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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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MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations
1932–1945

THE CHRONICLE
OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME THREE
The Years 1939 to 1940



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Abbreviations

BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
AFR	= American Foreign Relations (Documents 1939-1945)
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HKL	= Hauptkampflinie (Main Front Line)
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)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German Front-Line Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKH	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKL	= Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (High Command of the Luftwaffe)
OKM	= Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (High Command of the War Navy)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
RGBI	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RM	= Reichsmark
RSHA	= Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office)
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
TN	= Technische Nothilfe (Technical Emergency Relief Organisation)
VB	= <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organisation)
WTB	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolff's Telegraph Bureau)

PROLOGUE

While Hitler had scored victory upon victory in his years of triumph from 1932 to 1938, he met with defeat upon defeat in the years 1939 to 1945. These later years delineated his slow though steady decline. In Hitler's mind, the earlier years had merely cast a mold for what lay at the heart of his ambitions: the conquest of new Lebensraum. Central to this was the idea of expanding the Reich's frontiers to the Ural Mountains, thus encompassing all of Eastern Europe. A new empire was to be born, stretching across the vast expanses of the European continent; an empire of immense "geopolitical dimensions." It was to determine not only the destiny of Europe, but that of the entire world.

At the beginning of 1939, Hitler was convinced that:¹ "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!" In the midst of the war raging around him, he most acutely expressed one year later the deterministic view of foreign affairs he had embraced:² "I am firmly convinced that this [external] battle will not end a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally." Whether faced with elderly German Nationalists then or senile Englishmen now, with uncouth German Communists then or primitive Russians now—it was his destiny to rule. He had used bluffs against conservatives and brute force against ideologists at home. These methods which once helped him prevail were to secure victory abroad as well.

He could not take seriously the reluctance of the British to permit him a free hand in Eastern Europe. To him this seemed a stance inherent in their increasing national decrepitude, idiosyncratic to the English cast of mind. Assuredly, they would not stand in his way once he embarked on a policy of open confrontation and conquest in 1939. No doubt this would be met by rhetoric and not by decisive action.

The fallacy of this notion was to become apparent all too soon. In reality, the Western Powers had long resolved to respond to any further German aggression against a third state with a declaration of war. This resolution they had expressed clearly enough during the 1938 Sudeten

German crisis. The English were to swallow the willful annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, solely because no bloodshed was involved. Reluctantly, London refrained from any recrimination despite the blatant breach of contract this move represented in relation to the Munich Agreement signed by Hitler the year before.

Nevertheless, earnest voices of discontent made themselves heard abroad throughout the months leading up to August 1939. Chamberlain outspokenly criticized his adversary in a speech at Birmingham on March 17, 1939:³

I pointed out that any demand to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist . . .

And indeed, with the lessons of history for all to read, it seems incredible that we should see such a challenge. I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.

In a correspondence addressed to Hitler, the British Prime Minister commented on August 22, 1939:⁴

It has been alleged that, if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

His view clouded by the conceptions formulated in 1919, Hitler paid little heed to such statements. The only reaction these elicited from him was indignation at the British reluctance to let him pursue his expansionist designs in Eastern Europe. To teach the British a lesson well-deserved for their patronizing behavior, Hitler resolved to "brew them one devilish potion,"⁵ to enter into a pact with the devil himself, i.e. with Bolshevism. This would give the British a healthy fright and assuredly, he reasoned, they would be far more willing to bow to his arbitrary reign in the East as a consequence, their knees trembling at the prospect of a National Socialist and Communist alliance. Once again, Hitler fell prey to his misconceptions since, in

striking contrast to the German Nationalists, the English proved more than a match for him.

History ran its course and on September 1, 1939, open hostilities broke out as the German cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* fired on the bastion at the fore of the Danzig harbor. On September 3, the British Ambassador presented the declaration of war to Hitler's Third Reich. Germany's conduct of foreign affairs had failed it. Based on the notion that a policy of accommodation toward England and Italy in the West was compatible with a policy of aggression to the East, Hitler's foreign policy had borne within it the seeds of its own destruction. His speculation that England would remain neutral in any ensuing conflict did not come true any more than similarly confident pronouncements that Bethmann-Hollweg had made in his capacity as Reich Chancellor in August 1914.⁶ Confronted by a reality that in no way corresponded to the conceptions cherished for so many years, Hitler succumbed momentarily to utter dejection when presented with the shattering news of the British declaration of war. For minutes he stared at the floor, then said: "What now?"⁷

There was ample reason for his dejection. Up to the very last minute, he had repeated to his closest collaborators—generals, ministers, and leaders of the Party—that England would assuredly never resort to arms. Now the unthinkable had come true. For the Reich and its people, Hitler's mistake proved a fatal one. Had he indeed been a man of integrity, he would have faced either of two alternatives: to shoot himself on the spot or, at the very least, to leave the political stage. In principle, he himself had demanded no less of any leading politician guilty of a like grave error:⁸

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

The Führer of the Third Reich chose the easy way out, so to speak, by ignoring the import of the British declaration of war and proceeding with his plans as though nothing had happened. He still clung to the highly unrealistic notion that he could come to terms with England eventually, and that a miracle brought about by Providence would turn his foes into friends. To whoever cared to lend an ear, he insisted

throughout the war that he could still master the formidable task of bringing about an alliance with the “Germanic” Anglo-Saxons. The concern for not needlessly angering this potential future ally hindered him in the pursuit of a more determined military stance against that country. This lack of stamina was particularly apparent in the 1940 case of Dunkirk. In spite of having the means necessary at his disposal to prevent the escape of an entire British expeditionary corps, he allowed the Englishmen to get away. He displayed similar reluctance and hesitancy in the planning of assaults on Malta, Gibraltar, and Egypt, and especially in Operation “Sea Lion,” the planned landing of German troops along the coast of England. Every time the Reich successfully overran yet another small state, he graciously extended his hand in friendship to England and was incredulous each time he suffered another rebuff.

When all else had failed, Hitler turned against the Soviet Union in one last, desperate attempt to curry England’s favor. The English had contributed their part to reinforce him in this mistaken belief—it was exactly the same strategy that had already proved to be effective for the Crown in the case of Napoleon. Hitler invaded Russia in blatant disregard of the terms of the Non-Aggression Pact entered into by both countries. Persuaded that England would thus accept Germany as the savior of Europe from the Bolshevik plight, Hitler counted on Great Britain terminating its involvement in the struggle against the Third Reich. Naturally, this was not the only consideration that swayed Hitler to move against Russia. This step was in keeping with the idea of securing new Lebensraum in the East. A campaign against the primitive Bolsheviks could successfully be carried out, he was convinced, in a matter of weeks or a few months at the most.

There is an old German saying that likens Russia to a featherbed: easy to get into, but hard to get out of. Despite every kind of brutality, Hitler failed to overcome the Russians. In fact, as the English had correctly calculated, the bogging down of Germany’s forces along a perilous eastern front hastened the end of the war, in a manner quite different from the one Hitler had anticipated.

A few months later, contractual obligations to the Japanese cornered Hitler into declaring war on the United States, too. America’s entry into the war as Britain’s most important ally had been merely a question of time. Whoever gets drawn into a war with England ultimately also faces all English-speaking peoples in the world because of a traditional solidarity, their political connections, and the ties

between the Anglo-Saxon upper classes. Neither Imperial Germany nor National Socialist Germany had commanded the forces to face off such an alliance.

Whether Hitler was ever aware of the fatality of his undertaking or realized that his efforts were doomed from the outset—the harsh reality was that from September 3, 1939 on he was destined to suffer defeat upon defeat. The apparent victories the Third Reich secured in the subsequent years were Pyrrhic victories; they devoured its forces, consumed its military might, and curtailed its ability to act. While Berlin hailed the fall of France in 1940 as an astounding military accomplishment, it was in truth little more than a peripheral event. At the time, France was no more than half the Reich in size and had isolated itself politically. Conquests of smaller countries such as Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and the campaigns against Yugoslavia and Greece also failed to bring about any decisive changes as the Third Reich's chances for an ultimate victory faded.

As Hitler's prophecies about the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union and the certainty of reconciliation between Germany and Great Britain failed to materialize, he turned against the Jews as a last resort. The threat of massacring the Jewish people held hostage within the sphere of influence of the Third Reich would, so Hitler staunchly maintained, serve to coerce England to consider a settlement with Germany and to put forth a peace proposal. Should London still be reluctant to contemplate taking such steps, the agents of "world Jewry" would undoubtedly sway both London and Washington to submit to Germany's demands to save their brethren now at Hitler's mercy. Retaining his belief that this Jewish world government in fact existed, he held firm that this was the Third Reich's trump card. Unresolved in his eyes remained the mystery of why this strategy of intimidation and blackmail failed to produce the desired results. London did not at all respond as he had anticipated. Hitler had maneuvered himself into such a position that he could only make his threats true and carry out the barbarous massacre of millions of innocent Jews.

Once the British had resolved to wage war against him, they were not willing to halt their efforts before having accomplished what they considered their mission: namely, to end Hitler's reign of terror. Peace was yet possible between September 1, 1939 and 11:00 p.m. on the night of September 3, 1939. As the clock struck eleven, it heralded the twelfth hour of the Third Reich. From this point on, only Germany's

unconditional surrender and the capitulation of the National Socialist regime were acceptable to Great Britain. Neither Hitler's bloodthirsty threats, the Reich's initial successes abroad, his grotesque peace proposals, nor the insane genocide he bore ultimate responsibility for, sufficed to deter the British any longer. England's determined stance to see the matter through to its logical conclusion was made unmistakably clear in a radio broadcast on October 1, 1939, in which Winston S. Churchill, then serving as First Lord of the Admiralty and a member of Chamberlain's Cabinet, reiterated his assessment of the situation. To him and to the British Government, the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich and the removal of its notorious Führer formed the exclusive basis for conciliatory talks with Germany. Churchill's statement was short and devoid of any ambiguity:⁹

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

Hitler's fate was sealed and the war was lost for Germany on one and the same day: September 3, 1939. Events would run their natural course, and while the Third Reich retained the necessary capabilities to draw out the conflict, its government proved unable to win it. Neither the military occupation of fragile and relatively small states, nor the invasion of Russia and the mass murder of real or alleged enemies, conspirators, and Jewish "hostages" could change the facts of war.

Despite ample opportunities to compound the existing problems and thereby to prolong the conflict, Hitler mysteriously failed to take full advantage of these. Whether or not he subconsciously realized that this war was lost, he instructed the Wehrmacht not to prey upon Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Turkey, although it could easily have carried through a military occupation of these territories. Moreover, his irresolution on the topic of England apparently prevented him from ordering a landing on the British Isles, although, in the early stages of the war at least, this was entirely feasible.

On the other hand, even had he embarked on such ventures, this would have prolonged the conflict but not influenced its predetermined outcome. Had he indeed succeeded in conquering England, as the only consequence the Allied forces' mission to liberate France and Italy would have had to be extended to include the British Isles.

There is some truth to the argument that Hitler was at complete liberty to act as he chose until September 1, 1939. From the time that

he gave the signal for the invasion of Poland, he was no longer the master of his own destiny. The “sleepwalker” who was guided by Providence, as he once referred to himself,¹⁰ had lost his balance and, on recovering his senses, was confronted by harsh realities. His “actions” in the subsequent months and years are more properly described as “reactions” to the forces in place and the various constellations of power. He had conceived of foreign peoples and lands in a manner that did not correspond to reality. All of a sudden, he was faced with developments and events he had not foreseen and hence was incapable of dealing with properly. To keep his ship from sinking, he was forced to improvise to retain some semblance of coherence in his undertakings. The room left for action on his part was getting smaller all the time. Abroad, the foes of Germany whom he had summoned up with his arrogance and his ignorance of the true political power structures soon caused his ship to go under as a flood of events swallowed the man and his Third Reich.

Not surprisingly, from March 1939 on, Hitler’s speeches reflected an inner unrest. The forced nature of his arguments revealed an increasing desperation that arose from his flawed attempts to improvise in order to save himself and the situation. His bombastic announcements, unreasoned threats, and uncontrolled fits of rage mirrored the insecurity beneath the overly confident surface. He had ample cause to fear a future that looked more sinister by the day.

As early as 1939, rallies and electoral campaigns strikingly lacked the bombastic and colorful, though megalomaniac settings of similar occasions during Hitler’s years of triumph from 1932 to 1938. The next year, there were no more Party congresses and thanksgiving celebrations. Only one subdued Mayday celebration briefly added color to drab daily life in National Socialist Germany.

At this time, too, Hitler began increasingly to divorce himself from his old comrades who had shown such great unyielding loyalty in the course of so many years. Early in the war, he still mustered forces to speak before them on such dates as the November 8 commemoration of the 1923 Putsch, and the anniversary of the foundation of the Party celebrated on February 24. As the situation deteriorated further, even such relatively uncompromising speaking engagements fell victim to unexplained cancellations. Apparently there were no more appropriate occasions either for Hitler’s cherished “secret speeches” before gullible construction workers and factory hands employed by the armament industry. Instead of addressing the ordinary Reich citizen, Hitler spoke

exclusively before generals assembled at the various Führer Headquarters. This captive audience soon became tired of his lengthy tirades, and several officers actually fell asleep while listening to his narratives lasting hours.¹¹

Later Hitler occasionally contributed to discussions at military briefings, but otherwise he fell uncharacteristically silent. He regained his composure only when speaking before officer candidates annually assembled at the Berlin Sportpalast. There the Führer and Supreme Commander unfailingly crowned the initiation rites for the military's next generation with speeches during which he appeared to become his old, verbose self once more. This occasion was the only one reminiscent of the earlier great rallies he so cherished. Hitler increasingly shied away from direct contacts with his "beloved Volk." Those addresses which were held took place before a carefully selected audience on occasions such as the annual drive for the Winterhilfswerk and the commemoration of the National Socialists' rise to power.

On those rare occasions when Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, the subject was invariably linked to foreign policy. Frequently, Reichstag addresses were aimed more at London than at the deputies in the auditorium. Since Chamberlain and Churchill concerned themselves with Hitler in many of their public statements as well, these events tended to result in a fierce exchange of verbal abuse.

Judged solely by appearances, Hitler's and Churchill's speeches bore a striking resemblance. Both statesmen commanded an impressive, grandiose, and voluminous vocabulary, both loved prophesies and allegories. Neither spared his adversary or his respective audience vulgar expressions or demeaning commentary. The crucial difference between the two speakers lay in the fact that Churchill had the resources at his command to realize his announcements at a later time, whereas Hitler's threats against the Allies and his megalomaniac delusions tended to be without any substance or material backing in reality. To the contrary, he was confronted by a harsh reality which deprived him of the means to carry through on threats borne from frustration and desperation.

A German saying holds that he who shouts is the one in the wrong in the debate. Thus, before domestic audiences, Hitler's tirades against Churchill unwittingly backfired on him and left behind a most unfavorable impression. The German public was right in interpreting his railings as a bad omen. As the daily life of the Reich's citizenry deteriorated, the shortages which arose were accompanied by a

proportional increase in the curses and insults Hitler hurled at Churchill. Among the more graphic titles Hitler accorded his English counterpart were the following: “general criminal” (*Generalverbrecher*) and “general liar of world history” (*Generallügner der Weltgeschichte*),¹² “insane idiot” (*wahnsinniger Narr*),¹³ “insane drunkard” (*wahnsinniger Säufer*), and “whiskey-happy gentleman” (*whiskyseliger Herr*).¹⁴ No more respectfully, the Führer alleged the future Prime Minister to be a “garrulous drunkard” (*Schwätzer und Trunkenbold*), a “damned liar” (*verlogenes Subjekt*), and a “first-rank lazy fellow” (*Faulpelz ersten Ranges*).¹⁵ On another occasion, Hitler referred to Churchill as “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history” (*eine der erbärmlichsten Herostratennaturen der Weltgeschichte*).¹⁶ Once the United States entered the war, Hitler titled Roosevelt “Churchill’s accomplice in the White House,” and called him a “poor fool” (*armseliger Irrer*)¹⁷ and an “old gangster” (*alter Gangster*).¹⁸

Hitler lamented his lot to be faced with one too many “military silly asses” (*militärische Kindsköpfe*)¹⁹ and not by any more “formidable adversary.”²⁰ It was his plight to be confronted by “democratic nobodies . . . who cannot look back on even one single great achievement in their lives,²¹ by “ludicrous zeroes” (*lächerliche Nullen*) and “nature’s political run of the mill” (*politische Fabrikware der Natur*).²²

This terminology was in fact not of any recent vintage; the insults and accusations correspond to those Hitler employed in 1932 in campaigning against his domestic adversaries.²³ Times had changed and so had the adversaries he faced. He had met his master abroad. There he was confronted by an enemy vastly superior to him who was not willing to offer him the other cheek.

As victories became increasingly rare, so did Hitler’s public appearances and official statements. Already in earlier years, he had carefully avoided making such appearances at times of internal difficulties or when a situation had arisen which he cared not to expand upon. He was weary of meeting his Volk eye to eye and of accounting for his deeds. This approach was evident in his behavior throughout the war. If there were actual or alleged victories to report on, he spoke eloquently at great length and dedicated much time and effort to promote awareness of the historic import of these events and of the greatness of his own person. When developments were less favorable to his cause, he sent Göring and Goebbels to the fore and gave them the thankless task of rationalizing defeats and shortages in

the face of the undeniable facts a disgruntled audience was only too well aware of. One textbook example of this strategy of denial was the Stalingrad disaster.

The numerous interviews Hitler had granted foreign journalists in previous years, the heaps of correspondence and telegrams exchanged with other politicians, the summit-style meetings with foreign heads of state—events that had enthralled him in the years of his success and had become an addiction—all these became increasingly rare. It was only during the first two years of the war that foreign statesmen and journalists would still come to call on Hitler.

For instance, Sumner Wells toured Germany in 1940 to gather information independently and to assess the import of the situation in the Third Reich for the United States. Conferences with other foreign statesmen like Franco, Pétain, and Molotov later that year already bore the stamp of futile attempts at achieving some form of consensus among the various governments concerned. A meeting of a similar nature with Matsuoka the following year also failed to produce the effects intended. All that was left to Hitler in public support was his old foot-soldier Mussolini. As the war dragged on, Hitler eagerly welcomed statesmen from countries of lesser importance, many of which had been allied with Germany in the First World War. In *Mein Kampf*, he had derisively referred to these states as “junk destined for destruction.”²⁴ It was in desperation that he clung to the delusion of still commanding a position of respect internationally, and proudly he would display numerous insignificant telegrams received from abroad as though these bore a greater significance than the customary diplomatic etiquette to which they owed their existence. Indeed, he pretended that they represented a veritable approval of his politics. Until his dying day, Hitler sent wired greetings to “friends,” usually either to diplomatic missions or to states that maintained strict neutrality in the conflict. He firmly believed, and sought to convince the German public of as much, that routine responses to these reflected a favorable assessment of his person abroad.

In fact, those foreign statesmen who continued to curry Hitler’s favor tended to be of dubious character and origin. This was true in particular of Subhas Chandra Bose of India,²⁵ and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem,²⁶ to name only two. Now that he could no longer maintain the pretense of standing aloof from the exigencies of low politics, he was indeed grateful for the visits of those whom he had assessed as “garrulous, pompous asses with nothing to them” (*schwatzhafte*

Wichtigster, bar jeden Hintergrundes) in *Mein Kampf*.²⁷ Not so many years later, he found himself overjoyed at the prospects of visits by such odd figures. It was his hope these calls would leave a good impression at home and abroad, that these encounters would underline his own role of prominence in world affairs, and the multitude of such conferences would signal acceptance of his politics by the “outside world.” In retrospect, Hitler’s insistence on personally receiving such ludicrous figures in his capacity as Chancellor of the Third Reich and the rhetoric he employed in this context appear both tragic and comic at the same time.

He truly was persuaded that as long as he persisted in his undertakings and clung to the conceptions formulated in 1919, Providence would smile on him once again. Indeed, he conceived of the misfortunes and defeats encountered as a reflection of the existence of a God somewhere above the clouds, putting him and the German Volk to the test.²⁸ This almighty spiritual force sent “trials” upon him so that he might prove his valor. In Hitler’s strange appraisal, even catastrophes on the scale of Stalingrad were mere “lashes of the whip” and “hammer blows of Providence.”²⁹ If he remained steadfast, did not err from the path assigned to him, the Lord would one day grant him the victory he so well deserved. England would turn to him in friendship while the Almighty’s wrath would spell ruin for Bolshevism.

It was not until the rain of bombs approached his hideout beneath the Reich Chancellery in April 1945, that he could admit to himself that the end had indeed come. This resignation and the realization of a reality that failed to correspond to his perceptions is nowhere more evident than in his decision to finally marry Eva Braun and thus retroactively avow his relation to the mistress so long and so carefully concealed from the public’s eye. This last-minute attempt to legalize a relationship which was generally frowned upon at the time, transcended its immediate significance to become an admission of guilt also in respect to the political fiasco Hitler left behind. He had built himself up to be a “God-Man” incapable of doing wrong, of committing errors, and succumbing to such human shortcomings as sexual desire. For many years, out of fear that Eva Braun’s existence might become known and put into question his implicit claims to “supernatural” powers, he had isolated the girl, permitting her few if any contacts with other persons, and had greatly degraded her by this quasi-custody.

Many years before these developments, a sigh escaped from Eva Braun’s lips in a private conversation with the BBC’s then correspondent

in Berlin: “It is too bad that Hitler became Reich Chancellor—or else he might have married me.”³⁰ This comment revealed much about Hitler’s character, and it is in this context that the wedding before the double suicide gains a historic dimension. By finally granting the woman who had shared his life and was to die alongside him the legitimization of their relations she had so long dreamed of, Hitler conceded that indeed he was an ordinary man like so many others. This concession also reflected some kind of resignation, like an admission of his utter failure as battlelord, head of state, and politician.

There is great irony in the fact that while he was perhaps subconsciously aware of his faults, he nevertheless could not depart this life without one of those gestures of grandeur he so excelled at. In his last will and testament, he attempted to burden Reichsmarschall Göring and Reichsführer SS Himmler with the responsibility for the Third Reich’s ignominious defeat. Penning the document on April 29, 1945, a day before his death, he made one last all-out effort to transfer guilt to these two pitiful creatures and gave a grandiose pronouncement on the inevitable resurrection of the National Socialist Movement at some point in Germany’s future.

On April 30, 1945, the newly-weds Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler retired to their bedroom in the bunker beneath the Chancellery building. While his bride took poison, Hitler shot himself with a pistol. The gruesome reign of terror of this one man had come to an end, having cost the lives of millions of Jews, Russians, Poles, millions from nearly every European nation—and the lives of millions of Germans as well. The demagogue who had demonstrated a rhetorical magic, hitherto unknown, at the greatest mass rallies of all time; the spellbinding seducer who had developed visions unheard-of, who had promised his listeners everlasting power and glory in a new utopian Reich spanning the world—this man had finally fallen silent.

The Year 1939

Major Events in Summary

Hitler focused on additional territorial annexations in the East in the first months of 1939. In his eyes the city of Danzig, the Memel territory, and the remainder of Czechoslovakia were rightful possessions of the Reich.¹ In complete disregard of the actual situation, he speculated that the Western Powers would remain silent or, at most, would launch formal protests when confronted with persistent aggression on Germany's part. Blinded by the successes scored in 1938 with the Anschluss and the effective insistence on the return of Sudeten German areas to the Reich, he adhered to his earlier perceptions that these achievements were due to nothing other than the display of the Third Reich's military potential. He failed to realize the import of international legal regulations, which invalidated Germany's territorial claims in the case of the Sudetenland.

To the contrary, he felt humiliated at the thought that he had placed his signature beneath so odious a paper as the Munich Agreement. He perceived this as the gravest error in his political career to date. In his mind, it greatly detracted from the other achievements of 1938. The eager acquiescence of the British at Munich he interpreted as proof of Britain's declining power and status. Instead of paying heed to Chamberlain's and Mussolini's offers to mediate, he should have followed his instincts and—this thought enormously troubled him—he ought to have taken hold of the entire Czechoslovakian state in late 1938. This would have spared him the disgraceful signature of the Munich papers, and he would not have been humbled by accepting that an international body had secured territorial concessions for him. Had he proceeded by the use of force, he would also have avoided placing himself at the mercy of the same despicable forum. He worried little about his actions eliciting a negative response from abroad, as he was certain that neither France nor Great Britain would have declared war on him in either event.

Given this set of mind, it was not surprising that at the onset of this most fateful year in Germany's history, Hitler's thoughts rested

foremost with atoning in some manner for his “lapse of presence of mind” at Munich. No matter under what pretext, the Third Reich simply had to swallow up the remainder of Czechoslovakia and lay hold of Slovakia militarily. He attached little importance to the fact that such moves would present a grave affront not only to the other parties to the Munich Agreement and to Poland, but to the entire international community. The thought that this would clearly expose him as a man not to be trusted before the eyes of the world apparently never entered his mind. That this blatant breach of contract might backfire and discredit his regime was a consideration alien to him. The decrepit English, the decadent French, and the depraved democracies worldwide meant nothing to him. He would show them once and for all that it was he, Adolf Hitler, who ruled Europe. All other heads of state would have to bow to the Reich’s might and submit to his arbitrary reign. That these statesmen would ultimately come under his spell, as the German Nationalists once had, was a fact he never questioned.

Among the many peoples and states in Europe, Slovakia was the most to Hitler’s liking. Having grasped the exigencies of the hour, Tiso and other Slovak statesmen like Tuka, Mach, and Durcansky² nearly fell over each other in their quest to please and flatter the German dictator. They were only too eager to comply with his implicit request and to deal a fatal blow to the fragile Czechoslovakian federation by becoming vocal in their demands for more autonomy for their ethnic group. Their requests were deliberately such that Prague could not possibly satisfy them without the federation self-destructing. The upheaval and turmoil thus created in Czechoslovakia prepared the ground for a German military intervention. Officially this represented an effort to re-establish the rule of law and order in the area. Once the Slovak politicians had accomplished their mission, Hitler was more than willing to grant them an autonomous state for their people. In fact, however, this state’s freedom of action was severely limited by Hitler’s reservation that it remain subject to the military sovereignty of the Reich.

The easternmost outreaches of the Czechoslovakian state were situated in the Carpatho-Ukraine, an area for which Hitler had special plans as well. Magnanimously, he intended to cede the area to Hungary in an effort to divert attention from his other territorial ambitions. Much as he had handled the appropriation of the Olsa region to Poland the previous year,³ Hitler was set on currying the favor of the Hungarians this time and luring them into an alliance with

Germany. Unaware of the German head of state's ultimate designs, an autonomous, pro-German government had already formed in the Carpatho-Ukraine. They promoted the cause of incorporating in their envisioned new state those parts of their homeland that had fallen prey to the Soviet Union and Poland in earlier years. They unwittingly counted on Hitler's active support for their dream of a reunited "Greater Ukrainian Empire." While Augustin Volo-in⁴ served officially as the autonomous region's Minister-President, behind the scenes the hand of Hetman Skoropadskyi⁵ was at work. This peculiar man had already functioned as "head of state" of a similar structure in the days of William II. Skoropadskyi's vision of a Ukrainian state also encompassed those lands the Central Powers had annexed in 1918. The Carpatho-Ukrainians were the first foreign people, though by no means the last, to experience how quickly and mercilessly Hitler could turn against former supporters and allies, once these had served their purpose. The Poles, Yugoslavs, and Russians were the next in line for this realization.

In March 1939, Hitler embarked on the realization of his ambitious ventures in connection with the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the Slovak peoples. Encouraged by Hitler's alluring promises and backed by him,⁶ the Slovaks stirred up civil unrest and involved themselves in intrigues against the central government in Prague to such an extent that the newly appointed Minister-President Hácha felt compelled to ask for the resignation of the Tiso cabinet and replaced it with a governmental team headed by Sivak.⁷ This represented the cue for a massive German intervention in Pressburg (Bratislava). All of a sudden, dubious men such as Hitler's expert for annexations, Gauleiter Bürckel, haunted the halls of administrative buildings in the capital. This veteran of the Austrian Anschluss and of the repatriation of the Saarland strode down hallways accompanied by other suspicious characters such as, for example, Seyss-Inquart, along with numerous highly decorated German generals. Deployed on numerous similar missions in the course of his career, Hitler's special plenipotentiary Wilhelm Keppler reinforced their ranks. Together these so-called envoys set out to convince the Slovak regime that the time had come for them to sever ties to the central government in Prague. History demanded of them that they create an "independent" Slovak state under the guidance of National Socialist Germany. Should they be unwilling, the consequences for their people would be grave ones. Already groups belonging to the German Party in Slovakia paraded through the city's streets attired in combat clothing and, all of a sudden,

carrying weapons. This drove home the point Hitler intended to make with the Slovak officials.

On March 13, Hitler consented to seeing Tiso and Durcansky at the Chancellery in Berlin. He lectured them on the importance of immediately pronouncing Slovakia an independent state. Upon his return to Pressburg the following day, Tiso did indeed read to the Slovak Parliament a "declaration of independence of the Slovak State" which Hitler had drawn up for him. This pulled the "Slovak" pillar out from beneath the increasingly unsteady Czechoslovakian federation. It also signaled the renewal of a German propaganda campaign directed against Prague. Once again, newspapers piled up carrying story after story of alleged Czech atrocities, of violations of the civil rights of ethnic Germans, and of renewed unrest in Bohemia and Moravia. Despite the turmoil created, reserve troops in Germany received no orders to march. This fact corresponded to a projected assessment of the situation as discussed in a directive of December 17, 1938,⁸ in which Hitler insisted that the German military need not fear encountering resistance of any significance as it moved to occupy the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

In the evening hours of March 14, German troops and armed SS contingents⁹ penetrated the area surrounding Moravian Ostrau in order to take this strategically important city in a first strike against Prague. The proximity of this population center to the Polish border was also to deter Poland from resorting to any foolish measures, such as resisting the German occupation of neighboring Czechoslovakia.

On the night of March 14 to March 15, Hitler ordered Hácha and the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky to come see him and to sign an agreement, practically at gunpoint, which effected the Reich's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. To his credit, Hitler once more scored a major success without bloodshed. The Czech army received instructions not to oppose the German soldiers closing in on it from all sides. As a safety measure, the Czech soldiers had to hand over their weapons.

After the successful occupation of the territory, Hitler hastily issued two proclamations to the German Volk. He then rushed on to Prague to enter the Hradcany Castle and to finally reap the fruits of his labor which, he felt, the Munich Agreement had unfairly deprived him of. Nevertheless, the victory was a deceptive one. No glorious warlord was to be honored for his exploits; rather an exploited people was to be raped once more. And to achieve this dubious victory, Hitler had

sacrificed what remained of his credibility in the eyes of the world. In spite of repeated, solemn pledges denouncing intentions of further aggressive actions, like the ones enumerated below, he revealed himself to be a man of no scruples:

I shall never, as a statesman, put my signature on a treaty which I would never sign as a man of honor in private life either, even if it were to mean my ruin! For I would also never want to put my signature on a document knowing in the back of my mind that I would never abide by it! I abide by what I sign. What I cannot abide by, I will never sign.¹⁰

For my part, I declare that I would rather die at any time than sign something which, in my most sacred conviction, I hold to be unbearable for the German Volk.¹¹

I will never sign anything knowing that it can never be upheld, because I am determined to abide by what I sign.¹²

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!¹³

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.¹⁴

Nowhere in the world today is there a greater guarantee for the security of such a treaty than if it is signed by this [Hitler's] hand.¹⁵

Hitler had not only pledged to respect contracts he placed his signature on, he had also denied that he had any further territorial claims to make on behalf of Germany. Moreover, the establishment of a Greater German Reich would not entail subjugation of foreign peoples since, after all, as Hitler enjoyed pointing out, the last thing he wanted in this new Germany were Czechs. He pledged himself and his Movement to respect the right to self-determination of other ethnic groups:

We will never attempt to subjugate foreign peoples . . .¹⁶

We have no territorial claims to make in Europe.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

It is the last territorial demand I shall make in Europe. [—] I repeat here before you, once this issue [the cession of the Sudeten German territories] has been resolved, there will no longer be any further territorial problems for Germany in Europe!¹⁹

We do not want any Czechs at all.²⁰

He proved all these statements to have been despicable lies by invading what remained of the former Czechoslovakian state within five months after taking part in the Four Power Summit at Munich. His signature was worth less than the paper he scribbled it on. He had succumbed to the temptation of what he perceived to be the decrepitude of the English, the indecision of the French, the servile comportment of Mussolini, and the inferiority of Poland's military. For, in fact, the move of March 15 affected the Poles no less than the peoples of Czechoslovakia, as they strongly suspected Poland to be the next item on Hitler's list for future conquests.

In light of Hitler's deluded view of reality, the move of March 15 was not inconsistent with his previous statements. Given a fundamentally different assessment of the situation, the reaction abroad to the renewed provocation by Germany was entirely different from what Hitler had anticipated. The English were no German Nationalists, and they were not about to let the megalomaniac proceed as he wished. It would take just one additional slight provocation, one more attempt to subdue by force of arms yet another foreign people, and—British sources left no doubt of this—His Majesty's Government would be compelled to declare war on Germany as a consequence. Only the fact that no bloodshed had been involved in the March 15 foray spared the German people the horrors of war for another six months. Czechoslovakian troops had received timely orders not to fire on the advancing German units, and this saved Hitler one last time from the wrath of the Western Powers.

Meanwhile, this latest breach of contract by National Socialist Germany had reinforced Great Britain's determination to intervene militarily on the continent at the slightest provocation by Hitler's government. In a radio address aired from Birmingham on March 17, 1939, Chamberlain made the British position clear. The Prime Minister pointed out that earlier territorial claims by Germany had always been well-founded and justifiable in terms of international law. However, this latest undertaking was by no means compatible with the established conduct of affairs between states and represented a violation of all rights known to man:²¹

Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian Anschluss, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was

something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German Government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: “Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?”

“Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?”

To these remarks, Chamberlain added the warning already cited in the prologue to this volume, that no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that Britain would not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge.

Hitler failed to take seriously the well-meant admonishment, and instead of paying heed to it, he proceeded to the next items on his agenda for the spring of 1939: the Memel territory and Danzig. The former point was easily dealt with: fortune apparently chose to smile upon him one last time. Lithuania yielded to diplomatic pressure and, on March 22, declared its willingness to return the terrain illegally seized from the German Reich in 1923.

Poland, however, was not willing to make concessions on a similar scale. It refused to cede the Free City of Danzig to the German Reich. It also declined cooperation in the construction of an extraterritorial motorway piercing the Polish Corridor. Its reluctance was not a matter of spite, but one of well-founded concerns for its own safety. After the most recent forceful annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the military occupation of Slovakia, Poland found itself surrounded on three sides by Germany. The Third Reich’s troops had positioned themselves to its west, its north and its south, thus effectively encircling Poland, given that equally antagonistic Russians stood in the East. The Polish Government was haunted by the suspicion that any concessions on its part would, at best, keep Hitler at bay for another half a year. A military confrontation had apparently become unavoidable. And the Poles were not about to lend a hand in their own destruction, especially as they knew that Great Britain stood behind them.

Chamberlain unambiguously restated England’s commitment to Poland in a speech before the House of Commons on March 31, 1939:²²

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty’s Government in the meantime before those consultations are

concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

I may add that the French Government have authorized me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.

This declaration left no doubt that the Western Powers were determined to meet any further armed aggression by Germany with a declaration of war. This was to apply also if German forces attempted to take Danzig, irrespective of the fact that Germans populated the area, and that it had once formed part of the Reich. The British stance was as clear then as it had been in 1914 when Austria set out to annex Serbia by force. Both causes, that of Serbia in 1914 and of Danzig in 1939, ultimately led to a world war, a confrontation pitting England and the Western Powers against Germany and Austria. The Reich's invasion first of Belgium in 1914 and later of Poland in 1939 precipitated mortal conflict and open warfare.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, many Germans,²³ and in his lifetime Hitler also, argued that England was to blame for these regrettable developments leading up to the great calamity of September 1939. Germany would not have resorted to arms had England not unduly reinforced the Poles by its lamentable declaration of March 31, 1939. It was only because of the British reassurances that Poland so vehemently denied Germany the construction of an extraterritorial motorway through the Polish Corridor and, by the same token, that the Poles refused to return the city of Danzig to its rightful owner, Germany.

On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that Poland would have reacted in the same manner regardless of Great Britain's behavior. The issues at stake transcended the immediate dispute concerning the linkage of East Prussia to the Reich and the status of the Free City of Danzig. The existence of the Polish state was no more the subject of the dispute in 1939 than either Serbia or Belgium had been the bone of contention in 1914. The crux of the matter was Germany's forcible annexation of neighboring territories and the support lent by Austria. Great Britain and the Western Powers were no more willing to tolerate such militant expansionism in 1939 than they had been in 1914. Persistent denial of the serious nature of the warnings by the West

clearly places the responsibility for the ensuing tragedy on the shoulders of the German and Austrian statesmen of both periods. Had the politicians involved acknowledged that Great Britain and the world community had severe misgivings about the route chosen by the Reich, they could easily have prevented the outbreak of hostilities if they had ceased the pursuit of territorial expansion by brute force. By refusing to consider this option, in a sense the politicians in Berlin and Vienna might as well have signed the British declaration of war themselves.

Refraining from the pursuit of his goals was not a subject to be discussed with Hitler. He was determined to set out on “the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plough . . .”²⁴ And in this quest, he argued there was “but one ally in Europe: England.” That it was possible Great Britain did not share his enthusiasm for such a policy apparently never entered his mind.

Thus it was not surprising that the Führer was shocked by Chamberlain’s address before the House of Commons on March 31, 1939. England’s willingness to support Poland was inexplicable to him. He was at a loss trying to understand the rapid developments and the reactions they had elicited abroad in the course of the preceding two weeks. The annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia had provoked Chamberlain’s sharp criticism. Then Poland had indignantly rebuked Germany’s demand for a return of Danzig. And to top this off, Great Britain announced the existence of a mutual assistance pact it had evidently concluded with Poland earlier. This series of developments shook the very foundation of Hitler’s beliefs and the great stock he had placed in the decrepitude of the British mind. Obviously, English perceptions had not been dulled to the degree Hitler had counted on. Not surprisingly, Hitler was outraged at the impertinence of the British move when the news of Chamberlain’s statement of March 31, 1939, reached him. He shouted: “I shall brew them one Devil’s brew!”²⁵

The main ingredient for this potion was not difficult to divine: entry into an alliance with Bolshevik Russia. This was to disquiet the Western Powers and to entice them to greater leniency toward Germany. That this strategy would achieve its ends, Hitler was certain: had not the National Socialist and Communist cooperation in the 1932 transportation workers’ strike in Berlin forced von Papen and his reactionary German Nationalists to embrace his politics? Apparently oblivious of his previous proclamations that he would never collaborate with tainted men such as the Bolsheviks and risk exposure to this mind-poisoning

ideology,²⁶ he pursued these tactics to the end, albeit one quite different from what he had anticipated.

From April through August 1939, Hitler was busily adding other ingredients to the “potion” he was developing especially for the English. In his mind, they richly deserved his vengeance. It was the British Government’s recalcitrant behavior which had brought this misfortune upon them and forced him into an alliance with its archenemy. As of this time, however, he was still willing to grant England—magnanimously—one last chance to redeem itself. He would hold his anger in check and, at first, would deal it a few obvious slaps in the face. Should it fail to react to this in the desired manner, then his “Hugenbergers”²⁷ would have in fact dealt their last card and he would carry through on the envisioned alliance with the Soviet Union.

The Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939 appeared to Hitler a splendid occasion to affront the British Government once more and to test its reaction. First, he unilaterally abrogated the naval agreement on the size of the respective fleets arrived at in 1935. In one bold stroke of a pen, he then proceeded to declare null and void the 1934 Mutual Non-Aggression and Friendship Pact with Poland which, albeit many years ago, the Party press had once celebrated as a masterpiece of National Socialist statesmanship. Behind these two moves was Hitler’s megalomaniac desire to prove to Poland that Germany was free to move politically as he saw fit despite the British avowal of support for the Polish state.

All in all, Hitler did himself more damage than good as he terminated agreements he himself had labored so long to realize. And the twenty-one insolent responses to Roosevelt with which he laced his speech made him appear far more ludicrous than serious. Throughout the summer of 1939, he staged military parade after military parade in an effort to display the prowess and might of Germany’s Wehrmacht in a transparent effort to intimidate the English.

Already at a speech in Wilhelmshaven on April Fool’s Day 1939, the Führer had dedicated all his efforts to raise the specter of an overpowering German fleet before the eyes of the spectators, not to mention the British, at the christening of the battleship *Tirpitz*. The name was to remind London of the none-too-successful early stages of its struggle against the German Navy in the First World War.²⁸ When he appointed Admiral General Raeder Commander in Chief of the Navy, Hitler hoped the English would begin to wonder whether

a new Tirpitz was to head Germany's naval forces. If all went according to plan, he would cause the British to marvel at the apparent might of a navy that once more felt confident enough to face off Great Britain's own legendary naval power.

For his 1939 birthday celebration in Berlin, Hitler had rows of soldiers file by in front of him for hours, one of the most extensive military parades to date. In May, Hitler reserved several days for a thorough official inspection of the fortifications in the West in an attempt to underline the military's importance and might. Amidst much ado on May 22, he placed his signature beneath the so-called "Pact of Steel," a military alliance conclusively binding Italy to Germany. In the weeks to follow, a multitude of minor statesmen, mostly from the Balkans, came to call on the German dictator in Berlin, who rejoiced at these repeated opportunities to stage yet another impressive military parade. Between visits, Hitler busily attended maneuvers, issued directives to the military, and spoke frequently before Germany's generals. A special SS force took up quarters in Danzig, while Hitler called up reserve units and arranged for a concentration of German troops along the eastern frontier of the Reich, primarily in East Prussia and Slovakia.

Still the English failed to react as Hitler desired; they showed little inclination to be bluffed by military displays and paid little heed to Germany's obvious preparations for war against Poland. On the other hand, they repeatedly insisted on earlier statements that, should Berlin launch an armed aggression against Warsaw, even on as peripheral a topic as Danzig, an immediate declaration of war by London would be the consequence. Despite England's outward indifference, London noted the developments in Germany. Britain realized that the time for an open confrontation had come. What was at stake was not the fate of one small country but "larger issues," a topic Chamberlain had already expounded in a radio broadcast on September 27, 1938. Speaking on the eve of the Sudetenland crisis, he had alluded to the likelihood of such a confrontation, while maintaining that the time for this was not yet ripe.²⁹

However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbor, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in a war on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that.

The atmosphere that summer recalled one not so long ago when the Kaiser had still made pretenses about the glory to be gained for the

Germany of 1914 in the then pending conflict. National Socialist rhetoric and Hitler's outrageous pronouncements in 1939 sounded remarkably similar. The German public had been systematically divorced from reality, had no access to unbiased information, and hence had become easy prey for an exuberant propaganda apparatus. Few Germans had the resources necessary to recognize the true political and military power structure in Europe. This was as true in 1939 as it had been in 1914 on the eve of the First World War.

In England that summer, to the contrary, the air was heavy with forebodings. In a radio broadcast addressed to the American people and aired on August 8, 1939, Churchill described the situation in Europe in the following manner:³⁰

Let me look back—let me see. How did we spend our summer holidays twenty-five years ago? Why, those were the very days when the German advance guards were breaking into Belgium and trampling down its people on their march towards Paris! Those were the days when Prussian militarism was—to quote its own phrase—“hacking its way through the small, weak, neighbor country” whose neutrality and independence they had sworn not merely to respect but to defend.

But perhaps we are wrong. Perhaps our memory deceives us. Dr. Goebbels and his Propaganda Machine have their own version of what happened twenty-five years ago. To hear them talk, you would suppose that it was Belgium that invaded Germany! There they were, these peaceful Prussians, gathering in their harvests, when this wicked Belgium—set on by England and the Jews—fell upon them; and would no doubt have taken Berlin, if Corporal Adolf Hitler had not come to the rescue and turned the tables. Indeed, the tale goes further. After four years of war by land and sea, when Germany was about to win an overwhelming victory, the Jews got at them again, this time from the rear. Armed with President Wilson's Fourteen Points they stabbed, we are told, the German armies in the back, and induced them to ask for an armistice, and even persuaded them, in an unguarded moment, to sign a paper saying that it was they and not the Belgians who had been the ones to begin the War. Such is history as it is taught in topsy-turvydom.

Churchill's insistence that the fate of Belgium was of paramount importance to the developments in 1914 has to be taken with a grain of salt. “Larger issues” were at stake, to use Chamberlain's terminology of September 27, 1938. And, as Chamberlain expressed it, England would not go to war for the sake of one small nation alone, no matter how great its sympathy for the country.³¹

Nevertheless, Churchill hit the nail on the head when he spoke of “topsy-turvydom” and its false prophets. The legend of the stab in the

back, the myth of an invincible German army losing the First World War in 1918—all this bore evil fruit two decades later. Advocated by outspoken men such as Ludendorff and Hitler in conservative circles and warmed up occasionally, these theories led to a dangerous overestimation of Germany's military might and a no less perilous underestimation of the fighting power of the British and their staying power in battle. Hitler was among those who seriously believed that the Englishmen of this century were past their prime, and hence, he did not anticipate encountering such a determined stance on their part.

Despairing of the ineffectiveness of repeatedly slapping the British in the face, Hitler had maneuvered himself into a position where he could only resort to serving up his fabled "devilish potion." A non-aggression and mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union came about quickly and was ready for signature in Moscow by August 23, 1939.³² By entering into a pact with the devil, so to speak, Hitler was certain to achieve his ends, since a similar strategy had proved most effective against domestic opponents in the early years of his political career.

It took the English two full days to react to this obvious provocation. On August 25, Great Britain and Poland signed a formal mutual assistance agreement. Contrary to Hitler's expectations, Great Britain did not stumble after this renewed slap in the face, and the "potion" administered failed in its purpose.

This left Hitler ill at ease. He halted preparations already underway for a strike against Poland on August 26 to gain time to win England's favor. If London was not willing to enter into friendly relations with National Socialist Germany, perhaps assurances of its neutrality could at least be secured before a military move against Poland. Once more he pinned all his hopes on his oratorical prowess, his ability to persuade his opponents under almost any circumstances. He truly believed he could bring about a decisive change in the British stance this late in the game.

The approach he took was an old one: he was going to transmit a renewed "offer of friendship" to the British Government through the good offices of Göring's friend, the Swede Dahlerus. This was to signal his willingness to tie Germany to Great Britain—anything to secure England's good will. To this end, he stood prepared to antagonize his friend Mussolini whom he had just gravely affronted by entering into the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviets without informing Italy or asking for its consent. These new allies he also willingly would have

sacrificed on the altar of England's friendship, albeit only after a conquest or, at the very least, a renewed partition of Poland.

The absurdity of Hitler's thoughts became all the more obvious when he seriously offered to deploy German military forces in order to protect the British Empire. At first, in the Far East, this would have entailed facing off with Japanese troops, although an earlier alliance bound Germany to Japan and its interests in the region. Moreover, Hitler was completely unaware that, by making this clumsy attempt, he was affronting the English in nearly the worst manner conceivable. All English-speaking countries regarded it as a great privilege and honor to be allowed to contribute to the defenses of the English motherland and the outreaches of the Commonwealth in times of danger. According to the public opinion in Germany, at least ever since the times of the Kaiser, the British Empire was always on the verge of collapse. And even if this were the case—to think the British would accept the help of Hitler's Army divisions was veritably ridiculous.

By the asphyxiation of the truncated Czechoslovakian state, Hitler had clearly demonstrated that any compromise reached with him was ultimately doomed to fall victim to his megalomania. Granted that Downing Street would perhaps have been able to make the Poles step down and yield to the German demands for Danzig and the Polish Corridor, it had far less incentive to do so after the willful annexation of the remaining territory legally ruled by Prague as an outcome of the Munich Agreement a year earlier.

Rescinding his order to attack Poland on August 25, Hitler had been certain that he could secure Great Britain's benevolent neutrality within a few days. Roused by the British failure to react in the manner anticipated, Hitler proceeded to ignore Britain's very existence and its opposition to his envisioned undertakings. The conceptions formed in 1919 clouded his view. As in so many earlier instances, the English would assuredly come around. If London chose not to support Germany's campaign against Russia, it would at least not hinder Berlin's pursuit of territorial expansion in the East. Irrespective of the time frame involved, so he believed, London would desist from any rash actions, issue protests for the record, and maintain a benevolent neutrality when faced with the accomplished fact of the German incursion into Poland.

His chest swelling with confidence, he ordered the military move against Poland to begin at 4:45 a.m. on September 1, 1939. That morning, he dressed carefully in his field-gray tunic for the first time,

proudly bearing the Third Reich's emblem on the left sleeve. He then formally announced to the Reichstag that the German Army was to "return fire" on Polish troops.

Initial reactions by Great Britain and the Western Powers appeared to vindicate Hitler's tactics. Ambassadors of both Great Britain and France called on the German Foreign Minister in the late evening hours of September 1, 1939. They protested the German move on behalf of their respective governments and stated that this represented "an act of aggression" against Poland. The Ambassadors brought to the Foreign Minister's attention the import of certain obligations binding their states to the fate of Poland. Their governments would feel compelled to act on these, should German military forces not withdraw from the sovereign territory of the Polish state immediately. Such statements were precisely the type of reaction Hitler had anticipated: diplomatic gestures void of any real significance in light of the impotence of the Western Powers' military forces, of which he was so firmly convinced.

While Great Britain's response was subdued that first day,³³ a British declaration of war on Germany lay on the Chancellor's desk by the third day of the conflict. Stunned by this unexpected turn of events, he was—for once—at a loss for words. For several minutes, he could only stare at the floor. The man who prided himself on having provided for every contingency imaginable had been taken by surprise. "What now?" was all he could say. When presented with a similarly unexpected declaration of war by the English on August 4, 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had become no less despondent. In spite of Hitler's haughty disdain for his predecessors in office, the Führer cut a no less miserable figure in the Chancellery a mere quarter of a century later.

Thanks to Hitler's remarkable resilience, he regained his composure and confidence within a matter of hours. Undaunted by the recent breakdown of his conception of a foreign policy based on a tacit alliance with Great Britain and incompatible with the present British position, he carried out neither of the measures he himself had once required of any other politician who failed on a comparable scale. He neither stepped down nor committed suicide. Instead, he issued a multitude of proclamations to the German Volk, the Wehrmacht, and the National Socialist Party. Through these he hoped to deflect blame from his own person to the British, who were solely responsible for the calamitous situation at hand, at least in his opinion.

Defiantly, he told his supporters, "We have nothing to lose, but everything to win!"³⁴

Speedily he set out to inspect the state of preparations along the eastern front, in part undoubtedly to escape the disquieting situation in Berlin. He consoled himself by not taking the British declaration of war too seriously. He attributed it to a desire by the British to publicly satisfy the letter, not the spirit, of the English guarantee extended to Poland. Once the German military had conquered Poland with lightning speed, the English would undoubtedly resign themselves to the fact, whether they liked it or not. In time, they would realize that reconciliation with Germany and acceptance of its hand extended in friendship represented the only realistic approach for British foreign policy on the Continent.

Hence, it was imperative that the Polish campaign be brought to a successful conclusion as soon as possible under the circumstances. This in turn meant that Hitler had to concede parcels of territory in eastern Poland to Russia. One month after he set out to eliminate the Polish state, it had indeed disappeared from the political map. While this first "Blitzkrieg"³⁵ had lasted a mere twenty-eight days,³⁶ official sources in Germany shortened it considerably to eighteen days to emphasize the supposedly unequaled swiftness of the strike. A more decisive factor in the conflict had, however, been the numerical superiority of the German forces. Population figures were unmistakable here: 76 million Germans against 25 million Poles.

Goebbels' propaganda apparatus heralded this great military achievement as indicative of the intrinsic worth of National Socialism and its policies. The "Führer principle" and "blind obedience to the Führer" had won out over what was judged to be an inferior people. While such measures might have hastened compliance with orders from Berlin and resulted in swifter action by the military, the later years of the war were to prove that these ideas were impotent in a confrontation with a superior power. All victories scored in the initial stages of the war pitted an overwhelming German military force against countries with no like resources at their command: Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, and, of course, Poland. France for instance was only half the size of Germany at the time. When confronted with an adversary of equal or superior capabilities such as England, Russia, or the United States, Hitler's dictatorial measures failed to bring about decisive victories for Germany.

This baffled Hitler, as these measures had proved most useful in domestic politics. For example, when he ordered the construction of a large segment of the Autobahn, he could be assured of its immediate implementation. To construct a relatively small section of this Autobahn to cross the Polish Corridor, for some inexplicable reason, proved to be more of a task than he had imagined. That this was the case because of the determined opposition by the Western Powers to this particular project was a fact he was either unaware of or simply refused to accept.

Thrilled by the rapid conquest of Poland, Hitler determined the time had come to end the senseless confrontation with Great Britain. After all, the war between the two countries had not yet really begun. Nowhere had German troops actually faced off with their British counterparts, and already Hitler expected the British to back down without putting up a fight. In a speech before the Reichstag on October 26, 1939, he challenged the English to regain their senses, to accept the *fait accompli* of the Reich's annexation of Poland and to enter into negotiations for a settlement with Germany. Apparently, he sincerely believed that London would gratefully grasp the hand he extended in friendship as a splendid opportunity to end the war with Germany. This was a grotesque assumption.

In light of the peace proposal to Great Britain by the German resistance movement in 1941,³⁷ it is tempting to consider Hitler's 1939 offers with greater leniency. While Hitler's conception was undeniably divorced from reality, Goerdeler's bid for peace was even more absurd because of its late date. It seemed as though Goerdeler felt compelled to outdo Hitler in requesting the impossible. If this was indeed the case, he certainly realized his ambition by asking for a restoration of the German Reich within its borders of 1914, retention of the lands overrun by Hitler's troops, and a return of the colonies lost to Great Britain in the First World War. These outrageous demands lent further credence to Churchill's caricature of the Third Reich as "topsy-turvydom." Apparently, many of the Reich's citizens were convinced that the defeated party was entitled to dictate its terms for peace to its more successful adversary at ceasefire talks, in particular if the former was Germany.

In the last phase of the First World War, the Western Powers had already encountered similarly odd convictions in the Germans. These unpleasant experiences made the Allies adhere to a more prudent stance this time. As the war was winding down, they insisted on an "unconditional surrender" by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Popular

belief held this demand to have exacerbated the situation for Germany by forestalling an earlier end to the fighting and a possible removal of Hitler. This type of argument was based on the same fallacy as the one asserted about the Munich Agreement, and discussed in Volume II of this series. Many officers with the German Armed Forces maintained that the 1938 Munich Conference had effectively prevented them from launching a successful coup d'état to oust Hitler.

There has been much debate on the topic of “unconditional surrender.” In fact, any surrender is unconditional as far as the defeated party is concerned. The party to the conflict that lays down its weapons first will always be at the mercy of the conqueror. The vanquished party does not have the prerogative as to whether or not to accept certain proposals, unless it wishes renewed hostilities leading to its ultimate defeat. The term “unconditional” thus refers primarily to the defeated party, although it does not entail a complete liberty of action for the victor either. And as the textbook case of the Second World War shows, the demand for an “unconditional surrender” does not of necessity provoke rights-abuses. At the end of this particular conflict, the Allies desired merely to ensure that no doubts arose regarding the defeat of Germany; to avoid questioning that might lead to a repeat of the German military’s claim after 1918 that it had been lured into laying down its weapons, despite the preservation of sufficient fighting power to decide the conflict in Germany’s favor. Churchill pointedly sketched Great Britain’s stance in the matter in a radio broadcast of October 1, 1939, after the onset of open hostilities:³⁸

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

Given this state of events, it is hardly surprising that even the most gracious offers for peace by Hitler met with silence in England. Three days passed after the Reichstag speech of October 6, 1939 without any reaction from Great Britain. Enraged that the British were ignoring his peace proposals, Hitler decided to turn to the last resort at his command: the alliance with the Soviet Union. He would show the British who was the master of the continent. He would break their outpost, France. German tanks would roll over Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, countries officially neutral though sympathetic to the English cause and dependent on its protection. He was still reluctant to assault the British mainland, as he still held hopes for a later

reconciliation with this people bound to the German Volk by ties of blood. Nonetheless, he would chase the English from the European continent, which ultimately would be his. He would make them “scurry back to the Thames,” as he proclaimed in public.³⁹

Immediately, he set out to prepare for an offensive in the West. By October 9, 1939, he issued a directive “for the conduct of the war,” the opening statement of which was still cautiously phrased in the slowly diminishing hope that he could win the British over at this late date.⁴⁰

If it should become apparent in the near future that England, and, under England’s leadership, also France, are not willing to make an end of the war, I am determined to act vigorously and aggressively without great delay.

It was October 10 already, and still there were no signs that Great Britain was contemplating entering into peace negotiations with Germany. Again Hitler felt compelled to expand on the advantages a peace settlement would afford London. On the occasion of the annual drive for the *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* (Wartime Winter Relief Organization), Hitler spelled out in great detail once more how much London stood to gain by arriving at a settlement with Germany:⁴¹

We know not what the future shall bring. But one thing we know for certain: No power in this world shall ever wrestle Germany to the ground again! No one shall vanquish us militarily, destroy us economically, or trample upon our souls! And no one shall see us capitulate—under any circumstances.

I have expressed our willingness for peace. Germany has no reason to do battle against the Western Powers. It was they who began this war on a threadbare pretext. In the event they decline our offer for peace, Germany stands determined to take up the fight again and to follow through on it—in one way or another!

Not even this threat had any perceptible effect on the English. Chamberlain naturally rejected the peace proposal in his address before the House of Commons on October 12, 1939. Once more he emphasized that Great Britain and he himself judged Germany and Hitler by deeds and not words. Hitler found himself in a situation where he had to put aside his plans for reconciliation with the British and to embark on an offensive along the front in the West.

On October 13, Hitler issued an official declaration by the government admitting that the British had rejected the German peace initiative. Once more he pronounced himself able and willing to fight. And if it was to come to war with Germany’s neighboring states, then a conquest of these countries would be carried out quickly. Any

additional waste of time would merely allow Great Britain to prepare for war and increase the likelihood that it would embrace a more aggressive policy soon. Secondly, France might finally awaken from the lethargy it had displayed at the time of the campaign against Poland. Above all, swift action was to preclude a change of heart on the part of the Russians, whose alliance with Germany was of a relatively recent vintage and of whose continued support Hitler was not at all certain.

Oblivious of objections to launching a military campaign just before the onset of winter, Hitler resolved to commence the campaign on November 12, 1939. Naturally, he had yet to come up with a plausible immediate motive for propaganda purposes and to justify the venture in the eyes of the public. For one, the move entailed a violation of the neutrality of states such as Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, which National Socialist Germany had vowed to respect just as Imperial Germany once had. On the other hand, this was no more a reason to desist for Hitler than it had been for William II.

In the case of Poland, Hitler had already displayed his ingenuity for coming up with a "propagandistic reason" for unleashing the war, for divining an incident which could be portrayed as an affront sufficiently serious to warrant arousing the public, and to keep it from questioning the true motivation behind this particular military move.⁴² However, an incident of border violation like the staged assault on the Gleiwitz radio station was not feasible along the frontier to Holland. Nevertheless, the apprehension of two British Secret Service agents in the vicinity could be blown up into a sufficiently compromising affair.

When considering such carefully prepared undertakings orchestrated by Hitler and his assistants, it is imperative to keep in mind that any such incident was intended only secondarily as a justification of Germany's aggression abroad, and was intended primarily to rouse the public inside the Reich. Most of its citizens had vivid recollections of the First World War and were understandably reluctant to have those governing them embark on such risky forays as an attack in the West. There was great fear of yet another Verdun and renewed trench-warfare.

In Hitler's mind, to overcome this defeatist attitude by the German public, the propaganda experts of the Reich had to provide for an occurrence to outrage it and to set free the Teutonic fury essential to any successful and swift action against any of the countries bordering it. The fact that Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg served as bases for

Secret Service surveillance of Germany came to the aid of the propaganda department's staff.

The attack was scheduled for Sunday, November 12, 1939. Once more Hitler displayed his preference for a weekend to launch a military strike, a habit discernible in many other instances as well.⁴³ A provocative act to justify the invasion of Holland had to have taken place by this date. On November 7, because of bad weather, the date had to be postponed for three days.

On November 8, 1939, a mysterious attempt on Hitler's life ended with the explosion of a bomb in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, immediately after his delivery of the annual commemorative speech there. In fact, Hitler escaped injury only by departing for the train station earlier than scheduled. To this day, the particulars of this event are not fully understood.

The next day witnessed the staging of a more carefully prepared incident, involving English spies, at the Dutch border. It had initially been intended to rouse public opinion in Germany, a goal it failed to achieve. An SS *Kommando* abducted two British Secret Service agents in Holland and brought them across the border in the vicinity of Venlo.⁴⁴ The press in Germany tried to establish a connection between the explosion in Munich and the apprehension of the secret agents, which had allegedly occurred on German territory. The general public in Germany, however, did not judge this a plausible link and largely ignored the latter incident.

Far more likely seemed the explanation current in the foreign press: that the kidnapping was a coup staged by Hitler to procure an excuse for aggressive action against the Netherlands. Conspicuous troop movements had been under way on the three days before November 8, and these on such a scale that even uninterested passers-by had to notice that something out of the ordinary was going on. As a precautionary measure, the Dutch flooded the channels and streets on their side of the border.

Under these circumstances, Hitler considered wise a delay in the attack. Orders were rescinded, at first temporarily and then for a lengthier period as the season changed. A winter set in the like of which had not been seen in these latitudes for over a decade. Already in December, thermometer readings recorded minus twenty degrees Celsius and below. In the military compounds, vehicles refused to start. Against this background, even Hitler had to admit it would be rash to engage in any type of new military confrontation at this point.

Another factor which contributed to the considerable delay of the offensive in the West was the outbreak of the Russo-Finnish War on November 28, 1939. Hitler refused to render the Finns any type of assistance and even denied them moral support. Too many times in the past Finland had gravely affronted his regime and had even rebuffed an offer to enter into a mutual non-aggression pact with Germany. On December 7, 1939, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an article, "Germany and the Finnish Question," in which Hitler reprimanded Finland for its pro-British stance and the anti-German sentiments it frequently expressed. In connection with this, he quoted an old German saying: "As one shouts into the forest, so it echoes back."⁴⁵

This first year of the war closed on a relatively quiet note. The front in the East remained calm and the so-called "Sitzkrieg" (Phony War)⁴⁶ in the West continued uneventfully throughout the winter months. Neither party to the conflict managed to score a decisive victory in the air or at sea in the course of 1939.

Report and Commentary

1

The Berchtesgaden Christmas troupe jubilantly hailed the new year with a grand, traditional fireworks display in Hitler's honor. They could not possibly have foreseen that the year 1939 which they were ushering in so noisily was destined to be a fateful, tragic one. This year marked a turning-point in Hitler's career. The period 1932 through 1938 delineated the years of his greatest triumphs. The year 1939 heralded the beginning of his persistent decline, which culminated in the Third Reich's ignominious defeat in 1945. In 1939, events took a turn he had neither foretold nor anticipated. He lost the "instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker," with which he had followed the path supposedly assigned to him by Providence.⁴⁷

The New Year's Proclamation Hitler had composed for 1939 was destined to be the last one he wrote in peacetime. He maintained his firm conviction that "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!"⁴⁸ This firm conviction resounded from every line of his 1939 address. It was now, when he had created Greater Germany, and the "inner consolidation" he sought had been attained, that he felt himself in a position to "speak out for the right to life of our Volk even at the risk of the last and most formidable consequences." The Wehrmacht, State, and Party had passed "the test," as Hitler put it. He was reassured, moreover, by the transformation of "the Western front of the Reich into a wall of steel and cement of which we know that no power on earth shall ever be able to penetrate it."

The last peacetime New Year's Proclamation read:⁴⁹

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

National Socialist Germany emerges from the year 1938 with deeply moved gratitude for the merciful workings of Providence. The sixth year after the National Socialist Revolution—and the newly erected leadership of the people and state wrought thereby—has come to a close as the most eventful

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year in the history of our Volk in many a century. In the five years from 1933, the prevailing ambition of the National Socialist Movement and our Party was to overcome our domestic difficulties: the Volk's political, social, and economic misery. We have mastered the greatest foreign policy obstacle facing us within these twelve months which lie behind us now.

Who can help being deeply moved, seeing today's Greater German Reich which we erected, as he reflects on the situation we faced a mere six years ago? In face of the incredible changes wrought in the life of our Volk, who can any longer deny the righteousness of the forces and methods employed? In Germany, no one can—unless he consciously wishes our Volk ill. Abroad, of course, all those will deny this who have an interest in opposing the resurrection of the Reich—for whatever reason.

When I reflect on this year of the most bountiful harvest ever in our history, I feel tremendous gratitude first to Providence and second to my Party! The National Socialist Movement has wrought this miracle. The Good Lord provided for this, and the Party served as His instrument.

The Party stood by me in unyielding loyalty for nearly two decades. It became instrumental in creating the prerequisite conditions to herald, and indeed to force, Germany's resurrection. Throughout the years, its untiring exertions forged the inner consolidation of the *Volkskörper*. Knowing this concentrated force stood firm behind me, I was in a position, at a decisive moment, to stand up for the right to life of our Volk even at the risk of the last and most formidable consequences. All of us can reflect on 1938 with great pride and satisfaction: the men and women constituting the leadership of the Party, its fighting organizations, and the associations connected with it; the millions of active, albeit anonymous Party comrades; and all those active in the National Socialist Movement. Through their labor, they contributed to and rendered feasible the creation of this Greater German Reich.

National Socialism wrought a new sense of community within the Volk and provided it with a steadfast political regime which allowed me to carry out the build-up of a new German Wehrmacht. It has passed the test this year. Officers and enlisted men zealously competed with one another in their dedication to the National Socialist Greater German Reich. Once more the German Volk stands proud of its soldiers!

The state itself and its administration have resolved in masterly fashion a foremost task in the course of this year.

Above all, I reach out in gratitude to the entire German Volk. Its marvelous behavior has greatly contributed to robbing an inquisitive surrounding world of the last flicker of hope that the ancient affliction (*altes Erbübel*) of the Germans would once again be aroused. In the past year, not one of these so-called democratic statesmen could claim to truly speak for his people more so than I. This allowed for the resolution, without recourse to war, of this one European question which had to be resolved in one way or another.

The enterprising spirit of the German peasant assured production of foodstuffs for the German Volk. The German worker contributed to an exceptional increase in the productivity of our economy. I am grateful above all to those hundreds of thousands who transformed the Western Front of the

Reich into a wall of steel and cement of which we know that no power on earth will ever be able to penetrate it.

In this same period, the organizational power of our Volk has celebrated triumph upon triumph. The glorious feats accomplished by our Wehrmacht were paralleled by no less glorious achievements in the sphere of economics and public administration. And, one day, the history books will remark on the intriguing fact that, despite great political tensions and gigantic exertions and accomplishments, cultural life was not brought to a standstill but that, to the contrary, it witnessed astounding advances.

Within the past year, in all spheres of our communal life, the rich and multifaceted life of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft has compensated for the crimes committed against our Volk in certain decades and certain centuries. May this be of consolation to those who suffered throughout the years, throughout the decades, never yielding in their belief in our Volksgemeinschaft; and to those who were not fortunate enough to live to see the day of the restoration of the Greater German Reich. May they rejoice, from beyond their graves, in the happiness of uncounted millions which springs forth from their earthly remains. They did not suffer in vain; their deaths were not in vain.

The year 1938 constituted a solemn pledge on the part of the Volk. Twice within this year, Germans were called on to cast their votes. The first time, the Germans from the Old Reich stepped up to the ballot-box, alongside our Volksgenossen from the new German Ostmark. On the second occasion, Sudeten Germans having just returned to the Reich lined up beside them. And thus, for the first time in the history of our German Volk, all of Germany was allowed to freely and solemnly express its political will: to stand with the Greater German Reich and to never, ever again be severed from it—come what may!

In order that “come what may” could indeed come about, “the education of our Volk in the spirit of the National Socialist community” was imperative. In Hitler’s eyes, the realization of this end entailed promotion of an even more fervent personality cult in Germany, reinforcing the belief in his person among the Reich’s citizens. Another prerequisite for his ambitious designs was an augmentation of Germany’s military strength. It was essential to promote “the build-up and reinforcement of our Wehrmacht” while “implementing the Four-Year Plan” geared toward the establishment of a wartime economy. Hitler expanded on these concepts in the second part of the New Year’s Proclamation:

The future exacts fulfillment of the following tasks:

Our first and foremost task will remain what it has always been in the past and as it poses itself to us today: the education of our Volk in the spirit of the National Socialist community. The second task lies in the build-up and reinforcement of our Wehrmacht. And third, we face the task of implementing

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the Four-Year Plan, resolving the manpower shortage, and integrating the new Reich provinces economically.

Germany occupies a well-defined position in international politics. We stand firm and unyielding by the obligations resulting from our friendship with Fascist Italy. The realization of the historic role played by Mussolini in the preservation of peace in the past year compels us to profound gratitude. We are grateful also to those other statesmen who in this year have undertaken to search for and to find a peaceful resolution to these questions which, at the time, allowed for no further postponement.

As regards world politics today, the Anti-Comintern Pact determines our political stance. Beyond this we have only one desire: May the coming year allow us to contribute to a general pacification of the world. May the Lord's mercy accompany our German Volk on its fateful path. Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our German Volk and Reich!

Berchtesgaden, December 31, 1939

Adolf Hitler

The Order of the Day that Hitler traditionally issued to the Wehrmacht on January 1 of each new year was quite concise in 1939. It read:⁵⁰

Soldiers!

A dream of many centuries came true in the year 1938: Greater Germany was born. You have decisively contributed to this. I thank you for your dutiful loyalty. It is my firm belief that, in the future also, you will stand ready to protect the nation's right to life in the face of any type of aggression.

Adolf Hitler

In reference to the exchange of telegrams between "the Führer and the Duce," the following official note was released:⁵¹

Berlin, January 2, 1939

The arrival of the New Year afforded the Führer and Reich Chancellor the opportunity to send the Italian Head of Government, Benito Mussolini, a telegram relaying his heartfelt best wishes to him. The Führer paid his respects to Benito Mussolini's great work, to the close cooperation of the years past, and to the friendship of both peoples. The Duce congratulated the Führer and the German Volk in a corresponding manner. He referred to the ties of both governments in the following words: "The close cooperation in the year 1938 between our governments and our peoples is proof to the world that our revolutions have successfully withstood the test of time; that today our revolutionaries march side by side and that they shall continue to do so in the future, too."

It is noteworthy that Hitler's telegram is reproduced in summary only, whereas an entire paragraph of Mussolini's correspondence is cited verbatim. At this point in time, Hitler obviously greatly valued

Mussolini's renewed pledge to march side by side with Germany, come what may.

On January 5, a special guest called on Hitler at the Obersalzberg: the Polish Foreign Minister, Major Beck. With regard to the consultations conducted by the two statesmen, the following communiqué was published:⁵²

Berchtesgaden, January 5, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor received the Polish Foreign Minister Beck at the Obersalzberg at 3:00 p.m. Thursday, in the presence of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. Minister Beck was stopping over in Munich for two days on his return trip from Monte Carlo to Warsaw.

The uncharacteristically short and sedate nature of the note released revealed Hitler's irritation with the Polish Foreign Minister and his general dissatisfaction with the outcome of the conference. Relations between the two "friendly" nations had apparently cooled considerably even before this meeting. The bone of contention was the Polish Government's stance on a potential Anschluss of Danzig to the Third Reich. At the beginning of 1939, many in the National Socialist Party were unabashedly stating that now, after the Sudeten German areas had been joined to the Reich, it was high time for Danzig to return to Germany, too. Neither Hitler himself nor other members of the Party's leadership appeared troubled that such a request stood in blatant contradiction to a pledge Hitler had made on September 28 of the previous year in connection with the Sudetenland crisis: that this constituted his "last territorial demand" in Europe.⁵³

On the contrary, the Führer regarded the "return home" of Danzig as the most natural thing on earth, no different from the case of truncated Czechoslovakia or the Memel territory. After all, for many centuries, he reasoned, Bohemia, Danzig, and the Memel countryside had all formed part of the ancient Holy Roman Empire and later of the Prussian Kingdom. In his understanding, only the degrading military weakness of Germany and Austria and the despicable "betrayal" of 1918 had forced the surrender of these essentially German provinces in the first place. Now that Germany had regained its military strength, these territories would be restored to Germany. No power on earth nor any political intrigues could prevent the Reich from reclaiming them. Hitler was convinced that the British would not oppose him in the matter. And the Poles would ultimately bow before the might of the German Empire, so Hitler speculated, even if they did so only grudgingly.

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Against this background was set the meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister on January 5.⁵⁴ The talks began on a friendly note. Beck voiced his country's reservations on the topic of autonomy for the Carpatho-Ukraine, for German support had allowed a so-called Ukrainian "National Government" to establish itself in the region. This body openly advocated unification with other Ukrainian provinces, located in Poland and Russia, with the goal of establishing a nationalist Ukrainian state. Poland would much have preferred the annexation of the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary to escape the danger of a nationalist Ukrainian movement.

In principle, Hitler was not opposed to discussing the issue. Whenever there was a chance of gaining a political advantage by sacrificing a former "friend," such as the Carpatho-Ukraine, an area also known as Ruthenia, Hitler was willing to give serious consideration to such a scenario. Schmidt's notes on the meeting with Beck revealed Hitler's approach to such a situation:

The Führer's reply indicated that a resolution of existing differences lay in having recourse to the basic undercurrent of Polish-German relations. He was insistent that, on behalf of Germany, he could only emphasize that nothing had changed in these relations which the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact had determined. In the context of the Carpatho-Ukrainian question, he firmly maintained that Poland had nothing to fear, as the Reich entertained none of the designs the world press alleged that Germany pursued.

He stated that the Reich's interests did not extend beyond the Carpathian Mountains, and that he was indifferent to the activities of other interested parties in the area. He argued that the stance Germany espoused on the Viennese Sentence regarding the Ukraine, which regrettably had led to certain misconceptions in Poland, could be understood solely in the context of the issue's historical evolution. The verdict was carried out in favor of the Hungarian demands after both parties had been heard in the case. The Führer's stance on the Ukrainian question had been largely determined by his desire to avoid an international conflict at all costs.

Indeed, Hitler was to cede willingly the Carpathian section of the Ukraine to Hungary after the forcible resolution of the issue of truncated Czechoslovakia in mid-March. In all likelihood, Hitler speculated that his apparent generosity toward Poland warranted its acquiescence in the question of the Polish Corridor and Danzig. According to Schmidt, Hitler attempted to curry the Polish Foreign Minister's favor for such a barter agreement:

Aside from the Memel question, which apparently would be resolved in the interest of Germany (it appeared as though the Lithuanians were

interested in working for a rational resolution⁵⁵ of the matter), there remained one issue weighing heavily on immediate Polish-German relations: the highly sensitive and emotional issue of the Polish Corridor and Danzig. One had to move away from old, set ways to search for a completely new approach to a solution. In the case of Danzig, for instance, he could envision a return of the city in a political sense to Germany in accordance with the desire of the majority of its population. Polish interests would, however, be accounted for, especially in the economic sphere. To do justice to these was in the interest of the city, for, after all, Danzig was not an economically viable entity without a hinterland to back its economy. The Führer could visualize a settlement by which Danzig politically joined the German community, while economically remaining tied to Poland.

Danzig was German and was to remain German, and sooner or later it would return to Germany.

Hitler then declared that if Poland agreed to a return of Danzig to the Reich, and allowed for the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn and railroad through the Polish Corridor linking East Prussia to the Reich, then he would be willing to guarantee Poland's existing frontiers. He might even contemplate a twenty-year extension of the 1934 German-Polish Non-Aggression and Friendship Pact, the terms of which were scheduled to expire in 1944. He pointed out to the Polish Foreign Minister that further economic concessions by the Reich were also a distinct possibility.

Despite what Hitler held to be the "generosity" of his proposal, Beck failed to display the enthusiasm the Führer had anticipated. Instead, Beck felt himself called on to point out to the German Head of Government that such concessions would by no means balance the loss of the Free City of Danzig to Poland. Beck stressed: "I cannot do this to public opinion in Poland under any circumstances."

This latter statement elicited a flood of contrary arguments from Hitler by which he sought to persuade his Polish visitor of the most beneficial nature of such a proposed settlement. Still reluctant to agree with Hitler, Beck did not yet dare to openly affront him by a blunt rejection of his proposals. After all, for a number of years, Beck had been accustomed to finding a friend of the Polish people in the person of Hitler or an honest broker at the very least. As he left Hitler's office, he made a rather non-committal statement by saying that he "would like to sleep on the matter first."

Nevertheless, the meeting had greatly sobered Beck, who presently awoke to the reality that Hitler was determined to bring about a change in the status quo in Danzig soon. Another Polish statesman whom

Hitler referred to as a “friend” and whom he credited with sponsorship of the 1934 Treaty, Marshal Pilsudski, had once aptly observed that the German treatment of the Danzig issue represented “a certain criterion in the assessment of Germany’s true intentions toward Poland.”⁵⁶ Hitler had repeatedly acknowledged the territorial autonomy of Danzig in the past.⁵⁷ Now he had apparently changed his mind. He was convinced that Poland had no choice but to ultimately reconcile itself to this reality. He was quite mistaken on this point, however, as future developments revealed.

On January 6, Hitler welcomed to the Berghof Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, and “expressed his heartfelt best wishes on the tenth anniversary of Himmler’s service as head of the SS.”⁵⁸

On January 9, Hitler returned to the capital city earlier than was his custom to attend the dedication ceremony of the newly constructed Chancellery. (Usually, he preferred to spend as much time as possible at the Berghof, where, as he put it, he could “think most clearly.”) The new Chancellery had been erected on Voss Strasse in the course of the preceding months, where it stood adjacent to the old Chancellery at the Wilhelmsplatz.⁵⁹ The opening ceremony had initially been planned to take place in the Ehrenhof courtyard of the new building. Because of the bad weather, the 8,000 construction workers who had been instructed to take part in the ceremony were asked inside the Sportpalast instead. There on the morning of January 9, the construction worker Max Hoffmann presented Hitler the keys to the new Chancellery, in a red leather case.

Next, Hitler stepped up to the rostrum to hold one of his ‘secret speeches’ for construction workers. Throughout recent years, he had frequently addressed a variety of audiences in a similarly “secretive” manner. He took great pains to detail the state of Germany’s domestic, economic, and foreign policy. He spoke of “the strengthening of German self-confidence in all areas and on all levels of our Volk.” Hence, he explained, it was his ambition to present Greater Germany with a capital worthy of the Third Reich, “the magnificence of which was to be mirrored in the magnificence of this city.” He himself did not wish to appear as though he was more than he had always been, namely, a “German Volksgenosse;” but—alas—as “the Führer of the German nation,” he did have to pay mind to the exigencies of representation. He explained this in the following terms:⁶⁰

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As a German Volksgenosse, I am today precisely what I have always been, and I do not desire to be more than this. My private quarters⁶¹ are exactly as they were before I rose to power. This will remain unchanged. Today, however, I am the representative of the German Volk! When I receive a guest at the Chancellery, I receive him not as the private person Adolf Hitler, but as the Führer of the German nation! He is not my guest; through me he is the guest of Germany!

Then Hitler went on to praise the “young genius of an architect, Speer” who had, within the shortest time conceivable, erected “this edifice for work and representation” for the Greater German Reich. Construction had finished on January 9, 1939, the day scheduled for completion. Hitler claimed this represented a rare attainment in the construction business. As a former construction worker himself, he possessed the expertise to appreciate this feat properly. He declared:

This feat is unprecedented: I myself have worked in construction and I know what this means! It is truly a unique achievement, and every single man who partook in it is entitled to feel great pride today. And this is one more symbol of the German Volk’s capacity for great achievements!

Hitler then turned to thank all those involved in the construction of the building. He had even ordered the workers at the quarry, from which had come the stone to build the Chancellery, to participate in the festivities in Berlin. He concluded his lengthy speech on the following note:

Today all of you may feel great pride and joy. I rejoice in sharing with my German workers this celebration of accomplishment. Today I take possession of the new Reich Chancellery. I have observed you often in the task of building it, and I realize that what now stands before us so majestically, has cost you much sweat, labor, sacrifice, and exertion while undergoing construction.

It is the building of this new Reich Chancellery that now truly brings the year 1938 to a fitting close. It was in this year that you built the Chancellery as a monument to the events of this year and to crown our Greater German Reich. [—]

To our German Volk and to our Movement—*Sieg Heil!*

In the context of the dedication ceremony at the new Reich Chancellery building, it is appropriate to reproduce an article at this point, which Hitler would publish in July 1939 in a magazine called *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich*.⁶² The essay was entitled “Die Reichskanzlei—von Adolf Hitler,” and it dealt with the construction and significance of the old Reich Chancellery, but most of all, with the history of the

new one. In the article, Hitler's scorn for the old structure was shown in sarcastic comments on his predecessors' obviously mediocre frame of reference and their stilted lack of taste in general. In contrast, he showered praise on his own initiative and generosity, on the intricate and expert planning, and on the "truly magnificent effect" of the building. At this point, Hitler interjected: "this edifice that, by the way, will serve a different purpose from the year 1950 on." Hitler obviously entertained plans for the construction of a yet more magnificent and representative building to reflect the ever-increasing importance the Reich would undoubtedly have achieved by that year.

Hitler's essay, which was to be his last effort as an author, read:

THE REICH CHANCELLERY

by Adolf Hitler

When, after the re-establishment of the Reich, Bismarck determined to purchase the Palace Radziwill, later to become the Reich Chancellery, he himself retained his office in the Foreign Office building. The proximity of this building to the Foreign Ministry was, in all likelihood, the reason for the purchase of this particular object. The structure afforded virtually no actual space. Dating from the first half of the 18th century, it had initially served as an ancient seat for nobility. Its façade was well preserved. Inside, repeated attempts at modernization had disfigured the building. The end of the 19th century witnessed further such embellishments and degraded the palace by bestowing on it a heavy-handed elegance. Bombastic plaster was to hide the deficit of real material and thereby, unfortunately, glossed over its well-balanced proportions. Even the hall in which once the Congress of Berlin⁶³ convened was not spared like "improvements." Apparently, weak lighting along the walls and gigantic chandeliers of tin were then regarded as especially attractive. As concerns paintings in the house, these were mainly amateur copies of originals on loan from Prussian collectors. With the single exception of a portrait of Bismarck by Lenbach, the portraits of former chancellors were devoid of any artistic merit.

The Chancellery gardens were ill-tended and began to be overgrown by weeds. A superstitious fear of replacing old and dying trees led first to covering increasing numbers of their moldy trunks with shingles and then to filling them with cement. Had this process been allowed to continue, the park would undoubtedly have begun to resemble the Houthulster Wald⁶⁴ after three years of bombardment by the English.

While Chancellors before 1918 strove to make more or less tasteful improvements, the condition of the house began to deteriorate steadily after the Revolution of 1918. When I determined to move into the Chancellery nonetheless in 1934, the roof was practically rotting away above us while the floors beneath us were engaged in similar activities. The police restricted access to the hall in which congresses and diplomatic receptions were held to a total of sixty persons at one time, for fear the floor might give way. A few

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months before this, on the occasion of a reception held by Reich President von Hindenburg, approximately 100 guests and servants had crowded one hall. As we began to tear out the floors, we came across beams which remained little more than brittle sticks disintegrating as we rubbed them between our palms.

During rain storms, water penetrated the building, not only from above, but from below as well. From the Wilhelmstrasse, a veritable flood spilt over into the first-floor compartments. Its flow was augmented by a back-up in the drainage throughout the house, including the toilets. As my predecessors could rarely count on remaining in office for more than three, four, or five months, they had neither motivation to clear away the dirt of those before them nor to improve conditions for those to succeed them. As the world took little notice of them in the first place, they were not generally troubled with appearances before foreign representatives.

By 1934, the entire structure exuded decay: ceilings and floors were giving way while wall and floor paneling was rotted out. An unbearable stench pervaded the house. Meanwhile, the new office space created for the Chancellery along the Wilhelmsplatz took on the appearance of a storage house or station for the municipal firefighters. Its interior suggested a sanatorium for those with lung disease, although this was not primarily the disease that those laboring inside were in fact suffering from. In an effort to restore the structure as far as possible, I decided to undertake a general renovation project in 1934. The expenses incurred were not to be assumed by the state, as I myself provided the financial means necessary.

Professor Troost himself was still able to draw up the blueprints for this project. His goals were:

1. to reassign living space as well as space for receptions to the lower floors of the building, and
2. to furnish the second floor for the practical exigencies of running a Reich Chancellery.

My office as Reich Chancellor up to this point had been located in a room facing the Wilhelmsplatz. Its size and interior decorating made it more appropriate to house a general salesman for cigarettes and tobacco in the office of a medium-sized enterprise. It was virtually impossible to work in this office: with the windows closed, the heat suffocated anyone inside; with the windows open, there was the noise rising up from the streets.

The upper floors had customarily been reserved for official receptions by the respective chancellors. In the days of the renovation of the Reich President's Palace, the old Reich President had held various receptions there, too. This, however, meant that these rooms were not in use throughout most of the year and stood empty. This was the reason behind my relocating the reception rooms to the lower floors and remodeling the upper floors vacated thereby, to accommodate offices. The hall for Congresses, vacant throughout most of the year also and without any practical application, became the meeting room for Cabinet sessions.

Since there was no room of sufficient size to accommodate the large-scale receptions I had to give for diplomatic reasons as head of state, I instructed

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the architect Professor Gall to build a large hall to hold approximately 200 persons. At this point, it appeared as though the remodeling of the lower floor would suffice for this purpose. In the course of 1934, however, the merging of the offices of Reich Chancellor and Reich President necessitated rooms to house the presidential office and staff and provide space for the Wehrmacht secretariat within the building. Also, official receptions required an appropriate setting. The realization of these necessities led to the purchase of the Borsig Palace. Admittedly built in a style not looked on favorably in our age, its interior surpassed that of the miserable Chancellery building by far. Professor Speer was entrusted with the first remodeling of the Chancellery. Within a markedly short time and without altering the façade, the structure built by the architect Lucae was connected to the factory-building on the Wilhelmstrasse, and its interior design splendidly developed. At least for the time being, it provided the presidential office, the Wehrmacht staff, and the SA leaders with office space. Under the guidance of Party Comrade Bouhler, the Council of the Party was accorded a few rooms, too. The former office building of the Reich Chancellery was adorned with a balcony facing the Wilhelmstrasse. This was the first decent architectural element within the structure. Further building onto the existing structures, while providing temporary relief, did not represent a solution of the housing problem. Two further considerations were instrumental in bringing about my decision of January 1938 to seek an immediate solution.

1. In an effort to facilitate traffic flowing through the city from East to West, a lengthening of the Jägerstrasse had been determined on, to lead it through the Ministerial Gardens and the Zoo and thereby connect it to the Tiergartenstrasse. The Municipal Berlin Building Inspectorate of that time had drawn up these plans, which in my eyes did not represent a solution of the problem. Therefore I asked Professor Speer to come up with a more reasoned plan to relieve traffic flow along the Leipziger Strasse and the avenue Unter den Linden by securing a direct passage to the West of the Wilhelmsplatz. To this end it was necessary to transform the narrow passage along the Voss Strasse into a wide transit route. Since obviously this could not be realized at the expense of the Wertheim Department Store and would have been attended by construction difficulties in the first place, an attempt had to be undertaken on the opposite side of the street. Hence the necessity arose independently to tear down the entire housing front and to rebuild later.

2. Moreover, in the days of late December 1937 and early January 1938, I had determined to resolve the Austrian question and to erect a Greater German Reich. Hence the old Chancellery building could not possibly accommodate the additional administrative, as well as representative duties necessitated thereby. On January 11, 1938, I therefore instructed the General Building Inspector Professor Speer to undertake the construction of a new Chancellery building located in the Voss Strasse. The structure was to be completed by a January 10, 1939 deadline. On this day, I was to receive the keys for the building. While in fact we concerned ourselves with this topic mentally in a series of consultations, the physical nature of the task was an immense one. For on January 11, 1938, the construction of the new building

could not even begin as the old houses along the Voss Strasse had to be torn down first. Therefore, actual construction work could not be started before late March at the earliest. This left a term of nine months at our disposal to carry out the project. That this was indeed feasible we owe to this genius of an architect, his artistic inspiration, and his enormous organizational talents, as well as to the enterprise of those assisting him. The Berlin worker has outdone himself in his performance at this site. I do not think that a similar task, purely in regard to the labor involved, could have been carried out anywhere else in the world. I need not expand on the fact that naturally everything possible was undertaken to insure the social welfare of those involved in this construction project. In light of the winter temperatures, the severe frosts, the completion of this building is conceivable only—as emphasized earlier—if one considers the enormous ability to perform demonstrated by the Berlin worker.

The blueprint for this project is of a clear and generous nature and easily understood if one considers the structure's purpose and the space at the architect's disposal. The solution found in the gigantic, long structure along the Voss Strasse was dictated by the circumstances, as well as artistically ingenious. The sequence of rooms inside not only satisfies practical exigencies, it has also a truly magnificent effect on the onlooker. The interior decoration is truly excellent, thanks to the combined talents of interior decorators, sculptors, painters, etc., involved in the project. This applies also to the achievements of German craftsmanship here. The landscaping in the park is complete with the exception of one section which still serves as a construction site. The short period of construction has not yet allowed the banquet room at the end of the great hall to become apparent in its full size and stature. This room, therefore, is a makeshift, so that the structure can be used. The banquet room will only be complete in two years.

This Reich Chancellery building—this edifice that, by the way, will serve a different purpose from the year 1950 on—represents a practical and no-less artistic achievement of the highest order. It speaks for its ingenious designer and architect: Albert Speer.

Hitler's charge that the old Chancellery building left much to be desired was not unfounded. To a far greater extent this was true also of the Reich Foreign Ministry building, located at Wilhelmstrasse Nos. 74–76. However, one wonders whether splendor, or its absence, in a state's seat of government is truly a criterion of its might, as Hitler apparently assumed. London's Downing Street No. 10 and the White House in Washington suggest differently. While there was assuredly no causal relationship between the two, it was in fact rather curious how, once Hitler had set up house in the fabled new Chancellery building, things started to go decidedly downhill for him.

A peculiar trait of the Third Reich, its excessive preoccupation with questions of etiquette, taste, and representation, became particularly

prominent in 1939. While Hitler purposely fostered these outward displays of power, such efforts found little resonance among the German populace. The man on the street stood by on the sidelines and observed the goings-on with apprehension, distrustful of all the superficial glory. It was almost as if the ordinary citizen had a presentiment that in proportion to the increased demonstrations of might and self-confidence, the power needed to justify such pretense was getting less and less. Even the political leaders within the Party appeared ill-at-ease in the gilded uniforms replete with colorful new insignia, which Hitler so liberally distributed amongst them in April 1939.⁶⁵

The length to which Hitler went to show off the newly built Chancellery appeared excessive and unnatural. The first months after its opening, torrents of guests were ushered through its ostentatious hallways. Every imaginable sort of guest from Party, State, and Wehrmacht was instructed duly to admire the product of Hitler's vanity.

On January 12, the first official New Year's reception opened a series of festivities scheduled to take place in the new Chancellery building. At 11:00 in the morning, the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht, all in full dress uniform, came to convey their best wishes for the New Year to the German Head of State, as was the custom. They were accompanied by numerous adjutants; the Reichsführer SS; the Chief of the German Police with his assistants; the Mayor and City President of Berlin, Lippert; and finally the Halloren (saltworkers at Halle).

At noon sharp, the main festivities began in the new Mosaic Hall, in which the numerous diplomatic envoys had assembled. It was to be quite an event, since Hitler and his entourage appeared clad in full dress uniform. The Reich Foreign Minister and the German Diplomatic Corps wore their new uniforms, adorned with epaulettes, aiguillettes,⁶⁶ and lavishly embroidered cuffs. In comparison to the uniforms of some other diplomats, the German ones were not excessively gorgeous. However, the uniforms of the foreign diplomats were the outcome of tradition and had historical significance. Not surprisingly, Germany's career diplomats were less than pleased to be attired in such ludicrous outfits.

The SS men in Hitler's entourage appeared at the reception clad in full dress uniform, too, with aiguillettes and silver-and-white sashes. The officers of the Wehrmacht were instructed to wear similarly ornate outfits. And a man who previously had insisted on wearing only a

simple brown shirt and a jacket without any distinctions for many years, this self-proclaimed example of modesty—Adolf Hitler—appeared on this memorable occasion wearing a sash with gold lining! The scenario no doubt was an impressive one, even if only in the eyes of the diplomats from the Balkans.

In his address, the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo, recalled the Munich Agreement:⁶⁷

May God Almighty grant us the evolution of such a peaceful procedure into a customary means for the settlement of international disputes, for it proved itself so immensely valuable at the Munich Conference, and it corresponds so well to the desire of all peoples.

Although this pious wish was far less to Hitler's taste, he took care not to reveal his true preferences in public and he replied to the Papal Envoy's speech in the following manner:

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere gratitude that I accept the congratulations which Your Excellency has proffered to me and to the German Volk at the New Year, on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Berlin and assembled here.

Your Excellency has called to our minds the day the representatives of four great powers gathered in Munich. This unique occurrence has impressed itself strongly on my recollections of the past year. It is with profound gratitude that the German nation remembers 1938 as the year which brought about the realization of its inalienable right to self-determination. That this could indeed come about without rupturing the peace in Europe for even a single day was due largely to the policy of wisdom and understanding embraced by the powers, which found its expression in the Munich Agreement.

It was in another context that I already had the opportunity in this New Year to express the gratitude the German Volk felt to those statesmen who, in the year 1938, ventured to seek and secure a way toward a peaceful resolution of those questions which allowed for no further deferment and who pursued this path in concert with Germany. To have succeeded in this, to have arrived at the peaceful resolution desired by all parties, this we owe not exclusively to the will to peace and sense of responsibility of all governments concerned.

Foremost we owe this to the realization that the historical evolution and natural desires of a people have to be acknowledged sooner or later. These cannot be brushed aside to the detriment of one particular people or of one particular state, nor can force repress these. The powers concerned have capitalized on this insight, have drawn the proper conclusions, and have applied them to their political decision-making. Thereby they have not only made a genuine contribution to the preservation of peace in Europe, but also to the creation of a happier and healthier Europe.

These developments lead me to join with Your Excellency in the hope that in the future this insight will also enable all leading European statesmen to secure a peace for Europe which does justice to the natural and thereby rightful interests of all peoples, to the greatest extent possible.

May I cordially respond in kind to the congratulations Your Excellency extended to the German Reich and to my own person. My warmest wishes concern the personal welfare of all Heads of State represented here and the happiness and prosperity of their lands.

On the afternoon of January 12, Hitler called on Göring to congratulate him on his forty-sixth birthday. Alfred Rosenberg, who also turned forty-six that day, received only a congratulatory telegram. For his part, Rosenberg had chosen to celebrate his birthday outside the city of Berlin, as an equivocal press note indicated.⁶⁸ Hitler spent the evening at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, attending a new production of *Die lustige Witwe*, directed by the composer Franz Lehár himself.⁶⁹

The next grand reception at the Chancellery was scheduled for January 14. All Gauleiters and Reichsleiters, together with their respective deputies, were summoned to Berlin to attend a “Führer conference.” The primary purpose of this meeting most obviously was to exhibit to those present the new, magnificent rooms at the Chancellery. After a communal lunch, Hitler took it upon himself to escort his Unterführers through the newly constructed facilities. After the tour, he gave—what else—a lengthy address before them. The official communiqué read:⁷⁰

In his office after the viewing, the Führer imparted to the political leaders’ corps a recapitulation of the events of the past year and an assessment of the present political situation. The address lasted more than one hour. The Führer took advantage of the occasion to express profound gratitude to the Gauleiters and Reichsleiters for the outstanding behavior of the Party in the fateful months of the last year, with particular mention of his Deputy.

The Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Csáky,⁷¹ was the first foreign dignitary whom Hitler distinguished by a special invitation to the new Chancellery building. Ever since the Hungarian Foreign Minister Gömbös had been the first foreign statesman to call on the newly appointed Chancellor in 1933, numerous Hungarian politicians had gained his favor by frequent official visits. Hence, it was not by accident that a Hungarian was the first foreigner to admire in person the Third Reich’s novel facilities for representative government.

The subservience the Hungarians displayed towards Hitler was all the more astounding because Hungary traditionally had not been

friendly to Germany. Such age-old resentment naturally did not vanish overnight. This applied even to a career diplomat such as Count Csáky. Only three months after this visit, in the course of a conference on April 20, 1939 with Mussolini and Ciano in Rome, he referred to Hitler in a derisive manner. He related that the first impression Hitler had made on him had led him to consider the German Head of State as “plain crazy,” and he insisted that Hitler’s shifty eye had revealed this.⁷² At a later encounter with Ciano on August 18, 1939, he openly declared that 95 percent of all Hungarians hated the Germans.⁷³

The communiqué below was published in Germany on the meeting between Csáky and Hitler:⁷⁴

On Monday afternoon [January 16, 1939], in the presence of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Hungarian Foreign Minister for a consultation in the rooms of the new Chancellery.

Csáky related the following on his meeting with the German Head of State in an interview with the official German News Bureau:

I am both pleased and satisfied with my first trip abroad in the capacity of Foreign Minister. I rejoice at being back on German soil, and to once again bear witness to the pulsating life within the mighty German Empire and to the spectacular improvement of its most beautiful capital. I am satisfied, as my consultations in Berlin have taken place in an extraordinarily cordial, completely unclouded atmosphere.

In the course of the talks with Count Csáky, Hitler had evidently hinted that in the matter of the Carpatho-Ukraine the last word had not yet been spoken. Poland also desired that this area be annexed to Hungary. Hence Hitler conceived of the terrain as an instrument of barter to be used in exchange for Danzig.

The next display of the splendid new Chancellery had been scheduled for January 18. Recently appointed lieutenants to Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe had to line up for inspection by Hitler on this date and admire the newly constructed facilities. As a matter of course, Hitler held a lengthy address before the men assembled. The official note below was published in reference to the occasion:⁷⁵

Berlin, January 18

On Wednesday afternoon, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht received the lieutenants of the officer graduating class of 1938 who are entering service with Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, in the presence of the three respective Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht and of the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. In the Mosaic Hall at the new Chancellery, the Führer extensively detailed to his lieutenants their

duties and obligations as German officers in the Greater German Wehrmacht. After the address, the Führer entertained the lieutenants as his guests in the rooms of the new Reich Chancellery.

This address, held on the anniversary of the foundation of the Reich in 1871, developed into a prototype for similar orations in the years to come.

As a result of the outbreak of a war on a scale far larger than anticipated, nearly all Party events, marches, mass rallies, and the like had to be canceled from 1940 on. With the exception of insignificant appearances at rallies for the Winterhilfswerk and the meetings of the Old Guard on November 8 and February 24, Hitler spoke almost exclusively at occasions attended only by young officers. These listeners were still captivated by Hitler, albeit more because of military discipline than true enthusiasm. Regrettably, military etiquette allowed for “*Heil*” cries only at the beginning and at the end of Hitler’s appeal. During the delivery of the speech, the officer candidates kept silent. Up to 1942, Hitler spoke no less than seven times before a like audience, whose presence he himself had ordered.⁷⁶ Through the years, Hitler spoke to about 7,000 to 10,000 professional and reserve unit officers, ordered to line up in front of him so that through his speeches their confidence in victory would be reinforced. Actually, it was Hitler himself who sought to reinforce his confidence by the sight of—and assurance displayed by—these young, inexperienced junior officers, some of whom no doubt brought him true enthusiasm. For the longer the war lasted and the more “lashes of the whip” and “hammer blows of Providence”⁷⁷ were dealt to Hitler, the less confident he became.

On January 19, 1939, Hitler turned his attention once again to the SA. As mentioned before, Hitler had steadily degraded this organization until at last, after several years, it had been transformed into a mere sports club. These men were to serve the Wehrmacht as errand boys, to concern themselves exclusively with the defense exercises (*Webrsport*). The SA hence assumed responsibility for the paramilitary training of young Germans before conscription, to drill the youngsters so that, once drafted, they could be immediately assigned to specialized units and elite formations. Now the SA Sports Badge was given the title of *SA Wehrabzeichen*. The SA no longer simply served the “aggressive training of the body by means of simple, useful, and natural physical exercises,” as Hitler had paraphrased the SA’s mission as recently as 1935, but as an institution for paramilitary training.⁷⁸

Hitler's decree of January 19 had the following content:⁷⁹

To supplement my decrees of February 15, 1935 and March 18, 1937 on the acquisition of the SA Sports Badge and the annual training exercises, I elevate the SA Sports Badge to SA Defense Badge (*SA Wehrabzeichen*) and place it at the foundation of pre- and post-military training. As agency to provide this training, I appoint the SA.

On reaching seventeen years of age and satisfying the requirements for entry into the military, every German man will have the moral duty to fulfill the requirements for the acquisition of the SA Defense Badge in preparation for subsequent service with the Wehrmacht. Graduates of the Hitler Youth will begin preparations to acquire the SA Defense Badge on completing sixteen years of age.

Provided no prior engagement in special training through the facilities of another Party formation (such as SS, NSKK, NSFK) is already imparting training to him in the spirit of the SA Defense Badge, every soldier honorably discharged from the armed services and in good health shall maintain his physical and spiritual forces by joining the ranks of these defense contingents (*Wehrmannschaften*) and integrating himself into the SA. The character and nature of the training will take into account the requirements of service in the Wehrmacht.

Specific instructions on the character of the training will be issued by the SA Chief of Staff, pending agreement with the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht. Responsibility for implementation will lie with the SA Chief of Staff exclusively. Offices of Party and State are to lend support to the SA in this educational undertaking and to honor appropriately documented proof of the possession of the SA Defense Badge.

Adolf Hitler

This decree was complemented on January 27 by an ordinance pertaining to the pre- and post-military education for defense in the field of motoring:⁸⁰

I order the NSKK to cooperate with the Army in the realm of pre- and post-military education for defense and to assume the following tasks:

In the year before the individual conscript's tour of duty with the military, the NSKK is to instruct those individuals selected as drivers to relieve the motorized units of the Army in training courses of several weeks' duration at the "driving schools of the NSKK" at the wheels of Army vehicles.

All soldiers on leave from active duty⁸¹ who have been instructed in a modern fashion and have been selected as drivers in the event of a "Mob"⁸² are to complete training exercises with the NSKK to improve their technical driving skills. This training will be counted toward fulfillment of service with the SA Wehrmannschaften. The assignment to the SA Wehrmannschaften of these soldiers on leave from active duty will not be affected by the technical training.

The leaders and men of the NSKK as well as all soldiers on leave from active duty who have completed their tour of service are to join the ranks of

the NSKK and will undergo training with the NSKK on the basis of the provisions for the SA Defense Badge.

The NSKK is to take account of the requirements of the Wehrmacht with regard to organization and training. The NSKK Corps Leader is to issue specific instructions on the nature of the training, subject to the approval of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

Offices of Party and State are to lend support to the NSKK in this educational exercise.

Adolf Hitler

Both the above ordinances are instructive in the context of Hitler's true plans for Germany and his assessment of the German Volk. Their contents reveal that the various subdivisions within the Party served the pursuit of military objectives (divisions such as the SS, SA, NSKK, NSFK, and HJ). The so-called National Socialist Weltanschauung had apparently faded into oblivion and found no mention in either of the texts. On the other hand, this "philosophical" stance had never entailed anything other than "blind" obedience to Hitler.

One wonders whatever had happened to those supreme virtues that Hitler had fed to the Volk as the goals of his Movement, throughout all those years. Millions of Germans had enthusiastically rallied around such concepts as "love for Germany," "service to Volk and Fatherland," "physical exercise," "health right into old age," "strength through joy," "bread and work," and "culture and art." From early 1939 on, all one heard was: the "honorary service at the gun," "pre- and post-military education," the "moral obligation to acquire the SA Defense Badge," and the constitution of "defense units for the maintenance of physical and spiritual forces." Divisions and training within the Party hierarchy were to be set up in compliance with the "requirements of the Wehrmacht," and rules were subject to "the approval of the Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht."

Hitler's vision of a new Germany was one in which the German people had become soldiers knowing only blind obedience, and this to an extent not even the members of the Soldatenbund⁸³ had ever dreamt of. Nonetheless, the seeds Hitler had planted did not germinate. All Germans who were physically fit and could be spared at home would have to become soldiers soon, with or without the benefit of the SA Defense Badge! This would be the outcome of the harsh necessities of the war that was to begin, and that became a reality in a manner quite different from the one Hitler had envisioned. *Wehr-mannschaften*, "schooling" by SA and NSKK, etc., would be immaterial. Within the next six years, life in Germany would be tainted by the great

war, which Hitler's lack of restraint and caution had brought about. The entire structure of his fanciful and high-flown visions of the future would quickly crumble.

Undaunted as yet, Hitler believed himself in a position to build up a war machine, in the face of which every state would surrender. The Western Powers assuredly would not intervene. Nevertheless, speed was imperative. Therefore, the German economy would simply have to follow his lead "blindly" and concentrate on the armament process.

One of the consequences of this realization was Hitler's decision to dismiss Schacht, who occupied the position of Reichsbank President and who was particularly opposed to a further increase in the creation of money. Simultaneously, Hitler resolved to deal also with the other bourgeois economists who had approached him with their misgivings regarding the stability of the currency and other petty concerns.

On January 7, Schacht had placed before Hitler a memorandum on the intricate nature of Germany's finances. He had pointed out the strain of the armament process on the economy. Other directors with the Reichsbank had countersigned the policy paper, too. Of course, Hitler paid no heed to the memorandum. Instead, he made it clear to Schacht that he regarded him as an obstacle to the implementation of the National Socialist economic policy. Hence he effected Schacht's dismissal on January 19.⁸⁴

Berlin, January 19, 1939

Dear Herr Minister!

I wish to take advantage of the occasion of your leaving the office of President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors to express to you the sincere and cordial appreciation of your services in this position throughout long and difficult years on behalf of Germany and my own person. Your name will remain tied to the initial period of the epoch of our national restoration. I am glad to know you are at my disposal and to assign you new responsibilities in your capacity as Reich Minister.

With the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

Precisely what type of "new responsibilities" Hitler had in mind for Schacht remained a secret for the time being. Perhaps Hitler was speculating on making use of Schacht's services at a later date, as he was to do with the deposed Neurath just a few weeks later. For appearances' sake, both men stayed on as members of the Cabinet, whose reputation and presence were to create the illusion of national unity.⁸⁵ The new Reichsbank President, Funk, received the letter reproduced below:

January 19, 1939

Dear Herr Minister!

I take advantage of the occasion of your appointment as President of the Reichsbank to congratulate you on assuming this new position. It shall be your task:

1. to secure the absolute stability of wages and prices in your position, which is to combine the two important realms, and thereby secure the value of the Mark,⁸⁶
2. to develop and augment the private lender's access to funds in the money market,
3. to bring to a conclusion the process initiated by the law of February 10, 1937; in defiance of the Dawes Plan,⁸⁷ to reclaim the German Reich's uncontested sovereignty over the former Reichsbank and to place it unconditionally under the sovereignty of the State as a German bank of issue, in accordance with National Socialist principles.

With the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

Judging from these lines, it was not difficult to divine that Schacht, the previous Reichsbank President, simply no longer fit into the mold of the "National Socialist principles." At an earlier date, Schacht had been deemed a good man and a "well-trying" National Socialist.

Needless to say, Hitler also vigorously removed those directors of the Reichsbank who had placed their signatures beneath Schacht's memorandum. The official announcement read as follows:⁸⁸

Berlin, January 21

The Führer has relieved the following members of the Reichsbank Board of Directors of their duties: Vice President Dreyse and Reichsbank Director Hülle. Simultaneously, the Führer has appointed the State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics, Rudolf Brinkmann, as member of the Reichsbank Board of Directors. He shall retain his title as State Secretary. The Reich Minister of Economics and Reichsbank President, Funk, has named State Secretary Brinkmann Vice President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors.

Having removed the dissentious from the Reichsbank, Hitler took immediate control of the bank. He decreed that the Reichsbank was to extend to the State whatever credit he deemed necessary.⁸⁹ Hitler openly acknowledged his intentions in his speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, stating:⁹⁰

I stand determined to bring to its conclusion the transformation of the German Reichsbank—a path pursued ever since January 30, 1937—from an internationally controlled bankers' enterprise to the institute of issue of the German Reich.⁹¹

If the rest of the world laments the loss of the international character of yet another German institution, may we point out that it is our inexorable

decision (*unerbittlicher Entschluss*) to impart to all institutions affecting our lives predominantly German, i.e. National Socialist characteristics. [—]

I now hold it to be the duty, my Reichstag Deputies, of every German man and every German woman to comprehend the conduct of the Reich's economic policy. In the cities and in the countryside you have to consider in particular that Germany's economic policy is not based on some sort of financial theory, but rather on a very primitive understanding of production, i.e. on the realization that the sole determining factor is the quantity of goods produced.

That we are faced with numerous other tasks, such as the necessary deployment of a high percentage of manpower to the armament—by itself unproductive—of our Volk, is regrettable, yet unalterable. After all, the economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security. It is best to arrive at this realization early rather than too late. I hence see it as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses.

This explanation signaled that Hitler had abandoned the formerly highly praised National Socialist economic policy. He thought such a development “regrettable, yet unalterable.” Finally, the bank of issue could strive to fulfill its supreme purpose: to fuel the armament production to the point of no return. Carelessly, Hitler tossed aside the very economic policy that had carried him to power in the first place by successfully fighting unemployment. No longer did he pay any heed to the relationship between production and the circulation of money, nor to the “backing of the currency by means of national productivity.” What was crucial to the war effort was to keep prices and wages stable, even though this stability was clearly an artificial one. Small matter if this meant that in the end the money earned by the workers did them little good, since they could not buy anything with it.

It was Hitler's firm belief that once the new Lebensraum in the East had been conquered, the economy would take care of itself. Should the conquest fail—well, that would be the end in any event! Therefore, Hitler began to improvise, both in foreign affairs and military policy. “The economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security”—this motto best sums up his new-found economic faith. After all was said and done, Hitler's assessment of this relationship proved to be correct in the end. The Third Reich would indeed ruin both the economy and the people. Once Hitler's reign was finally over for good, Germany awoke not only to an unparalleled military and political fiasco, but also to an economy in shambles. This collapse was far worse than the catastrophe of 1918.

On January 21, Hitler welcomed the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky⁹² to the new Chancellery for talks. The following official note was published on the meeting:⁹³

Saturday afternoon, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Czechoslovakian Minister for Foreign Affairs Chvalkovsky for consultations in the new rooms at the Chancellery. In the morning, both Foreign Ministers had already conferred on all the questions pertaining to the relationship of the German Reich to Czechoslovakia.

Subsequently, the Reich Foreign Minister gave a breakfast banquet at the Kaiserhof Hotel in honor of Chvalkovsky.

The issues Hitler and Ribbentrop discussed with Chvalkovsky largely concerned additional German claims on the “*Rest-Tschechei*” as well as a renewed curtailing of the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia. As early as November 19, 1938, Germany and the Czechoslovakian Government had signed a “contract on the construction and maintenance of an extraterritorial transit Autobahn, connecting Breslau (Wroclaw) to Brünn (Brno) and Vienna.”⁹⁴

Another agreement of January 1939 was designed to facilitate traffic by car and bicycle. The treaty specified that Czechoslovakia was to allow for the passage of both types of vehicles along no less than 30 transit routes crossing its territory. Further, Reich Germans were exempted from paying customs duties, taxes, or tolls of any kind.⁹⁵

It is a very revealing fact that, despite Czechoslovakian cooperation with regard to the extraterritorial Autobahn through their territory, the complete annexation of the “remainder of Czechoslovakia” could neither be avoided nor delayed for any significant time. Hence, acquiescence to Hitler’s demand for the construction of a similar Autobahn through the Polish Corridor,⁹⁶ was by no means a guarantee that Poland would not suffer a similar fate. There was no telling whether, if at all, Hitler would not cast an eye on other Polish terrain also.

Ever since the establishment of what remained as the Czechoslovakian Republic in 1938, Germany had exerted enormous pressure on this newly founded state. It was merely a question of time before it succumbed to the far more powerful German Reich and was turned into a protectorate of sorts. The above example of the transit Autobahn provides ample evidence to that effect, as does the free passage of German vehicles through territory of the nominally sovereign Czechoslovakian state.



XXXI January 1939

Hitler developing fantastic notions of a glorious future for Germany while speaking before an audience gathered at the new Reich Chancellery. From left to right: Reich Press Chief Dietrich, Hitler, General Bodenschatz, Goebbels, Lammers, Hess, and Hanke.

Photo: Domarus archives



XXXII March 16, 1939

Hitler looking down from the lofty heights of the Hradcany Castle at Prague confident of having achieved a great victory.

Photo: Domarus archives

There was simply no need for the forced entry of Hitler's troops into Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939. In due time, the country would have been de facto completely dependent on the Reich, though perhaps not de jure. Granted that his freedom of action in the region did not extend to military and foreign policy concerns, still he could regulate any matter to suit his interests. Nevertheless, Hitler insisted on subjugating the remainder of Czechoslovakia to Germany's military sovereignty, as he planned to do in the case of Danzig and the Memel territory.

On the afternoon of January 25, the Italian State Secretary Farinacci⁹⁷ called on Hitler at the new Chancellery.⁹⁸ It is worthy of notice that Gauleiter Julius Streicher accompanied him to the conference, the content of which evidently was of an anti-Semitic nature. Frinacci was a proponent of the new anti-Semitic agitation in Italy, perpetration of which Hitler had unequivocally demanded of Mussolini. Obviously, Farinacci had come to Berlin to pick up instructions on how to proceed.

The evening of that same day, another showing of the new Chancellery took place. This time, it was high ranking commanders of Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe who dutifully had to admire Hitler's new seat of government.⁹⁹ The stage could not have been more properly set if it had been a true theatrical performance. The officers wore full dress uniform as they lined up along the wall in the "Long Hall." Hitler stepped in front of them and slowly greeted each man personally. Torches burning in the huge hall did little to shed light, and thus the entire scene was of a most somber character. Nevertheless, Hitler was exalted and held a lengthy lecture on the political and military situation for the benefit of his guests. No official act of state was properly conducted, unless he gave at least one speech and dinner on the occasion.

Celebrations on the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact were set for January 26. Hitler had sent Ribbentrop to Warsaw to take part in the festivities. At the time, Hitler was still convinced that he could succeed in talking the Poles into returning Danzig and permitting the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn through the Polish Corridor. While in Warsaw Beck and Ribbentrop spoke of the "well-trying cooperation" between Poland and Germany, the question of Danzig weighed heavily on their minds. Increasingly, the opinion spread in Poland that the Pact with Germany was nearly suicidal in nature.

After the conquest of the city of Barcelona, Hitler sent the telegram below to Franco, congratulating him on the feat on January 27:¹⁰⁰

I wish to convey to you my most cordial congratulations on the liberation of Barcelona, on this glorious success scored by the National Spanish Army under your leadership. I am confidently hoping that a swift and victorious end to this war shall restore peace to the Spanish people and thereby herald a new epoch of blissful evolution of the Spanish nation.

On the morning of January 30, the sixth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, the Wehrmacht serenaded its Supreme Commander.¹⁰¹ At 11:00 a.m., Hitler greeted the recipients of the 1938 German National Award in the big hall of the new Chancellery.¹⁰² Without exception, these men played a role of importance in Germany's armament industry:¹⁰³ for example, Heinkel and Messerschmitt, who represented the aviation industry; Todt, who was later to become Reich Minister of Armaments and Munition; and Porsche, the designer of the Volkswagen, which would become known not as the *Kdf Wagen*,¹⁰⁴ but rather as the *Kübelwagen* (bucket car)¹⁰⁵ when it was used in the upcoming war.

What a change in comparison to the award winners of the previous year! Then there had been Professor Troost's widow; Alfred Rosenberg; the Asia expert Wilhelm Filcher; and the two surgeons Ferdinand Sauerbruch and August Bier.¹⁰⁶

Hitler also announced a series of promotions in the Wehrmacht and in the administration on January 30, 1939. For the most part, these were men of little importance. The only noteworthy appointment perhaps was the one of Hermann Esser¹⁰⁷ as State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Propaganda. Previously, Esser had primarily handled issues connected with tourism. Also on that day, the Führer liberally distributed titles such as Professor, Baurat (Chief Architect), or Justizrat (Councilor of Justice) and awarded the Golden Party Badge to no fewer than 233 Party comrades.

On the evening of January 30, a Reichstag session took place in the Kroll Opera House. Elected on April 10, 1939, the "Greater German Reichstag" convened here for the first time.¹⁰⁸ As a result of the increase in population, the Reichstag comprised a total of 885 deputies.¹⁰⁹ Not much time was wasted on the process of electing a Reichstag President. Hitler named Göring in due course. Hanns Kerrl, Hermann Esser, and Emil von Stauss¹¹⁰ obtained the nominations for and unanimous acclaim as Vice Presidents. Behind the President's chair and the seats of the Reichstag deputies, at the head of the room, now hung the newly

conceived national emblem: a huge, three-dimensional eagle. It had replaced the swastika banner.

At a quarter past eight that night, Hitler ascended the rostrum to deliver a declaration of the Reich Government.¹¹¹ Once again, it ended up being a mammoth speech, lasting more than two-and-a-half hours. First came the customary “party narrative,” consisting of a detailed description of the state of affairs in the Weimar Republic. According to Hitler, thirty-five parties, in their shared hatred for the young movement, had come together to conspire against National Socialism. “Priests of the Center Party and communist atheists; socialist opponents of private property and proponents of capitalist interests in stock markets; monarchist regents and republican destroyers of the Reich” had nearly succeeded in subjecting Germany to “Bolshevist chaos.” This had only been averted because of “a last-minute miracle,” namely, the National Socialist rise to power.

Hitler concluded this particular “party narrative” with the following words:

Greatly disconcerted about the future of my Volk, I moved into Wilhelmstrasse on January 30, 1933. Today—six years later—I am able to speak before this first Greater German Reichstag! Truly, we are today better equipped than any generation before us to appreciate the pious import of the saying: “What a turn of events brought about by divine dispensation!”¹¹²

Six years sufficed to fulfill the dreams of many a century; one year to afford our Volk enjoyment of the unity which many a generation yearned for in vain. When I look at you today, the representatives of our German Volk from all Gaus of the Reich gathered around me, and I know the elected men of the Ostmark and the Sudetenland to be among you, then I am once more overwhelmed by those tremendous impressions recollected from that one year which realized the longings of centuries. How much blood was shed for this object—for naught! How many millions of German men strode forth on this bitter path throughout the years, conscious or unconscious of the higher ambitions they served—a path which led them to a swift or painfully prolonged death. How many others were condemned to end their lives behind fortress or dungeon walls, lives they sought only to dedicate to Greater Germany! How many hundreds of thousands, bending under the yoke of misery and worry, were forced to join that never-ending stream of German emigrants surging forth into the world, for decades cherishing the memory of the unfortunate homeland, after generations forgetting her. And now, in the span of this one year, a dream has come true.

It was not realized without a fight, as many an forgetful bourgeois might believe. For before this year of German unity, a political idea had to struggle fanatically for nearly two decades. Hundreds of thousands, millions risked their lives, their physical existence and economic livelihood. They put up with

mockery and scorn as willingly as they faced abusive treatment, base defamation, and near-unbearable terror. Throughout the German Gaus, countless corpses and the injured splattered with blood bore witness to this struggle. And, moreover, this success was secured by an immeasurable rallying of willpower and perseverance in valiant and zealous determination. I must say this today because there is a danger that certain elements who contributed the least to the practical implementation of German unity now seek, as brash orators, to appropriate to themselves the creation of this Reich. They portray the events of 1938 as a most natural, long-overdue, foregone conclusion, only belatedly realized by National Socialism.

To counter these elements, I must first state that perseverance through this year required a strength of nerves of which these dwarfs have not an inkling. They are well-known to us, these old incorrigible pessimists, skeptical and apathetic, who throughout the twenty years of our struggle made a positive contribution by making none. Now, after the victory, these self-proclaimed experts of the national uprising feel called on to contribute their comments and criticism to it.

I will now in a few sentences offer you an objective recapitulation of the historic events in this memorable year 1938.

His “objective recapitulation” of events “in a few sentences” began with the obligatory reference to Wilson’s Fourteen Points and to the right to self-determination which had been denied the German people. A description of the developments in Austria in the spring of 1938 followed. This particular version of the recent events was nearly identical to the one rendered in the speech before the Reichstag on March 18, 1938.¹¹³ Remarkable, however, was Hitler’s unabashed admission that he had already ordered German troops to cross the border into Austria at 10:00 p.m. on March 11. Previously, Hitler had consistently maintained that the German military had not transgressed the border until the next day.

Friday evening [March 11, 1938] a plea reached me, in the interest of preenting anarchy and chaos in this country, to order German troops to march. Already by 10:00 p.m., units were crossing the border at several locations. The general invasion began at 6:00 in the morning [March 12, 1938], to the great and unforgettable jubilation of the people now finally liberated.

In the second part of his description, Hitler turned to the topic of the Sudetenland crisis, frankly admitting that, as early as May 28, 1938, he had already scheduled the attack on Czechoslovakia for October 2, 1938. On this May 28, 1938, he had also decided on the immediate mobilization of no less than ninety-six divisions, to be followed by the mobilization of additional armed contingents at a later date. Hitler declared:

The man responsible for these developments was the then State President Dr. Beneš, who transformed Czechoslovakia into the exponent of the outside world's hostile intentions against the Reich. It was he who, on the prodding and with the active participation of certain foreign circles,¹¹⁴ carried out the mobilization in May a year ago which sought first to provoke the German Reich and, second, to do injury to the German Reich's prestige abroad.

The fictitious report of a German mobilization allegedly forcing Czechoslovakia to mobilize its armed forces was maintained and propagated, despite an official declaration twice conveyed at my bidding to the Czech State President Beneš, stating that Germany had not mobilized even a single soldier, and in spite of identical assertions to representatives of foreign powers. Insistent demands called for Germany to countermand the fictitious mobilization order and to renounce its pretenses. Beneš labored to spread the rumor that the determined nature of the steps he had taken had forced the German Reich back within its appropriate borders. Since the Reich had neither mobilized its forces nor entertained any intentions of attacking Czechoslovakia, this situation would have entailed without a doubt a serious loss of prestige for the Reich.

Because of this unbearable provocation, 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.

On the subject of his plans for the future, Hitler categorically denied the interests of other powers "in this area in which neither the English nor other Western nations have any business meddling." He immediately added that, "in the future also, we will not stand for the Western states meddling in certain affairs which concern us exclusively, in order to prevent by their intervention the arrival at natural and reasonable solutions."¹¹⁵ Hitler made this statement in the following context:

When certain newspapers and politicians in the outside world insist that Germany is threatening other peoples by military extortion, it is on the grounds

of a grossly distorted rendition of the facts. Germany has merely realized the right to self-determination of ten million German Volksgenossen in this area in which neither the English nor other Western nations have any business meddling. The Reich does not pose a threat to anyone, it has merely defended itself against the attempts at intervention by third parties.

There is no need for me to assure you, my Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag, that, in the future also, we will not stand for the Western states meddling in certain affairs, which concern us exclusively, in order to preclude by their intervention the arrival at natural and reasonable solutions.

Therefore, all of us were happy about the initiative of our friend Benito Mussolini and at the also highly appreciated readiness of Chamberlain and Daladier which allowed us to find elements for a peaceful settlement of a situation which demanded immediate attention. Moreover, this can justly be regarded as evidence of the possibility of a reasoned treatment of certain problems of vital interest and their resolution. However, without the determination to resolve this problem in one way or another, such an agreement between the great European powers could not have become a reality.

Hitler's words revealed his firm conviction that it had not been compliance with the requirements of international law which had ultimately led the Western Powers to consent to the return of the Sudeten German areas to the Reich. Instead, it had been Germany's persistent display of combat readiness and his "determination to resolve this problem in one way or another" which had been crucial to the success of his demands. All he needed to do in the future, so he reasoned, was to threaten the West with the unequivocal use of force to attain the ends he pursued. If he was insistent right from the start, then assuredly the Western Powers—decrepit as they were—would back off and submit to his demands for territorial revisions. It was precisely this erroneous belief which resulted in Hitler's downfall.

Hitler concluded his "objective recapitulation" with a reference to the election of the first Greater German Reichstag, and maintained:

Hence, we have before us today a form of representation of the German Volk which can claim to be a truly constituent body.

It would have been more truthful had Hitler admitted that this representative body was to carry out obligingly any constitutional changes he desired. After all, as he strove to establish an arbitrary reign, he wished not to be encumbered by legal or constitutional restrictions. In spite of his vague assurances to the contrary, he neither desired nor would have accepted the writing of a new constitution. Having expressed his gratitude for Göring's and Ribbentrop's outstanding

service in 1938, Hitler evidently thought it appropriate to recall once again the blind obedience the Volk owed him:

The German Volk of earlier decades, politically and socially disorganized, squandered large part of its inherent strength in an inner struggle as fruitless as it was senseless. The so-called democratic freedom to live to the full according to one's persuasions and instincts leads not to an evolutionary advancement nor to a freeing of exceptional forces or values. Instead, it leads to a squandering of the existing wealth of the creative potential of the individual and to his ultimate paralysis. By putting an end to this fruitless struggle, National Socialism released the inner strength otherwise suppressed and set it free to realize the vital interests of the nation in the sense of managing the great community tasks in the interior of the Reich and securing the vital necessities for the community with regard to the surrounding world.

It is complete nonsense to presume that obedience and discipline are useful only to soldiers and that they have no further application in the life of peoples beyond this. To the contrary: a Volksgemeinschaft instilled with discipline and obedience can far more easily mobilize the forces necessary to secure the survival of its own people, thereby benefiting other peoples and serving the interests of all more effectively.

Such a Volksgemeinschaft cannot be created by force primarily, however, but by the compelling force of the idea itself, hence, through the toil of a continuing education.

Now Hitler took a minute to relax, i.e. to begin with a second "party narrative." He claimed that National Socialism strove to establish a true Volksgemeinschaft. Naturally, jabs at his intellectual critics could not be omitted in this description of the aims of National Socialism.

There are indeed men whom neither the greatest of calamities nor earth-shattering upheaval can incite to inner reflection or induce to spiritual action. Their hearts beat no more. They are of no value to the community. They cannot make history and history cannot be made with them. Their blasé decadence and narrow-mindedness expose them as a useless waste product of nature (*Ausschussware der Natur*). They find some consolation, even satisfaction, in considering what they hold to be their cleverness or wisdom elevating them to a lofty height above the events of the day; in other words, in the contemplation of their own ignorance.

Now it is easy to imagine that, without such ignorant men, a Volk may well be capable of the greatest actions and deeds. However, it is impossible to imagine a nation, much less to lead it, which has at its core a multitude of such ignorant men instead of a mass of full-blooded, idealistic, believing, and positive men. They constitute the only valuable elements in a Volksgemeinschaft. You will allow them a thousand weaknesses, if only they possess the strength to give all they have, if necessary, for an ideal or for an idea.

My Deputies, we still face enormous, gigantic tasks! We must build up a new class of leaders for our Volk. Its composition is subject to racial criteria. Through the educational system and the methods we employ, it is equally

necessary to demand and secure valor and readiness to take on responsibility as natural prerequisites to the assumption of public office.

In assigning men to posts of leadership in State and Party, attitude and character are to be valued more highly than so-called purely scientific or supposed mental qualifications. For, wherever leadership has to be exercised, it is not abstract knowledge which is decisive, but instead the inborn ability to lead and therefore a high degree of readiness to take on responsibility, of determination, courage, and persistence.

In principle, we must realize that documented proof of a presumed first-class scientific education can never compensate for a lack of readiness to take on responsibility. Knowledge and leadership abilities, and hence vigor, are not mutually exclusive. In case of doubt, however, knowledge cannot serve as a substitute for attitude, courage, valor, and initiative, under any circumstances. These attributes are the more important ones in terms of the leadership of a Volksgemeinschaft in Party and State.

When I express this to you, my Deputies, I do so under the impression of that year of German history which has taught me, more than my entire previous life, how important and irreplaceable these virtues are and how, in a critical hour, one man of action weighs more than one thousand sophisticated weaklings. As a social phenomenon this new selection of leadership has to be divorced from the numerous prejudices, which I can only term phoney and profoundly nonsensical social morals.

There is no attitude which does not have its ultimate justification in the resulting advantages for the community. What is unimportant or detrimental to the existence of the community can never be seen as moral in the service of a social order. Above all: a Volksgemeinschaft is conceivable only in recognition of laws which apply to all. You cannot expect or demand of one that he abide by principles which seem absurd, detrimental, or merely unimportant in the eyes of another.

I fail to comprehend the endeavors of dying social classes, seeking to hide behind a hedge of withering class laws which have become unreal and divorcing themselves from reality to sustain life artificially. Nothing can be said against it, if it is being done in an effort to secure a calm cemetery where to rest after passing away. However, if it is being done in order to erect a barrier against the progress of life, then the storm of a forward charging youth will brush away the old scrub.

Today's German Volksstaat knows no social prejudices. Hence, it knows no special social morals. It knows only the laws and necessities of life, as they reveal themselves to man through reason and knowledge.

Having once more vented his anger on Germany's intellectuals, Hitler asserted that the National Socialist State would master any task it encountered.

The unity of the entire German Volkskörper, whose foremost guarantors you are and will continue to be, my Deputies, affords me the certainty that whatever tasks pose themselves to our Volk, the National Socialist State will resolve them sooner or later! Whatever the nature of the difficulties we

encounter may be, the valor and the courage of its leadership will master them!

The difficulties the leadership was fated to run into presently were primarily connected to the armament industry. Obviously, the unrestricted production of weaponry was a crucial preparatory step toward realizing the envisioned conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, as mentioned earlier in connection with Schacht's dismissal. Before turning to this sensitive topic, Hitler attempted further to dull the perception of his increasingly tired audience with a long-winded lecture on "economic philosophy." This rhetorical aside took up the better part of an hour, and numerous platitudes pervaded this section of the speech, excerpts of which are reproduced below:

1. We fight a truly gigantic struggle to which we have dedicated the entire force and energy of our Volk, and

2. we will win this struggle without reservations; yes, indeed, we have already won it!

For what is the reason for all our economic troubles? Simply the overpopulation of our Lebensraum! And in this context, I can only hold out to these critical gentlemen in the West and in the democracies beyond Europe one simple fact and one simple question: The German Volk survives with 135 inhabitants per square kilometer without any exterior assistance and without access to its earlier savings. The rest of the world has looted Germany throughout the past one-and-a-half decades, has burdened it with enormous debt payments. Without any colonies, its people are nonetheless fed and clothed and, moreover, Germany boasts no unemployment. And now to my question: Who among our so-called great democratic powers is in a position to say as much of itself?! [—]

To him on whom nature has bestowed bananas for free,¹¹⁶ the struggle for survival necessarily will appear far easier than to the weary German peasant who, all year round, toils to sow and reap on his plot of soil. And, therefore, we insist that this carefree, internationalist banana picker refrain from finding fault with the labor of our German peasant.

After endless accounts of the economically unsound policy forced on Germany by the victorious Allies in the aftermath of the year 1918, Hitler intimated that the economic sphere in Germany was soon to undergo radical changes. He insisted that an "expansion of Lebensraum" was both necessary and inevitable.

The dilemma we shall then face can only be resolved in two ways:

1. through an increase in the import of foodstuffs which necessitates an increase in the export of German manufactured goods in due consideration of the fact that raw materials used in the production process have to be imported initially and hence only a fraction of profit remains for the purchase of foodstuffs, or

2. through an expansion of Lebensraum for our Volk, thereby establishing

an economic circle to secure the production of sufficient foodstuffs for Germany domestically. Since the second approach is as yet [!] impossible to pursue due to the persistent delusions of the one-time victorious powers, we are forced to follow along the path of the first proposition. This means we must export in order to be able to purchase food from abroad. Since these exported goods use up raw materials which we ourselves do not possess, this means we must export yet more goods to secure these raw materials for our economy. We are compelled not by capitalist considerations, as this may be the case in other countries, but by dire necessity, the most excruciating which can befall a people, namely, concern for its daily bread.

And when foreign statesmen threaten us with economic sanctions, for what reason I do not know, then all I can do is to assure them that this would lead to a desperate struggle for economic survival. We could far more easily hold our own in such a struggle than those other satiated nations, for our motive for entering into this struggle would be a very simple one: German Volk, either live, i.e. export, or perish! And I can assure all these doubters abroad that the German Volk will not perish; it will live! And, if necessary, this German Volk will place at its leadership's disposal its entire capacity for work realized in the new National Socialist community. It will take up this struggle and it will persevere in this struggle. And as far as its leadership is concerned, I can only assure you that it stands determined to do whatever is necessary.

A final resolution of this problem in a reasonable manner will only come about when the greed of certain peoples has been conquered by the insights of human common sense and reason if one accepts that insistence on injustice is not only detrimental politically, but also useless economically, indeed that it spells insanity.

Thereupon, Hitler made a few further sarcastic remarks on the subject of the "obstinate intolerance" of the Western Powers, their "supposed superiority in arms," and the allegedly enormous financial strain on them after the appropriation of the former German colonies. At long last, he came to speak on the topic of his new economic policy. He uttered not a word in reference to Schacht's removal from office. Nevertheless, he emphasized the role of the Reichsbank, of the capital market, and of the careful reallocation of manpower, and announced "new additional production." At first Hitler tried to foster the impression that the issue at stake was simply to "obtain the highest yields possible from the Lebensraum available to us." He conceded, however, that he regarded it "as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses."

Given the present circumstances, we have no recourse other than to persist in the continuation of our previous economic policy which must undertake to obtain the highest yields possible from the Lebensraum available to us. This requires an ever greater increase in our efforts and in production.

This forces us to strengthen the implementation of the Four-Year Plan. Ever more manpower must be mobilized. And it is at this point that we enter into a new phase of Germany's economic policy.

In the first six years after our rise to power, it was the task of our economic leadership to channel idle manpower into some form of productive occupation. In the coming years, it will be their task to draw up a detailed inventory of our labor force, to reallocate productive powers according to plan. They will need to strive for rationalization and an improvement of operating conditions, in order to secure, while the work input remains constant, an increase in productivity, which, in turn, frees manpower for new additional production.

This, however, forces us to make the money market more accessible in the interest of technical advancement of our enterprises and to relieve it from its obligations to the state. This in turn necessitates close cooperation of economic and financial institutions. I stand determined to bring to its conclusion the transformation of the German Reichsbank—a path pursued ever since January 30, 1937—from an internationally controlled bankers' enterprise to the bank of issue of the German Reich.

If the rest of the world (*übrige Welt*) laments the loss of the international character of yet another German institution, may we point out that it is our inexorable decision to impart to all institutions affecting our lives predominantly German, that is National Socialist, characteristics. And perhaps this will make clear to the world the distorted nature of the claim that we sought to force German attitudes on the rest of the world. It would be far more justified if we in National Socialist Germany lamented that the outside world (*andere Welt*) is persistently trying to force its attitudes on us.

I now hold it to be the duty, my Reichstag Deputies, of every German man and every German woman to comprehend the conduct of the Reich's economic policy. In the cities and in the countryside you have to consider in particular that Germany's economic policy is not based on some sort of financial theory, but rather on a very primitive understanding of production, on the realization that the sole determining factor is the quantity of goods produced.

That we are faced with numerous other tasks, such as the necessary deployment of a high percentage of manpower to the armament—by itself unproductive—of our Volk, is regrettable, yet unalterable. After all, the economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security. It is best to arrive at this realization early rather than too late. I hence see it as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses. I place great stock in the German Volk's insight and, above all, in its recollections.

Hitler then turned his attention to the press campaign in Great Britain which had infuriated him especially. He threatened retaliation through a similar campaign in the German media.

We have no right to presume that, should Germany suffer yet another attack of weakness, its destiny would take on a different appearance. To the

contrary: they are in part the very same men who once kindled the fire to scorch the entire world who today strive to prepare the grounds for another, renewed struggle as the paid henchmen at the service of those promoting hatred among peoples, to augment existing animosities.

Deputies, Men of the Reichstag! I implore you in particular not to forget one thing: It is apparently one of the exquisite privileges of democratic, political livelihood, enjoyed in certain democracies, to indulge in artificially feeding the flame of hatred against so-called totalitarian states. By a flood of partially distorted, partially fictitious reports, these rouse public opinion against certain peoples who have done nothing to harm others nor wish to undertake anything of this nature, but have only suffered from the great injustice done to them throughout the decades.

And when we venture to defend ourselves in view of the injurious attacks of such apostles of war as the gentlemen Duff Cooper,¹¹⁷ Eden,¹¹⁸ Churchill,¹¹⁹ or Ickes,¹²⁰ then this is portrayed as though we were infringing on the most sacred of rights in these democracies. According to the understanding of these gentlemen, they apparently have the unchallenged right to attack other peoples and their leadership, but no one in turn has the right to defend himself against these attacks. I need not assure you that, as long as the German Reich shall exist as a sovereign state, its leadership will not allow one or another English or American politician to forbid it to reply in kind to such attacks. In the future, the weapons we forged shall insure that we remain such a sovereign state, as shall a great number of our friends.

Actually we could simply laugh off the libelous claim that Germany intended to attack America. And, indeed, we would much prefer to remain silent on the topic of the campaign of hatred pursued by certain British apostles of war and to simply ignore them. Yet we may not forget the following:

1. The democracies in question are states in which the political structures make it possible that, within a few months' time, the most notorious of these warmongers may actually have emerged as the leaders of their governments.

2. We hence owe it to the security of the Reich to enlighten the German Volk about the true nature of these men in a timely manner. The German Volk harbors no hatred for England, America, or France, and desires nothing other than to live calmly and peacefully, while the Jewish and non-Jewish agitators persist in rousing the animosity of these peoples against Germany and the German Volk. In the event that these warmongers should succeed in their undertakings, our own Volk would be confronted with a situation incomprehensible to it, as it was not psychologically prepared for anything of this nature.

Therefore, I believe it necessary that from now on our propaganda and press shall answer immediately to any such attacks and inform the German Volk of them. It must know who these men are who so desperately seek to provoke a war, no matter what the circumstances. I am convinced that the calculations of these elements will prove faulty as soon as National Socialist propaganda begins to reply in kind to these provocations. We shall deal with them as successfully as we did in Germany's interior when we wrestled the

Jewish world enemy to the ground through the forceful use of our propaganda.

It is evident that Hitler's firm belief in the identical nature of domestic and foreign policy extended to the Jewish issue as well. National Socialism would "wrestle the Jewish world enemy to the ground" on the international stage, just as it had been vanquished in "Germany's interior." Hence, Hitler believed it appropriate once again to rage on furiously against international Jewry and the supposed secret Jewish world government. He proclaimed:

The peoples of the world will realize within a short time that National Socialist Germany does not desire to elicit the enmity of other peoples. Allegations of the aggressive designs entertained by our Volk on other peoples are the products of a deranged, hysterical mind or blatant lies by certain politicians struggling for survival. In certain states, businessmen void of any conscience try to save their financial interests by propagating these lies. Above all, it is international Jewry which seeks thereby to gratify its thirst for vengeance and its insatiable hunger for profit.¹²¹ And this constitutes the greatest libelous claim ever levied against a great and peace-loving Volk.

After all, German soldiers have never fought on American soil other than for the cause of America's independence and freedom. Yet American soldiers were shipped to Europe and contributed to the suppression of a great nation struggling to preserve its liberty. It was not Germany that attacked America; it was America that attacked Germany. And it did so, according to the findings of an investigative committee in the American House of Representatives, without any compelling reason, other than perhaps capitalist considerations.

Nevertheless, let there be no doubt as to one point: all these attempts will not in the least sway Germany from its reckoning with Jewry. I would like to say the following on the Jewish question: it is truly a shaming display when we see today the entire democratic world filled with tears of pity at the plight of the poor, tortured Jewish people, while remaining hardhearted and obstinate in view of what is therefore its obvious duty: to help. All the arguments with which they seek to justify their non-intervention lend only further support to the stance of Germans and Italians in this matter.

For this is what they say: "We"—that is the democracies—"cannot possibly admit the Jews!" And this those world powers claim who can boast no more than ten persons per square kilometer while we must accommodate and feed 135 persons per square kilometer.

Then follow assurances: "We cannot take them unless they receive a certain monetary contribution from Germany to facilitate immigration." Small matter that Germany has already been good enough to provide for these elements for centuries, who possessed little more than infectious political and sanitary diseases. What this people possesses today, it obtained at the cost of the not-so-cunning German Volk by means of the most base manipulations. What we do today is no more than to set right the wrongs these people committed. In the days when the German Volk lost its savings, accumulated throughout decades of hard work, thanks to the inflation¹²² incited and

nurtured by the Jews; when the rest of the world took the German Volk's assets abroad; when it expropriated our colonial possessions; at that time such philanthropic contemplations did not yet play such an influential role in these democratic statesmen's considerations. I wish to assure these gentle-men that, owing to a fifteen-year-long crash course in democracy, we are today steeled against any sentimentality.

We had to live to see how, at the end of the war, after hunger and destitution had killed more than 800,000 children of our Volk, because of the gruesome articles of a Diktat which the democratic, humane world apostles had forced on us in the guise of a peace treaty, nearly a million dairy cows¹²³ were driven from our barns. We had to live to see, one year after the end of the war, over one million German prisoners of war still held captive without any perceptible cause. We had to suffer the sight of how, along our frontiers, far more than one-and-a-half-million Germans bereft of their possessions were driven from their homes with no more than their shirts on their backs. We had to bear the sight of millions of our Volksgenossen torn from us, without anyone according them a hearing, and were left without any means of sustaining themselves in the future.

Once he had securely placed the blame on the Jews for the bad fortune Germans had suffered throughout the twentieth century, Hitler set out to steel the audience before him "against any sentimentality" and humanitarian concerns. And—in the context of his previously mentioned strategy of blackmail,¹²⁴—he threatened the "annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the Jewish race in Europe" in the event foreign powers should again declare war on Germany.

I could supplement these examples by dozens of yet more gruesome ones. Do not reproach me on the grounds of your humanitarian concerns. The German Volk does not wish to be governed by another people; it does not wish others to determine its affairs in its place. France to the French; England to the English; America to the Americans, and Germany to the Germans!¹²⁵

We are determined to undercut the efforts of a certain foreign people to nest here; a people whose members knew how to capture all leading positions. We will banish this people. We are willing to educate our own Volk to assume these leadership functions. We have hundreds of thousands of the most intelligent children of peasants and workers. We will have them educated, and we are already educating them. We are hoping that one day we can place them in all leading positions within the state along with others from our educated classes. No longer shall these be occupied by members of a people alien to us.

Above all, as the literal meaning of the term already indicates, German culture is exclusively German; it is not Jewish. Hence we shall place the administration and the care for our culture in the hands of our Volk. Should the rest of the world be outraged and protest hypocritically against Germany's barbarous expulsion of such an extraordinary, culturally valuable, irreplaceable element, then we can only be astonished at the consequences such a stance

would imply.

Should not the outside world be most grateful to us for setting free these glorious bearers of culture and placing them at its disposal? In accordance with its own statements, how is the outside world to justify its refusal to grant refuge in its various countries to these most valuable members of the human race? For how will it rationalize imposing the members of this race on the Germans of all people? How will the states so infatuated with these "great guys" explain why they are suddenly taking refuge with all sorts of pretenses just in order to deny asylum to these people?

I believe the earlier this problem is resolved, the better. For Europe cannot find peace before it has dealt properly with the Jewish question.

It is possible that the necessity of resolving this problem sooner or later should bring about agreement in Europe, even between nations which otherwise might not have reconciled themselves as readily with one another. There is more than enough room for settlement on this earth. All we need to do is put an end to the prevailing assumption that the Dear Lord chose the Jewish people to be the beneficiaries of a certain percentage of the productive capacities of other peoples' bodies and their labors. Either the Jews will have to adjust to constructive, respectable activities, such as other people are already engaged in, or, sooner or later, they will succumb to a crisis of yet inconceivable proportions.

And there is yet one more topic on which I would like to speak on this day, perhaps not only memorable for us Germans: I have been a prophet very often in my lifetime, and this earned me mostly ridicule. In the time of my struggle for power, it was primarily the Jewish people who mocked my prophecy that, one day, I would assume leadership of this Germany, of this State, and of the entire Volk, and that I would press for a resolution of the Jewish question, among many other problems. The resounding laughter of the Jews in Germany then may well be stuck in their throats today, I suspect.

Once again I will be a prophet: should the international Jewry of finance (*Finanzjudentum*) succeed, both within and beyond Europe, in plunging mankind into yet another world war, then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the earth and the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the Jewish race in Europe.¹²⁶

Thus, the days of propagandist impotence of the non-Jewish peoples are over. National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy possess institutions which, if necessary, permit opening the eyes of the world to the true nature of this problem. Many a people is instinctively aware of this, albeit not scientifically versed in it. At this moment, the Jews are still propagating their campaign of hatred in certain states under the cover of press, film, radio, theater, and literature, which are all in their hands. Should indeed this one Volk attain its goal of prodding masses of millions from other peoples to enter into a war devoid of all sense for them, and serving the interests of the Jews exclusively, then the effectiveness of an enlightenment will once more display its might. Within Germany, this enlightenment conquered Jewry utterly in the span of a few years.

Peoples desire not to perish on the battlefield just so that this rootless,

internationalist race can profit financially from this war and thereby gratify its lust for vengeance derived from the Old Testament. The Jewish watchword "Proletarians of the world, unite!" will be conquered by a far more lofty realization, namely: "Creative men of all nations, recognize your common foe!"

Since Hitler was already in the process of threatening international Jewry, he determined to go on the offensive against members of the clergy opposed to his rule. Should they persist in their defiance of the state, he would see to implementing the appropriate measures for severely restricting church activities. In vivid colors, he depicted an effective separation of church and state, i.e. the end of state subsidies and tax revenues for the Church.

Among the reproaches which the so-called democracies have heaped on Germany has been the claim that National Socialist Germany is a state hostile to religion. On this topic, I wish to make the following solemn declaration before the entire German Volk:

1. To date, no one has been persecuted because of his religious affinity in Germany, nor will anyone be persecuted for this reason in the future either.¹²⁷

2. Since January 30, 1933, the official institutions within the National Socialist State have transferred the following tax earnings to the two Churches:¹²⁸

130 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1933; 170 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1934; 250 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1935; 320 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1936; 400 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1937; 500 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1938. In addition to this, the Church receives approximately 85 million Reichsmarks annually in the form of Länder subsidies, and approximately another seven million Reichsmarks in the form of subsidies by the local communities and associations. Next to the State, the Church constitutes the greatest proprietor of land. It possesses holdings in real estate and forestry in excess of ten billion Reichsmarks. From these, it derives annual earnings of about 300 million.

Moreover, the Church benefits from countless gifts, bequests, and, above all, from donations collected. Further, the National Socialist State accords the Church concessions in a variety of realms: donations and inheritance are tax-exempt for instance. To make an understatement, therefore, it is with insolent impertinence that foreign politicians accuse the Third Reich of hostility to religion. Should the churches within Germany regard the situation as unbearable, then please bear in mind that the National Socialist State is willing, and prepared at any time, to undertake a clear separation of church and state, as is the case in France, America, and other countries.¹²⁹ In this context, I permit myself to pose the following question: Within this period, how much did official state appropriations to the church amount to in France, England, and the USA?

3. The National Socialist State has not closed even one single church,

neither prevented church services nor infringed on the conduct of Mass. It has not imposed its views on any confession's church doctrine and faith. In the National Socialist State, man is free to seek absolution in the fashion desired.

However, the National Socialist State will relentlessly deal with those priests who, instead of serving the Lord, see their mission in propagating derisive comments on our present Reich, its institutions, or its leading men. It will bring to their attention the fact that the destruction of this State will not be tolerated. The law will prosecute a priest who implicates himself in illegal activities and he will be held accountable for these in the same manner as any other, ordinary German citizen. It must, however, be stated at this point that there are thousands upon thousands of priests of all Christian beliefs who attend to their clerical duties in a manner infinitely superior to these clerical warmongers and without entering into conflict with the established law and order. To protect these is the mission of the State. To destroy the enemies of the State is the duty of the State.

4. The National Socialist State is neither prudish nor hypocritical. Still there are certain fundamental mores which must be upheld in the interest of preserving the biological health of the Volk. And we shall not allow these to be altered. This State prosecutes pederasty and child abuse as crimes to be punished by the law, irrespective of who perpetrates them. Five years ago, when leading members of the National Socialist Party were guilty of these crimes, they were shot.¹³⁰ Should other men perpetrate similar transgressions, whether in public, privately, or as members of the clergy, the law will duly prosecute them and sentence them to serve time. Should men of the cloth perpetrate other transgressions, in violation of their avowal of chastity etc., then it is of no interest to us. There has been no mention of this in our press ever. And besides this, this State has interfered only once in the inner organization of the churches, namely on the occasion when, in 1933, I myself attempted to reunite the impotent, fragmented Protestant Land Churches of Germany in the form of a great and mighty Protestant Reich Church. This attempt ran aground on the opposition of individual Länder bishops.¹³¹ And therefore I abandoned my efforts since, in the final instance, it is not our task to strengthen or to defend by force the Protestant Church against its own leaders.

The motivation behind certain statesmen in the democracies abroad taking such a vigorous interest in a few German priests is obviously political. For these very same democratic statesmen remained silent when in Russia hundreds of thousands of priests were hacked to pieces and their bodies burnt. These democratic statesmen remained equally silent at the brutal slaughter of priests and nuns in Spain, numbering in the tens of thousands, some of whom were even burnt alive. These democratic statesmen could not deny these facts, but they remained silent and nothing broke this silence. In the meantime, upon news of these massacres—and of this I must indeed remind these democratic statesmen—countless National Socialists and Fascist volunteers placed themselves at General Franco's disposal. They did so with the aim of precluding an escalation of the conflict, to prevent this Bolshevik bloodbath from enveloping all of Europe and hence the greater part of the civilized world.

January 30, 1939

Now it was clear why National Socialists and Fascists had volunteered for the fighting in Spain: they had simply not been able to stand the sight of slaughtered priests and nuns any longer! In 1936, however, as the conflict had raged to the South, Hitler had oddly enough published an ordinance in the Reich Law Gazette detailing that any German participating in the Spanish Civil War would be jailed, even if he had only instigated others to take part.¹⁵²

Now, three years later, Hitler thought the moment had come to admit publicly to the role Germany had played in the conflict. The fall of Barcelona had brought an end to the war within reach. Naturally, Hitler did not want to miss out on sharing the laurels, although he qualified his statement by insisting that the Reich had done so only in defense of European culture.

It was concern for European culture and the essence of civilization which led Germany to take sides in this struggle between Nationalist Spain and the Bolsheviks who attempted to destroy it. It is indeed a pitiful sign of the mentality abroad that people there cannot conceive of so selfless an intervention. Alas, National Socialists shared in General Franco's uprising because of their burning desire to promote his cause: to avert the danger threatening to engulf his country, a danger Germany itself had almost succumbed to.

Therefore, it cannot be sympathy or pity for persecuted servants of God that has mobilized the interest of the democratic citizens in some priests in Germany who have come into conflict with the law. Rather these interest them as German enemies of the state. May they note the following on this topic: we shall protect the German priest as a servant of the Lord, but we shall destroy the priest who is a political foe of the German Reich. We believe this will preclude the development of a situation which, as the experience in Spain has demonstrated, could all too easily escalate into a confrontation of as yet unforeseeable proportions.

As a matter of principle, I should like to state the following on this subject: apparently, certain circles abroad are pervaded by the conviction that the outspoken avowal of sympathy for certain elements who have come into conflict with the law in Germany would bring about an improvement of their situation. In this context, there is perhaps the hope of terrorizing the leadership of the German State by employing certain methods of exerting influence through the media.

This assessment rests on a profound fallacy. For the credence lent to these individuals abroad, and hence implicitly to their anti-governmental activities, merely reassures us in our earlier conviction that the characters in question are in fact traitors. After all, simple opposition to a regime has never elicited equal sympathy from these democracies abroad; and neither has the prosecution nor the sentencing of an individual in political opposition. For when was there ever a stronger opposition movement in Germany than the National Socialist

one? Never were political adversaries suppressed by like base means, persecuted, and hunted as those of the National Socialist Party. To us it is an honor never to have partaken in the sympathy and support extended by a foreign government. Evidently, such support is lent exclusively to those who aim to destroy the German Reich. Hence, in our eyes, the display of such support would indicate the necessity to step up measures previously taken in any such case.

After this tirade, Hitler turned to foreign affairs, relishing his role as the cultured statesman and historian. He enumerated many countries and peoples with which Germany allegedly maintained "excellent relations." Then he concluded with the exclamation: "Men make history!"

In view of the dangers enveloping us today, I regard it as most fortunate to have found states within Europe and beyond Europe which, like the German Volk, have had to struggle hard to preserve their existence: Italy and Japan. In the Occident, Italy and Germany today constitute the most ancient peoples, Italians as the descendants of Ancient Rome and Germans as the descendants of the Germanic tribes, and hence we have been in touch with one another the longest. Already on the occasion of my speech in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome during my visit to Italy, I underlined the tragic nature of the centuries-long and fruitless confrontation between this most mighty of cultured peoples of the Ancient world and the young German Volk, which belonged to a new world coming into being. These clashes were due largely to the lack of any natural frontier separating the two peoples and to a multitude of other circumstances.

But from these contacts throughout the millenniums sprang a community, one tied not only by linkage of blood, but by a shared historical and cultural past, a heritage of supreme significance. What precisely the Germanic peoples owe to Antiquity in terms of the evolution of statehood, realization of ethnic affinity, and in the sphere of general cultural development, defies measurement and description in its totality. Two thousand years have passed since. And the time came when we ourselves were called on to make a contribution, and we did so generously. Throughout, we remained closely linked to the Italian people, spiritually, culturally, and historically.

The 19th century heralded a process of political unification, strikingly alike in both instances. The Germanic tribes united in the German Reich, the Italian people came together in the Italian Kingdom. And the year 1866 even witnessed both peoples entering side by side into the struggle to form new states.¹³³

Now, for a second time, these peoples are experiencing a similar development. A man of secular standing was the first to oppose successfully to the democratic world of ideas, which had become barren, a forceful new idea which reigned victorious within a few years' time. What Fascism means to Italy is difficult to imagine. What it has contributed to the preservation of the culture of man is of astronomic proportions.

Striding through Rome or Florence, who can help being overcome by the contemplation of what fate these unique monuments of human creativity might have met with had it not been for Mussolini and Fascism, which pulled Italy back from the brink of Bolshevist oblivion? Germany, too, faced this danger. Here National Socialism wrought the miracle of rescue. And the belief in a new Renaissance in our day and age clings to these two states in the imagination of countless men of all races. The solidarity between these two regimes represents far more than simple, egotistical self-interest. This solidarity holds the promise of Europe's rescue from its threatened destruction by Bolshevism.

As Italy strode forth in its heroic struggle for its right to existence in Abyssinia, Germany sided with it as its friend. This friendship was more than repaid in the year 1938. May no one in the world doubt National Socialist Germany's loyalty, in which it shall not waver. In the interest of peace, let there remain no doubts that, should any power initiate hostilities against Italy, for whatever reason, this will automatically call Germany to its friend's side.¹³⁴

Above all, one should not heed false counsel by those who vegetate in the various countries as isolated, bourgeois weaklings who fail to comprehend that in the life of nations, wisdom implies not cowardice, but courage and honor.

As regards National Socialist Germany, it is painfully aware of the destiny awaiting it should Fascist Italy be wrestled to the ground by an international agglomeration of forces, irrespective of pretenses. We know these consequences and we shall cold-bloodedly (*eiskalt*) look them straight in the eye.

There will not be a repetition of the fate of Prussia from 1805 to 1806 in German history. Those weaklings who then counseled the King of Prussia counsel no one in today's Germany. The National Socialist State knows of the inherent dangers and undertakes the necessary steps to prepare for its defense.

Just as I know our own Wehrmacht is quite capable of standing up even under the greatest of strains of a military nature, I know this to be true of the military might of Italy. For as no one can judge the present German Army by the standards of the old Federal Army around 1848, no one can assess the present Fascist Italy by the standards of the old, warring Italian states.¹³⁵

Only a hysterical, mean-spirited press, as obstinate as it is tactless, can so quickly repress memories of the embarrassment it suffered through its false prophecies of Italy's Abyssinian campaign. And its present assessment of the Nationalist forces under General Franco affords it a similar embarrassment once over.

Men make history!

They forge the tools to mold history and, above all, they lend them their spirit. Great men are no more than the strongest, most concentrated representation of a Volk. National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy are sufficiently strong to secure peace in the face of any infringement and stand determined to bring to a successful close this conflict which irresponsible forces have far too thoughtlessly embarked on.

After Hitler had let the Western Powers know about the supposed invincibility of the German and Italian military, he continued his speech on a more subdued note.

He insisted that the Anti-Comintern Pact served one purpose exclusively, namely, "to arrest the menace of a progressive Bolshevization of a world blind to this danger;" and he expressed the hope that "one day, the Anti-Comintern Pact may be appreciated as a focal point around which gathered a group of powers whose most salient ambition lay in the thwarting of this satanic phenomenon imperiling peace and culture world-wide."

A mere seven months later, Hitler sealed a historic pact allying National Socialist Germany to this "satanic phenomenon." On January 30, 1939, however, Hitler entertained no misgivings about his righteous campaign against Bolshevism. He proclaimed:

This does not mean we Germans desire war, as an irresponsible press would like to have it, but that we

1. appreciate other peoples' wish to secure for themselves a share in the goods of this world, in accordance with their numbers, their courage, and their intrinsic value, and that therefore we

2. recognize these rights which oblige us to take a common stance in the pursuit of our common interests.

Above all, we shall not yield to threats or attempts at blackmail under any circumstances!

Our relations to Japan are determined by this realization and the firm determination to arrest the menace of a progressive Bolshevization of a world blind to this danger. One day, the Anti-Comintern Pact may be appreciated as a focal point around which gathered a group of powers whose most salient ambition lay in the thwarting of this satanic phenomenon imperiling peace and culture worldwide. Within the past two years, the Japanese people has repeatedly and tangibly demonstrated its splendid heroism and, undoubtedly, it is a swordsman in the service of mankind on the other side of the globe. Its potential collapse would be to the detriment of the cultured peoples within Europe and beyond and would irrevocably herald the Bolshevization of the Far East. And no people can wish for such a development, other than perhaps international Jewry, which has an interest in this, too.

And if indeed in this past year mighty exertions were permitted to come to a peaceful conclusion, then we are grateful for this not only to Mussolini. As mentioned in the first part of this speech, we extend our thanks also to those other two statesmen who, in the hour of critical decision, valued peace more highly than persistence in a wrong. Germany places no territorial demands on either England or France, other than perhaps a restitution of its former colonies. Yet, although a resolution of this question is highly desirable, this issue most assuredly does not warrant the outbreak of open hostilities.

If Europe today is plagued by strenuous tensions, then this is due primarily

to agitation in an unaccountable and irresponsible press. It allows not a single day to pass by without spreading disquiet among mankind by propagating false alarms, as ludicrous as they are libelous. The liberties taken in this context by the various organs of this worldwide poisoning of wells (*Weltbrunnenvergiftung*) can be regarded only as criminal wrong-doing. In recent days, there has been an attempt to place radio journalism at the service of this internationally instigated campaign. I wish to pronounce this warning here: if certain countries do not immediately desist from airing broadcasts targeted at Germany, then we shall respond accordingly.¹³⁶ And then I hope statesmen from these countries will not venture to approach me with the sincere desire to restore normal relations between our states.

For I remain convinced that our educational campaign will be far more effective than the campaign of lies instigated by these international Jewish agitators. And the announcement of American film companies of their intention to produce anti-Nazi—i.e. anti-German—films, will only lead to our German producers creating anti-Semitic films in the future.¹³⁷ And in this instance, too, certain elements would do well not to deceive themselves as to the effect: a multitude of states and peoples exist today who would be most receptive to such an educational campaign expanding their comprehension of this important issue.

I believe that, should we succeed in arresting the activities of the Jewish-international press agitators and their propaganda, then a reconciliation between peoples would be speedily attained. These elements alone persistently place their hopes on war. I, however, believe in a long-lasting peace.

It was only natural for Hitler to wish for peace in the West, i.e. with Great Britain in particular. All he wanted was a *carte blanche* for his undertakings in the East, an area which he understood to be “none of [the Englishmen’s] business” in the first place. It was equally beyond him why the Western Powers could not be “reasonable” and accept his hand extended in a genuine offer of friendship and peace. Hitler was not a man to give up easily and therefore he renewed his efforts in the vain hope of interesting London, at long last, in the Anglo-German alliance he had always dreamt of.

For is there truly a conflict of interest between England and Germany, for instance? I have often enough stated that there is no German man and especially no National Socialist who even as much as dreams of interfering with the vested interest of the British Empire. And repeatedly the voice of reason was heard to reign in England as well, and we have indeed heard of Englishmen whose calm reflection has led them to espouse a similar stance toward Germany.

It would be a cause for great happiness throughout the world, should these two peoples enter into confiding cooperation with each other. And the same holds true for our relations with France.

While Hitler had generously allocated time to speak on the previous subjects, he treated the remainder of the world's states in a cursory manner. His account carried him swiftly from Poland all the way to South America:

These days bear witness to the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of our Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. There is little dissent today among those who truly love peace as to the value of this agreement. Just imagine where developments might have taken Europe in the interim, had it not been for the conclusion of this pact which truly signaled a great relief for all involved. Poland's most outstanding marshal and patriot¹³⁸ rendered his people as great a service as the National Socialist State's leadership rendered the German Volk. And, in the course of the tense months last year, German-Polish friendship became a reassuring factor in the otherwise troubled political life in Europe.

Our relations with Hungary are based on a long-standing, well-trying friendship and shared interests. Each people has traditionally avowed its high regard for the other.¹³⁹ Germany rejoiced in participating in the restitution for a misfortune inflicted on Hungary.

One state that has commanded our Volk's attention ever since the Great War has been Yugoslavia. The high regard which German soldiers once felt for this valiant people has become ever the more profound and has fostered the development of a sincere friendship. A sharp increase in trade has marked our economic relations with Yugoslavia, as with states friendly to us such as Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, and Turkey. The primary cause has lain in the complementary nature of these economies to the German one.

Germany today considers itself fortunate to possess pacified frontiers to the West, South, and North.¹⁴⁰ Our close relations to states in the West and in the North, i.e. to Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic States, are the cause of further rejoicing, all the more so as recent times have witnessed an increasing tendency to renounce certain war-laden paragraphs of the League of Nations.¹⁴¹

To a greater extent than any other state, Germany appreciates knowing that truly friendly neutral states reside along its borders. May Czechoslovakia succeed in its search for inner peace and the restoration of law and order so as to preclude a relapse into the times of former State President Beneš.¹⁴² The adherence of Bulgaria and Manchukuo to the Anti-Comintern Pact¹⁴³ is an agreeable symptom of resistance worldwide to the threat posed by Jewish-internationalist, Bolshevik agitation.

The amicable relations between the German Reich and the South American states are at present being invigorated in the economic sphere.

Our relations with the North American Union have suffered unduly because of a smear campaign. With the pretext that Germany threatens America's independence and even its liberty, it has placed an entire continent at the service of all too transparent political and financial interests. These are attempting to agitate against those European states governed by the people for the people. All of us are aware that these elements are not representative

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of the will of millions of American citizens who do not doubt for one minute, despite bombardment by a 'gigantic Jewish-capitalist instigated propaganda campaign—via press, radio, and film—that there is not a word of truth in all these claims. Germany desires to live in peace and friendship with all countries, America included. It declines any involvement in America's internal affairs and hence, equally vigorously, it rejects American involvement in Germany's internal affairs.

Whether or not Germany seeks maintenance of economic ties or promotes business with the states of Latin America is really not the business of anyone but these states themselves. Germany is a sovereign state and a great Reich. Its policies are not subject to revision by American politicians. In any event, I believe that all the world's states face so many urgent problems at home these days that their peoples would undoubtedly be glad if the statesmen responsible accorded greater attention to domestic issues in their own countries.¹⁴⁴

As concerns Germany, my own experiences have taught me that the tasks to be mastered are so great that they are almost¹⁴⁵ beyond a single man's capacity for insight and concerted action. I can therefore state, both on behalf of my staff and myself, that we are dedicating our lives exclusively to the maintenance and sustenance of our Volk and Reich, both of which can proudly look back on a glorious history spanning the millenniums.

Hitler was now nearing the end of his exposition of several hours. However, he did not easily separate himself from the rostrum. Once again, he felt compelled to reflect on the past and the future. Sentimentally, he pleaded the greatness of the times to which one must sacrifice even "institutions grown dear, cherished recollections, manly pledges of loyalty, and so on." Even the first German dukes would have made these demands, when they formed "wild tribes into higher unions." All collectively had served "as instruments of Providence in the formative process of a nation." And hence, one had to be grateful to the Lord Almighty "to be alive at this time and this hour." Hitler concluded his speech with the following words:

My Deputies, Men of the First Greater German Reichstag!

As I conclude my explanations today, the years of struggle and fulfillment lying behind us now pass once more before my mind's eye. To many these meant the sense and purpose of their entire existence. We know that greater things cannot be granted to our Volk and our own lives.

Without shedding a drop of blood, we succeeded in raising up this great Reich of the German Volk. Let us not forget, however, that this process meant painful sacrifices for some of us: the erasing of many Lander structures; the lowering of their banners; the oblivion of their local traditions. Yet may it be of consolation to these men that no generation involved in the constructive process of our history has been spared similarly painful experiences. Ever

since the first German dukes labored to form wild tribes into higher unions, their endeavors had to obliterate institutions grown dear, cherished recollections, manly pledges of loyalty, and so on.

It was nearly two thousand years before the scattered Germanic tribes emerged as one people; before the countless lands and states forged one Reich. We may now consider this process of the formation of the German nation as having reached its conclusion. The creation of the Greater German Reich represents the culmination of our Volk's thousand-year struggle for existence. As streams of German blood flow together therein, so do traditions of times past, their standards and symbols, and, above all else, all the great men of whom their contemporaries were rightly proud. Small matter whose side they stood on in their day, all those daring dukes, great kings, formidable warlords, mighty emperors, and around them the inspired geniuses and heroes of the past served as instruments of Providence in the formative process of a nation. Insofar as we embrace this great Reich in grateful reverence, the wealth of German history reveals itself to us in all its splendor. Let us thank the Lord Almighty for bestowing on our generation the great blessing to be alive at this time and this hour.

Now Göring—who more than any other man knew how to curry Hitler's favor—rose to add a few words:

Mein Führer!

Your comrades of the first hour are seated before you willing to follow your lead loyally as one united whole; to stride forth at your side in the future also, suffused by the single desire to follow you blindly toward the attainment of the greatest of victories: the victory of our great German Volk. You have led us onward to victories unfathomable. You have restored to us a life worth living, a life splendid and magnificent. It was you who created Greater Germany. How feeble are our expressions of gratitude; words to express our gratitude to you simply defy us! The cries with which we jubilantly hail you presently, mein Führer, these shouts of *Heil* sum up everything we feel within ourselves in respect to inspiration, dedication, love, and loyalty.

Comrades! To our dearly beloved Führer, the creator of Greater Germany: *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

2

At this particular session, the Reichstag unanimously extended the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933,¹⁴⁶ due to expire in two years' time, to remain effective until May 10, 1943.¹⁴⁷ Technically speaking, there was no pressing reason for such a step at this time. The same legislative body had already passed a decree on January 30, 1937¹⁴⁸ which had rescheduled the expiration date for April 1, 1941. Hitler was extremely cautious in all questions regarding power politics, as mentioned earlier. The first historic session of the Greater German Reichstag appeared to him an excellent forum for extending the Enabling Act until 1943. After all, so he speculated, there was no telling whether he would still be in a position to see through a like heavy-handed move in 1941. As a precautionary measure, he himself issued the following "Law on the Tenure of the Reichstag":¹⁴⁹

§ 1

- (1) The Reichstag shall serve for a period of four years.
- (2) Tenure shall commence on election day, and shall terminate four years after the first session of the Reichstag.

§ 2

Within sixty days after the expiry of tenure, a new election shall be held.

§ 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior shall issue specific regulations.

Berlin, January 30, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The emphasis of this particular decree was obviously on Paragraph 1, Section 2. The preceding Reichstag had been elected on April 10, 1938. In violation of the Constitution, this Reichstag was not called into session until this January 30, 1939.¹⁵⁰ Hence, its period of service would not expire on April 10, 1942; instead it would remain in office until

January 30, 1943, legally. According to the new regulation, an election to the Reichstag was to be held within sixty days of this date, i.e. before Sunday, March 30, 1943. The law was obviously intended to circumvent the requirements of Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution.¹⁵¹ The most salient feature of this new regulation was that it contained no stipulation indicating when the new Reichstag was to convene for the first time. Hence, if Hitler so desired, he could easily delay calling on the Reichstag for years and thus avoid a new election. In theory, he could postpone the dissolution of this Reichstag indefinitely as long as he never convened it in the first place.

In view of the extension of the Enabling Act by the Reichstag that day, it would have been only logical had Hitler made use of this same forum to pass the law on the Reichstag. That he refrained from doing so was revealing, because Article II of the Enabling Act provided that governmental laws could deviate from the letter of the Constitution only "to the extent that they do not concern the institutions of the Reichstag or Reichsrat as such."¹⁵² Hitler obviously violated the spirit of this provision by issuing the law on Reichstag tenure, as this undeniably jeopardized the institution of the Reichstag as such. But he alone shouldered, as he once put it,¹⁵³ the responsibility for this action. In any case, he did not venture to place this law before the Reichstag for a vote, although in all likelihood, it would have passed the law as unanimously as it had assented to the prolongation of the Enabling Act. Probably, no one would have noticed the hidden traps that had been set therein.

Hitler's paranoid concern for his position in power politics had proved completely unfounded in the past, but still he lived in constant fear that a stranger might come along and depose him, or capture power in some other manner.¹⁵⁴ Hitler's own rise to power appeared so miraculous to him that he was haunted by the vision, throughout his years in power, of another launching a similarly astounding career.

After the Röhm Purge, Hitler had grown apprehensive about meeting his Volk face to face. He feared the Reichstag no less, as had already been evident in his address on July 13, 1934.¹⁵⁵ At the time, he had sought to explain the murders of June 30, 1934. Before entering the hall, he had armed SS guards wearing steel helmets positioned around the rostrum and dispersed throughout the hall.¹⁵⁶

This precautionary measure was to discourage any assassination attempts by any deputies outraged at the bloodbath. In particular, Hitler feared the Reichstag's disposition in the event he should suffer

some political setback. Speaking before the leading editors of Germany's press in a conference on the passive opposition by German intellectuals on November 10, 1938, he expressed this anxiety in the following manner: "What would happen if we ever suffered a defeat? It is a possibility, gentlemen."¹⁵⁷

Hitler's fear of the Reichstag was not completely unfounded, since this parliamentary body represented what might well be termed the Achilles' heel in his system of governance, as, in theory at least, it made steps in opposition to the government legally permissible. An illegal uprising to oust Hitler was highly improbable. Given the cultural heritage of obedience to authority in Germany, no revolutionary movement could hope for more than initial successes in any such undertaking. Exerting pressure from below, through a mass uprising for instance, was inconceivable. Even in the unlikely event that a protest movement gathered momentum in its early phases, it was doomed to collapse beneath a shower of bullets fired by the members of the Armed Forces, traditionally loyal to whatever regime was in power. Hitler's 1923 Putsch debacle was a textbook example of this historic reality. Moreover, desertions from the governing elite did not imperil Hitler's reign. Any attempt to overthrow Hitler as the legal head of state and government would have required illegal activities. German bureaucrats and officers were not suitable as candidates for such a venture.

The Reichstag presented an entirely different case, however. As the sole parliamentary body empowered to render null and void Hitler's decrees, it possessed the vested authority to remove Hitler from office. While the Reichstag deputies were members of the National Socialist Party, and their appointments to this legal body reflected their ideological reliability, this was no guarantee of their loyalty to Hitler in times of crisis. In the past, this had repeatedly proved to be of concern to him. One has only to think of the case of Gregor Strasser.¹⁵⁸

Every member of the Reichstag had the right to take the floor, to give a speech, or to propose a motion. Hitler was well aware that there was no telling how such a step by one renegade deputy might affect the Reichstag as an entity. All depended on the overall political and military situation and the arguments employed. Hitler was decidedly more aware of this potential vulnerability than of the entire resistance movement within Germany, as he was decidedly more competent in questions of constitutionality and power politics. His greatest nightmare was that, in the wake of some policy disaster, one of the deputies might

unexpectedly rise to speak. With an extensive pool of the Führer's wrongdoings, false prophecies, and fallacies to draw on, the renegade deputy could conceivably conclude his speech with a demand for the impeachment of Hitler.

There was ample reason for Hitler's misgivings, as Mussolini's overthrow on July 25, 1943 proved in retrospect. At a session of the Great Fascist Council, a deputy by the name of Grandi courageously rose to offer this parliamentary body undeniable proof that Mussolini's ill-conceived policies were responsible for the unprecedented debacle Italy now faced. Thereupon, the Italian equivalent of the Reichstag proceeded successfully to pass a vote of no confidence against the Duce. Its enigmatic leader gone, the entire Fascist Party vanished from the political stage as though it had never existed. Yet no man with the stamina of Grandi was to be found among the 884 deputies constituting the Reichstag in Germany.

The situation in 1939 and in particular during the years of war to follow was entirely different from the one faced by Reichstag deputy Wels on March 23, 1933 when the Social Democrat sought unsuccessfully to counter Hitler.¹⁵⁹

To effect the removal of Hitler by entirely legal means, it would have sufficed had one of the Reichstag deputies vigorously challenged Hitler, acting as a sort of counsel for the prosecution on behalf of the German Reich. Any man attempting to parry Hitler would, admittedly, have had to command considerable courage and intelligence, as well as extraordinary oratorical prowess. Moreover, he would have had to boast a familiarity with the Constitution and an understanding of its pitfalls, a subject in which Hitler excelled. Had there been such a man among the deputies, he might possibly have risen to request innocently Göring's permission to take the floor. Most likely, the President of the Reichstag would have accorded the deputy this opportunity to voice his laudation of the Führer—what else could possibly be his design? Now the fictitious deputy might have reiterated Hitler's assertions of his alleged desire for peace and his loyalty to treaties, of the alleged neutrality of England, of the alleged crack-up of Russia, of the alleged invincibility of the German Wehrmacht, etc. A rigorous comparison of these claims to the undeniable realities of the day might well have prepared the ground for a motion toward a vote of no confidence against the Führer. A two-thirds majority in favor of such a resolution would have sufficed to remove Hitler and to call for the constitution of a new government.

Of course, it is entirely possible that such a motion would have failed. The renegade deputy in this speculative example might have been booed by the audience, arrested, or shot at once. Nevertheless, given careful maneuvering on his part as well as favorable circumstances, he might well have succeeded in the end. After a vote of no confidence, Hitler might have reacted by retreating into some form of exile, followed by a large number of his adherents, to launch his struggle for power at a later date.¹⁶⁰ Or, possibly, he might have committed suicide.

Many of Hitler's early followers had premonitions of his ultimate failure since they had more intimate knowledge of his person than others, such as conservatives and officers for instance. Better acquainted with his ambitious designs, these NSDAP members had looked with open eyes at Hitler's ruthless determination ever since the events of June 30, 1934. Once the Second World War broke out, they grasped how tragically mistaken Hitler's assumption of British neutrality had been and that from this point onward, Hitler was merely improvising and had lost the assurance flaunted previously. Several members of the Reichstag would flee Germany in the course of the Second World War, such as Fritz Thyssen and Rudolf Hess. Others committed suicide, like Gauleiter Josef Bürckel.¹⁶¹ Even the relatively dense Himmler realized that Hitler's policies heralded disaster and, at the very latest from 1943 on, desperately searched for a way out.

Despite an abundance of good intentions, there were very few outstanding personalities among the deputies who could have mustered the courage necessary to openly oppose so extraordinary a man as Hitler. Not even Graf Helldorff,¹⁶² a high-ranking SA leader and President of the Berlin Police, could make any pretenses to such a distinction. This intelligent and courageous sympathizer of the resistance movement was not used to speaking publicly nor did he command the legal knowledge required for such a sophisticated attack.

While opposition within the Reichstag was precluded from the start, as no deputy dared to openly challenge Hitler, he was cautious enough not to take this for granted. He took every step imaginable to curtail the Reichstag's ability to take action. The public by and large paid no attention. The press was not allowed to publish anything pertaining to the law of January 30, 1939 concerning the Reichstag.¹⁶³ All was well, as long as no deputy bothered to draw the pertinent conclusions on the law's ramifications.

During the war, Hitler approached the Reichstag with utmost caution. He preferred not to call on the parliamentary body to

convene, even on as innocuous an occasion as the anniversary of his rise to power.¹⁶⁴

On those extremely rare occasions when Hitler did in fact summon the deputies, he invariably used the Reichstag as a forum for the announcement of some great achievement or astounding military success. This was the case on September 1, 1939, when “retribution” for Poland’s alleged aggression was to be celebrated, closely followed by a report of victory over Poland on October 6, 1939. A number of further dates and events merited a session of the Reichstag: July 19, 1940 marking the fall of France; May 4, 1941 witnessing the conquest of the Balkans; December 11, 1941 heralding a declaration of war on the United States. The Reichstag deputies were called together one last time on April 26, 1942 in order to issue Hitler a virtual *carte blanche* to dismiss any member of the judiciary or of the administration as he saw fit.

This effectively heralded the end of the Greater German Reichstag. Even when, on May 10, 1943, the Enabling Act expired, Hitler did not deem it advisable to summon the deputies. He himself attended to the matter as the chief executive. Two months later, the Great Fascist Council effected Mussolini’s ignominious dismissal, which affirmed Hitler’s conviction that he had dealt wisely with this dangerous forum. He now ensured his complete control over the members of this parliamentary body by ordering police surveillance of the deputies.

On January 30, 1939, Hitler issued a further decree which was equally indicative of his preoccupations at this time. The issue at stake was the preservation of power in Austria. On the surface, everything appeared to be going well there as Gauleiter Josef Bürckel, an expert in questions of territorial annexations, remained securely installed in Vienna as Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich.¹⁶⁵ This administrative post had been established by a decree dated April 23, 1938. Bürckel would have had to relinquish his position on May 1, 1939, according to the provisions of the decree. However, Hitler’s goals in Austria were too ambitious to be attained within one year: he desired the complete erasure of Austria as a separate entity from the political map of Europe. The problem arose of what to do about the dreams of many Austrian National Socialists who envisioned their country as carrying out a special mission in the future life of the Reich.

To deal with the matter swiftly, Hitler issued the following decree on January 30:¹⁶⁶

January 30, 1939

I have heeded the request of Party Comrade Odilo Globocnik¹⁶⁷ to relieve him of his post as Gauleiter of the Gau of Vienna. I appoint Party comrade Josef Bürckel as NSDAP Gauleiter of the Gau of Vienna, while he retains his other positions.

Adolf Hitler

Thus all Austrians, in particular the citizens of Vienna, could rejoice that Hitler's Reichskommissar would stay on a bit longer—whether they liked it or not.

On the sixth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, he received fewer congratulatory telegrams than customarily. The German print media published only four notes from foreign statesmen: Mussolini, Franco, the Hungarian Regent Horthy, and the Hungarian Minister-President Imrédy.¹⁶⁸

The telegram of the Italian Head of State read:

Unanimously rallying to you, the German Volk, in its great political, military, and social institutions, celebrates the sixth anniversary of your rise to power. I feel compelled to express to you my heartfelt and comradely best wishes, the roots of which are based on the sincere and profound friendship linking our two peoples through the Axis of this steadfast alliance for the present and for the future.

Mussolini

Hitler wired the following telegram in response to this avowal:

I wish to relate my heartfelt thanks for the comradely congratulations extended to me today on the sixth anniversary of my rise to power. It is with particular satisfaction and rejoicing that I accept these as a renewed symbol of our solidarity and friendship.

With the very best of wishes to you, I remain, Your Adolf Hitler

In 1939, the anniversary celebrations culminated in a midnight, torch-lit parade along Wilhelmstrasse, where the columns filed by beneath the Chancellery's balcony. There Hitler stood perched to observe the festivities in the company of Göring and Hess.¹⁶⁹ The SS Standarte *Feldherrnhalle*¹⁷⁰ headed the festive military parade, its men proudly shouldering their rifles. Various Party formations and Labor Service delegations followed. Sporting steel helmets and rifles, the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* made up the tail-end of the procession.

On January 31, Hitler once again entertained guests at the new Chancellery. A delegation of approximately eighty cavalry officers from Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary had accepted Hitler's invitation.¹⁷¹ The deputies were in Berlin to participate in the Nineteenth International Equestrian Com-

petitions. The military attachés of the respective embassies accompanied the participants to the reception at the Chancellery where all of them were afforded ample opportunity to admire the new seat of government in the Reich capital. Hitler was a most congenial host and generously donated an honorary award for the tournament entitled “Preis der Nationen.”¹⁷²

On the following day, Hitler personally attended the qualification rounds in the Deutschlandhalle at Berlin.¹⁷³ Also on February 1, Hitler decreed a restructuring of the Luftwaffe. The Air Force was to be subdivided into three separate Fleet Commands, the commanders of which bore the titles listed below:

Chief of the First Air Fleet and Commander of the Eastern Section:
General Kesselring.¹⁷⁴

Chief of the Second Air Fleet and Commander of the Northern Section: General Felmy.¹⁷⁵

Chief of the Third Air Fleet and Commander of the Western Section: General Sperrle.¹⁷⁶

In addition, Hitler effected the following promotions: State Secretary Colonel General Milch¹⁷⁷ was named Inspector General of the Luftwaffe; General Stumpff¹⁷⁸ became Chief of the Anti-Aircraft Forces; Lieutenant General Udet¹⁷⁹ was appointed Aircraft Master General. As Hitler emphasized in the decree, these steps served the “greatest possible concentration of all forces,”¹⁸⁰ and accomplished “another decisive step forward in the buildup of the Luftwaffe.”

On February 1, Hitler brought together art treasures that were formerly part of the Schack Gallery in Munich¹⁸¹ with works of art from the same period that previously had been in the possession of the Bavarian State. These objects of art were to be integrated in a permanent collection renamed the “Schack Gallery of German masters of the 19th century,” with its seat in Munich.¹⁸² The State of Bavaria would become the official proprietor of the gallery. The Bavarian Minister-President was to administer the collection “in accordance with the Führer’s instructions.”

February 4 witnessed the publication of additional information on the precise nature of the personnel changes on the Reichsbank board of directors. Hitler had apparently dismissed three of Schacht’s former colleagues in order to assign more ideologically reliable men to their posts.

The official notice detailing the changes in personnel read as follows:¹⁸³

The Führer has relieved of their duties the following members of the Reichsbank Board of Directors: Privy Finance Counselor Dr. Wilhelm Vocke, Carl Ehrhardt, and Kurt Blessing. The following men received new appointments to the Reichsbank Board of Directors: the Director of the Reichsbank, Friedrich Wilhelm; the departmental head in the Reich Ministry of Economics, Ministerialrat Kurt Lange; the Ministerialrat in the Reich Ministry of Finance, Walter Bayrhofer. The previous official positions of the latter two individuals are not affected.

On February 7, Hitler conveyed his congratulations to the Emperor of Manchukuo,¹⁸⁴ Pungi (Pu Yi), on his birthday.¹⁸⁵ This conspicuous wire served two purposes. For one, it was to draw attention to Manchukuo's assent to the Anti-Comintern Pact. Second, this public recognition of Manchukuo as a sovereign state was to reward the Emperor for his decision to side with Germany.

On February 9, Hitler honored Rear Admiral von Reuter, who now lived in Potsdam, with a congratulatory telegram on his seventieth birthday.¹⁸⁶

On the next day, Hitler ordered a wreath placed at the tomb of Sir Henry Deterding,¹⁸⁷ in Dibbin in the district of Mecklenburg.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Hitler offered his condolences to the Vatican on the death of Pope Pius XI. The following official note was published:¹⁸⁹

On the occasion of the demise of Pope Pius XI, the Führer requested the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery, Dr. Meissner, to offer his condolences to the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Orsenigo.

Flags flew at half-mast in front of the Presidential Chancellery, the Reich Chancellery, the Reichstag building, and the Foreign Office.

February 10 was indeed busy at the Reich Chancellery, as numerous receptions had been scheduled for that day.¹⁹⁰ The Yugoslav Envoy Cincar-Markovich¹⁹¹ called on Hitler to bid his official farewell as he returned home to assume the post of Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister. He was followed by the Spanish Ambassador, de Magaz, who presented Hitler with a handwritten letter from Franco. The main event of the day was a reception of all Group Commanders serving with the Army. These were afforded the opportunity of duly admiring the new Chancellery building.¹⁹² Before an extensive tour of the grounds, they assembled in the main conference hall to hear a lengthy lecture on one of Hitler's favorite topics, "the tasks and duties of the officer in the National Socialist State."

On Sunday, February 12, Hitler graced with his presence a "community stew dinner" in the new Reich Chancellery's courtyard.

More than 1,400 Party members, representatives of the National Socialist Party News Agency, and volunteers for the Winterhilfswerk had been asked to participate in the conspicuously grand display of simplicity. Eight army field kitchens dished out peas with bacon. The following effusive official communiqué reported on Hitler's participation in the event:¹⁹³

Ushered in by thunderous cries of *Sieg Heil*, the Führer himself appeared among his guests to the boundless joy of everyone present. Accompanied by SA Obergruppenführer Brückner, Reichsleiter Bormann, and State Secretary Hanke, the Führer stuffed bills into numerous collecting tins stretched out to him. The Führer further made sizeable contributions to collections by numerous other Party comrades who handed him "their" tins, to their great rejoicing. From the staircase, he bade the assembled party farewell as a frenzy of gratitude was showered upon him.

On February 12, Hitler conveyed his congratulations to the eldest member of the SA, Andreas Hofmann, a resident of Presseck, who celebrated his ninety-third birthday.¹⁹⁴ On the same day, Hitler also received the Slovak politician Dr. Tuka¹⁹⁵ to whom he indicated that he favored the Slovak quest for independence.¹⁹⁶ Hitler conceived of Slovakia as an ideal base for launching his attack on the newly established Czechoslovakian Republic. To this end, he strove to fuel the civil strife between the Czechs and Slovaks. Within a few weeks, so he reasoned, this existing controversy would no doubt sharpen, given a little encouragement. Unrest in these areas, a possible declaration of Slovak independence, and state attempts at its suppression, would furnish an excellent pretext for a German military intervention. In his understanding and in that of the more faithful adherents of National Socialism, such a development would suffice to rationalize, and hence to excuse, the breach of the Munich Agreement. This argument, however, was unacceptable to the international community. Hitler was to realize this later to his great astonishment and annoyance.

In mid-February, the Führer was still undaunted by any such misgivings. He felt confident that the time had come for a display of the Third Reich's military might. The British especially needed reminding that he was at least as "tough a fellow" as Bismarck.

On a side note, Hitler was by no means one of the more ardent admirers of Bismarck. In numerous speeches and in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler showed that he disapproved of several of Bismarck's policy objectives, like the idea of a Smaller Germany and Prussia's strategic alliance with Austria. Moreover, he judged Bismarck's dealings with

the Social Democrats and the Center Party to have been extremely unwise. In Hitler's eyes, Bismarck had been a man of limited resources who had merely smoothed the path for a man to succeed him: a man of greater mental capacities and faculties whose name was to be Adolf Hitler; a man whom Providence had chosen to fulfill the longings of Germany's most renowned sons in all spheres: culture, politics, and military affairs.

When Hitler now proceeded to name the first heavy battleship *Bismarck*, the intent was a rather transparent one: by conjuring up the specter of the old "Iron Chancellor," he hoped this would remind the British of the might of Imperial Germany and of its formidable fleet.¹⁹⁷ Haunted by the fear that Germany might one day resurrect its naval supremacy and thereby threaten their interests, the British would undoubtedly give in to Germany's implicit demands regarding Eastern Europe and be transformed into a more conciliatory partner in world politics. Should they still remain recalcitrant on this account, then indeed he would see to the creation of a German fleet even mightier than that of William II.

At this point, Hitler was no doubt contemplating such a build-up of the German fleet,¹⁹⁸ despite the alleged "honest intentions" to limit its tonnage to 35 percent of the total tonnage of English vessels.¹⁹⁹ While this percentage was still far off, once he had reached it, he would proceed as he pleased.

Hitler's choice of *Bismarck* as the name for the first great battleship exceeding 35,000 tons demonstrated once more his scant knowledge of history, even German history. For one thing, Bismarck would have been strongly opposed to provoking England in so obvious a manner. He had been one of the few German politicians and statesmen who had appreciated the might and significance of Great Britain in world politics and thus had been moderate in his demands. It had been because of this realization that Bismarck had thought little of the Kaiser's naval policy—undoubtedly, he would not have been pleased to see his name on the bow of this ship which symbolized a similar policy of confrontation.

On February 13, Hitler left Berlin for Friedrichsruh where he placed a wreath at Bismarck's grave.²⁰⁰ This deferential act evidently was to prepare him spiritually for the festivities at the ship's launching. The following communiqué was released regarding Hitler's visit:²⁰¹

While journeying to Hamburg, the Führer stopped on Monday at Friedrichsruh, where he placed a laurel wreath at the tomb of Prince Otto von

Bismarck, the Chancellor of the Old Reich. Thereafter, the Führer was the guest of Prince von Bismarck and his wife,²⁰² at the Friedrichsruh Castle. On both arrival and departure, the population of Friedrichsruh and the surrounding countryside enthusiastically acclaimed the Führer, whom they had observed in deeply moved silence in the solemn act of placing the wreath at the grave.

Late in the evening of February 13, Hitler reached Hamburg. A guard of honor greeted him at the Dammtor train station and from there, he proceeded to the Hotel Atlantic where he set up quarters. When he left the hotel on February 14, at 12:15 p.m., several Party formations lined up to form a cordon through which his automobile passed. At the St. Pauli gangway, he boarded the state yacht *Hamburg*, as nearby canons fired a round of 21 shots in his honor. From there, he proceeded to inspect the Blohm and Voss shipyard. Anchored there, the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*, the cruiser *Nürnberg*, and the torpedo boats forming the Fourth Flotilla greeted the passing state column. At the docks, State Counselor Blohm reported the completion of the new battleship type 'F'.²⁰³

Thereupon, Hitler mounted to the rostrum to present the following address on the occasion of the vessel's christening:²⁰⁴

Germans!

On the day of our assumption of power six years ago commenced the resurrection of the German Wehrmacht. It is to secure the existence of the Reich and to enable its Führer to pursue the justified interests of the nation successfully. As the sharpest instrument of war, it is to take under its protection a just peace and help shield it. Simultaneously with the establishment of the German Army and the creation of a new German Luftwaffe, we established a new Navy, one sufficient to meet our needs. We Germans still feel a terrific tug at our hearts when we think of the fate of the Fleet sunk twenty years ago, after its glorious struggle throughout four years.²⁰⁵ National Socialist Germany sought its resurrection with particular dedication and love.

The circumstances made necessary and acceptable the restrictions in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement on the number of large-sized ships. This has led to the necessity of achieving a compromise in the christening of these vessels between, on the one hand, the Navy's understandable desire to accommodate its heritage and, on the other hand, the new Wehrmacht's significance to the Volk and the National Socialist State. The pool of names from which to draw inspiration in the naming of large entities of our fleet is therefore restricted to those men who deserve an honorary mention in our history, to be immortalized in these gigantic works of nationalist feats and inspirations, or else to those men whose names have already been inscribed honorably on the pages of our history and whose greatness commands us to respect this tradition. And it was thus that the names of two great soldiers were given to the first two German battleships to serve with our new Navy.²⁰⁶ These

men undertook, in times of the greatest degradation of Prussia, to realize the principal idea of a *Volksbeer* (people's army) and to fight for the restoration of their country's external liberty. The names *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* have already borne witness to a naval history and a glorious heroic struggle on their own.²⁰⁷

Before us today we see the first giant of a new squadron of 35,000-ton battleships. We shall witness its launch momentarily, the first in the days of the new Greater German Reich. After a period of complete collapse and decay, National Socialism has gripped the nation, elevated it, and led it toward gigantic domestic and foreign victories. And the signs of the time compel me all the more fervently to honor the memory of those whose undertakings in their day and age created the preconditions for this Greater Germany of today.

One giant rises above all of those who could lay claim as well to having prepared the path toward a Greater Germany: Bismarck.²⁰⁸ The life of this one heroic man reflects the history of an age. Amidst the waning relief felt as Prussia and Germany emerged from a disquieting age, when the best of Germans began to entertain doubts as to the rise of the desired liberty for the German nation and had but a faint, imperfect vision of a new German Reich, a child is born. Thirty-three years later, the deputy von Bismarck begins to emerge from a revolutionary, agitated epoch; highly ambitious in its ideals; highly ambivalent in the methods it employed. Those surrounding him grow increasingly attentive to the young man.

Two years later, he appears at the Bundestag in Frankfurt in his official capacity as the Envoy of Prussia. Eleven years thereafter, a King of great character entrusts him with the leadership of Prussia and the conduct of its foreign affairs. Within barely eight years, he assures hegemony in Germany for a Prussia previously in the shadow of the Habsburg monarchy. He leads Prussia onward, his efforts crowned by the creation of a new German Reich.

This culminating event was not predetermined. It was not one whose time had come in due course, as certain dunces (*Einfaltspinsel*) maintain. No, this result was wrought by a historically isolated phenomenon, a man truly blessed by the Lord.

And this struggle for a new German Reich is a struggle not only against all sorts of imaginable internal forces and their opposition. Liberals and democrats hate this Junker. As late as 1867, conservatives implore the King to distance himself from this treacherous reformer; from this revolutionary who seeks the destruction of Prussia. Clerical politicians fight him with teeth clenched for they clearly recognize him as the founder of an imperial might; one for whom they harbor only hatred. In the eyes of the Marxists, this man represents a stabilizing force in a social order which ultimately undertakes the solution of social problems without setting fire to the entire world in due course. The egoism of stubborn, decrepit dynasties unites with the hunger for power of Länder politicians. The ambitions and recklessness of parliamentarians mobilize the print press and agitate the Volk. Certain females (*Frauenzimmer*) plunge themselves into the nerve-racking pursuit of intrigues at the Royal Court. At each step, this great man of genius, alone in his age, encounters the opposition of nobodies. It is truly a struggle of giants, as only a man can

estimate who himself has been forced to lead a struggle in a similarly hostile environment [i.e. Hitler].

What we so greatly admire in this man, besides his daunting insight and wisdom, is the enormous willpower which insured him against any cowardly pretenses. In three instances,²⁰⁹ his sense of duty pressured him to take up his sword in order to resolve matters which, according to his most sacred conviction, he held not to be answerable by means of a negotiated majority decision. And for what this giant wrought within himself—for this, all Germans owe him never-ending gratitude. By mastering the challenging, inner transition from a Prussian statesman to a German *Reichsschmied* (smith of the Reich) he forged not only an empire, but also created the prerequisites for the erection of what is today called Greater Germany. Despite scruples, he also laid the foundation for the National Socialist State as one of unity and cohesion. His persistent efforts led, as a logical conclusion, to an overcoming of the psychologically divisive prejudices between various tribes and Länder, and the difference in interests.

In those instances in which he was denied success, his efforts had been doomed from the outset, as he lacked the means to pursue this struggle to its ultimate conclusion. The resistance encountered from a filibustering league of Center Party priests paralyzed him as much as did his own attempt to exorcize the spirit of Marxism from the German Volk by all means at his disposal. His attempt to resolve purely social problems by state intervention inspires admiration even today. Unfortunately, he had not an inkling of the potential of an effective propaganda campaign. Most crucially, he lacked a certain tool in his pursuit founded on a *weltanschaulich* legitimate idea which alone could assure the long-term success of his efforts. And thus, thanks to his genius, his outstanding character and valor, he resolved the state's problems in his day and age with the governmental means then available. Nevertheless, his attempt to lead a crusade with governmental means against powers that transcended the state was doomed to ultimate failure.

The Second Reich collapsed as he himself had sensed in torturous premonitions. He to whom the German nation owed all, who, after endless days of Germany's degradation and shame, restored respect to the name of our Volk, might and strength to the Imperial Reich, and colonial possessions which linked the Reich to the remotest parts of the world, he received bad recompense for his troubles. His removal from office and the later hostility of certain political circles, these both constitute a lamentable chapter of national ingratitude. Providence proved more just than man. There are no longer princes and dynasties, politicized Center Party priests and Social Democrats, liberalism, Länder parliaments, or Reichstag parties. All those who rendered difficult the historic struggle of this one man outlived him for but a few years. National Socialism, however, through the vehicle of its Movement, has imparted to the German Volksgemeinschaft the spiritual and organizing abilities of a world view capable of destroying the enemies of the Reich from now on for all eternity. In the sixth year of the National Socialist revolution, we bear witness today to the launch of this third, now mightiest of battleships in our new fleet.

As Führer of the German Volk and Chancellor of this Reich, I cannot conceive of a better name to give this ship than the name of this man who, as a fearless valiant knight created this German Reich, whose restoration from bitter despair and whose miraculous growth Providence has bestowed on us.

German construction workers, engineers, and dock workers have created the enormous hull of this proud giant which will ride the waves! May the German soldiers and officers, who will have the honor to command this ship one day, prove themselves worthy of the name! May the spirit of the Iron Chancellor suffuse them, may it accompany them in their actions during many sorties in times of peace! Should it be necessary, may his example inspiringly remind and precede them, may it illuminate the hours of hardest fulfilment of their duty!

It is with this fervent wish that the German Volk greets its new battleship, the *Bismarck*!

After Hitler's concluding remarks, Admiral General Raeder addressed the audience:

We thank the Führer for bestowing on this new battleship of the Third Reich's Navy so proud a name which obliges us to the Great Smith of the Second Reich. We acknowledge the high calling of his name. On this day, mein Führer, we pledge ourselves, the crew of this ship and the entire Navy, always to bear in mind the high calling and enormous responsibility—unto our last breath.

“Unto our last breath;” this was a maxim to Hitler's liking. He had always greatly admired the naval officers' strict code of conduct. And, indeed, the men of the *Bismarck* were to keep their promise in the end, as they did not receive permission to surrender to the enemy despite the hopelessness of the situation. On that day in February 1939, *Bismarck*'s granddaughter, Dorothee von Loewenfeld,²¹⁰ assuredly had no premonition of the future tragedy as she mounted the rostrum and proclaimed: “On the Führer's order, I christen you the *Bismarck*.”

On February 17, Hitler established a new award in recognition of “loyal services rendered in the protection of customs frontiers.”²¹¹

Later that day, he gave a lengthy speech at the festivities opening the annual International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in the Berlin Exhibition Halls on Kaiserdamm. This particular address was the last he could deliver on such an occasion, as it was the last exhibition of this kind to take place in the Third Reich.

Although the setting was as elaborate as the year before, if not more so, the affair lacked the ebullience of previous ones. Though Hitler expounded the significance and potential of motor vehicle production at great length and in great detail, his words failed to convey the enthusiasm he had earlier displayed on this particular topic. Hitler

barely mentioned his favorite project, the Volkswagen, and referred to the construction of the Autobahn as an aside only.

Indeed, the tone was a subdued one in 1939. The forced armament production was already overshadowing the automobile industry as well as other branches of the economy, which relied heavily on the infrastructure, traffic, and transportation. Raw materials and fuel supplies were becoming increasingly scarce, and Hitler admonished the public to exercise economy in the consumption of these goods: "Every kilogram of steel needlessly tacked onto an automobile not only raises its costs and its retail price, but also maintenance expenditures. This in turn leads to more gas being used up, tires wearing out more quickly, and street surfaces needing more frequent replacement."

These new insights imparted by Hitler to the audience in his appeal for economy were intended to challenge the automobile industry to construct new car models, weighing no more than 2,000 kilograms instead of the customary 3,000 kilograms. Hitler further argued that the Autobahn highways had not been built "for speeds from 120 to 140 kilometers per hour, but rather for average speeds, let us say, of eighty kilometers." This speed limit soon became law. Ironically, after the National Socialists' rise to power in 1933, one of the first pieces of legislation enacted had been a repeal of earlier speed restrictions which allegedly had inhibited the development of motorization. At the time the Nazis had claimed that high speeds even reduced the number of accidents on the road! A change of heart on this subject now turned speeding into "un-National-Socialist behavior."

Hitler began his speech at the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition with the following remarks:²¹²

For the seventh time, I have the pleasure of opening an exhibition which affords us insight not only into the workings of one of the most important branches of industry in our country, but also of a large part of the world.

Hitler then indulged in sentimental reminiscences of the great "victory" celebrated by the automobile in the days of Gottfried Daimler and Carl Benz. He proceeded, in a five-point overview, to enumerate the measures taken by the National Socialist administration to promote the development of the motorcar. The first four points concerned the evolution in society's attitude toward the automobile: "The automobile is not a luxury article, it is an article of general use." Furthermore, National Socialists had succeeded in lowering costs and prices: "adaptation of price policy to the group of buyers in question." This

would lead to an increase in “the confidence of the German Volk in its own car.” In fact, the traffic infrastructure the National Socialist State had built up over the years was far superior to “the attainments of the past and present.” The most important aspect of Hitler’s speech was no doubt contained in the fifth item concerning the creation of “an independent raw material base.” A discussion of additional goals to be pursued in the future followed:

Within the framework of the Four-Year Plan, we sought to free motorization in Germany from dependence on factors abroad and to establish our own independent raw material base. After only a few years, the results of this effort may today already be called gigantic. In part, they have led to overwhelming new inventions whose superiority renders it unnecessary to use raw materials formerly [involved in the production process], even should they be abundantly available once more in the future.

In an overview of these facts, which in themselves reveal to us the greatness of the results attained, we note the striking evidence of the gigantic increase in production, the extraordinary rise in exports, the lowering of prices for certain models of automobiles and motorcycles, and above all, the excellent work in detail. I open an exhibition today which will splendidly demonstrate these achievements. In spite of this, along with a few smaller tasks and current problems, there remain great tasks yet to be accomplished:

1. It was understandable that, in times of grave concern for sales, each individual firm, more or less nervously, tried to scan the market and its requirements. Hence, as I already pointed out in my last speech, each firm seized that model which apparently held the greatest promise, without considering how many other factories were already involved with this particular model, or the potential size of the series already in production at any one factory. The resulting competition precluded a potential decrease in prices for certain models. Furthermore, it was understandable that, under the circumstances, a relentless competition for customers ensued which led to an exaggeration of the mechanical element. This meant the incorporation of any type of innovation in the car, no matter how insignificant its practical application, simply because of the belief that one had to oblige a highly selective customer.

The conditions which led to this technically and economically undesirable phenomenon no longer exist today. It is less the task of today’s German automobile industry to seek potential customers than to satisfy the demands of existing customers. The demand for automobiles is overwhelming. The following are necessary in order to satisfy this demand:

a) Lower prices. This is possible in the long run only if one instills order in the types of models produced. This means that individual firms must achieve a consensus on the type of models to be produced and restrict the overall number of models. Indeed, there must be a simplification of the production program to very few models. It is crucial to augment the total production of automobiles instead of increasing the number of models

offered. The multitude of these would ultimately lead to a splintering off into an infinity of models, encumbering the production process and possibly lowering total output.

b) Justice can be done to this call for lower prices only if the weight of cars, particularly of those in mass production, is significantly lowered. Every kilogram of steel needlessly tacked onto an automobile not only raises its costs and its retail price, but also maintenance expenditures. This in turn leads to more gas being used up, tires wearing out more quickly, and street surfaces needing more frequent replacement. Moreover, a 3,000-kilogram automobile performs no better than one in a 2,000-kilogram category, but needlessly taxes the raw materials at our disposal. Two cars in such a heavy weight class simply rob us of the materials needed to produce a third one.

I do understand that, in the end, the industry was not capable of arriving at such an ordering of its production on its own. Therefore, I appointed Colonel von Schell²¹³ as plenipotentiary to see to these tasks being carried out. He is presently issuing binding directives to all appropriate offices within the framework of the Four-Year Plan. His activities have already resulted in exceptional results and hold great promise. He will be in a position to account for his activities for the first time at the 1940 exhibition.²¹⁴ The resulting further decline in prices for our automobile industry will undoubtedly have a positive effect on exports.

2. Let the new Volkswagen represent an enormous, real avowal of these principles. All those concerned are called on to devote the greatest energy to press forward the construction of its factory. I sincerely rejoice in being able to afford you a glance at the car for the first time in this exhibition. The Volkswagen's ingenious designer has bestowed an object of extraordinary value on the German Volk and the German economy. It is up to us now to persevere in our efforts to shortly begin mass production of this car.

3. The pending increase in the flow of motorized traffic, due to the Volkswagen and the introduction of a series of low-price trucks, now forces us to take steps necessary to ensure traffic safety. In a period of six years, the German Volk sacrifices nearly as many men to automobile-related accidents as it did in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. This cannot be tolerated. Though the beneficial cooperation of State and Party offices, and the deployment of traffic police and NSKK patrols has already brought some relief, these results can neither be regarded as satisfactory nor can the situation be regarded as tolerable.

Above all, there are certain principles and duties all those who participate in traffic on German roads must be aware of:

When someone causes an accident today, whether he be the engineer or the switchman, then the responsible party will be regarded as an unscrupulous criminal who is indifferent to the life of his contemporaries, and he will be punished accordingly. The driver of a private vehicle bears similar responsibility not only regarding his own life, to which he may be indifferent or which may be of little value, but for that of other participants in traffic. Whoever nonchalantly endangers these lives acts in a criminal manner and without any scruples.

Those who cause the nation to lose 7,000 men annually, in addition to imparting to it the care of 30,000 to 40,000 injured, are parasites on the Volk. They act irresponsibly. They shall be punished as a matter of course, provided they do not escape the Volksgemeinschaft's wrath by dying themselves.

It is truly not an art to drive fast and to endanger the lives of others. Rather it is a great art to drive safely, i.e. carefully. Lack of caution coupled with high speed is the most common cause of automobile crashes. And it is discouraging to realize that the majority of those driving could easily spare the extra ten, twenty, or even thirty minutes which, at best, they can hope to save by their insane reckless driving (*Wahnsinnsraserei*), even on long stretches.

This constitutes a call for all those involved in the training of our drivers. One should point out that the new roads in Germany, especially the Autobahn, distinguish themselves in allowing for a high average speed, although peak speeds may well be relatively low. The Reichsautobahnen were not built, as many mistakenly believe, for a speed of 120 to 140 kilometers per hour, but rather for an average, let us say, of eighty kilometers. This is easily obtained by driving at a near-constant speed. In the end, this speed over long distances far exceeds that of even our most rapid trains.

Speaking on a matter of principle, it is indeed un-National-Socialist behavior to be inconsiderate towards other Volksgenossen. At this point, I would like to say today that I expect, in particular of representatives of National Socialist institutions, that, in this realm as well, what otherwise would be mere lip service to the Volksgemeinschaft, will become a matter of course for them. Besides, in the context of our national supply of raw materials, it is absolutely senseless to drive at speeds which increase the rate at which tires need replacement twice or even three or four times. Naturally, these speeds also cause an uneconomical fuel consumption. In general, our race cars and their drivers set speeds and records for performance, as do others who promote motorization. They do not need the support of more or less talented amateur drivers. Consideration for one's fellow man should have priority for all those on our streets; otherwise they cannot expect the Volksgemeinschaft or the state to show consideration to them. All of us should unite to make our country not only the one with the greatest traffic density, but also the one where traffic is the safest. In the interest of maintaining this traffic safety, the state stands determined to mercilessly destroy and exterminate those criminal elements which set up road traps and rob taxi drivers, and commit murder.

I wish to take advantage of today's occasion to thank all those who have not only contributed to the domestic significance of the German automobile and motorcycle industry, but also to its renown worldwide: the businessmen for their enterprising spirit; inventors, engineers, and technicians for their ingenuity; and masters of their trade and laborers for their astounding achievements. The German Volk today can justly be proud of the marvels of an industry which once took its first, gingerly steps toward practical application in this country.

In this spirit, I hereby declare the 1939 International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin open to the public.

Having thus concluded his opening statements, Hitler spent the following three hours touring the exhibition. Göring, Ley, and numerous Reichsleiters and ministers accompanied him. Before leaving, he inspected a bus in which the propaganda department exhibited its own display: “Vierjahresplan.”

That afternoon, Hitler delivered yet another ‘secret speech’²¹⁵ before 400 laborers, some of them construction workers involved in the Autobahn project and others representing the German automobile industry. Together with members of the NSKK and the Wehrmacht, these men had assembled at the Kaiserhof Hotel to hear Hitler speak. The German News Bureau published the following report on the gathering and on Hitler’s ‘secret speech,’ which was destined to be the last of its kind in the Third Reich’s history:²¹⁶

It was the appearance of the Führer himself which proved the crowning event at this comradesly gathering of staff members and of laborers toiling at the fore of motorization. The Führer dedicated an extended period to his guests and, to their great rejoicing, even addressed a few words to them.

On February 17, Hitler ordered that “special measures to promote urban development” be implemented in the capital cities of various Gaus, including Augsburg, Bayreuth, Breslau, Dresden, Graz, Hamburg, and Würzburg. He entrusted the carrying out of these projects, in the form of separate decrees,²¹⁷ to the respective Gauleiters, such as Karl Wahl,²¹⁸ Fritz Wächtler,²¹⁹ Josef Wagner,²²⁰ Martin Mutschmann,²²¹ Dr. Siegfried Uiberreither,²²² Karl Kaufmann,²²³ and Dr. Otto Hellmuth.²²⁴ This move complemented a law to remodel major cities in Germany in accordance with Hitler’s taste, an ambition already expressed and provided for in a law dated October 4, 1937, which had decreed the nationalization, i.e. expropriation, of private property.

As mentioned previously, Hitler entertained great designs for Germany’s cities, envisioning large-scale changes of the type he had already implemented in Munich, Nuremberg, and Berlin. Entire blocks of houses were to be torn down to provide for thoroughfares and new monumental buildings. During the Second World War, however, Allied bomber squadrons transformed the major German cities in a completely different way and buried Hitler’s grandiose plans beneath the rubble.²²⁵

On February 18, Hitler attended the funeral services for the late Gauleiter of Kärnten, Hubert Klausner.²²⁶ These were conducted in the Knights’ Chamber of the Landhaus in Klagenfurt.²²⁷ While he did

convey his sympathies to the family of the deceased, he refrained from speaking on this particular occasion. On February 20, Hitler presented the poet Hermann Burte²²⁸ and the author Josef Stolzinger-Cerny²²⁹ with the Goethe medal for performances in the arts and sciences,²³⁰ on their respective sixtieth and seventieth birthdays.

One day later, Franco displayed the might of his armed forces in the form of a military parade through the city of Barcelona. In connection with this event, the Generalissimo addressed telegrams to both Mussolini and Hitler. The telegram to the German head of state read as follows:²³¹

As our victorious troops made their entry into Barcelona at the culmination of the Catalan campaign, heroic German volunteers were among them. Through them the Spanish people jubilantly cheered Germany and its Führer. I cordially convey my greetings to you and wish to assure you of the great respect your army enjoys with ours.

Generalissimo Franco

On February 23, Hitler replied to Franco in the following manner:

With all my heart, I thank you for the telegram relayed to me on the occasion of the troop parade in Barcelona. Germany and its Wehrmacht rejoice that German volunteers were permitted to fight in the ranks of your glorious army, alongside their Italian comrades, and thereby were allowed to modestly contribute to the liberation of your country and to the restoration of a proud Nationalist Spain.

Adolf Hitler

In the evening hours of February 24, the annual festivities commemorating the foundation of the National Socialist Party took place in the banquet hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.²³² In his customary address, Hitler attempted once more to instill in his party comrades the conviction that any future problems could be countered by the exercise of “diligence, determination, ingenuity, willpower, and unyielding persistence in standing together.” If this advice was heeded, then assuredly Germany’s struggle abroad would end no differently from that at home:

Naturally, it is not possible to convert all men. Although busy becoming extinct, some of our adversaries are still active in Germany. They are our friends from the black-red-gold coalition²³³—well known to us from the days of old—the same people who today are forming a coalition against us worldwide.

Hitler was not in the least troubled by considerations of a possible failure. He continued:

You shall assuredly not judge me presumptuous, my old Party Comrades! How could a man think differently! Especially how could one man do so who set out as an unknown individual twenty years ago; who stood here for the first time nineteen years ago, forsaken by everyone, facing a raging and defiant crowd; who strode forth to take up the struggle to conquer this vast Reich, accompanied by only a dozen of his most loyal comrades, on this indescribably difficult path. Who could truly believe that such a man would, once in power, easily be frightened off by the threats of others? I knew no fear then. I know no fear now; otherwise I would have to feel ashamed of myself; otherwise I would not feel worthy to call myself the Führer of this German nation. Their threats will not shake us. And should indeed the peoples of the world once more commit the insanity of engaging us in another battle, then this would merely serve to fortify us in our resolution not to capitulate. [—]

There shall never be another year 1918 in German history!

At the end of his speech, Hitler once more portrayed his own “marvelous ascent” to power as conclusive proof that the goals National Socialism had set for itself were attainable. Since the social life at the new Chancellery building had developed so rapidly within the past few weeks, Hitler desired to impart this style to his undertakings in Munich, too. One day after the official celebration at the Hofbräuhaus, he entertained an evening festivity at the Führerbau on the Königlicher Platz. Party officials from the rank of Gauleiter on up and their ladies were invited guests on this occasion,²³⁴ and Hitler naturally could not refrain from once again offering his assessment of the political situation in a speech.

On February 25 in Munich, Hitler established November 9 as a national holiday “in commemoration of the dead of the Movement” so that the lower ranks of Party and Wehrmacht could fully appreciate the splendid life the Third Reich afforded them.²³⁵ The official schedule now provided for celebration of the Heldengedenktag on March 16, alternatively on the preceding Sunday, and its official purpose now was to mark the “anniversary of the reintroduction of general conscription” to Germany.²³⁶

In the interim, the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano had journeyed to Warsaw. State visits there by representatives of the Axis Powers had grown increasingly frequent in the past weeks. Tensions were simmering between them and the Warsaw Government because of Germany’s claims to Danzig.

A visit by Ribbentrop to Warsaw in late January had passed uneventfully. This bland guest failed to disconcert the general populace in Poland. Another visit by Himmler on February 19 also had passed

quietly. Himmler had called on the Polish government in his capacity as chief of the German police to confer with his Polish colleagues. Ciano's arrival in the Polish capital on February 25 was, however, accompanied by the first vocal anti-German demonstrations. It is highly likely that the Polish population perceived the Italian Foreign Minister, himself a Catholic, as a natural southern ally for their cause. Apparently, Poland speculated that the Axis alliance was much weaker than it actually was, and the Poles believed they could win Ciano for their defiant stand against German encroachment on Polish sovereignty. Before the gates to the German Embassy in Warsaw, protesters shouted:²³⁷ "Down with Hitler! An end to pro-German politics! Long live Polish Danzig!"

For Hitler, the turmoil came at an opportune moment, as it later furnished him with a credible motive for the armed aggression against Poland. Nevertheless, the problem of the remainder of Czechoslovakia still needed to be addressed before any further steps could be taken. Because of this, newspapers in Germany initially refrained from reporting on the incidents in Warsaw.

On February 28, another diplomatic reception took place at the new Chancellery. The Lithuanian Envoy Kazys Skirpa, the Bolivian Envoy Hugo Ernst-Rivera, and the Siamese Envoy Phra Prasasna appeared before Hitler to present him with their credentials. The Führer welcomed them in the customary addresses prescribed by diplomatic etiquette, the contents of which, however, were not published.²³⁸

Later on February 28, Hitler was present at the opening ceremony for an exhibition entitled "Ancient Japanese Art," to tour various state museums in Berlin.²³⁹ This represented the first tangible result of the German-Japanese Cultural Agreement. The galleries displayed Japanese sculptures from the 12th and 13th centuries.

On March 1, a new round of receptions at the Chancellery began. Within the first ten days of March 1939, no less than five gala banquets took place there. On these various occasions, Hitler himself, attired in a tailcoat, would lead his guests on a tour of the Chancellery's halls. Many diplomats, economic leaders, military men, ministers, and prominent Party members were thus afforded the opportunity to view the building's interior and listen to numerous addresses or anecdotes related by the German Head of State.

On March 1, Hitler asked all foreign diplomats accredited in Berlin, and their female companions, to the first in a series of official

receptions at the new Chancellery. The British Ambassador Henderson also attended, having returned to Germany only two weeks earlier, after an extended period of convalescence at home.²⁴⁰ He sought to take advantage of the opportunity to enter into a more serious discussion with Hitler on the persistent tensions between England and Germany.²⁴¹ However, Hitler was not inclined to display preference for the British in front of his other guests. Instead of making any commitment, he voiced the usual platitudes on the subject. He maintained that the issue of the colonies constituted the only point of difference between Britain and Germany. He had no desire to stand in the way of the British Empire, which he greatly admired. In return, however, Britain must acknowledge Germany's special position in Europe. It was not up to Britain to involve itself in what he held to be exclusively Central European affairs. This was the same old story Hitler had reiterated so many times before: Germany would acknowledge the interests of the British Empire worldwide, as long as Great Britain gave Germany a free hand in the East and did not interfere in Central Europe, which meant above all else in Czechoslovakia, Danzig, and Poland. Apparently, Hitler sought to discourage British intervention by openly affronting the government in London, with an eye to the pending operation against the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

On March 2, 1939, the former State Secretary Cardinal Pacelli²⁴² assumed leadership of the Holy See and took the name Pius XII.²⁴³ Hitler promptly conveyed his congratulations on its choice to the Vatican, as Pacelli was considered to be pro-German. Undoubtedly, so Hitler believed, Pacelli's appointment signaled increased support for German policies. From 1937 on, his predecessor Pope Pius XI had found these ever less acceptable. Given the uncivil comments Hitler and other leading National Socialists had repeatedly made about the Vatican over the years, this was hardly surprising.²⁴⁴

At noon on March 2, Hitler received the Prince of Liechtenstein, whom he treated with great respect, at the new Chancellery for mutual consultations.²⁴⁵ Later in the day, Hitler entertained the leaders of the German economy and their ladies at a festive evening reception and led his guests through the new facilities. Renowned singers participated in a charity concert to benefit the Winterhilfswerk. "Voluntary contributions" exceeded two million Reichsmarks that night.²⁴⁶

On March 4, a similar evening reception for the leading personalities in German arts took place²⁴⁷ and gave Hitler yet another occasion to display the new Chancellery building to the public.

One day later, on the occasion of the opening of the annual Trade Fair at Leipzig, Hitler forwarded the following telegram to its organizers:²⁴⁸

The Leipzig Spring Trade Fair 1939 is the first Reich Fair of Greater Germany. It shall prove before the world the quality of German products and the enormous improvements attained by German technology. I wish the Fair the greatest success possible in fulfilling this mission.

Adolf Hitler

On March 7, an important reception took place in the rooms of the new Chancellery. Hitler had invited the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht, the commanding generals and admirals serving with the three branches of the Armed Forces, and their female companions to attend a dinner, in order to display the magnificence of the new seat of government.²⁴⁹ On March 8, Hitler welcomed prominent members of Party and State there.²⁵⁰ It soon became quite evident at the gala dinner which of the various groupings had gained Hitler's favor recently. The Wehrmacht generals received preferential treatment, while the Party men had to take a back seat. Nevertheless, everybody present was afforded the opportunity of marveling at the splendor of the new Chancellery: the Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, and "their ladies." Many of the more glamorous women present had obtained legalization of their relationships under the title of "Frau" quite recently. A number of Hitler's colleagues from the "time of struggle" no longer deemed their first wives good enough for the new aspect life had assumed in the Third Reich. Many of the leading men in the Party especially had obtained divorces from their spouses to marry more attractive companions with whom to shine more brilliantly at social occasions.

On March 9, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the presidents of Germany's universities, who had assembled in Berlin for their annual convention. In their reply to Hitler's telegram, they expressed their gratitude that Hitler had restored science in Germany to the "springs of wisdom," its well-deserved place.²⁵¹

On March 10, naval attachés convening in Berlin called on Hitler. In the course of their short visit, they were also allowed, as the Führer's guests, to duly admire the new structure.²⁵²

The next day, staff members of the various military academies in Germany followed. One of their foremost tasks was naturally to tour the Chancellery building. This "special treat" was crowned by an appearance of the Führer addressing them in person in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.²⁵³

The celebration of the annual Heldengedenktage commemoration on March 12 was already overshadowed by the pending assault on the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Already on March 10, a propagandistic campaign in Germany's press spread reports of civil unrest in Ruthenia. On March 6, the Government in Prague had attempted to quell the separatist agitation by the self-declared autonomous government under Vološin.²⁵⁴ The ensuing repression had led to grave unrest in Chust, the so-called capital of the Carpatho-Ukraine.

German newspapers on the morning of March 11 described the situation in Slovakia as "hair-raising." Encouraged by Hitler's remarks of February 12,²⁵⁵ Tuka and Tiso had clamored so loudly for autonomy that the central government in Prague was left with no choice but to intervene. It removed the Slovak ministers Durcansky and Prucinsky²⁵⁶ from office and unequivocally dismissed Tiso, and entrusted Minister Karl Sidor²⁵⁷ with the formation of a new government. According to the reports in the media, martial law had been imposed in Pressburg (Bratislava) where the Czech military was harassing Slovak citizens, while government troops had arrested the leader of the Slovak independence movement and had jailed dissidents. The events across the border provided a most appropriate background for the display of military might in Berlin on the occasion of the Heldengedenktage festivities. Since its inception in 1933, events of either a military or a political nature had dominated these annual celebrations, with the sole exception of 1937.²⁵⁸

On March 12, Hitler attended the official ceremony at the State Opera, although he did not speak on the occasion. This was the traditional task of the senior officer in attendance. Previously, von Blomberg had delivered the annual address. In 1938, Göring had taken over this function. However, in 1939, since Göring had been assigned to San Remo where his presence was required as of March 5,²⁵⁹ it fell to Admiral General Raeder to address the audience in his capacity as senior officer in attendance. Doubtless at Hitler's insistence, Raeder spoke in forceful terms of the Wehrmacht's readiness for immediate deployment. The address poorly concealed Germany's aggressive intentions and the possibility of a German military foray:²⁶⁰

It is the will of the Führer that the German Wehrmacht should continuously be strengthened to enable it to take account of the increasingly responsible mission assigned to it, regardless of how well armed the enemy might be. Wherever we gain a foothold, we will maintain it! Wherever a gap appears, we will bridge it! Wherever additional armament is needed, we will rearm!

March 12, 1939

And let no one deceive himself: our weapons will not be blunt should German soil be ravaged or the blood of Germans be spilt. Germany will protect all Germans on this side of the border and on its other side! The shots fired at Almeria²⁶¹ are proof of this. Germany strikes swiftly and strongly!

After the official ceremony, Hitler reviewed the honor guards of the three branches of the Wehrmacht. He then proceeded to the monument on Unter den Linden to place an enormous wreath in honor of the Unknown Soldier. Afterwards, Hitler spent a few minutes in conversation with disabled veterans of the World War and then returned to the Chancellery. On this particular Heldengedenktag, he had arranged for the placement of wreaths at Hindenburg's tomb in Tannenberg, at Ludendorff's grave in Tutzling, and at the Viennese cemetery where Conrad von Hötzendorf lay buried.²⁶²

Hitler had not lost sight of the Slovak question in the interim. As early as March 11, he had dispatched to Pressburg his specialists well-versed in questions of territorial annexation: State Secretary Wilhelm Keppler and Gauleiter Josef Bürckel.²⁶³ Accompanied by German military experts, the two men appeared at the Slovak seat of government and instructed the ministers present to declare Slovakia's independence. The deposed Minister Durcansky addressed the population on the Viennese Reich Broadcasting Network, urging the declaration of an independent Slovak state. Keppler and Bürckel required the allegedly incarcerated Minister-President Tiso to visit Hitler. Tiso's plane touched down in Vienna in the early morning hours of March 13 only immediately to take off again for Berlin. The leader of the ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) in Slovakia, State Secretary Karmasin, also played a major role in staging the events in Pressburg.

By March 13 reports on the situation in Slovakia grew increasingly dramatic. The newspapers alleged the abuse of a German child by men hostile toward Germany. Another headline read: "Nineteen deaths to be lamented in Slovakia." Supposedly "terror perpetrated by the Czech military" targeted ethnic Germans; three Reich Germans had been arrested, etc. Papers throughout the Reich carried a multitude of similar reports of atrocities.²⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the communiqué below was released on the talks between Hitler and Tiso in the afternoon hours of March 13:²⁶⁵

Berlin, March 13

In the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, the Führer today received the Slovak Minister-President, Dr. Tiso, who has flown to Berlin by special plane from Pressburg. Minister Durcansky accompanied Dr. Tiso to the

Chancellery where they met with the Führer for consultations on pending issues.

In addition to the men listed above, Colonel General Keitel and State Minister Meissner also attended these “consultations.”²⁶⁶ In a manner reminiscent of the meeting with Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden,²⁶⁷ Hitler prefaced his talk with an angry and agitated tirade as indicated by these unequivocal notes on the encounter:²⁶⁸

Czechoslovakia owed it only to Germany that she had not been mutilated further. With the greatest self-control Germany had renounced the language enclaves situated on her frontiers, only in order to insure normal living space for Czechoslovakia. No thanks had been received for this.

During recent weeks conditions had become intolerable. The old spirit of Beneš had come to life again.

A second disappointment had been the attitude of Slovakia. He had thought Slovakia wanted to lead an independent existence.

He had now summoned Minister Tiso in order to clear up this question in a very short time.

It was a question not of days but of hours. He had previously²⁶⁹ said that if Slovakia wished to become independent he would support and even guarantee her efforts in that direction . . .

If she hesitated or refused to be separated from Prague, he would leave the fate of Slovakia to events for which he was no longer responsible.

Hitler’s thinly veiled threat to leave Slovakia at the mercy of Hungary recalled his recent action in the case of Ruthenia. The pressure exerted resulted in the desired outcome, in particular after the timely arrival of a message reporting Hungarian troop movements along the Slovak border. The resistance of Hitler’s two unwitting Slovak guests collapsed. Eagerly they assured Hitler that Slovakia would prove itself worthy of his trust.

This easy victory over Tiso reinforced Hitler in his conviction that he could deal with the Czechoslovakian President Hácha in a similar manner. Apparently, Hitler had initially determined to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force. In his planning, he had accounted for token Czech resistance to a military occupation, albeit on a negligible scale. Two directives of October 21 and December 17, 1938 on the issue of the “elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia” (*Erledigung der Rest-Tschechei*) point in this direction.²⁷⁰ Similar convictions appeared in the unequivocal “Proclamation to the German Volk” that Hitler published in the aftermath of the invasion on March 15, 1939. In rationalizing the military action, Hitler argued that the presence of German troops there served exclusively “to disarm terrorist

gangs and the Czech armed forces backing them.”²⁷¹ This publication nowhere mentioned that, the night before, Hácha had signed a paper in accordance with Hitler’s instructions. Caution and fear moved him to place “the fate of the Czech people and state trustingly in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich,” as he himself put it.

There is further evidence substantiating the hypothesis that Hitler had originally intended to take the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force of arms: contingents of the Eighth Army and the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* had already crossed the border in the evening hours of March 14 and seized the strategically located junction of Moravian Ostrau (Mährisch-Ostrau). Hitler then resolved to subjugate Hácha—like Schuschnigg and Tiso—by rhetorical force alone. The successful meeting with the Slovak Minister-President might have had greater impact on this decision than Hácha’s request for a talk.²⁷² Hácha would have secured neither a like audience nor a peaceful solution, had the Führer definitely been determined to proceed as planned. Hitler’s tactical change of mind spared Germany an immediate joint declaration of war by Britain and France. Undoubtedly, one would have been forthcoming, had the Czechs mounted a more decisive resistance and had blood been shed.

On March 14, Hitler ordered Hácha and the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky to be brought to Berlin. In the interim, he recalled Göring from San Remo. Göring arrived in Berlin at 6:00 p.m. On Germany’s request, Tiso had meanwhile read the Slovak declaration of independence to the Slovak parliament and thereby dealt a deadly blow to the government in Prague. The Czechoslovakian confederation lay in shambles.

March 14 also witnessed a renewal of the press campaign. Headlines told of gruesome atrocities perpetrated in Czechoslovakia. Czech policemen were allegedly bayonetting ordinary citizens and shooting civilians deliberately; German schools were attacked; riots reportedly raged in Brünn (Brno); from Iglau, stories reached Germany of the wounding of fifty individuals; headlines in German papers accused Moscow of involvement in the civil unrest and of arming underground movements.

The articles published in the press were nearly verbatim reproductions of reports of atrocities across the border during the summer of the year before. In the assessment of Hitler and the German military,²⁷³ every one of these articles then had undercut Czech resistance and sabotaged morale in Czechoslovakia. Moreover, these

libelous reports had psychologically prepared the German public for an armed aggression against that state. While there was indeed a basis for this interpretation of the events in the months of August and September 1938, Hitler greatly overestimated the potential of a renewed press campaign in 1939. Launched three days before the invasion, the 1939 campaign had little impact on public opinion in Germany. Most Germans simply shook their heads in disbelief at the reports of barbarous slaughter in the East. They were left to wonder why the Prague government would resort to such inconsiderate measures in view of its earlier displays of eagerness to please Berlin. Ever since October 1938, the Czechoslovakian Government had anxiously fulfilled each and every demand made on it by the German head of state. It had voiced no objections to the extraterritorial rights presumptuously appropriated by Germany and had not stood in the way of the construction of an extraterritorial motorway. The general public in Germany was left to puzzle why the “spirit of Beneš” should have risen to haunt Berlin once more. And abroad, this ludicrous and implausible claim merely helped to create a highly unfavorable impression of the Third Reich and its leaders. Moreover, the campaign in the media by no means affected the lot of the Czech people, who would have to come to terms with Hitler’s Diktat in one way or another.

Late on March 14,²⁷⁴ the train bearing Hácha and Chvalkovsky to Berlin pulled into the Anhalt station in the midst of a snowstorm. State Minister Meißner and Colonel General Seifert were on hand to welcome Hitler’s guests. In spite of the cold weather, the two Czechoslovakian statesmen bravely reviewed an honor guard waiting to greet them. Having fulfilled this requirement of diplomatic etiquette, they proceeded to the Adlon Hotel where they awaited Hitler’s summons. Hitler once more exercised his favorite tactic of letting several hours pass before declaring himself ready to see his physically and psychologically exhausted visitors.

Shortly after 1:00 on the morning of March 15, Hitler finally awoke his guests to his office at the Chancellery, where he and several members of his staff awaited them. Göring, Ribbentrop, Keitel, and Meißner were in attendance, as was Schmidt in his capacity as interpreter. The gentlemen seated themselves on upholstered chairs at a round table. The setting recalled the scenario Tiso had encountered a mere thirty hours earlier.

Again Hitler began his monologue with an angry tirade. According to Schmidt’s recollections,²⁷⁵ Hitler’s harangue was tantamount to a

global indictment of the Czech people. He reiterated the same “list of sins” that he had already exhaustively employed during the Sudeten crisis in his conversations with the British and French. The spirit of Beneš pervaded the new Czechoslovakian state as it had its predecessor, Hitler complained. He quickly added to this statement that he did not wish to create the impression that he had lost confidence in Hácha. He did not doubt his unyielding loyalty. However, Hitler argued, it was imperative to assure the safety of the Reich. Hence, Germany had resolved to establish a protectorate in Czechoslovakia to ensure law and order in the region. After speaking for forty-five minutes, Hitler concluded:

An invasion by German troops is inevitable. If you wish to prevent bloodshed, then you had best telephone Prague immediately and instruct your Minister of War that the Czech troops are to offer no resistance.

Hitler summarily dismissed the two stunned Czechoslovakian statesmen. He then proceeded in the manner which had proven enormously effective during Schuschnigg’s visit on February 12, 1938.²⁷⁶ Following his verbal assault on the people of Czechoslovakia, he entrusted Hácha and Chvalkovsky to the care of Ribbentrop and Göring. In the case of Austria the year before, von Papen had assisted Ribbentrop in this task. The change in personnel constituted the sole difference between the meetings in Berchtesgaden and Berlin.

Having listened to Hitler’s accusations in silence, Hácha and Chvalkovsky sat as though “paralyzed.” According to Schmidt, Göring then took charge. He threatened them with military intervention. Among other things, Göring stated that he would be exceedingly sorry to have to bomb as beautiful a city as Prague. This was a bluff. Neither Hitler nor Göring would ever have issued such an order.²⁷⁷ Prague was different from such cities as Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Belgrade which were bombed later. For one thing, it held a German population of over 40,000. Moreover, Hitler’s forthcoming speeches included token references to the one-thousand-year-old “German” city of Prague. He could ill afford to speak of Prague’s exceptional beauty, which testified to centuries of German cultural influence in the East, after German fighter planes had leveled the city. In addition, the destruction of the city would have been completely unnecessary from a military point of view.

These considerations notwithstanding, the pressure exerted by Göring brought the desired results. Hácha even suffered an acute

attack of fatigue. Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Morell,²⁷⁸ however, lost no time in reviving him by administering an injection.

After this unpleasant incident, Hácha and Chvalkovsky called Prague to inform the deputies in the Czechoslovakian Parliament of the recent developments and the hopelessness of the situation. They cautioned their colleagues that any resistance was entirely useless. Afterwards, they conveyed to Hitler their readiness to sign the mutual declaration as requested. Only ninety minutes had elapsed from the time the Czechs had entered Hitler's office to the signature of this historic agreement. According to the impression made on Schmidt, Hitler had obviously prepared the content of this "agreement" well before the meeting and had "kept it on hand." At 3:55 on the morning of March 15, the chief protagonists placed their signatures beneath the declaration, which read:²⁷⁹

Berlin, March 15, 1939

At their request the Führer today received the Czechoslovak President, Dr. Hácha, and the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Dr. Chvalkovsky, in Berlin in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. At the meeting the serious situation created by the events of recent weeks in the present Czechoslovak territory was examined with complete frankness.

The conviction was unanimously expressed on both sides that the aim of all efforts must be the safeguarding of calm, order, and peace in this part of central Europe. The Czechoslovak President declared that, in order to serve this object and to achieve ultimate pacification, he confidently placed the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich.

The Führer accepted this declaration and expressed his intention of taking the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and of guaranteeing them an autonomous development of their ethnic life as suited to their character.

In witness whereof this document has been signed in duplicate.

Adolf Hitler
Dr. E. Hácha

von Ribbentrop
Chvalkovsky

After its signature, the parties to the agreement took leave of each other. A car returned Hácha and Chvalkovsky to their hotel. Hitler celebrate the moment in his own way. He rushed up to his two female secretaries, asked them to kiss him on the cheek, and exclaimed: "Children! This is the greatest day of my life! I will go down in history as the greatest of Germans!"²⁸⁰ This utterance lends further credence to the theory that Hitler had not counted on the Czechs' giving in so easily, and had been prepared to take military measures.

Abroad, public opinion conceded the profoundly tragic nature of the developments, although some critics blamed Hácha for his surrender. Further events in the end proved Hácha right. Resistance might have been an alternative before the autumn of 1938, when crucial territorial concessions had led to the dismantling of Czechoslovakia's border installations. Its defenses crippled, Czechoslovakia was at the mercy of Hitler. Given his insatiable thirst for ever new conquests, the Prague Government undeniably acted in its people's best interest in submitting to German rule and leaving the fighting to the great powers.

Despite Lidice²⁸¹ and other atrocities, the people of Czechoslovakia suffered a less tragic fate than most other countries during the Second World War, with the exception of Denmark which in 1940 also formally surrendered.

March 15 marked the publication of Hitler's "Proclamation to the German Volk." As mentioned earlier, this had obviously been prepared well in advance of Hácha's visit to Berlin, as its contents failed to account for this most recent development.²⁸²

To the German Volk!

Once already, a few months ago, Germany was forced to extend its protection to our German Volksgenossen living in closed settlements in Czechoslovakia, and to counter the intolerable aggression of its terrorist regime against them. These last weeks have borne witness to similar phenomena. An area that is home to so many nationalities, living next to one another, of necessity leads to the development of intolerable conditions. In response to the renewed aggression imperiling their life and liberty, the various ethnic groups have now divorced themselves from the Government in Prague. Czechoslovakia has ceased to exist.

Since last Sunday, wild outrages have frightened many cities and victimized numerous Germans. Renewed pleas for help reach us every hour from those concerned and persecuted. Another wave of refugees who have been robbed of their possessions flows toward the Reich from the populous German-speaking enclaves which only the magnanimity of the Reich allowed to remain in Czechoslovakia this past autumn. Persistence of this situation will eradicate the last aspects of public order in the area affected, one which is of vital interest to the Reich. Indeed, this land formed part of the German Reich for over one thousand years.

To eliminate this threat to the general peace and to create the preconditions for the necessary new order in this Lebensraum, I have determined to order German troops to march on Bohemia and Moravia as of this day. Their task is to disarm the terrorist gangs and the Czech armed forces backing them. They will extend their protection to all those whose lives are threatened; and thereby they will secure the basis of a fundamental settlement, which will do

March 15, 1939

justice to a thousand-year-old history and the practical requirements of the German and the Czech people.

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Adolf Hitler

At this time, Hitler also issued an order to the German Wehrmacht which read:²⁸³

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Order to the German Wehrmacht

Czechoslovakia is disintegrating. Intolerable terror is being inflicted on our German Volksgenossen in Bohemia and Moravia. As of this day, March 15, 1939, contingents of the German Army and Luftwaffe will advance into Czech territory to secure equal protection for life and property of all inhabitants of this country.

I expect each German soldier not to view the population of the occupied territory as the enemy. Instead, each should behave as the executor of the will of the German Reich Government which endeavors to restore an acceptable form of order to this territory. Should local resistance be encountered, all means available are to be employed to break it.

Bear in mind, furthermore, that you enter the Czech areas as representatives of Greater Germany.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler

A short announcement was published to update the order which had evidently been prepared well before the meeting with Hácha. It read: "The Government in Prague has ordered that no resistance be offered the invading German troops and that their requests be complied with under all circumstances."

A further ordinance vested the executive power in the occupied territories in the Commander in Chief of the Army:²⁸⁴

Berlin, March 15, 1939

In connection with the entry of German troops into Bohemia and Moravia, and upon the Führer's orders, executive power in the areas afforded protection by the German Wehrmacht shall be vested in the Commander in Chief of the Army as of this day.

Under his supervision, the following shall exercise executive powers: the Commander in Chief of the Third Army Group, Infantry General Blaskowitz, in Bohemia; the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group, Infantry General List, in Moravia. Reichskommissar and Gauleiter Konrad Henlein shall assist the Commander in Chief of the Third Army Group in civilian questions; Reichskommissar Gauleiter Bürckel shall assist the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group in civilian questions.

Much as he had done in the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, Hitler allowed the military men to dominate the situation.

The Reichskommissars assigned to the military, like Bürckel in Austria and Henlein in the Sudetenland, functioned solely as advisors.

In the early hours of March 15, the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe units converged on Czechoslovakia from all sides. The military had been on alert and on the move ever since March 13.²⁸⁵ In accordance with the directive of December 17, 1938,²⁸⁶ no mobilization of reserve units took place, as additional fighting men were not required. This spared the general populace the unpleasantness of a full-scale mobilization. In only two prior cases had Hitler resorted to mobilizing reserve units: in Bavaria in March 1938; and another time throughout the Reich in August 1938.

The first German troops reached Prague at 9:00 on the morning of March 15. Afterwards, Hitler released “Wehrmachtsbericht” for publication that day. This was the first announcement of this nature and set a precedent for the nearly two thousand Wehrmacht bulletins to follow in the course of the Second World War:²⁸⁷

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt
(The High Command of the Wehrmacht makes public):

German Wehrmacht troops, under the joint command of Infantry General Blaskowitz and Infantry General List, crossed the German-Czech border early Wednesday morning and are presently advancing on targets in Bohemia and Moravia. Army contingents and the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* already occupied Moravian Ostrau and Witkowitz in the evening hours on Tuesday. At the same time today, under the joint command of General der Flieger Kesselring, General der Flieger Sperrle, and Lieutenant General Löhr, Luftwaffe squadrons penetrated Czech airspace.

And what would the Führer do? Would he head the German troops’ triumphant entry into the city of Prague, if not as warlord after winning a battle, then at least in his capacity as Supreme Commander? Would he enter exhilarated at finally laying claim to the glory which Chamberlain, “*dieser Kerl*,” had denied him in the autumn of 1938? Nothing of the sort. Like a thief in the night, he awaited dusk to steal into the capital city, in a manner most fitting for someone who had just illegally appropriated a foreign country. He boarded the notoriously slow Special Train in Berlin and arrived in Bohemian Leipa, Sudetenland, around 3:00 p.m. Once there, he asked Henlein and Lammers to join him in the special train compartment for a conference. He also summoned Colonel General Hoepfner²⁸⁸ to inform him of the progress made in the course of the military occupation.



XXXIII March 16, 1939

State President Hácha and Hitler facing each other in a sitting-room at the Hradcany Castle.

Photo: Domarus archives



XXXIV At the North Sea, April 1939

Hitler on his “once in a lifetime” vacation aboard the Kdf-ship *Robert Ley*. From left to right: Robert Ley, his wife Inga, and Hitler, sporting a blue cap designed especially for the occasion.

Photo: Domarus archives

Hitler then climbed into his three-axle, cross-country Mercedes, precisely as he had done in Austria and the Sudetenland the year before. Naturally, every single SS man had put on his field-gray uniform, tailored to be worn in times of war. The Führer himself, however, had to leave his gray uniform hanging at home since, after all, no shot had been fired and the venture could not be termed a bona fide war.

The Führer's car passed through the towns of Daubva, Töschen, and Wallach. At 6:00 p.m., the Mercedes crossed the Czech border at Liboch. A snowstorm dampened Hitler's entry into "enemy country," and no *Hitlerwetter*²⁸⁹ as anywhere in sight to provide relief.

Having overtaken columns of soldiers moving up to the front, the Mercedes reached the outskirts of the capital shortly after 7:00 p.m. An hour later, it pulled into the Prague Fortress (Hradcany) courtyard, without attracting public notice. His entourage welcomed him: Keitel, Himmler, SS leaders Daluge and Wolff, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, and Dr. Dietrich. Several other generals and a number of local National Socialists were on hand to greet him as well. Discussions of the military situation claimed Hitler's undivided attention that night, and he eagerly listened as Keitel, List, and Blaskowitz²⁹⁰ reported on the state of affairs.

On March 16, Reich Minister of the Interior Frick heeded Hitler's summons to Prague. The Supreme Commander desired "clarification of questions concerning constitutional law in the Bohemian-Moravian territories." Arriving from Berlin at the Prague airport, in the company of State Secretary Stuckard,²⁹¹ Frick was immediately ushered to the Fortress. There he drafted a decree on the establishment of a "Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," which Hitler hastily signed. The legal experts determined to accord the former Czechoslovakian state a status similar to that of the French Protectorate of Tunis in North Africa.

The document read as follows:²⁹²

In the name of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the decree of March 16, 1939, regarding the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is hereby proclaimed.

For a thousand years the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia formed part of the Lebensraum of the German people. They were arbitrarily torn from their ancient historic setting by force and folly and, by their ultimate fusion into the artificial structure of Czechoslovakia, became a center of constant unrest.

Year by year the danger increased that a new and tremendous threat to the peace of Europe would spread from this area, as it had done once in the past, for the Czechoslovakian State and its rulers did not succeed in organizing a reasonable coexistence for the ethnic groups arbitrarily united within it, nor

in awakening and keeping alive among all concerned the interest in the maintenance of their joint State.

In this it showed its inherent inability to survive and has therefore now fallen a victim to actual dissolution. The German Reich, however, cannot tolerate continuous disturbances in these areas, which are of such vital importance for its own peace and security as well as for the general well-being and general peace. Sooner or later, as the power most interested and most concerned due to historical and geographical circumstances, it would have had to bear the heaviest consequences.

It is therefore in keeping with the law of self-preservation that the German Reich is now resolved to intervene decisively to rebuild the foundations of a reasonable order in Central Europe and to take the necessary steps for this purpose. For in the thousand years of its history it has already proved that, thanks to the greatness and the qualities of the German people, it alone is called upon to undertake this task.

Inspired by the solemn desire to serve the real interests of the nationalities living in this area, to insure an individual national life to the German and Czech peoples, and to promote the peace and social welfare of all, I, therefore, in the name of the German Reich decree the following as a basis for the future coexistence of the inhabitants of these areas:

Article I

The areas of the former Czechoslovakian Republic occupied by the German troops in March 1939 form part of the Greater German Reich from now on and, as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, come under the protection of Germany. Insofar as is necessary for the defense of the Reich, the Führer and Reich Chancellor will issue separate ordinances for individual parts of these territories.

Article II

The *volksdeutsch* inhabitants of the Protectorate become German nationals and, in accordance with the provisions of the Reich-Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935, citizens of the Reich. The laws for the protection of German blood and German honor therefore apply to them. They are subject to German jurisdiction. The other inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia become subjects of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Article III

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is autonomous and self-governing. It exercises sovereign rights conceded to it within the framework of the Protectorate, in conformity with the political, military, and economic requirements of the Reich. These sovereign rights will be exercised through their own organizations and their own authorities with their own officials.

Article IV

The Supreme Head of the autonomous administration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia will enjoy the protection and the honorary rights of the head of state. The Supreme Head of the Protectorate must have the confidence of the Führer and Reich Chancellor for the execution of his office.

Article V

The Führer and Reich Chancellor will appoint a Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia as a guardian of the interests of the Reich. His headquarters will be in Prague. It will be the duty of the Reich Protector, as the representative of the Führer and Reich Chancellor and as the commissioner of the Reich Government, to insure respect for the political directives of the Führer and Reich Chancellor. The members of the Government of the Protectorate will be confirmed in office by the Reich Protector. The confirmation may be withdrawn. The Reich Protector is empowered to receive information on all measures passed by the Government of the Protectorate and to advise the Government. He can protest against measures calculated to harm the Reich, and if there is danger in delay he can order measures necessary in the common interest. Proclamations and laws, as well as the execution of administrative measures and valid court decisions, are to be rescinded if the Reich Protector objects to them.

Article VI

The Reich will take over the foreign affairs of the Protectorate, in particular the protection of its nationals abroad, and the Reich will conduct foreign affairs in a way suitable to the common interests. The Protectorate will have a representative with the Reich Government with the rank of Minister.

Article VII

The Reich will afford military protection to the Protectorate. For the exercise of this protection the Reich will maintain garrisons and military establishments in the Protectorate. The Protectorate may set up its own organizations for the maintenance of internal security and order. The Reich Government will decide on these organizations and their armament.

Article VIII

The Reich will exercise direct control over transportation, posts, and telegraphs.

Article IX

The Protectorate comes within the customs area of the Reich and is subject to its customs jurisdiction.

Article X

Until further notice the Krone, as well as the Reichsmark, will remain the legal currency. The Reich Government will decide the exchange rates of the two currencies.

Article XI

The Reich may promulgate legal measures valid for the Protectorate; insofar as common interests demand, and a common need exists, the Reich may incorporate administrative branches into its own administration and set up the Reich authorities required for this. The Reich Government may take measures necessary for the maintenance of security and order.

Article XII

The code of law at present valid in Bohemia and Moravia may remain in force insofar as it does not conflict with the terms of the assumption of protection by the German Reich.

March 16, 1939

Article XIII

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the Reich Ministers concerned, will take the legislative and administrative measures necessary for the execution and completion of this decree.

Prague, March 16, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick
The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop
The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

The Commander in Chief of the Army called on Hitler at noon to report on the state of the troop movements. Precisely at 12:39 p.m., Hitler stepped out onto the balcony to greet several thousand Germans who had gathered at the main entrance. Later a delegation of German inhabitants of Prague and members of the City Council welcomed Hitler to their city.

At 2:30 p.m., Hitler conferred once more with State President Hácha, whom Ribbentrop had meanwhile instructed on the restrictions implied by the decree establishing the Protectorate. The Führer accorded the man who had served as the country's Minister-President in the autumn of 1938, the Czech Army General Sirovy,²⁹³ a hearing later that day.

Before leaving Prague in the afternoon hours of March 16, he had himself personally introduced to a few hundred students of the Prague University. They had marched into the courtyard of the Prague Fortress, properly attired in NSDAP "Brown Shirts." Himmler and Heydrich accompanied Hitler on this occasion. Afterwards, he also reviewed the honor guards of the Army with Keitel and Brauchitsch in attendance.

The Führer expressed his appreciation of the military's performance in two separate decrees issued to the respective Commanders in Chief of Army and Luftwaffe. These read:²⁹⁴

Prague, March 16, 1939

To the Commander in Chief of the Army!

Through its speedy occupation of the most important cities in Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939, the Army has restored to the Greater German Reich sovereignty over ancient territory of the Reich. Despite the stormy winter weather and difficult road conditions, Army units, reinforced by Luftwaffe squadrons, crossed the borders and reached their destinations within hours of orders.

On my journey to Prague, I encountered troops who, in defiance of the physical exertions undoubtedly lying behind them, made a most favorable

March 16, 1939

impression upon me. I wish to express my appreciation for behavior and performance to officers and enlisted men alike.

Adolf Hitler

Prague, March 16, 1939

To the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe!

In the course of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15 and March 16, 1939, through daring sorties in spite of adverse weather, the Luftwaffe's valiant deployment has proven its readiness for combat and the personal courage of its members.

I wish to express my appreciation for behavior and performance to officers and enlisted men alike.

Adolf Hitler

The following communiqué was published on the special honors bestowed upon Keitel and Brauchitsch for their involvement in the venture:²⁹⁵

Upon the astoundingly successful conclusion of the military operations in Bohemia, the Führer awarded Colonel Generals von Brauchitsch and Keitel the Golden Party Badge. In this context, the Führer expressed his personal appreciation and gratitude for the most valuable services rendered by both generals.

The situation in Slovakia meanwhile had escalated. The Slovak Minister-President addressed this telegram to Hitler on March 5:²⁹⁶

Trusting in you as the Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Greater German Reich, the Slovak State places itself under your protection. The Slovak State asks you to assume its defense.

Tiso

On March 16, Hitler responded

I acknowledge receipt of your telegram yesterday, and hereby assume the protection of the Slovak State.

Adolf Hitler

Curious wording indeed! Just one telegram sufficed to have Adolf Hitler personally assume responsibility for the defense of the Slovak state. Actually, this proved none too difficult since German troops were already penetrating Slovak territory, for example taking over the cities of Pressburg and Treshov. The Slovak Propaganda Chief, Sano Mach, promptly gave them a heartfelt welcome.

On the evening of March 16, the High Command of the Wehrmacht announced the following:²⁹⁷

In the course of March 16, the troops of the Third and Fifth Army have reached their final destinations in the territories assigned to them, without any

incidents. Herewith law and order have been restored to the Bohemian and Moravian areas.

Hitler spent the first night on Sudeten German soil in his special train in the Silesian territory. In the morning, Hitler's train rolled on, passing through the Altvater region to Olmütz and from there on to Brünn, where he arrived at 11:10 a.m. General List, Gauleiter Bürckel, Reich Governor Seyss-Inquart, and other dignitaries awaited him at the railroad station. From the square in front of the station, Hitler reviewed the Second Panzer Division by car, as he drove down the main street where it had lined up in parade formation. The local Kreisleiter of the ethnic Germans, Folta, welcomed Hitler in the Knights' Chamber of the City Hall.²⁹⁸ In his reply, Hitler thanked those assembled for their loyalty and hailed them as "new citizens of the Greater German Reich." As a sign of "gratitude for the liberation," the German Mayor of Brünn presented Hitler with a highly valuable copy of the ancient legal code of the famed "Brünn Court of Lay Assessors." While Hitler initially accepted the gift, he later returned it to the Mayor with the remark that he desired the ancient body of laws to remain in the Moravian capital. Subsequently, Hitler stepped out onto the City Hall's balcony to address the crowd of Germans assembled in front of the entry below.

Shortly after 2:00 p.m., Hitler's special train left Brünn and arrived at the Nordbahnhof Station in Vienna at 5:00 p.m. Moving through a lane formed by Party contingents, Hitler's car took him to the Imperial Hotel, where he made an appearance on the balcony.²⁹⁹ In the meantime, Neurath had also arrived in Vienna, as Hitler had ordered.³⁰⁰ Ever since February 4, 1938, Neurath had served primarily decorative purposes, although he remained a Cabinet member and had been accorded the title "President of the Secret Cabinet Council" officially. While retaining him in this position, Hitler had appointed him as Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia, assigned to assume his new responsibilities in Prague.³⁰¹ In Vienna in the early morning hours of March 18, the treaty for the Protectorate of Slovakia was drawn up. Ribbentrop and Tuka were to ratify this in Berlin on March 23.³⁰²

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., Hitler left Vienna's Westbahnhof Station for Berlin. On his return trip, he had the train stop over in Linz for several hours. There were two reasons for this interruption of the journey. For one, Hitler wished to delay his arrival in the Reich capital until nightfall on March 19. The festivities of the "Day of the Wehrmacht" would be enhanced by the drama of his entry into the city. Second, exhilarated

by his success with Slovakia, Hitler took advantage of the opportunity to visit the place of his earlier triumph in Austria. He went to the Weininger Hotel, where he had signed into law the edict effecting the Anschluss the year before. There he informed himself on the progress of the constructional improvement in the city³⁰³ and the development of the Hermann-Göring Works.³⁰⁴ Naturally, Hitler stepped onto the Hotel's balcony as well to show himself to his adherents. In addition, he undertook an excursion into the surrounding countryside to the Pöstlingberg, high above the city.

On that March 18, the leader of the NS Warriors' Association, Major General and SS Gruppenführer Reinhardt, celebrated his seventieth birthday. He had been instrumental in the dismemberment of the Soldatenbund.³⁰⁵ Hence Hitler promoted him to Infantry General and penned the following handwritten note to him:³⁰⁶

Dear General Reinhardt,

I am happy to be able to promote you to the honorary rank of Infantry General on the occasion of your seventieth birthday, in appreciation of your dedicated service in the fostering of German soldiership and of your efforts to unite all groups of former soldiers in the National Socialist Reichskriegerbund.

In addition to expressing my appreciation, I extend my personal best wishes for your future. In comradely friendship and with the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

At 7:30 p.m. on the night of March 19, Hitler's special train entered the Görlitz station in Berlin. As on numerous previous occasions, Göring greeted him in an ebullient fashion and then declared:

And yet once more Providence has called on you. Once more you have heard and heeded its call. Today, instead of mere thanks, please accept on behalf of the entire German Volk this, our most solemn pledge: never to let go of those things mighty and great, which, by virtue of your unequalled valor, you have bestowed on us—come what may. For it is not possible that behind such a heroic soldier, there should not stand an equally heroic Volk.

Afterwards, the Führer made yet another "triumphant" entry into the Reich capital. Anti-aircraft searchlights flooded the avenue Unter den Linden, forming a veritable "tunnel of light" through which the columns of soldiers passed, while fireworks illuminated the night skies. This magnificently staged welcome could not conceal, however, that the Volk was less than pleased with this latest coup by its leader. While Göring had presumed to speak "on behalf of the entire German Volk" in his considerably overdrawn declamation at the Görlitz station,

the majority of the German people was outraged by Hitler's treatment of the Czechoslovakian state born of the Munich Agreement. The prospect of war had already put the public ill at ease the previous autumn.³⁰⁷ It had been with a feeling of great relief that the Germans warmly welcomed Chamberlain's intervention. They had hoped that this intervention had effectively put a halt to Hitler's expansionist designs. In March 1939, the public in Germany was stunned by the unbelievably callous breach of contract Hitler had committed in dealing the Czechoslovakian Federation a deadly blow, having vowed to uphold its integrity and to respect the borders drawn at Munich just a few months before. This surpassed all of Hitler's indiscretions since the Röhm Purge.

Hitler's assertions that the cession of the Sudeten German territories constituted "the last territorial demand [he] shall make in Europe," and that Germany did "not want any Czechs at all"³⁰⁸ still rang in the ears of many a German. Schmidt's later comment that the rape of Czechoslovakia appeared to him as the beginning of the end³⁰⁹ was a sentiment shared by a large section of the German population. Hitler's most loyal Unterführers such as Ribbentrop, Göring, and Neurath, who were usually willing slaves to his designs and power, knew deep down that Hitler had left the safe grounds of Realpolitik. Casting caution aside, Hitler had wandered into a terrain of the political landscape where circumstances would force him to resort to potentially dangerous improvisation.

Many Germans were astounded that the Western Powers apparently were willing to put up with Hitler's affront. This led others to believe that perhaps indeed Hitler was the political wizard he had always claimed to be, as even the great powers of the West had apparently abandoned their resistance to his designs. Events would soon prove how gravely Hitler was mistaken in his calculations.

Judging by those to follow, March 15 still had been a fairly calm day. While Chamberlain commented, speaking before the House of Commons, that the Third Reich had indeed acted in defiance of the spirit of the accord reached in Munich, he was quick to point out that, in light of the dissolution of the Czechoslovakian Federation to which its members had apparently consented, the border guarantees that had been extended no longer applied.³¹⁰

The leading statesmen in Germany interpreted this remark to signify that Great Britain would accept the occupation of truncated Czechoslovakia as a *fait accompli*. Assessing the stance of Britain on

such questions usually necessitated waiting a few days to see how opinion there developed. And this was equally true of the events in March, 1939.

While Chamberlain's statements on the first day were subdued in nature, England made its discontent with Hitler vocal on the third day after the invasion. On March 17, the British Ambassador Henderson called on State Secretary von Weizsäcker at the German Foreign Ministry. Henderson expressed His Majesty's Government's reservations on the Czechoslovakian affair to von Weizsäcker, who headed the Ministry in Ribbentrop's absence.³¹¹ Henderson further stated that London perceived a new chapter in German politics to have opened, one which could by no stretch of the imagination be attributed to justifiable pursuit of the self-determination of the peoples. Germany had clearly embarked on a policy of territorial expansion. After the elimination of Czechoslovakia, everyone in England was wondering: "What next?"

3

Far more important in the context of British policy toward Germany was, however, a speech held by the British Prime Minister in Birmingham in the evening hours of March 17.³¹² There the true “victor of Munich” spoke, the man whose cautious conduct of negotiations had succeeded in luring Hitler into the “trap” in September 1938, according to the Führer’s interpretation of events. After all, it was indeed an outstanding achievement to get Hitler to place his signature beneath the international agreement voluntarily. This assured that, should Hitler break the Munich Agreement, he would stand revealed before the world as the perjured, brutal conqueror he truly was. It was a precaution well taken, as Hitler respected neither his legal obligations, the contracts binding him, nor ethical and moral imperatives. The Czechoslovakian venture had revealed his true character and the mask of a reliable statesman was now finally torn from his face for good. The Chamberlain who spoke at Birmingham was a different man from the one who had sought conciliation at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich. In a frank manner, he declared that Hitler’s previous actions—such as the annexation of the Rhineland, of Austria, and of the Sudeten German areas—had been provocative enough, though they could be reconciled with the principles of international law. This was no longer the case in the brutal aggression against Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain reminded Hitler of the assurances he himself had given and admonished him to abide by these. The next time Hitler resorted to the use of force and this resulted in bloodshed, said Chamberlain, he would face an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain. The British Prime Minister stated:³¹³

I am convinced that after Munich the great majority of British people shared my hope and ardently desired that that policy should be carried further. But today I share their disappointment, their indignation that those

hopes have been so wantonly shattered. How can these events this week be reconciled with those assurances which I have read out to you? Surely as a joint signatory of the Munich Agreement I was entitled, if Herr Hitler thought it ought to be undone, to that consultation which is provided for in the Munich declaration. Instead of that he has taken the law into his own hands. Before even the Czech President was received, and confronted with demands which he had no power to resist, the German troops were on the move, and within a few hours they were in the Czech capital.

According to the proclamation which was read out in Prague yesterday, Bohemia and Moravia have been annexed to the German Reich. Non-German inhabitants, who of course include the Czechs, are placed under the German Protector in the German Protectorate. They are to be subject to the political, military, and economic needs of the Reich. They are called self-governing States, but the Reich is to take charge of their foreign policy, their Customs and their Excise, their bank reserves, and the equipment of the disarmed Czech forces. Perhaps most sinister of all, we hear again of the appearance of the Gestapo, the secret police, followed by the usual tale of wholesale arrests of prominent individuals, with consequences with which we are all familiar.

Every man and woman in this country who remembers the fate of the Jews and the political prisoners in Austria must be filled today with distress and foreboding. Who can fail to feel his heart go out in sympathy to the proud and brave people who have so suddenly been subjected to this invasion, whose liberties are curtailed, whose national independence has gone? What has become of this declaration of "No further territorial ambition"? What has become of the assurance "We don't want Czechs in the Reich"? What regard has been paid here to that principle of self-determination on which Herr Hitler argued so vehemently with me at Berchtesgaden when he was asking for the severance of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and its inclusion in the German Reich.

Now we are told that this seizure of territory has been necessitated by disturbances in Czechoslovakia. We are told that the proclamation of this new German Protectorate against the will of its inhabitants has been rendered inevitable by disorders which threatened the peace and security of her mighty neighbour. If there were disorders, were they not fomented from without? And can anybody outside Germany take seriously the idea that they could be a danger to that great country, that they could provide any justification for what has happened?

Does not the question inevitably arise in our minds, if it is so easy to discover good reasons for ignoring assurances so solemnly and so repeatedly given, what reliance can be placed upon any other assurances that come from the same source?

There is another set of questions which almost inevitably must occur in our minds and to the minds of others, perhaps even in Germany herself. Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian *Anschluss*, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public

opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German Government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: “Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?”

“Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?”

Those are grave and serious questions. I am not going to answer them tonight. But I am sure they will require the grave and serious consideration, not only of Germany’s neighbours but of others, perhaps even beyond the confines of Europe. Already there are indications that the process has begun, and it is obvious that it is likely now to be speeded up.

We ourselves will naturally turn first to our partners in the British Commonwealth of Nations and to France, to whom we are so closely bound, and I have no doubt that others, too, knowing that we are not disinterested in what goes on in South-Eastern Europe, will wish to have our counsel and advice.

In our own country we must all review the position with that sense of responsibility which its gravity demands. Nothing must be excluded from that review which bears upon the national safety. Every aspect of our national life must be looked at again from that angle. The Government, as always, must bear the main responsibility, but I know that all individuals will wish to review their own position, too, and to consider again if they have done all they can to offer their service to the State.

I do not believe there is anyone who will question my sincerity when I say there is hardly anything I would not sacrifice for peace. But there is one thing that I must except, and that is the liberty that we have enjoyed for hundreds of years, and which we will never surrender. That I, of all men, should feel called upon to make such a declaration—that is the measure of the extent to which these events have shattered the confidence which was just beginning to show its head and which, if it had been allowed to grow, might have made this year memorable for the return of all Europe to sanity and stability.

It is only six weeks ago that I was speaking in this city, and that I alluded to rumours and suspicions which I said ought to be swept away. I pointed out that any demand to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist, and I added that I could not believe that such a challenge was intended, because no Government with the interests of its own people at heart could expose them for such a claim to the horrors of world war.

And indeed, with the lessons of history for all to read, it seems incredible that we should see such a challenge. I feel bound to repeat that, while I am

not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power resisting such a challenge if it ever were made. For that declaration I am convinced that I have not merely the support, the sympathy, the confidence of my fellow-countrymen and countrywomen, but I shall have also the approval of the whole British Empire and of all other nations who value peace indeed, but who value freedom even more.

In Berlin on March 18, 1939, the Ambassadors of Great Britain and France, Henderson and Coulondre, presented the German Government with official notes of protest. Von Weizsäcker's refusal to accept these was of no avail, however. To emphasize the gravity of the situation, the British and French Governments recalled their ambassadors on that same day.³¹⁴

On March 19, Hitler returned to Berlin to face the situation described above. There was little he could do other than to recall Germany's Ambassadors from Britain (von Dirksen) and France (Graf Welczek) in turn. The Führer, nevertheless, initially failed to perceive the seriousness of the Western protests, which he understood to constitute token gestures. He resolved to speedily announce the appointment of the well-known and respected former Reich Foreign Minister, Neurath, to the post of Reich Governor in the newly annexed territories in the expectation that this step would appease international public opinion.

On March 20, German newspapers carried the following communiqué on the Western Powers' reaction:³¹⁵

Berlin, March 20

In response to the measures Germany undertook to restore law and order in Bohemia and Moravia in order to pacify Central Europe, the British and French Ambassadors made a demarche to the Foreign Ministry to protest against the supposed unlawfulness of the German actions. As reported, the Foreign Office officially informed them that the Reich Government was not in a position to formally acknowledge receipt of this protest, which was completely unfounded politically, legally, and morally.

Hitler's breach of the Munich Agreement indeed was not only a grave affront to Britain and France, but also a slight to Italy. As usual, Hitler had failed to give notice of his designs to Mussolini.

In this instance, however, Hitler was plagued by a guilty conscience and hence was reluctant to provide Mussolini a written justification. The previous year, Hitler had entrusted Prince Philip of Hesse with a

personal letter addressed to Mussolini³¹⁶ to inform him of the planned Anschluss. In 1939, however, Hitler chose instead to send Prince Philip to Rome with an oral report. The excuses Hitler made were the customary ones: Czechoslovakia had kept its armed forces on the alert, it had established ties with the Soviet Union, and the Government in Prague had willfully mistreated the German minority in Czechoslovakia. The Prince of Hesse duly relayed Hitler's arguments to the Italian Head of State. Ciano was present at the encounter and recorded the frustration he felt in his diary:³¹⁷ "Such pretexts may be good for Goebbels' propaganda, but they should not use them when talking with us."

Hitler's approach in this matter was a bit much even for his friend Mussolini. The Duce fervently opposed making the Prince's visit public. Angrily he burst out: "The Italians would laugh at me; every time Hitler occupies a country he sends me a message."³¹⁸ This development was pivotal and apparently reinforced Mussolini's determination to launch his military campaign against Albania³¹⁹ in the hope of improving his tarnished image.

The rape of the remainder of Czechoslovakia greatly disconcerted Poland. Needless to say, Hitler had not thought it necessary to consult this "befriended" people before taking action. During the autumn crisis of 1938, relations between the two states had improved when Hitler had apportioned the Olsa region to Poland.³²⁰ Alas, times had changed. Nevertheless, Hitler remained undaunted, as he was confident that he had done the Poles so great a favor, by appropriating the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary, that they would remain silent when confronted with the German annexation of the Czech territories. He was wrong. While Poland had long sought to obtain a common border with Hungary, the military occupation of Czechia and, above all, of Slovakia was obviously a measure directed against Poland. Its aim was to corner Poland, which now faced German troops to its west, north, and south.

In view of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Reich's demands for the return of the Free City and for the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn across the Polish Corridor took on a very different connotation. These items on Hitler's agenda were undoubtedly intended to prepare the grounds for an assault on Poland. Acquiescence to these requests did not represent an acceptable solution for the Poles, especially considering that, despite far-reaching concessions, Czechoslovakia had not been spared annexation. Neither the cession of the Sudeten German areas, nor the construction of an extraterritorial

Autobahn linking Breslau to Vienna, nor thirty other extraterritorial thoroughfares had prevented Hitler from annexing the “remainder of Czechoslovakia.”³²¹ Poland could not hope to sway him in his ambitious designs by granting Germany access to one port and extraterritoriality of a single motorway across the Polish Corridor. It was proof of Hitler’s impertinence that he thought he could see his demands through all the more easily after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On March 21, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to present the German demands to the Polish Ambassador Lipski anew. First of all, Ribbentrop said he regretted that Poland had not been informed of the measures taken against Prague. Then he began clumsily to repeat Hitler’s arguments for the cession of Danzig and permission for the construction of either an extraterritorial motorway or railway link across the Polish Corridor. Ribbentrop recorded the following in his notes on the talk:³²²

I asked the Polish Ambassador Lipski to see me at noon today.

In describing the recent developments in Czechoslovakia, I pointed out to Herr Lipski that, because of the rapid succession of events, I had been unable to inform the representatives of foreign powers here in the manner I had desired. [—]

I stated that I assumed that the settlement of the Carpatho-Ukrainian question was satisfactory to Poland. The establishment of a Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia meant the pacification of the region and accorded with the historic conditions. In the end, it benefited everyone.

At this point, Ambassador Lipski interjected Polish misgivings on Germany’s assumption of the protection of Slovakia. News of this event had had quite an impact in Poland. The man in the street regarded this move as one primarily directed against Poland. Slovaks shared a linguistic affinity to the Polish people. Poland had historically defined interests in this area. Speaking in terms of an unfettered *Realpolitik*, the extension of German protection to Slovakia could only be interpreted as a strike against Poland.

Ribbentrop then mused on the correct course of action to take:

It appeared imperative to me to make a renewed attempt to get German-Polish relations back on track. It appeared to me both correct and highly appropriate that German and Polish statesmen should personally meet in the near future to exchange views. I stated that I would be extremely pleased if Foreign Minister Beck would visit Berlin soon. The Führer had also indicated to me that he would warmly welcome such an exchange of views. [—]

The provisions of the Versailles Treaty as they applied to the Corridor were generally regarded as placing a great strain on Germany. Not one of the previous German Governments had been in a position to distance itself from the claim for revision without its governing coalition being swept away by the Reichstag within forty-eight hours.³²³

The Führer was of a different opinion with regard to the Corridor. He acknowledged the justified claim of Poland to free access to the sea. He was the only German statesman who could pronounce a renunciation of the Polish Corridor for good. Prerequisites for this were the return of the exclusively German city of Danzig to the Reich and provisions allowing for the construction of an extraterritorial highway and railroad link between East Prussia and the Reich. Only by this could the thorn represented by the existence of the Polish Corridor be extracted from the flesh of the German Volk.

Should Polish statesmen in all earnest sit back and ponder these facts for awhile, then assuredly a resolution of the situation could be obtained on the basis of the following: a return of the Free City of Danzig to the Reich, an extraterritorial highway and railroad link between East Prussia and the Reich, and, in exchange, a [German] guarantee of the Corridor. [—]

Ambassador Lipski promised to inform Foreign Minister Beck and thereupon to report back to me. I suggested that Ambassador Lipski himself return to Warsaw to relay his report orally. I repeated once again how advantageous a final settlement between Germany and Poland appeared to me at this particular stage. This was especially important since the Führer was astonished by the odd attitude Poland assumed in a variety of questions. It was imperative that the Führer not gain the impression that Poland was simply not willing [to address these difficulties].

Soon Hitler would judge Poland's behavior even more "odd," when, on March 26, its government refused categorically to give in to the German demands.³²⁴ Apparently, Hitler had truly believed Poland would be more likely to yield to Germany after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. After all, it had been his declared intention to first occupy the remainder of Czechoslovakia, and then the Memel territory and Danzig in 1939. He had been convinced that the virtual annexation of these territories could easily be attained without opposition by the Western Powers.³²⁵

The circumstances surrounding the cession of the Memel territory had been fortunate ones for Hitler. The Versailles Treaty³²⁶ had severed the region from the German Reich. Without awaiting a final settlement, Lithuania had deployed its soldiers in the area on January 8, 1923. This hasty move had resulted in the withdrawal of French occupational forces from the territory.

Attended by representatives from Lithuania, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, the Convention of May 8, 1924 had granted the Memel territory a certain autonomy. In spite of good intentions, this settlement had been far from satisfactory to the area's population, which consisted largely of ethnic Germans. In the year 1935, Hitler had repeatedly taken up the cause of the Memel territory, pointing to Lithuania's conduct in

1923, in an effort to divert attention from the reintroduction of universal conscription.³²⁷

In early 1939, Lithuania granted the Memel territory a far-reaching autonomy.³²⁸ This, in turn, allowed Hitler great political freedom of action in the region, similar to the privileges he enjoyed in the Free City of Danzig. Hitler was not interested in political issues at this point; what he desired was to extend the Reich's military sovereignty to the Memel territory. He was determined to succeed in this "in one way or another." Returning to Berlin from Prague, Hitler alerted the Navy and issued instructions to the three branches of the Wehrmacht to take measures in preparation for a military occupation of the Memel territory. In the interim, Ribbentrop conveyed Hitler's demand for an immediate cession of the Memel territory to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Juozas Urbys, who happened to be in Berlin at the time.

On March 21, Urbys returned to Kaunas (Kovno). That same night, the Lithuanian Government published the following declaration:³²⁹

Kaunas, March 22

After returning to Kaunas yesterday [March 21], Foreign Minister Urbys reported on the outcome of his talks with the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to the Ministerial Council. It was in session from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The report conveyed that, on the behalf of the Reich Government, the Reich Foreign Minister had proposed the restitution of the Memel territory to the Reich. This he termed the sole expedient approach to a settlement.

Von Ribbentrop further added that, provided a return of the territories was effected based on voluntary agreement, Germany was willing largely to consider Lithuania's vested economic interest in the Memel harbor. The Reich Foreign Minister emphasized that such a solution not merely rendered justice to the unequivocal desire of the German population within the Memel territory, but would clearly be in the best interest of future relations between the two countries. He then pointed to the Memel German population's well-known demand for a return to the Reich. The atmosphere in the Memel territory at present was such that a settlement of this question on the basis of the proposed solution by the Reich was urgent and imperative in order to prevent clashes.

After Foreign Minister Urbys' exposition, the Ministerial Council consulted at great length on the resulting situation. The Foreign Minister shall report on this to the body of the Sejm today. In view of the stance espoused by the German Reich, the Ministerial Council has consented to the return of the Memel territory. A Lithuanian delegation will depart for Berlin on Wednesday to discuss the ramifications of this decision.

At 3:20 p.m. on March 22, on receipt of the good news, Hitler again climbed aboard the special train awaiting him as Head of State at the

Stettin station. Though not aware of this himself, he was about to bring to its conclusion the last bloodless territorial acquisition of his career. Accompanied by the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, Hitler arrived in Swinemünde at 6:30 p.m., where he boarded the pocket battleship *Deutschland*. Also at this time, those navy contingents which were not engaged elsewhere set sail: the pocket battleships *Admiral Graf Spee* and *Admiral Scheer*,³³⁰ the light cruisers *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Köln*, two divisions of destroyers, three torpedo boat flotillas, and several convoy vessels.

Half an hour later, negotiations concerning the Memel territory began in the Reich capital. Urb-ys having returned to Berlin from Kaunas, the Reich Foreign Minister and the Lithuanian Foreign Minister sat down to draft a treaty, which was to settle all outstanding questions. By 11:00 p.m., the two diplomats had the document ready for signature.

Its contents, however, implicate Hitler as its original author:³³¹

The German Reich Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Lithuania have determined to settle the reunification of the Memel territory with the German Reich in an international treaty. It shall resolve all outstanding issues concerning Germany and Lithuania and, thereby, it shall open up venues for the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

To this end, the Chancellor of the German Reich and the President of the Republic of Lithuania have appointed as plenipotentiaries: the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Herr Juozas Urb-ys, and the Lithuanian Envoy to Berlin, Herr Kazys Skirpa.

After the due and proper exchange of powers of attorney, agreement on the following was reached:

Article I

Severed from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, the Memel territory shall be reunited with the German Reich as of today.

Article II

Lithuanian military and police forces shall withdraw immediately from the Memel territory. The Lithuanian Government shall attend to the orderly evacuation of the premises to be left behind in proper conditions. Wherever necessary, both parties shall appoint commissars who shall assume responsibility for handing over administrative units not presently in the control of the autonomous administration of the Memel territory. The remaining issues arising from the transfer of sovereignty shall be addressed in subsequent agreements. This applies in particular to questions of an economic and financial nature, and to questions concerning issues of an administrative character or matters of citizenship.

Article III

To account for Lithuania's economic requirements, a free trade zone shall be established in the Memel harbor. The particulars pertaining to this shall be regulated in guidelines contained in the enclosure to this treaty.

Article IV

To strengthen said resolution to promote the development of friendly relations between Germany and Lithuania, the two parties to this treaty pledge themselves to refrain from the use of force against each other and from the support of efforts by third parties to use force against either of them.

Article V

This treaty enters into force on the day of its signature. In acknowledgment thereof, the plenipotentiaries present place their signatures beneath this treaty.

Done in duplicate in the German and the Lithuanian languages.

Berlin, March 22, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop

J. Urbšys

K. Skirpa

At midnight, Ribbentrop triumphantly informed Hitler in a telegram: "Mein Führer! I report to you the signing of the treaty with Lithuania on the reunification of the Memel territory with the Reich."

On March 23, aboard the *Deutschland*, Hitler effected a "Law on the Reunification of the Memel Territory with the German Reich." The Reich Ministers who supposedly countersigned this decree were not present on the ship, with the exception of Lammers. This law was passed in violation of the Constitution in a manner similar to the ordinance effecting the Austrian Anschluss on March 13, 1938³³² and had the following content:³³³

Law on the Reunification of the Memel Territory
with the German Reich on March 23, 1939

§ 1

The Memel territory is part of the German Reich again.

§ 2

(1) The Memel country shall be integrated into the Land of Prussia and the Province of East Prussia. It shall be assigned to the administrative district of Gumbinnen.

(2) The Reich Minister of the Interior shall decree either the administrative subdivision of the Memel territory in urban and rural districts or shall integrate the Memel territory into the existing urban and rural districts.

§ 3

As of the promulgation of this law, those residents of the Memel territory who lost their German citizenship with the removal of the Memel territory on

July 30, 1924 shall regain their German citizenship, provided their place of residence as of March 22, 1939 was located either in the Memel territory or in the German Reich. This shall equally apply to persons whose citizenship is derived from individuals native to the Memel territory who fulfill the above criteria.

§ 4

(1) Reich Law shall enter into force in the Memel territory as of May 1, 1939.

(2) The Reich Minister concerned shall be entitled, in concord with the Reich Minister of the Interior, to provide either that Reich Law not enter into force in the Memel territory, or that it shall do so at a later date, or that its promulgation shall be subject to special measures. Any such regulation shall require publication in the Reich Law Gazette.

§ 5

(1) The Law of the Prussian Land shall enter into force in the Memel territory as of May 1, 1939.

(2) The administration of the Land of Prussia shall be entitled to provide that either Prussian Law not enter into force in the Memel territory, or that it shall do so at a later date, or that its promulgation shall be subject to special measures. Any such regulation shall require publication in the Statute Books of the Land of Prussia.

§ 6

(1) The Reich Ministry of the Interior shall constitute the center for the reunification of the Memel territory with the German Reich.

(2) The President of the Province of East Prussia shall serve as transitional commissar [for the Memel territory]. The Führer of the Memel Germans shall serve as his deputy.³³⁴

(3) The Reich Minister of the Interior shall be entitled to decree the legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation and supplementation of this Law.

§ 7

This Law shall enter into force on March 22, 1939.

Aboard the Panzerschiff *Deutschland*, March 23, 1939.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan,

Field Marshal and Prussian Minister-President, Göring

The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

The autonomous government in the Memel territory took control of all formerly Lithuanian agencies: the postal service, the broadcast station, the port authority, etc. The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, Himmler, was the first Reich German to arrive in the Memel territory on March 22. Police task forces and SS Kommandos accompanied him.

In the morning hours of March 23, German battalions and Panzer divisions crossed the Queen-Luise Bridge in Tilsit and entered the Memel territory, while Luftwaffe squadrons soared overhead. Torpedo boats and escort vessels pulled up alongside a naval landing party in the Memel harbor at approximately 10:00 a.m. Hitler himself did not disembark, although—given Himmler’s stringent security measures—he could have safely come ashore. As usual, whenever his personal welfare was concerned, Hitler played it safe and waited until the German military had completely secured the city.

It was not until 1:30 p.m. that Hitler finally left the *Deutschland* anchored offshore. He transferred to the torpedo boat *Leopard*, which ferried him to the harbor where he finally stepped ashore at 2:00 p.m. There he reviewed naval officers, police contingents, and the Memel German Security Police.³³⁵ A car took him to the Theater Square where the leader of the Memel Germans, Dr. Ernst Neumann, greeted him and led him up to the balcony of the theater. There Hitler pinned the Golden Party Badge on Neumann’s chest.

After Neumann’s introductory statements, Hitler gave an uncharacteristically short speech. Indeed, he appeared to have other things on his mind. In all likelihood, the unexpectedly vocal British reprimand of his actions weighed heavily on him. Spitefully, he stated the Reich’s determination “to master its own destiny, to fashion it, whether or not this suits an outside world.” Hitler stated.³³⁶

Memel Germans! Volksgenossen!

I greet you today in the name of the entire German Volk. I am happy to receive you into our Greater German Reich. I lead you back to your homeland which you have not forgotten and which has never forgotten you. In the name of the German Volk, I thank you for your brave, manly, and unshakeable insistence on your rights and your affiliation to the German Reich.

I believe I could not have expressed this gratitude in any better way than I just did by bestowing on your leader the one badge which adorns the chest of the new German Reich’s best fighters. That you are able to celebrate this day is not the result of chance, but of immense work, the most difficult of struggles and sacrifices. You were once forsaken by a Germany which had succumbed to disgrace and shame. Now you have come home to a mighty new Germany.

It upholds once more its unshakeable sense of honor. It shall not entrust its destiny to foreigners; it stands ready and willing to master its own destiny, to fashion it, whether or not this suits an outside world.

Eighty million Germans today stand up for this one new Germany. You shall now partake in the surge of our national life, our work, our faith, our hopes, and, should it become necessary, you shall partake in our sacrifices.

You appreciate this more than other Germans who enjoy the good fortune of living in our great Reich's heartland. You live on its borders and you will perceive what it means no longer to feel forsaken now that you know a mighty Reich, a great united nation, stands behind you. Just as you once suffered because of Germany's impotence and its fragmentation, other Germans did, too. From despair and suffering now springs forth a new community. It is our will and our determination that it shall never again be shattered and that no power on earth shall ever break or bend it. Let this be our most solemn vow.

Twenty years of misery and suffering shall serve us as a lesson and as a warning in the future. We know what we have to expect of the rest of the world. Yet we wish it no ill because of this. But the suffering it imparts to us must have an end.

Hence, I greet our German Volksgenossen of old as the newest of the Greater German Reich's citizens. Let us join the other Germans throughout the Reich who, at this moment, express our love, our dedication, our willingness to sacrifice, our faith, our loyalty, and our confidence in the battle cry: our Volk and our German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

As early as 3:45 p.m., the Führer left aboard the *Leopard*, which returned him to the *Deutschland*. By 9:00 the following morning, he was back in Swinemünde. Before stepping ashore, he had the following message related by flag signal to the fleet:³³⁷ "I express to the fleet my appreciation for the accomplished mission. Adolf Hitler."

Amidst the thunders of the salute, Hitler again set foot on land at approximately 10:00 a.m. A special train took him back to Berlin, where he arrived around noon at the Stettin station. In this instance, he refrained from making another "triumphant" entry into the city.

On March 24, the ratification of a far-reaching economic agreement between Germany and Rumania became public. Ministerialdirektor Wohltat had served as Hitler's special emissary on this occasion and, along with Fabricius, the German Ambassador to Bucharest, had negotiated the treaty with the Rumanian Foreign Minister, Grigore Gafencu.³³⁸ It had been concluded the previous day.³³⁹

The treaty's purpose was obvious: Hitler sought to secure access to Rumania's oil reserves and other raw materials essential to the war effort. The true significance of paragraphs 3 and 5 of the treaty was thinly veiled. These points provided for the establishment of a German-Rumanian joint venture dedicated to the "exploration of petroleum, development and exploitation of copper pyrites, manganese ore, and bauxite." Hitler's ambition to convert Rumania into a German vassal state was manifested by Point 7 where he promised to "supply armament and weaponry to the Rumanian Armed Forces."

On March 25, Hitler signed into law two “Ordinances on the Implementation of the Law on the Hitler Youth.”³⁴⁰ The first of these provided for the creation of a *Stamm-Hitlerjugend* (regular Hitler Youth), privileged as a subdivision of the NSDAP. Hitler Youth members of good standing were to be granted admission to this “core” unit after a one-year membership in the Hitler Youth movement. The second ordinance decreed that all German boys between the ages of ten and eighteen years were to partake in the activities of the Hitler Youth and were obliged to accept compulsory membership in general Hitler Youth sections. This decree contained a slogan to inspire German youngsters to take part in the labor service and to participate in defense exercises: “Service with the Hitler Youth is an honorable service to the German Volk.”

In a special law³⁴¹ also dated March 25, Hitler granted the *Technische Nothilfe* (Technical Emergency Relief Organization) the standing of a corporate body under public law. It was dedicated to “the most worthy of services to the German Volksgemeinschaft.” The motivation revealed in this “generous” acknowledgment was of a purely military nature and by no means humanitarian in character. Should there be a war, Hitler thought it judicious to have at his command the resources of this agency and the expertise of its personnel, to fulfill “certain tasks in the defense of the nation on land and in the air.” The preamble to the law stated:

In order to provide technical assistance in combating public emergencies and in carrying out certain tasks in the defense of the nation on land and in the air, the State is in need of a permanent technical relief organization. The Technische Nothilfe constitutes this technical relief organization. Service with the Technische Nothilfe renders valuable service to the German Volksgemeinschaft. To assure the constant readiness and the effectiveness of the Technische Nothilfe, the Reich Government promulgates the following law, which is hereby made public:

Article 1

As a provider of technical help, the Technische Nothilfe (TN) shall be placed under the supervision of the Reich Minister of the Interior.

Hitler signed another ten decrees and ordinances on this day so rich in lawmaking. Chief among these was a “Decree on the Organization of the Sudeten German Territories.”³⁴² The heartland was to become a Reichsgau divided into three administrative districts (Aussig, Eger, and Troppau), while the Reich Government dealt out parcels of land on the southern and eastern fringes of the Sudetenland to Bavaria, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, and Silesia.

March 25, 1939

As though he had suddenly recalled his friend Mussolini, whom he had recently slighted so considerably, Hitler addressed the following telegram to the Duce that same day:³⁴³

On the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist League of Fighters, my thoughts turn to you, in heartfelt and loyal friendship, as the victorious creator of the proud new Italy. Suffused by identical ideals, the German Volk stands shoulder to shoulder with the battle-tested Italian people in order to thwart attempts, fostered by hatred and incomprehension, to hamper the justified will to live of our two peoples and to undermine peace worldwide.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, Göring had returned to San Remo, where he granted an interview. As Hitler's spokesman, he obediently declared the friendship between Germany and Italy to be ineradicable. It would defy any and all attempts to drive a wedge between the two peoples. Any speculations on this possibility were ludicrous, as any such endeavors were doomed from the outset. The slight irritation perceptible in these declarations revealed that, apparently, there were powers which "speculated" on a rift between the two states. In a speech the next day (March 26), Mussolini hurriedly declared efforts to undermine the Berlin-Rome Axis simply "childish."³⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Hitler spent his time awaiting the arrival of the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, from whom he expected to receive Danzig and the extraterritorial Autobahn on a silver platter. Despite the urgent nature of Ribbentrop's request of March 21, Beck failed to heed Berlin's summons. Instead, the Polish Ambassador Lipski announced his intention to relay to Berlin a memorandum drawn up by the Polish Government.

Hitler bluntly refused to see anyone other than the Polish Foreign Minister. He was irritated and baffled by the reaction of the Poles. In his eyes, the situation was clear cut: Poland would have to yield to Germany's demands. How could it be so bold as to present him with a "memorandum"?

Hitler took advantage of the demise of the Reichsärzteführer (Head of the Reich Physicians' Association) Dr. Wagner,³⁴⁵ in order to leave Berlin for a few days. He expressed his condolences to Wagner's widow in a short telegram:³⁴⁶

I offer you my deeply felt condolences on the painful loss you have suffered with the death of your husband.

Adolf Hitler

On March 26, the thankless task of accepting the Polish Government's memorandum from the hands of Ambassador Lipski fell to Ribbentrop.³⁴⁷ The note made no mention of a possible return of Danzig to the German Reich, and instead the Polish Government advocated a "joint German-Polish guarantee for the Free City." In addition, the memorandum called to mind "certain statements by the Herr Reichskanzler in February of 1938."³⁴⁸ At the time, Hitler had argued that, if the Polish Government respected the German character of Danzig, then the Free City and the German Reich would respect Poland's rights and interests. The memorandum included this unequivocal statement on the disputed topic of an Autobahn and railway link across the Polish Corridor: "Any concessions on the part of Poland are viable only within the framework of the sovereignty of the Polish state—hence granting extraterritoriality to motorways is out of the question."

One can easily imagine Ribbentrop's displeasure at such strong language. In his notes, he remarked:³⁴⁹

Having taken note of its contents, I responded to Ambassador Lipski by stating that, in my personal opinion, the Polish position afforded no basis for a solution of the German-Polish contention. The only possible resolution thereof lay in the reunion of Danzig with the Reich, and the creation of extraterritorial railroad and motorway links, connecting the Reich to East Prussia. Herr Lipski retorted that his was the unpleasant duty to point out that any further pursuit of this particular German policy, especially pertaining to the restitution of Danzig to the Reich, meant war with Poland.

One can equally easily imagine the impact of this memorandum on Hitler. He was incensed at the thought that the impudent "satellite" state³⁵⁰ Poland dared defy him and cite his own statements of February 1938 in arguing against his claims, thereby adding insult to injury. Poland had thus turned the Danzig question into a *casus belli*. This was decidedly ungrateful on Warsaw's part, for had not he, Adolf Hitler, just done it the extraordinary favor of appropriating the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary? And had he not done so in order that Poland might realize its dream of obtaining a joint border with Hungary? Had it not been reasonably clear that a Polish cession of Danzig was to be expected in return? Never had he faced such refractoriness before. Hitler was outraged. Had he not just offered Poland a "generous" guarantee of its borders?

Undoubtedly, all this was the fault of the British. Their support of Poland had emboldened the Polish statesmen to employ so provocative a language in the memorandum addressed to him. Here Hitler was

right, since the Poles had reason to believe—based on Chamberlain’s comments on March 17—that Britain would answer the use of force by the German dictator with an unequivocal declaration of war.

At noon on March 27, Hitler attended the funeral service for Reichsärzteführer Wagner in the mortuary of the Ostfriedhof cemetery in Munich. He placed an enormous laurel wreath at the grave.³⁵¹

On March 28, events in Spain took a decisive turn as Franco’s troops moved to occupy the capital of the country. Hitler wired the following congratulatory note to the Spanish Generalissimo on this occasion:³⁵²

I extend my most heartfelt congratulations on your troops’ entry into Madrid and the final victory which Nationalist Spain thereby secured over the destructive forces of Bolshevism. In sincere appreciation, Germany’s thoughts turn today to the outstanding accomplishments of your brave soldiers. Germany stands convinced this shall herald an era of Spanish ascent which will justify the great exertions and sacrifices of the years of struggle.

Adolf Hitler

On March 29 in Berchtesgaden, representatives of the judiciary (Rechtswahrer) in the Ostmark and the Sudetenland visited Hitler, who delivered a short address for their benefit.³⁵³

On March 30, Hitler inspected the progress of a project restoring Augsburg’s city theater and surveyed work at the Apollo Theater.³⁵⁴ Among other officials Gauleiters Adolf Wagner and Karl Wahl, Reichsleiter Bormann, and Building Inspector Professor Giessler accompanied Hitler on this tour.

Returning to Berlin the same day, Hitler placed his signature beneath a decree introducing a standard service uniform for civil servants. Hitler had been indignant that high-ranking German civil servants and even ministers appeared in civilian clothes on official occasions. This could not be reconciled with the new style in the Third Reich. He dealt summarily with this lack of etiquette by instituting a dress code in the form of a decree, the preface to which detailed the following:³⁵⁵

§ 1

(1) Civil servants in the higher echelons of the administration of the Reich and the Länder, the civil service administration, and permanent representatives thereof are obliged to wear the uniform of the civil service whenever they represent the government or the administration at official events or whenever specially instructed to do so. Exempted from these provisions are civil servants who are entitled to wear the official Party uniform in their capacities as political leaders or members of organizations. The Deputy of the Führer

shall issue special guidelines in agreement with the Reich Minister of the Interior.

In addition, Hitler awarded the Goethe Medal to the President of the Reichsgericht, Dr. Bumke, on the occasion of his tenth service anniversary. Hitler was highly satisfied with Bumke's conduct of office.

Hitler also conveyed his condolences to the parents of Luftwaffe Captain von Moreau, who had perished in a plane crash.³⁵⁶

March 31 was a black day for Hitler. Chamberlain had chosen this date to follow up his announcements of March 17 with concrete action. Stepping before the House of Commons, he announced the conclusion of a military alliance between the United Kingdom and Poland. It would enter into force immediately if Poland was forced to oppose aggression by Germany. He declared:³⁵⁷

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments.³⁵⁸ In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect. I may add that the French Government have authorized me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.

The British Prime Minister hereby made clear that the agreement also applied to Danzig. Since the Polish Government held a military occupation of Danzig by German troops to represent a serious infringement on its independence and vital interests, any such action by Germany would elicit a declaration of war by Great Britain and France. Hitler was outraged when news of Chamberlain's address reached him. This was hardly surprising, as this was already the third blow to his conception of foreign policy which he had received from abroad within the last two weeks.

First, Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham on March 17 had contained an unexpected British reaction to the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Second, Poland had boldly refused to cede Danzig and opposed the construction of an extraterritorial motorway across the Polish Corridor. Third, Chamberlain now threatened that, should Germany pursue its aggressive designs against Poland, Britain would declare war on the Reich. All this was hard to

reconcile with the Third Reich's policy of territorial expansion to the East. Hitler's entire foreign policy had been based on a "natural alliance" with Great Britain.³⁵⁹

In a fit of rage, he pounded the marble desk top with his fists. Time and time again, he cursed the British. Finally, he shouted: "*Denen werde ich einen Teufelstrank brauen!*" (I shall brew them one devilish potion!)³⁶⁰

He already had in mind a few potent ingredients for this drink: abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, renunciation of the German-Polish Friendship Pact, and military subjugation of Poland. And, if he failed to succeed at first, then there always remained what he considered an ace up his sleeve: an alliance with the Soviet Union. The English were certain to feel weak in the knees when confronted with the terrible prospect of a National Socialist alliance with the evil forces of Bolshevism. They would eagerly abide by any conditions the Reich Chancellor then chose to impose on them. After all, a similar strategy had quickly led to the capitulation of the German Nationalists in the Berlin transportation workers' strike in November 1932. Naturally, he would resort to such a drastic measure only as a last recourse. The British would assuredly regain their common sense before this and would realize that only submission to the will of Adolf Hitler represented a reasonable approach to foreign policy in the Europe of 1939.

For the moment, a few slaps in the face would undoubtedly restore reason to the obstinate British. The threat of an abrogation of the Naval Agreement of 1935 would suffice as a first step. Hitler welcomed the launching of a battlecruiser in Wilhelmshaven on April 1, as it afforded him the opportunity to speak at length on the topic of naval supremacy. The vessel to be christened was the second so-called 35,000-ton heavy battlecruiser, which had an actual tonnage of over 40,000 tons, in disregard of earlier agreements. The *Tirpitz* and the *Bismarck* were destined to be, when completed, the strongest vessels afloat in the world.

At the launching of the *Bismarck* on February 14, Hitler had already implied that persistent hostility by Britain might lead him to embrace a naval policy similar to that of William II. It was not by chance that the first large high-seas battlecruiser of the German Navy bore the name *Bismarck*. To drive home this point once again, Hitler resolved to christen the second battlecruiser *Tirpitz*. Although the German fleet, even if everything went well, would require years to approach the

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might of the Kaiser's fleet, at least the English would learn again to fear a German Grand Admiral like Tirpitz. For this reason, Hitler speedily promoted Raeder to Grand Admiral on April 1.

Around 11:00 a.m., Hitler's special train pulled into the Wilhelmshaven station. From there he proceeded by car to the naval shipyards. He reviewed a contingent of the naval artillery and mounted the rostrum to open the festivities. Vice Admiral von Trotha³⁶¹ delivered a short address, which he concluded with shouts of "Sieg Heil!" Frau von Hassel, a daughter of Grand Admiral Tirpitz, had been asked to christen the battleship named in honor of her father: "On the orders of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, I christen you the *Tirpitz*."

Once the ship had been successfully launched, Hitler boarded a light battlecruiser, the *Scharnhorst*, which had cast its anchor near the Seydlitz Bridge. Before a gathering of the admirals and commanders of the Fleet, Hitler personally presented Raeder with his new appointment in a handwritten letter:³⁶²

My dear Admiral General Raeder,

These days you celebrate your forty-fifth service anniversary. Throughout your long years of service, you bore active witness to all [!] of the most crucial epochs in German history. You experienced the building of our mighty fleet before the war under its great creator.³⁶³ You headed the missions of this instrument of German naval prestige, standing at the side of the most outstanding Commander of this Fleet³⁶⁴ in a great day and age. With all your might, you upheld the thought of Germany's naval prestige even in a time of decline.

For ten-and-a-half years you have been the leader of this German Wehrmacht at sea. Your personality has left its imprint upon it. On this day, the launching of the fourth battleship,³⁶⁵ which bears the name of the creator of Germany's first High Seas fleet, greatly reinforces its ranks. I take advantage of the launching of the *Tirpitz* to lend visible expression to my gratitude and appreciation for your dedicated and purposeful work.

I promote you to Grand Admiral as of this day!

In the context of this promotion, I wish to extend my heartfelt, best wishes on your forty-fifth service anniversary. I cherish the hope that you shall be preserved to us in the best of health so that you may continue to head the building of a fleet worthy of Greater Germany and remain at my disposal as my adviser and colleague for many years to come.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, Raeder received the baton of Grand Admiral, which bore the inscription: "To the first Grand Admiral of the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler."

April 1, 1939

Hitler remained aboard the *Scharnhorst* for several hours. In all likelihood, he was already drawing up the directives to the Wehrmacht in preparation for the aggression against Poland (“Case White”).³⁶⁶ One piece of evidence in support of this theory is a letter Keitel wrote in Berlin on April 3, 1939:³⁶⁷

In connection with “Case White,” the Führer has given the following additional orders:

1. Action on this case has to allow for implementation at any point after September 1, 1939.

2. The High Command of the Wehrmacht is charged with drawing up an exact chronological table for “Case White” and ascertaining congruence through talks with all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

3. The branches of the Wehrmacht are to submit their intentions and papers regarding the chronological table to the High Command of the Wehrmacht by May 1, 1939.

On April 1, Hitler left the *Scharnhorst* for Wilhelmshaven at approximately 5:00 p.m. The Mayor of Wilhelmshaven bestowed honorary citizenship on the Reich Chancellor at the City Hall. Following the official reception, Hitler staged a mass rally at the square in front of the building. Already his opening statements revealed his reasons for holding forth on this particular occasion: by taking up the city’s imperial past, Hitler wished to attack the British verbally:³⁶⁸

Germans! Volksgenossen!

Whoever seeks to fully appreciate the rise and fall of Germany, has only to look to the history of a city such as Wilhelmshaven. Today resounding with creative activity and work, it was a dead spot not so very long ago—virtually without a right to exist and with no prospects for the future. One does well to reflect on this past every once in a while.

The city experienced its first boom along with the rise of the German Reich after its struggle for unification. This Germany was a Germany of peace. It was a time when many of the so-called peace-loving, virtuous nations were engaged in a multitude of wars while this Germany knew but one goal: to secure peace, to work in peace, to advance the welfare of its inhabitants, and to thereby contribute to human culture and civilization. Internally, this peaceful Germany labored to fashion its life with infinite diligence, ingenuity, and persistence. On the outside, it sought to secure for itself a well-deserved place in the sun by participating in peaceful competition with other peoples.

Although this Germany was the greatest guarantor of peace for many decades, wrapped up in its peaceful pursuits, it was unable to prevent other peoples, especially their statesmen, from looking at our rise with envy and hatred. In the end, they responded with war.

Today the historic record tells us how England systematically pursued this policy of encirclement at the time.

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Propaganda in Germany peddled the slogan “policy of encirclement” during the months to follow, ruthlessly exploiting the watchword Hitler had introduced in his speech. While Britain had admittedly taken certain precautionary measures before 1914, they had been applied only after Germany and Austria attempted to expand by force.³⁶⁹ The First World War had broken out precisely because Austria had not heeded London’s warnings and had invaded Serbia, and Germany had invaded Belgium. Their cause had been doomed: neither Germany nor Austria had commanded the military resources to emerge victorious from a confrontation with the Western Powers.

No nation can claim the glory of having wrestled us to the ground, least of all those nations whose statesmen do all the talking today! Germany remained undefeated and unbeaten in the struggle on land, in the air, and at sea. And still we lost the war. We know the power which carried the victory over Germany back then. It was the power of lies, the poison of propaganda. It did not recoil before distortion and falsehood. And, unprepared for this onslaught, the German Reich was defenseless against it.

After these utterly fantastic claims, Hitler expounded the impact of Wilson’s Fourteen Points on the German military at great length. The German army had prematurely laid down its weapons in 1918, deceived by these false promises. Hitler attacked the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. In this context, he spoke of Germany’s “right to life.”

When other statesmen insist that the rule of law should prevail in this world, then one ought to point out to them that their crimes do not constitute law. Their Diktat is neither right nor law. The eternal right to life of all peoples takes precedence over this Diktat. Providence did not create the German Volk so that it might obediently comply with a law, applauded by either the English or the French, but so that it might realize its right to life. And this is what we are here for!

Apparently, Hitler thought he had just realized this “eternal right to life” of Germany by invading Czechoslovakia. Before replying to British misgivings at his conduct in recent days, he interjected a *ritardando*, to whittle a highly convoluted rendition of his struggle “within the nation” in the form of a “party narrative.” Finally, he returned to his earlier topic and went on the offensive:

If an English statesman today believes he can resolve all outstanding problems by means of open consultations and negotiations, then this will elicit from me only one comment: There was ample time for this before we came—fifteen years! Apparently, the world today is persuaded it can divide

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the nations into two categories: those which are virtuous and those which are not. England and France belong to the first category, while Germany and Italy belong to the latter. All we can say in reply is: Is it not best left to the Lord Almighty to determine who is virtuous and who is not? Assuredly, it is not up to us mortals to pass judgment.

Perhaps this English statesman will then retort: "Evidently, the Lord has already passed his judgment, for did he not accord the virtuous nations a quarter of the surface of this earth while he took everything from those which are not virtuous?" Please permit me to ask a question here: Precisely by what means have these virtuous nations appropriated themselves a quarter of the earth? There is only one reply to this: surely these means were not virtuous! For 300 years now, England has acted in a fashion which cannot be described as virtuous. And now, in its old age, it speaks of virtue!

"In its old age," decrepit England and its senile statesmen³⁷⁰ thought they could order him, Adolf Hitler, around! These men were incapable of taking decisive action. Nothing they could do would dissuade him, the young conqueror, from the pursuit of his ambitious designs.

It took great impertinence on the part of the British, so Hitler reflected, to find fault with him for not consulting them prior to the move against Czechoslovakia. He was not a man to ask others what to do. Indeed, had he not always "gone it alone," not even conferring with his closest friend Mussolini, or his own staff, before taking action? Apparently Hitler had all but repressed the memory of having twice in the previous year signed his name to a contract which stipulated consultations with Great Britain.³⁷¹ On the contrary, Hitler had meanwhile come to believe steadfastly that his actions were simply none of England's business, as he had not interfered in the Palestinian question.

If a British statesman today demands of me that all problems related to Germany's vital interests first be discussed with England, then I could as well insist that all issues pending in Great Britain had first to be discussed with us. It is entirely possible that the English would retort to this: "The Germans have no business being in Palestine!" Indeed, we do not want to be in Palestine. And just as we Germans have no business being in Palestine, the English have no business being in our German Lebensraum!

And now they declare the issues at stake to be general questions of law and legitimacy. This opinion would hold good only if they were universally binding ones. They tell us that we have no right to do this or no right to do that. I would like to ask in turn: What right have the English—to cite only one example—to go about shooting Arabs in Palestine only because these stand up to defend their homeland? Who gives them this right?

We in Central Europe, on the other hand, have not slaughtered thousands. We go about regulating our affairs calmly and with order! I should not like

to fail to mention one thing here: the German Volk of today, the German Reich of the present are not willing to forsake their vital interests. Likewise they are not willing to stand by and watch the approaching danger without taking action themselves.

And woe to any “satellite state”³⁷² bold enough to heed Great Britain’s bidding and not his. Anyone attempting “to pull the chestnuts out of the fire” for the Western Powers would have to bear the consequences. He “should expect to burn his fingers.” Hitler undoubtedly had the “satellite state” Poland in mind when he pronounced this unequivocal warning:

When the Allies transformed the political landscape in Europe in utter disregard of practicality, laws, traditions, and reason, we did not have the power to prevent it. But when they expect today’s Germany to stand by patiently until the day their satellite states (*Trabantenstaaten*) leap on it, states whose *raison d’être* lies in their potential to be used against Germany, then they apparently mistake today’s Germany for that of the prewar years! Whoever declares himself willing to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the great powers should expect to burn his fingers.

Now Hitler began to search for a rationale to explain the destruction of the Czechoslovakian state created in Munich. Well, for one, it had been Germans who had built the Hradcany Castle and St. Vitus’ Cathedral in Prague. A German king had reigned there in the past. For a thousand years the territory had formed part of the “Lebensraum of the German Volk.” He had merely reinstated the “ancient German law” there and had brought back together “what history and geographical position, the rules of common sense, demanded be united.” He continued:

We harbor no hatred for the Czech people. For years, our peoples lived alongside each other.³⁷³ The English statesmen know nothing of this. They have no inkling that the Hradcany Castle was not built by Englishmen, but by Germans. Neither did the English built the St. Vitus’ Cathedral. No, Germans had their hands in this, too.

The French were not active in this area either. They do not know that, when England was still a small country, a German emperor was paid homage on this mountain. A thousand years before I stood there, the first German king received this people’s homage. The English do not know about this. They cannot and need not know about this. It suffices that we should know it and that this was the case. For a millennium, this area formed part of the Lebensraum of the German Volk.

Nevertheless, we would not have had anything against an independent Czech state if it had not oppressed Germans and had not been intended as a weapon in the pending attack on Germany.

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These days, a former French Minister of Aviation wrote in a newspaper³⁷⁴ that it is the task of this Czech state to serve as a base, because of its excellent location, for launching aerial attacks on Germany's industrial heartland. It is easily understood that such a remark is of interest to us. It is equally natural that we draw the proper conclusions from this. It would have been up to England and France to defend this airfield. It was up to us, on the other hand, to prevent such an attack from taking place.

It had been my intention to achieve this in the most natural and simple manner possible. It was only after I had realized that any such attempt was destined to fail and that anti-German elements were gaining an upper hand once more; only after I had also seen that this state had long ceased to be a viable structure; that it had already broken apart internally; it was only then that I determined to reinstitute ancient German law here. Thereby I have reunited what history and geographical position, the rules of common sense, demanded be united. This was not to oppress the Czech people! They will enjoy greater privileges than many of the oppressed peoples in the virtuous nations. I believe I have rendered a great service to the cause of peace because I took timely steps to render useless this weapon which was to be effective against Germany in the event of war.

This rationale could not in the least justify Hitler's actions before the rest of the world. To the contrary, the reasons he cited were about the least convincing ones he could possibly have come up with. If these principles had been universally applied, then German supremacy would have had to be accepted throughout Europe. For where had Germans not been involved, in the course of the past millennium, in the construction of cathedrals and palaces, where had not a German sovereign once governed a state or a territory? At one point or another, every region in Europe had come into contact with the Holy Roman Empire, which since 1512 has been officially called the "Holy Roman Empire of the German nation." The Empire of Charlemagne and its successors, as well as the German Empire from 962 to 1806, were both regarded as the Christian ("holy") revival of the Roman Empire and comprised at their height much of western and central Europe.

To apply Hitler's logic to cases such as Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands would have meant that these states would have to become part of the Greater German Reich, too, since all of them had at one point belonged to the ancient German Reich. Taking the argument further, Hitler could have claimed Hungary for his Third Reich, as the Habsburg royal family had once reigned there also. The case would have been even clearer with Poland, as Saxon electors had reigned there for some time. Moreover, the grasp of East Prussia had extended far into the country's heartland in the course of

the repeated historic divisions of the land. Germany could also have had claims to all three Baltic states, for the Knights of the Teutonic Order had long owned land in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Numerous German kings had also reigned in the Balkans: Karl I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen had ruled Rumania; Ferdinand I of Coburg had been king in Bulgaria; and Otto I of Wittelsbach had once led Greece.

In the context of Hitler's pretenses to formerly German-held territories, the history of the House of Habsburg would have brought Yugoslavia under the rule of the Third Reich: Croatia, Slovenia, northern Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina had all formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Habsburg family had also reigned in Spain for over two centuries (1506–1700), creating a world empire which spanned large parts of Europe and America. And only seventy-five years ago, Maximilian, the brother of Emperor Franz Joseph, who precipitated World War I, had been Emperor of Mexico.

By the same token, Italy would have had to become German as well considering its long association with German emperors and kings who had served as regents in the country. The Kingdom of Naples, including South Italy and Sicily, had experienced its heyday under the German Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. Upper Italy, Venice, and Tuscany had belonged to Austria for ages.

With regard to France, at the very least, Alsace-Lorraine and Burgundy had long belonged to the "German Lebensraum." Tracing history to the days of Charlemagne, Hitler could have argued that the whole country rightly had to be German. The great King of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor, who united most of Western Europe, died 814 in Aachen where he was buried; his language was German, or more precisely *theodisc* as it was called at the time.

In the case of Belgium, cities such as Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet could well have been considered German and hence fallen prey to Hitler's expansionist designs, not to mention Belgium's temporary integration into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its various sovereigns being descendants of the House of Nassau-Orange and the House of Saxe-Coburg. The Netherlands had belonged to Spain (House of Habsburg) and afterwards were ruled by members of the House of Nassau-Orange. This same line of argument would have brought England under German control. In fact, Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, also called the Anglo-Saxons) had conquered much of the island between the 5th and 7th centuries; they ruled until

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the Norman invasion of 1066. The Angles, coming from the North German district *Angul*, gave their name to England and the English. Hitler considered England's inhabitants to be members of the Germanic race, as he frequently pointed out.³⁷⁵ Also in modern times, the British Royal Family was tied by lines of blood to the German nobility, in particular to the Houses of Hanover, Nassau-Dillenburg, and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

For the annexation of Denmark, North Schleswig could be used as a pretext, or the "German Lebensraum" in the north. Such an affiliation to the Germanic race was applicable as well to the Norwegians and Swedes. Frequently, though incorrectly because of their Asiatic origin, the Finns were cited as one of the Germanic peoples that belonged to the natural "German Lebensraum." After all, Finland had gained its independence in 1918 with the help of German troops.

According to Hitler's line of argument, Germans would have been entitled to rule Russia, too—at least in part. Many German noblemen had sought fame and fortune in the Russian lands. The last Romanov Tsar was married to the German Princess Alix of Hesse. The 1918 peace accords of Brest-Litovsk had granted possession of the Ukraine jointly to Germany and Austria. And Germans had long history of settlement in the Volga region. These might also be eager to return to the German Reich.

In accordance with the criteria enumerated in his speech at Wilhelmshaven, the list of potential candidates for annexation by Germany would have been an impressive one. And so it was no coincidence that all the countries mentioned above would appear again—nearly identically—in a list of states forwarded to Hitler on April 15. Its author was the American President Roosevelt, who demanded that Hitler respect the territorial integrity of all of these states and refrain from aggression against them.³⁷⁶

By the time Hitler spoke at Wilhelmshaven, he had apparently realized that his move against Czechoslovakia had outraged much of the outside world. He tried to appease international public opinion by claiming that—already before his forced intervention [!]³⁷⁶—he had chosen the motto "Party Congress of Peace" as a proof of Germany's peaceful intentions. He was eager to state that power politics did not lie at the core of Germany's policy in Eastern Europe and maintained that its interests there were of a purely economic nature.

I do not believe that, when people abroad say that this [the aggression against Czechoslovakia] heralds the beginning of a German attack on the world, this is meant quite seriously. If it is, then this is a sign of a guilty

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conscience. Perhaps it only reflects indignation felt at the failure of a larger plan? Perhaps it only serves to create the tactical prerequisites for a new policy of encirclement? Whatever the case may be, I remain convinced that I have rendered a great service to the cause of peace.

And it was in this conviction that three weeks ago,³⁷⁷ I chose the name "Party Congress of Peace" for the upcoming Party Congress. Germany has no intentions of attacking other nations. What we do not want to do without, however, is the expansion of our economic relations. This is our right. I refuse to accept orders from any European statesman on this account, or from any other statesman for that matter!

The German Reich is not only an important producer, it also consumes enormous amounts. Just as we represent an irreplaceable trading partner in our capacity as consumers, our role as producers affords us the means to pay for our consumption honestly and fairly. We entertain no designs on other nations, provided they also leave us in peace. In any event, the German Reich is not willing to subject itself to a policy of intimidation and encirclement in the long run.

Apparently, Hitler now felt the time had come to call the British to order and to threaten them with the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, should they persist in causing trouble or venture to conclude a military alliance with Poland. They would not succeed in wearying him, so he assured the British, as the German Volk always stood ready to fight, if this proved necessary. Moreover, he placed special emphasis on the strength of the Axis:

I once concluded a treaty with England: the Naval Agreement. It was based on the one desire we all share: never to have to go to war against England. This desire must be a mutual one, however. If England no longer wishes this, then the practical prerequisites for this agreement are no longer present. In that case, Germany would not be greatly perturbed. We are so sure of ourselves because we are strong, and we are strong because we are united and, moreover, because our eyes are open.

In this city especially, I can confidently appeal to you, my Volksgenossen: Look at the world and at what is happening around us with open eyes. Do not allow yourselves to be deceived regarding the most crucial condition for life, namely, your own strength. Whoever does not possess might, forsakes his right to live! We have seen this in the past fifteen years. Because of this, I have made Germany strong again and built up its Wehrmacht on land, at sea, and in the air. Now that other countries openly declare their intent to arm, and to constantly rearm, there is only one thing I can say to these statesmen: they will not wear me out!

I have resolved to continue striding forth on this path. And I firmly believe that we shall advance more quickly along it than all the others. No power on earth shall ever take these arms from us again by empty talk. Nevertheless, should some power seek to measure its might against ours by force, then it ought to realize that the German Volk is in a position to take up the fight at any time. It stands prepared and determined! And our friends think precisely

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as we do. In particular, this feeling is shared by one state closely allied to us. We march alongside it today and in the future, no matter what the circumstances! And when our adversaries' journalists run out of material to write about, they speak of divisions within the Axis, of signs of its disintegration. May they rest assured that this Axis represents the most natural of political instruments in this world. It is a political combination which owes its existence not only to considerations of reason and a desire for justice, but also to the power of idealism. And this construction will prove itself more durable than the temporary alliances of non-homogeneous bodies on the other side. And to anyone who tells me today that there are no longer any *weltanschaulich* or ideological differences between England and Soviet Russia, I can only say: Congratulations, gentlemen!

At this point, Hitler thought it appropriate to remind the British of the evils of Bolshevism to which they would undoubtedly succumb should they continue to oppose Germany. He claimed that the Bolsheviks had "slaughtered hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings—men, women, children, and old people" in Spain. This was irrefutable evidence of the horrors perpetrated by the Jewish-Bolshevist pestilence."

It was obvious that Hitler had not yet abandoned all hope that he could bring the British around by constantly referring to the Bolshevik threat to the world. After all, this strategy had been highly effective in Germany. He was still hesitant to administer the "devilish potion" he had prepared for his adversaries in the form of an alliance between National Socialists and Bolsheviks. He would use it only as a last resort.

Toward the end of the address, Hitler made a display of his unfettered confidence: he maintained that "no power on earth" could ever break Germany's might and shrugged off the recent British declarations as mere "papers."

He concluded the speech on the following note:

I believe the time is near when it shall become apparent that the *weltanschaulich* community of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany is of a different mettle than that of democratic Great Britain and Bolshevik Russia under Stalin. Should there really be no ideological differences between them, then all I can say is: how correct indeed my views of Marxism, communism, and democracy were! Why should there be two phenomena when the substance is actually the same?

We witness a great triumph and we experience a profound, inner satisfaction these days. A land ravaged by Bolshevism has freed itself, where hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings—men, women, children, and old people—were slaughtered. It has freed itself despite Bolshevism's ideological sympathizers in Great Britain, France, and other countries. We understand this struggle in Spain only too well. We welcome its success and

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we congratulate Spain. And, as Germans, it fills us with particular pride that many young German men fulfilled their duty there. As volunteers, they helped to break a tyrannical regime and restore to a nation its right to self-determination. We rejoice in observing just how quickly—extraordinarily quickly—the *weltanschaulich* change of heart of the suppliers of war material among the Reds came about. We are happy to see how well they suddenly understand Nationalist Spain, and how eagerly they engage in economic relations with it, now that their *weltanschaulich* endeavors have failed.

This, too, is a sign of where events are taking us. My Volksgenossen, I am convinced that all states will eventually face the same problems we once did. State upon state will either surrender to this Jewish-Bolshevist pestilence or will fight it. We fought it and we built up a national German *Volksstaat*. Its sole desire is to live in peace and friendship with all other states. It will never again allow itself to be wrestled to the ground by any state!

Will the world become Fascist? I do not know. Will the world become National Socialist? I do not believe so. Will the world ultimately rid itself of the grave dangers of Bolshevism? I am profoundly convinced of this.

And it is because of this that I believe in a final reconciliation among the peoples [of the world], which will come about sooner or later. Only if the Jewish spirit of discord among people is eliminated, can a lasting cooperation among nations come about, based on mutual understanding. Today, we must rely on our own forces! And we can be satisfied with the results of this self-reliance—both internally and externally.

My Volksgenossen, when I took power, Germany was torn by inner conflicts and impotent. It was a plaything at the mercy of foreign powers. Today, we are united at home, and our economy thrives. Abroad, we may not be popular, but people respect and esteem us. And this is decisive!

Above all, we have imparted the greatest happiness possible to millions of our Volksgenossen: we enabled them to return home to our Greater German Reich. Further, we have imparted a great happiness to all of Central Europe, namely, a peace protected by Germany's might. And no power on earth shall ever be able to break this might! This shall be our pledge!

And thus we realize that two million of our Volksgenossen did not perish in vain in the Great War. Their sacrifices have brought this mighty young German Reich into being. It has held its own in life. And, in view of these sacrifices, we shall never shrink from making sacrifices ourselves, should this become necessary. The world would do well to take note of this! Let them conclude pacts, issue declarations, all they like. I do not rely on papers. I rely on you, my Volksgenossen!

We Germans were the victims of the greatest breach of promise of all time. Let us now take care that our Volk shall never again become divided internally. Then no power on earth shall ever be able to threaten us again. And then peace shall be preserved for our Volk. Should it be necessary, we shall force its preservation. Then our Volk will thrive and prosper. It will dedicate itself to works of peace and culture with all its ingenuity, its abilities, its diligence, and its assiduity. This is our desire, this is what we hope for and what we believe in.

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Twenty years ago today, when our Party was founded, it was only a small structure. Think of how far we have come since then. Think of the miracle which has come to pass. And, because of this miraculous path along which the German Volk has traveled, believe that it is making its way toward a great future as well. Deutschland—*Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

On the international stage, however, there was no such “miraculous path” to be found. Even the most elegant speech could not change the fact that domestic policy and international politics were simply not the same.

After the rally, Hitler returned to the harbor to put to sea again, though not on board a battleship this time. The new KdF ship *Robert Ley* set out on its maiden voyage at 8:00 p.m. with the Führer of the Greater German Reich aboard.

Hitler was confident that his speech in Wilhelmshaven had given the British something to think about. Now he could spend a few days relaxing. Allegedly, the journey aboard the *Robert Ley* was the first and only vacation of his entire life.³⁷⁸ He was well prepared for the trip, having had a blue flatcap especially tailored for the occasion. He wore it along with civilian attire on board. This peculiar flatcap was a cross between the blue cap that skippers sported and the pseudo-military hat that German veterans wore at the NS Reich Warriors’ Organization meetings. The only distinction of this cap was that Hitler had had the sovereign symbol pinned on it. Even during this trip, Hitler would wear his uniform on occasion, for example, when he and other tourists visited the island of Heligoland. For the remainder of the time, Hitler preferred to appear casual. He had his picture taken with pretty girls, was attentive to Robert Ley’s attractive new wife, and watched other travelers play medicine ball on deck.

Hitler could not resist the temptation of adding a little drama to the otherwise calm journey. “Accidentally,” the passenger liner encountered the *Scharnhorst* on the High Seas. The battleship raced toward the cruiser at breakneck speed, fired salutes, and then turned about close by. Its crew stood in parade formation on the deck. The newly promoted Grand Admiral Räder raised his baton to greet the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. On this occasion Raeder and Hitler exchanged telegrams at sea.³⁷⁹ Hitler enjoyed the voyage so much that he extended the journey an additional day. Thus his vacation ended on April 4, a day later than scheduled.

On April 3, while Hitler was still at sea, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck paid a visit to Great Britain. He did so in spite of having slighted Berlin by declining Hitler’s summons on March 21.³⁸⁰ The purpose of

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his journey to London was to work out the details of the Anglo-Polish military alliance³⁸¹ with Chamberlain. Hitler still thought the British were merely bluffing at this point.

On April 4, the *Robert Ley* anchored in the Hamburg harbor at noon. Having walked past rows of tourists, shaking hands here and there, Hitler left the KdF ship. He then made his next publicity stop at the floating youth hostel "Hein Godewind" to chat briefly with a few of its guests. Then he drove through the lane formed by Party contingents to the Dammtor station, so as to depart at 12:43 p.m. on his special train for Berlin.

Before departing from Hamburg, Hitler addressed the following greeting to the so-called *Kraft durch Freude* Fleet:³⁸²

The voyage aboard the steamer *Robert Ley* will always remain among the most cherished of my recollections. Nowhere is the impact of the National Socialist educational work of social improvement more beautifully manifest, neither at public events nor on other occasions, than in the trips of the wonderful ships of the *Kraft durch Freude* Fleet. They not only afford us visible proof that the Greater German Reich encompasses all German Gaus, but, above all, they are a living demonstration of our Volksgemeinschaft.

Hamburg, April 4, 1939

Adolf Hitler

The same day, Hitler extended his and the German Volk's condolences to Prince Abdul Illah of Baghdad, who was mourning the demise of King Ghazi I.³⁸³ State Minister Meissner personally called at the Iraqi Embassy to convey Hitler's message. Attending the official funeral ceremony, the German Ambassador to Baghdad placed a wreath at the King's graveside on behalf of the Führer.³⁴

In subsequent days, Hitler had to face one disappointment after the other in his relations with the British. His former "friend" Lloyd George, whom he had so lavishly praised in *Mein Kampf*³⁸⁵ and whose remarkable visit to Berchtesgaden in 1936 had so exhilarated him,³⁸⁶ this same Lloyd George openly spoke out against him before the assembled House of Commons on April 4. Should Hitler force his way into Poland as he had into Czechoslovakia, then, as Lloyd George summarily stated, Great Britain and France would order their troops to march also. Lloyd George subsequently spoke of a potential Anglo-Russian military alliance against Germany. The German press, which had called the British statesman a "hotspur" (*Feuerkopf*) in 1936, now describe him as "senile." According to Hitler's perception, Lloyd George had become the victim of the same "decrepitude" which ultimately beset all British statesmen.

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In a speech before the House of Commons on April 3, Chamberlain had announced that Great Britain and Poland had concluded a mutual assistance pact. Referring to Hitler's speech on April 1, Chamberlain declared:³⁸⁷

It is true we are told now that there are other reasons for recent events in Czechoslovakia—historical associations, the fear of attack. Well, there may be excellent reasons, but they do not accord with the assurances which were given before.

It is inevitable that they should raise doubts as to whether further reasons may not presently be found for further expansion. I am not asserting that today this challenge has been made. No official statement that I know of has ever formulated such ambitions, although there has been plenty of unofficial talk; but the effect of these recent events has penetrated far beyond the limits of the countries concerned, and perhaps even further than was anticipated by those who brought them about.

It is no exaggeration to say that public opinion throughout the world has been profoundly shocked and alarmed. This country has been united from end to end by the conviction that we must now make our position clear and unmistakable whatever may be the result.

On the situation in Poland, he stated:

If that policy were the policy of the German Government it is quite clear that Poland would not be the only country which would be endangered, and the policy which has led us to give this assurance to Poland, of course could not be satisfied or carried out if we were to confine ourselves to a single case which, after all, might not be the case in point.

These recent happenings have, rightly or wrongly, made every State which lies adjacent to Germany unhappy, anxious, uncertain about Germany's future intentions.

The Prime Minister concluded his speech with the following appeal:

Therefore, we welcome the co-operation of any country, whatever may be its internal system of government, not in aggression but in resistance to aggression. I believe that this nation is now united not only in approval of what we have said, but in approval of the aim and purpose that lie behind it. I believe that the whole Empire shares in that approval. The members of the British Empire beyond the seas have hitherto watched our efforts for peace with a fervent hope that they might be successful. All of them have had a growing consciousness that we cannot live for ever in that atmosphere of surprise and alarm from which Europe has suffered in recent months.

The treaty between Britain and Poland—drawn up on April 6—would enter into force upon signature³⁸⁸ for a term of five years. It was ratified on August 25, 1939, and read:³⁸⁹

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Agreement of Mutual Assistance
between the United Kingdom and Poland

London, August 25, 1939

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Polish Government:

Desiring to place on a permanent basis the collaboration between their respective countries resulting from the assurances of mutual assistance of a defensive character which they have already exchanged;

Have resolved to conclude an Agreement for that purpose and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries:

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G., G.C.S.I, G.C.I.E., Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs;

The Polish Government:

His Excellency Count Edward Raczyński, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Polish Republic in London;

Who, having exchanged their Full Powers, found in good and due form, have agreed on the following provisions:

Article I

Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power³⁹⁰ in consequence of aggression by the latter against that Contracting Party, the other Contracting Party will at once give the Contracting Party engaged in hostilities all the support and assistance in its power.

Article II

(1) The provisions of Article I will also apply in the event of any action by a European Power which clearly threatened, directly or indirectly, the independence of one of the Contracting Parties, and was of such a nature that the Party in question considered it vital to resist it with its armed forces.

(2) Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of action by that Power which threatened the independence or neutrality of another European State³⁹¹ in such a way as to constitute a clear menace to the security of that Contracting Party, the provisions of Article I will apply, without prejudice, however, to the rights of the other European State concerned.

Article III

Should a European Power attempt to undermine the independence of one of the Contracting Parties by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, the Contracting Parties will support each other in resistance to such attempts. Should the European Power concerned thereupon embark on hostilities against one of the Contracting Parties, the provisions of Article I will apply.

Article IV

The methods of applying the undertakings of mutual assistance provided for by the present Agreement are established between the competent naval, military and air authorities of the Contracting Parties.

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Article V

Without prejudice to the foregoing undertakings of the Contracting Parties to give each other mutual support and assistance immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, they will exchange complete and speedy information concerning any development which might threaten their independence and, in particular, concerning any development which threatened to call the said undertakings into operation.

Article VI

(1) The Contracting Parties will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings of assistance against aggression which they have already given or may in future give to other States.

(2) Should either of the Contracting Parties intend to give such an undertaking after the coming into force of the present Agreement, the other Contracting Power shall, in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Agreement, be informed thereof.

(3) Any new undertaking which the Contracting Parties may enter into in future shall neither limit their obligations under the present Agreement nor indirectly create new obligations between the Contracting Party not participating in these undertakings and the third State concerned.

Article VII

Should the Contracting Parties be engaged in hostilities in consequence of the application of the present Agreement, they will not conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement.

Article VIII

(1) The present Agreement shall remain in force for a period of five years.

(2) Unless denounced six months before expiry of this period it shall continue in force, each Contracting Party having thereafter the right to denounce it at any time giving six months' notice to that effect.

(3) The present Agreement shall come into force on signature.

In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Agreement and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in English in duplicate, at London, the 25th August, 1939. A Polish text shall subsequently be agreed upon between the Contracting Parties and both texts will then be authentic.

Halifax Edward

Raczynski

When news of the Anglo-Polish accord reached Hitler, he found himself once more in a position which forced him to improvise. Although he had originally thought the ratification of such a treaty impossible, and although he held its practical applicability to be severely limited, he could not deny the obvious: Poland had gone over to the British camp. He had speculated that Poland would offer little more than token resistance to the German demands and would, slowly but surely, follow in the Slovaks' footsteps. Initially, Hitler had even toyed with the idea of stationing German troops in Poland. This would

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have been a good base for operations in the East. If the Poles conducted themselves obligingly, then he might even have been willing to accord them a certain, albeit limited, role in the military conquest of new Lebensraum in Russia. Later, after the war had started, Hitler would proceed in this manner in the case of Slovakia, Rumania, and others.

A rude awakening was the only tangible result of Hitler's dreams of a faithful Polish vassal state in the East of the Greater German Reich. He was forced to take by the sword what refused to become his voluntarily. Poland denied the Third Reich access to Danzig and the Polish Corridor. To add insult to injury, the Polish Foreign Minister rushed to London instead of heeding Hitler's summons to Berlin. The Polish military concentrated troops on the outskirts of the Free City with the obvious intent of intervening should ethnic Germans in the city stage a coup there. Hitler considered this move even more insolent than what he had termed an "intolerable provocation of the German Reich" perpetrated by the Czechoslovakian State President Beneš when he mobilized his country's military on May 21/22, 1938.³⁹² Thus, Hitler was forced to issue more detailed instructions for "Case White" to the German military.

While immersed in preparations for the strike, news of Mussolini's attack on Albania caught Hitler completely by surprise. Mussolini had taken the country's capital Tirana on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. Albanian forces had mounted hardly any resistance to the Italian invasion. Even though Italy had contemplated annexation of its neighbor to the East for a long time,³⁹³ the Duce's strike at this point was a direct response to Hitler's clandestine action against Czechoslovakia.

This move had inspired Mussolini to pursue his *Mare Nostrum* policy³⁹⁴ with equal ardor. As far as the Mediterranean arena was concerned, Hitler had expected a better performance by his friend Mussolini. The ludicrous conquest of impotent Albania did not contribute much to the greater glory of Fascist Italy. Throughout the preceding months, Italian newspapers had bristled with news of grand proclamations in Mussolini's speeches, of his designs on Tunis, Corsica, Nice, Suez, and Djibouti.³⁹⁵

A year earlier, Hitler had dreamt up visions of a potential military confrontation in this region. One possible scenario had been an armed conflict pitting France and Great Britain against Italy.³⁹⁶ Had developments taken such a turn at the time, Hitler would surely have found better things to do than to rescue the Duce. Back then, such an

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engagement of England and France in the Mediterranean region would have immensely facilitated his dealings with the Eastern Europe states.

By 1939, the situation for Germany had changed dramatically. Faced with the distinct possibility of war with Britain and France, Hitler had absolutely no use for a Duce who might well rouse the anger of the Western Powers with his ill-considered steps. Mussolini was needlessly complicating matters.³⁹⁷

The further course of events proved that Hitler had little to fear in this context. At this point, Mussolini apparently still had complete command of his faculties and was not so foolish as to provoke an open confrontation with the Western Powers. He could easily have done so by attacking either Tunis or the Suez Canal. In fact, the Italian dictator adhered to the same principle his German colleague did and took the way of least resistance. He hurled the might of the Italian armed forces against tiny Albania to achieve a cheap political and military success. Despite their ideological affinity, Hitler was less than pleased by Mussolini's activities. He himself had just laboriously "pacified" Rumania and thus opened this area to exploitation by Germany. The Duce's move was stirring up "unrest" in the Balkans. Hitler could not bring himself to forward the customary congratulatory telegram required on similar occasions. The only official acknowledgment of Mussolini's indiscretion in Albania appeared in the form of an official German press release which stated that Germany "sympathized" with Italy's actions.³⁹⁸

On April 10, the Führer wired his congratulations to Cavalry General Knochenhauer in Hamburg on his fortieth service anniversary; likewise to Admiral Albrecht, whom Hitler now promoted to the rank of Admiral General.³⁹⁹

On April 11, having taken advantage of the extended weekend holiday to formulate his policy stance on "Case White," Hitler issued the following directive to the Wehrmacht, including instructions for "Case White" and the occupation of Danzig:⁴⁰⁰

TOP SECRET MILITARY
BY OFFICER ONLY
OKW No. 37/39 g. Kdos. Chefs. WFA/L I

Berlin, April 11, 1939
5 copies

Subject: Directive for the uniform preparation of war
by the Wehrmacht for 1939/40

I shall lay down in a later directive the future tasks of the Wehrmacht and the preparations to be made in accordance with these for the conduct of war.

April 11, 1939

Until that directive comes into force the Wehrmacht must be prepared for the following eventualities:

I) Safeguarding the frontiers of the German Reich and protection against surprise air attacks. (See Enclosure I).

II) "Case White" (See Enclosure II).

III) Taking possession of Danzig (See Enclosure III). Enclosure IV lays down the regulations for the exercise of military authority in East Prussia in the event of hostilities.

Adolf Hitler

Enclosure II
"Case White" (*Fall Weiss*)

The present attitude of Poland requires, over and above the plan "Frontier Security East" the initiation of military preparations, to remove if necessary any threat from this direction forever.

1. Political Requirements and Aims

German relations with Poland continue to be based on principles of avoiding any disturbances. Should Poland, however, change her policy towards Germany, which so far has been based on the same principles as our own, and adopt a threatening attitude towards Germany, a final settlement might become necessary in spite of the treaty in force with Poland.

The aim then will be to destroy Polish military strength, and create in the East a situation which satisfies the requirements of national defense. The Free State of Danzig will be proclaimed a part of the Reich territory at the outbreak of hostilities, at the least. The political leaders consider it their task in this case to isolate Poland if possible, that is to say, to limit the war to Poland only.

The development of increasing internal crises in France and resulting British restraint might produce such a situation in the not too distant future.

Intervention by Russia, if she were in a position to intervene,⁴⁰¹ cannot be expected to be of any use to Poland, because this would mean Poland's destruction by Bolshevism. The attitude of the Baltic States will be determined wholly by German military superiority. In the course of further developments it may become necessary to occupy the Baltic States up to the border of the former Courland and to incorporate them in the Reich.

Germany cannot count on Hungary as a certain ally. Italy's attitude is determined by the Rome-Berlin Axis.

2. Military Conclusions

The great objectives in the reconstruction of the German Wehrmacht will continue to be determined by the antagonism of the Western Democracies. "Case White" constitutes only a precautionary complement to these preparations. It is not to be looked upon in any way, however, as the necessary prerequisite for a military conflict with the Western opponents.

The isolation of Poland will be all the more easily maintained, even after the outbreak of hostilities, if we succeed in starting the war with sudden, heavy blows and in gaining rapid successes. The overall situation will require, however, that in all cases precautions be taken to safeguard the western frontier and the German North Sea coast, as well as the air above them. Against

the Baltic States—Lithuania in particular—security measures are to be carried out in case of a Polish march through this country.

3. Tasks of the Wehrmacht

The task of the Wehrmacht is to destroy the Polish Armed Forces. To this end a surprise attack is to be aimed at and prepared. Camouflaged or open general mobilization will not be ordered earlier than the day before the attack and at the latest possible moment.

The forces provided for “Frontier Security West” (*Grenzsicherung West*), section I, “Frontier Security” must not be employed for the time being for any other purpose.

All other frontiers are to be kept under observation only; the Lithuanian frontier is to be covered.

4. Tasks for the Branches of the Wehrmacht

a) Army

The operational objective in the East is the annihilation of the Polish Army. For this purpose the German Wehrmacht, on the southern flank, may enter Slovak territory. On the northern flank, communication between Pomerania and East Prussia must be established quickly.

The preparations for the opening of operations are to be made in such a way that, even without waiting for the planned deployment of mobilized units, positions can be taken up by the troops immediately available. A camouflaged assembly of these units just before the day of attack may be provided. I reserve for myself the decision in this matter.

Whether the forces provided for “Frontier Security West” will be deployed there in their entirety, or whether part of them will be available for some other employment, will depend upon the political situation.

b) Navy

The tasks of the Navy in the Baltic Sea are as follows:

1) Destruction and/or elimination of the Polish Naval Forces.

2) Blockade of all sea-lanes to the Polish naval bases, especially Gdynia. The neutral shipping in Polish harbors and in Danzig is to be given a time limit for sailing at the beginning of the invasion of Poland. After its expiry, the Navy will be free to take blockade measures. The disadvantages for the conduct of naval warfare caused by this time limit must be accepted.

3) Suppression of Polish maritime trade.

4) Securing of the sea-route between the Reich and East Prussia.

5) Protection of German sea-communications to Sweden and the Baltic States.

6) Reconnaissance and protection, as far as possible in an inconspicuous manner, against intervention by the Soviet Navy from the Gulf of Finland. Suitable naval forces are to be provided for defense of the North Sea coast and its approaches. In the southern part of the North Sea and in the Skagerrak such measures are to be taken as are deemed advisable as precautions against surprise intervention in the conflict by the Western Powers.

These measures are to be restricted to the absolute minimum. Their inconspicuousness must be assured. It is of decisive importance to avoid here any sort of action which might aggravate the political attitude of the Western Powers.

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c) Luftwaffe

The Luftwaffe, except for necessary forces left in the West, is to be used for a surprise attack on Poland. Besides destruction of the Polish Air Force in the shortest time possible, the tasks of the German Luftwaffe are principally as follows:

1) Interference with Polish mobilization and prevention of planned strategic concentrations by the Polish Army.

2) Direct support of the Army, especially support of the spearheads starting immediately after the crossing of the frontier. A possible transfer of air units to East Prussia, before the beginning of operations, must not endanger the element of surprise.

The first crossing of the frontier by air is to be synchronized with the operations of the Army. Attacks against the harbor of Gdynia may be undertaken only after the expiry of the sailing period for neutral ships (see number 4b). Strong points of air defense are to be set up above Stettin, Berlin and the Upper Silesian industrial district including Moravian Ostrava and Brno.

Enclosure III

Taking Possession of Danzig

Surprise occupation of the Free State of Danzig may become possible independently of "Case White" by exploiting a favorable political situation.

The preparations are to be made on the following basis:

The "Division of Power Command in East Prussia in case of hostilities" (see Enclosure IV) will be put into effect according to paragraph 3.

Occupation by the Army will be carried out from East Prussia.

The Navy will support the action of the Army by intervention from the sea, according to detailed orders by the Commander in Chief of the Navy. The naval forces involved are to be instructed to cooperate with the Army.

The extent to which the Luftwaffe units can participate in the occupation will be decided by the Reich Air Minister and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe.

Details on cooperation are to be settled directly between the branches of the Wehrmacht.

The "Special Orders" attached to "Case White" added—under Section 1 ("Legal Bases")—that "it is to be assumed that a state of defense or state of war as defined in the Reich Defense Law of September 4, 1938⁴⁰², will not be declared. All actions and requirements connected with the implementation of mobilization are to be based on peacetime legislation. The provisions of the Hague Convention on Land Warfare will similarly apply." Therefore, one particularly remarkable feature of this directive was Hitler's intent of opening hostilities against Poland without issuing any declaration of war. He was soon to realize this ambition. A similar propensity had already been evident in the prelude to the assault on Czechoslovakia a year

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earlier. Nevertheless, this departure from the accepted practices of war found its first unequivocal expression in the directive of April 11, 1939.

The fact that Germany and Japan resorted to this behavior on various occasions during the Second World War was tantamount to a return to barbarism. Though it was not until the 19th century that international conventions sought to regulate and humanize warfare,⁴⁰³ a formal declaration of war prior to the outbreak of hostilities was prescribed even in the so-called "Dark Ages." While war was regarded as an acceptable means of resolving conflict in general within the German Reich then, a formal announcement of the anticipated clash was an undisputed prerequisite to ensuring the legal acceptance of the steps taken.

On April 11, Hitler awarded retired Colonel General Haselmayr the title of SA Obergruppenführer on the occasion of the old NSDAP fighting comrade's sixtieth birthday.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, Hitler sent Haselmayr a painting depicting a battlefield scene.

On the same day, he expressed his condolences to the Deutsche Erdöl Company in Sachsen-Altenburg on the casualties sustained among its colliers in a tragic mining accident.⁴⁰⁵

Profoundly shaken by the news of the accident in the pit of the Deutsche Erdöl mine at Regis-Breiteningen, I ask you to convey my sincere sympathies to the bereaved and my best wishes for the convalescence of the accident's survivors. I place a sum of RM 20,000 at the disposal of the concerned families as immediate assistance.

Adolf Hitler

Retreating to Berchtesgaden for the Easter holiday, Hitler tended to several of the Reich's internal affairs. There was the question of parliamentary representation in the Reichstag for the Germans living in the Memel territory and in other protectorates. Under no circumstances was Hitler willing to allow supplemental Reichstag elections in these areas, similar to those conducted on December 4, 1938 in the case of the Sudetenland. Nor did he desire a call for new elections in the entire Reich. On the one hand, he had always maintained that he would ask for the Volk's endorsement of his policies by means of annual plebiscites.⁴⁰⁶ On the other hand, he was well aware that public opinion was not partial to him at this point. Hence, he decided to proceed in a different manner, in utter disregard of the Constitution. In all likelihood, he regarded this measure as "a risk [he] had to take."⁴⁰⁷

He appointed several deputies to represent the German population in the newly acquired territories in the Reichstag, without obtaining the

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consent of the electorate. Oddly enough, the Reich Government had apparently relocated from Berlin to Berchtesgaden and consisted of only two persons (Hitler and Frick), when it promulgated the following laws:⁴⁰⁸

Law on the Representation in the Greater German Reichstag
of German Volksgenossen residing in the
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

To grant German Volksgenossen who reside in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia proper representation in the Greater German Reichstag, the Reich Government has promulgated this law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

The number of deputies in the Greater German Reichstag elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938, shall be determined by dividing the total numbers of German Volksgenossen, who reside in the Protectorate as of March 16, 1939 and are at least twenty years of age, by a factor of 60,000.⁴⁰⁹

§ 2

In accordance with § 1 above, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall appoint individuals to the Greater German Reichstag from among the German Volksgenossen who reside in these areas and are at least twenty-five years of age.

Berchtesgaden, April 13, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

Law on the Representation of the Memel Germans
in the Greater German Reichstag

To lend visible expression to the reunion of the Memel territory with the Greater German Reich, and grant the Memel Germans proper representation in the Greater German Reichstag, the Reich Government has promulgated the following law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

In accordance with the number of members of the German Volkstum, who reside in the Memel territory as of March 22, 1939 and are at least twenty years of age, two more deputies shall join the Greater German Reichstag elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938.

§ 2

In accordance with § 1 above, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall appoint the deputies to the Greater German Reichstag.

Berchtesgaden, April 13, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

Three decrees issued in April, 1939 concerned the internal affairs of the National Socialist Party.⁴¹⁰ One established an NSDAP service award in three classes.⁴¹¹ A second ordinance introduced new insignia of rank and departmental badges for the Political Leaders. In accordance with this ordinance, it was possible to promote Ortsgruppenleiter and Kreisleiter up to five times. With each promotion, the official in question would receive new insignia of rank without actually moving on to a higher office. A third ordinance regarded the wearing of the new uniforms, overcharged with frills, which were intended to mirror the new style to which the Third Reich now aspired.

Hitler's ordinances once more revealed his fascination with the military and its ways. He greatly admired the discipline in the ranks, the blind obedience the superior could command. Hitler sought to instill these principles in the German people, who were supposed to look up to him. He was the Supreme Commander, whose authority was not to be questioned. He felt that only a strict hierarchical organization such as that of the armed forces would guarantee that the will of Adolf Hitler would indeed be implemented without lengthy debate. Despite his efforts, Hitler feared he had not yet obtained this blind submission to his ideals even within the confines of the Party. This greatly irritated him and prompted him to draw up numerous similar pieces of legislation.

On April 14, Hitler established a medal for German participants in the Spanish Civil War.⁴¹² From a legal point of view, such participation ought to have resulted in the distribution of arrest warrants instead of awards. After all, the law of February 18, 1937 stipulated that all German citizens interfering in this internal affair of the Spanish state were liable to criminal prosecution. Even those merely implicated in the matter, say by recruiting Germans to serve as mercenaries in the civil war, risked legal action and possible imprisonment.⁴¹³ The Cross of Spain, and the badges awarded to soldiers wounded in Spain, were remarkable in the sense that these were the first awards Hitler designed especially for veterans.

A preference for pins was already evident at this point. It would largely determine the design and manner of wearing medals during the Second World War. Given the sheer number of these pins—badges awarded to wounded soldiers, insignia, shields, clasps, etc. distributed for meritorious service on the battlefield—the front of most tunics no longer sufficed and hence some medals had to be worn on the sleeve. The immense pleasure Hitler derived from heaping countless medals

and awards on his subordinates strongly recalled Slavic, Oriental, or South American customs.

Also on April 14, Hitler signed the "Law on the Establishment of the Administration in the Ostmark."⁴¹⁴ It carved up Austria into several Reichsgaus, administrative districts within the Reich. Obviously, any lingering memory of Austria's existence as an independent political entity was to be swept into oblivion. Even the provinces of Upper and Lower Austria received new names and henceforth were to be referred to as the provinces of the "Upper and Lower Danube." Vienna became a Reichsgau in its own right, thus receiving the same legal status as the other former Austrian provinces. Hitler's administrative reform in Austria was of a far more radical nature than in the Old Reich. The former Länder largely retained their historic boundaries and were not affected by the administrative restructuring. The insistence on this in the case of Austria revealed Hitler's persistent fear that the country's inhabitants felt apprehensive about the Anschluss that they possibly did not feel the affinity for the Reich necessary to become an integral part of it, if left to their own devices. Thus, Hitler decided to give them constant reminders that they formed part of the Reich.

Hitler was busily restructuring Austria's administration in Berchtesgaden, when news of a new statement by Chamberlain reached him. Speaking before the House of Commons on April 13, Chamberlain announced that Great Britain had issued unilateral guarantees to Rumania and Greece in the event that the independence of these states was endangered. This was the British response both to the German-Rumanian economic agreement of March 24⁴¹⁵ and to Italy's move against Albania on April 7. Chamberlain added that those governments which were closely allied to Greece, in particular the Turkish Government, would be informed separately of the guarantee.⁴¹⁶

The structure of the alliance systems was emerging. Few states remained which were willing to side with Germany and the Axis. Although Hitler held Germany's allies in the First World War in great disdain, the failure of his coveted alliance with Britain forced him to reconsider. Now his only recourse was the Balkan states and Turkey, that "junk" (*Gerümpel*), as he had called them in *Mein Kampf*.⁴¹⁷

4

On April 15, Hitler sent a delegation to Teheran to represent Germany at the wedding of the Iranian Crown Prince, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi,⁴¹⁸ with the Egyptian Princess Fawzieh.⁴¹⁹ Later that day, Hitler received another blow from the Western Powers. The President of the United States addressed this message to Hitler on April 15:⁴²⁰

Washington, April 15, 1939

His Excellency Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, Berlin

You realize, I am sure, that throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars. The existence of this fear and the possibility of such a conflict is of definite concern to the people of the United States, for whom I speak, as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire western hemisphere. All of them know that any major war, even if it were to be confined to other continents, must bear heavily on them during its continuance and also for generations to come. Because of the fact that after the acute tension in which the world has been living during the past few weeks there would seem to be at least a momentary relaxation because no troops are at this moment on the march, this may be an opportune moment for me to send you this message.

On a previous occasion⁴²¹ I have addressed you on behalf of the settlement of political, economic and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to war but the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin. All the world, victor nations, vanquished nations, and neutral nations will suffer. I refuse to believe that the world is of necessity such a prisoner of destiny. On the contrary it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended. It is, however, unfortunately necessary to take cognizance of recent facts. Three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated. A vast territory in another independent nation of the Far East has

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been occupied by a neighboring state. Reports, which we trust are not true, insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations. Plainly the world is moving towards the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found. You have repeatedly asserted that you and the German people have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war. Nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the cause of self-evident home defense.

In making this statement we, as Americans, speak not through selfishness or fear or weakness. If we speak now it is with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind. It is still clear to me that international problems can be solved at the Council table. It is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussions for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs they will not lay aside their arms. In Conference rooms as in Courts it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both and it is customary and necessary that they leave their arms outside the room where they confer.

I am convinced that the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of Governments. Because the United States, as one of the nations of the western hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe, I trust that you may be willing to make such a statement of policy to me as the head of a nation far removed from Europe in order that I, acting only with the responsibility and obligation of a friendly intermediary, may communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your Government may take.

Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations:⁴²² Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran? Such an assurance clearly must apply not only to the present day but also to a future sufficiently long to give every opportunity to work by peaceful methods for a more permanent peace.

I therefore suggest that you construe the word 'future' to apply to a minimum period of assured non-aggression, ten years at the least, a quarter of a century if we are to look that far ahead. If such assurance is given by your Government I will immediately transmit it to the Governments of the nations I have named and I will simultaneously enquire whether, as I am reasonably sure, each of the nations enumerated above will in turn give like assurance, for transmission to you.

Reciprocal assurances such as I have outlined will bring to the world an immediate measure of relief. I propose that, if it is given, two essential

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problems shall promptly be discussed in the resulting peaceful surroundings and in those discussions the Government of the United States will gladly take part. The discussions which I have in mind relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament which is each day bringing them more closely to the brink of economic disaster. Simultaneously the Government of the United States would be prepared to take part in discussions looking towards the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life.

At the same time those Governments other than the United States which are directly interested could undertake such political discussion as they may consider necessary or desirable. We recognize complex world problems which affect all humanity but we know that study and discussion of them must be held in an atmosphere of peace. Such an atmosphere of peace cannot exist if negotiations are overshadowed by the threat of force or by the fear of war.

I think you will not misunderstand the spirit of frankness in which I send you this message. Heads of great Governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war. History will hold them accountable for the lives and the happiness of all even unto the last.

I hope that your answer will make it possible for humanity to lose fear and regain security for many years to come.

A similar message is being addressed to the Chief of the Italian Government.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

This letter represented Roosevelt's reaction to the preceding weeks' events in Czechoslovakia and the Balkans. Moreover, it was also a reply to Hitler's speech in Wilhelmshaven,⁴²³ where he had attempted to justify his advances to the East by reference to "ancient German right," the history of the thousand-year Reich, and the role played by German kings and architects in the building of Prague. This speech had provoked Roosevelt's adjuration, which encompassed nearly all European states, as well as those which had established themselves on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. These had a long history of relations with Germany, which they had maintained even during the First World War.

Roosevelt's telegram was tantamount to an admonition that should Great Britain be drawn into a war with Germany, the United States might well engage in the fighting also. While remonstrating with Hitler,

Roosevelt expressed the uncompromising solidarity of the English-speaking nations, and this was reinforced by a note published three days later in London. In concert with Roosevelt's telegram, Buckingham Palace announced on April 18⁴²⁴ that the King and Queen of the United Kingdom would officially pay a visit to the White House from June 7 to June 11.

Hitler failed to comprehend the true import of Roosevelt's telegram. He was convinced that it was merely a diplomatic bluff, designed to rouse public opinion in Germany against him. This was precisely how he had assessed Wilson's Fourteen Points many years earlier.

Most revealing, too, was the headline of the *Völkischer Beobachter* on the pending publication of the telegram: "The 'message' of the US President—an infamous attempt at deception of the public *à la* Wilson."

Hitler resolved to parry such an impudent maneuver by replying in a rhetorical masterpiece of even greater length than the original. Wilson had once preached Fourteen Points; Hitler would now catapult twenty-one points at Roosevelt.

At once, he had the following official note published on the matter:⁴²⁵

The American President has addressed a telegram to the Führer with the request that he might indicate his stance on certain issues. The Führer has deemed this matter of paramount importance and has therefore resolved to respond to the American President on behalf of the German Volk, before the forum of the Reichstag. He has thus called on the German Reichstag to convene on April 28 to bear witness to the delivery of this declaration.

Before the announced speech, Germany's diplomatic missions abroad received instructions to counter Roosevelt's "infamous" propaganda campaign. Immediately, Hitler extended diplomatic feelers to the smaller nations listed to investigate whether these states had granted Roosevelt license to speak in their name.⁴²⁶ Despite negative replies hastily issued in most of the capital cities enumerated, he remained insistent on the conclusion of several bilateral non-aggression pacts. He was less than satisfied with the results: only Denmark, Latvia, and Estonia were willing to enter into such agreements with Germany. Norway, Sweden, and Finland declined Hitler's offer to his great displeasure.⁴²⁷

On April 17, Hitler inspected troops in Austria, confident of his diplomatic initiatives.⁴²⁸ At 10:00 a.m., he appeared at the post command in St. Pölten, proceeded to the pioneer training camp at

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Krems, and then to the garrisons stationed at Stockerau and Strebersdorf. Having reviewed “each and every man,” as he claimed, Hitler delivered a number of addresses before officers serving in Austria. In the course of these, he promoted the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group, General List, to the rank of Colonel General. After the inspection, Hitler issued the following order of the day:⁴²⁹

Soldiers of the Ostmark!

It was with great pride and joy that I was able to personally convince myself earlier today, inspecting a series of garrisons, of the high quality of your training. I was able to ascertain the assiduity, insight, and earnestness on the part of the trainers, and the great dedication of the recruits in the fulfillment of their honorary service to Volk and Fatherland.

Adolf Hitler

On April 17, Hitler summoned his former “special envoy” to Austria, Franz von Papen, to Berlin. Von Papen had completely withdrawn to private life after his unanticipated dismissal from his post in Vienna. Nevertheless, he stood ready to return to the political stage when the Führer required his services. And this was the case, indeed. The combined activities of Chamberlain and Roosevelt in recent days had cornered Hitler and had placed great strain on Germany diplomatically. Though Hitler thought little of Turkey,⁴³⁰ he wished nevertheless to preclude its siding with the Anglo-Saxon Powers. Thus he resolved to send von Papen as special envoy to Ankara, as von Papen had served as Chief of the General Staff with Liman Sander’s Fourth Ottoman Army in the First World War. Hitler was confident that von Papen’s connections and diplomatic astuteness would lure Turkey back into Germany’s camp. However, the Führer’s hopes proved vain, as times had changed considerably since 1914.⁴³¹

The following communiqué was published on von Papen’s appointment and on his meeting with Hitler:⁴³²

Acting on a proposal advanced by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer appointed Franz von Papen Ambassador to Ankara. On Monday afternoon [April 17], the Führer bade the newly appointed Ambassador farewell and wished Herr von Papen success in his future work in Turkey.

In reference to von Papen’s performance in the First World War, the *Völkischer Beobachter* called him “the deliverer of Turkey in the most difficult of times,” and added that von Papen’s appointment to Ankara mirrored “the great importance the Führer assigns to a continuation of friendly relations between the young Reich and the

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young Turkish State.” Given the troubles he was facing, Hitler naturally desired “friendly relations” with the Turkish Government. Whether this was a mutual wish remained questionable, however. Despite the diplomatic pressure exerted by Germany, Hitler was unable to secure any satisfactory commitment. All the Government in Ankara would concede was a tentative assurance of Turkey’s benign neutrality. This was applicable, of course, only as long as its relations with Germany did not present an acute threat to Turkey’s position itself. When Germany’s fortunes began to wane in the course of the Second World War, Turkey broke relations. And ultimately, when the Third Reich’s defeat was no longer in doubt, it declared war on Germany in the spring of 1945.⁴³³

On April 17, von Massow,⁴³⁴ a retired Major General and SS Brigadeführer, celebrated his seventieth birthday. Hitler sent him the following telegram:⁴³⁵

In grateful appreciation of your services to the German Volk in times of war and peace, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on your seventieth birthday today.

Adolf Hitler

On April 19, the Rumanian Foreign Minister Gafencu called on Hitler at the new Chancellery. The Rumanian Ambassador in Berlin, Radu Crutzescu, and Ribbentrop accompanied him to the reception.⁴³⁶ The official occasion was Hitler’s upcoming fiftieth birthday. The German-Rumanian economic agreement reinforced Rumania’s position as a German “satellite.” However, Rumania had accepted the British offer of a guarantee the week before. Would not Hitler see this as a plain desertion from the German ranks?

To dispel any such notions, the Rumanian Foreign Minister detailed his country’s position. Rumania had concluded the economic agreement with Germany in order to “strengthen peace” and in this same spirit his government had accepted the British guarantee. Certainly, the Führer would have liked a Rumanian rejection of the British declaration decidedly better. Notwithstanding his annoyance, he realized that Germany’s reliance on Rumanian crude oil and other raw materials essential to a wartime economy was too great to allow for discord in this precarious situation.

Such were apparently his considerations as he lectured Gafencu for over two hours on the general political situation, beginning with a series of compliments to the Rumanians, while persistently finding fault with the Hungarians. Despite his great generosity, the Hungarians

had repeatedly proven themselves to be a most ungrateful people. The German minority in Romania⁴³⁷ had absolutely no desire to return to Hungary; rather, Hitler argued, they felt most at home in the new confederation to which they now belonged. Indeed, had the Führer had any say in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, he would have resolved the nationality problem by simply allocating to each people its own state: the Poles would have had a Poland, the Serbs a Serbia, the Romanians a Romania, and the Germans a Germany.

Romania had nothing to fear as far as he was concerned, so Hitler claimed, provided that the British guarantee remained a unilateral affair, i.e. that the treaty was not extended to a mutual assistance pact as had happened with Poland. At this point, Hitler apparently believed the time had come to speak on less genial topics. It appears as though he was rehearsing for his speech before the Reichstag and regarded the meeting with the Romanian Ambassador as a mere dress rehearsal.⁴³⁸ Moreover, Hitler knew that Gafencu planned to leave for London shortly. Without doubt, Hitler hoped that Gafencu's vivid report of the German dictator's outrage and threats would intimidate the British.

On the topic of Poland, Hitler declared: "Beck's mistake was to go to London [instead of to Berlin]. It is beyond me what could have provoked this change in the Poles' attitude. It could prove a fateful one for Poland." Gafencu next had to listen to the same tirades which the Reichstag would hear on April 28.⁴³⁹ Again Hitler expounded the unparalleled obliging tone of his earlier proposals and of his friendly advances to Warsaw. He added: "As regards the Danzig question, it has to be resolved shortly—and it will be resolved, no matter what political schemes a certain Herr Beck concocts!"

Precisely as in the later Reichstag address, this remark was followed by a long list of sacrifices which Hitler claimed to have made to France (the cession of Alsace-Lorraine), Italy (Southern Tirol), Yugoslavia, Romania, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Convinced that this lent credence to the conciliatory nature of his arguments and designs, Hitler put forth the rhetorical question: "Why should we once again make precisely the same mistakes we made in 1914?"⁴⁴⁰

Finally, Hitler addressed the topic of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. He maintained that it simply had not been possible to ensure the independence of this state because, for one thing, Hungary had clamored for Ruthenia and, for another, the Slovaks had been determined to secede. Hitler then came to speak of the

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impudence of the British, who stubbornly refused to issue him a *carte blanche* for his designs in Eastern Europe:

The English do not comprehend. Instead of seeking an understanding with us, they insist on getting in our way. They are looking for a quarrel. They cannot reconcile themselves to our political might. They oppose our economic development. They are searching for allies against us everywhere. They seek to undercut our influence. They have embarked on a campaign of hatred. They are preparing for a general war and are already trying to burden us with the responsibility for it.

What is it they accuse us of? We desire nothing that is not rightfully ours. We want our colonies back, we need them.⁴⁴¹ We need them for our economy and for our feeling of greatness and honor. We desire England, whose empire we respect, to respect our sphere of influence in turn, and the areas of vital interest to us.

Again his words revealed how firmly he clung to his old convictions of 1919: In Germany's struggle for new *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe, Great Britain would assuredly lend its support to the Reich. England would constitute Germany's only "potential ally" in this quest. And this the "senile" British statesmen regrettably failed to "comprehend." Hitler grew increasingly irate as he spoke, raising his voice, shouting, and raging against the British. After all, he hoped that the Rumanian Foreign Minister would inform London of how serious the situation was, how determined the Führer was, and what a terrible fate awaited Britain, if it failed to heed Hitler's timely warnings.

Well, if England really wants this war, then it shall have it. But it will not be an easy war, as the British apparently imagine it will be.⁴⁴² It will not be a war of the old kind. England will no longer have the entire world on its side. At least [!] half of the world will be with us. It will be a war of destruction (*Zerstörungskrieg*), as no imagination however vivid can yet envision. By the way, how can England believe it will be able to conduct a modern war if it cannot even muster two armored divisions at any one front?⁴⁴³

As far as we are concerned, our misfortunes have rendered us a great service in the end: we shall fight with different weapons than in 1914! We will act mercilessly and ruthlessly. Never before were we as powerful as we are today.

The ingenuity of our technicians, of our engineers, and of our chemists complements the invincibility of our armies. The world will stand in awe of our resources and our inventions.⁴⁴⁴ And on what are they counting to stand up to us? On their air forces? Perhaps they shall be able to bomb a few of our cities, but how can they dare compete with us?

Our *Luftwaffe* is the best in the world, and no enemy city will remain standing!

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Having boasted enough about Germany's military might, Hitler once more conjured up the specter of international Bolshevism. This enemy of the civilized world had always served him well with the German Nationalists. It was inconceivable for Hitler that a similar tactic would fail to intimidate the British.

And for what this unthinkable massacre? In the end all of us, victor and vanquished alike, will lie buried beneath the same rubble, and there will be only one who will benefit from it—the one in Moscow.

And who should ever have imagined that it would be I, of all people, who would be forced to envision a like conflict? It was I who repeatedly was faulted in Germany for being too incorrigible an admirer of the British Empire; who so frequently sought to bring about a lasting understanding between the Reich and England, an understanding which I still consider vital to the defense of European culture even today! And to be blamed for all of this is solely the unreasonableness and obstinate blindness of the leaders of Great Britain!

In Hitler's eyes, the leading British statesmen truly suffered from "blindness," as they failed to see the obvious benefits of an alliance with Germany. Apparently, they were as reluctant to share the world with Hitler as they had been opposed to sharing it with William II.⁴⁴⁵ And this Hitler failed to see.

Once Gafencu had left, Hitler began to prepare for the countless activities and festivities which were to span the days of April 19 and April 20, marking Hitler's fiftieth birthday.⁴⁴⁶ In the afternoon, the first guests to congratulate him called: Ludwig Sieber, the Bavarian Minister President; Adolf Wagner, State Minister and Gauleiter; and the Mayor of Munich, Reichsleiter Fiehler.

The reception in the Mosaic Room at the new Chancellery for graduates of the SS Junkerschule Brunswick began at 5:00 p.m. On finishing their training courses, the recruits were automatically promoted to the rank of Untersturmführer (lieutenant) of the Waffen SS. Graciously, Hitler allowed them to admire the building which cadet officers had been asked to tour earlier. Hitler could naturally not resist delivering another speech on this occasion. Afterwards, Hitler had Himmler and SS Gruppenführer Schmidt, the inspector of the SS Junkerschulen, introduce him personally to every young man, whose pledge of loyalty he accepted at this time.

Since 1933,⁴⁴⁷ Hitler had proceeded in this manner at the swearing-in of recruits for the various armed SS contingents which took place at the Feldherrnhalle in Munich on November 9 of every year. Their numbers had swelled so considerably in the interim that Hitler could

personally attend only to the oath of loyalty of the more high-ranking officers.⁴⁴⁸

At 7:00 p.m., Hess led in a group of 1,600 Political Leaders who presented the Führer with a collection of fifty original letters by Frederick the Great. Hitler thanked them in a short address, culminating in the following proclamation: "May the iron determination of this Movement constitute our age's legacy to the nation for all time to come!"

At 8:00 p.m., survivors of the 1923 Putsch and bearers of the Blood Order filled the Chancellery's Marble Gallery to congratulate the Führer on his birthday. One hour later, Hitler's car passed along the recently finished seven-kilometer stretch of the Tiergartenstrasse which now complemented the so-called "East-West Axis" through the city. After Hitler arrived at the Hindenburgplatz at 9:15 p.m., General Building Inspector Speer duly reported the completion of the project. Hitler thanked him, the city's mayor, and all workers involved for its speedy realization and declared the street officially open for traffic.

At 10:00 p.m., the tattoo was sounded at the Wilhelmsplatz, and a parade of troops crossed the square in front of the Chancellery. A torchlight procession of the Old Guard moved through Berlin's streets only thirty-five minutes later. Subdivided into twenty-one parade formations, the men filed by in front of Hitler at the Wilhelmstrasse. Significantly, there were guards of honor from Danzig [!] among them, as well as from other Gaus. At 11:00 p.m., the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* sang their namesake a birthday song in the courtyard of the new Chancellery. At midnight, Hitler's entourage extended their personal best wishes to the Führer. Afterwards, Hitler stepped out on the Chancellery's balcony to show himself to the crowd below.

On Hitler's actual birthday, celebrations began at 8:00 a.m. in the garden of the old Chancellery where the Leibstandarte's band played for Hitler. An hour later, the entire SS Leibstandarte paraded by, accompanied by a storm unit of the SS *Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Head Units) and a battalion of the Schutzpolizei.

Twenty minutes later, the Papal Nuncio Monsignor Orsenigo congratulated Hitler in the name of the Diplomatic Corps. Five minutes later, Reich Protector von Neurath appeared to present his best wishes along with State President Hácha. Another five minutes later, Tiso and the Slovak Foreign Minister Durcansky followed in their footsteps. At 9:45 a.m., Hitler received individual Cabinet members to accept their

congratulations. At 10:00 a.m., the heads of the Wehrmacht called on Hitler to congratulate him: Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, and Keitel. Hitler expressed his thanks to each of them in the form of a short address.

The Mayor and City President of Berlin, Lippert, came to extend his best wishes about ten minutes later. The next ten minutes in Hitler's schedule were reserved for Gauleiter Albert Forster, who presented Hitler with a letter conferring on him honorary citizenship of the Free City of Danzig. The document had been designed by the Munich Professor Richard Klein and bore the following inscription:⁴⁴⁹

With the consent of its citizens, the Senate of the Free City of Danzig has bestowed upon Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Volk, the freedom of the city, in ineradicable gratitude for his work at the service of the moral and *völkisch* renewal of the German Volk, and as a symbol of the close bonds of blood which tie Danzig to the German Volk.

In testimony thereof,

Danzig, April 20, 1939

The Senate of the Free City of Danzig

The letter strikingly resembled the contents of the document conferring on Hitler the honorary citizenship of Saarbrücken on May 1, 1934,⁴⁵⁰ only a few months before the Saarland was reunited with the Reich. The Saar returned to the Reich under international supervision. In the case of Danzig, Hitler had either to desist or to resort to war to secure the Free City.

The military parade across the Wilhelmsplatz began at 11:00 a.m. It moved along the newly constructed "East-West Axis." The rostrum for Hitler and the guests of honor had been erected in front of the Technical University of Berlin. Special seats of honor stood on top, reserved for the Czech State President Hácha and the Slovak Minister-President Tiso. Given the embarrassingly sparsely populated stage, there was an attempt, nearly by force, to seat the Rumanian Foreign Minister Gafencu there as well, in spite of his declared opposition to this plan.⁴⁵¹ Gafencu feigned illness, so that Hitler's assistants finally reconciled themselves to his being seated with the Diplomatic Corps, as inconspicuously as planned initially.

The absence of the British, French, and American Ambassadors, however, was not easily concealed, as it was public knowledge that the representatives of these countries had been withdrawn to protest against Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia. Only the British Chargé d'Affaires was present at the official ceremony. While the Polish Ambassador Lipski was in attendance, Poland had not dispatched a

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special delegation to the birthday celebration as had Hitler's other "friends" (Italy, Japan, Spain, and several of the Balkan states). During a four-hour défilé of troops, the birthday parade displayed Germany's military might for the benefit of Hitler, naturally, and the representatives of smaller countries.

At 4:00 p.m., the Berlin Sängerbund assembled on the Wilhelmsplatz to sing several folk songs in honor of Hitler's birthday. About one hour later, delegations from Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria were allowed to convey their congratulations. Thereafter, Hitler invited all members of the various foreign delegations to the Chancellery for tea where they were joined by numerous generals, Reich Ministers, and NSDAP Reichsleiter.

At 6:30 p.m., a delegation representing various German ethnic groups living abroad congratulated Hitler in the name of their constituency: von Hassebeck, the organization's Secretary General; Fabricius, a retired Cavalry Captain; and SS Obergruppenführer Lorenz. Albert Speer headed the next delegation to call on Hitler, one comprising artists such as von Arendt, Breker, Giesler, Gradl, Kreis, Thorak, and Ziegler.

The following information was published regarding the congratulatory telegrams wired to Berlin on this April 20, 1939:⁴⁵²

On the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, a multitude of foreign heads of state and heads of government forwarded cordial congratulatory telegrams to the Führer. From Italy, telegrams were received from King Victor Emmanuel III; Mussolini; the Marshals Balbo and Graziani; Count Ciano; and many other prominent figures. Further congratulatory telegrams were wired by: the Emperor of Japan; the Kings of Great Britain, Bulgaria, Rumania, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Egypt, and Afghanistan; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the Queen of the Netherlands; the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg; the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Regent of Iraq; the Regent's Counsel of Siam; further the Hungarian Regent von Horthy and the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki; General Franco; the Presidents of Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Turkey, China, and Bolivia; the Prince of Liechtenstein; the former King Ferdinand of Bulgaria and its former Minister-President Stojadinovic.

Of the customary responses to these congratulations, only two were published: one to the Italian King Victor Emmanuel and the other to Mussolini:⁴⁵³

I ask Your Majesty to accept this most cordial expression of my gratitude for the kind congratulations on my birthday, which sincerely delighted me.

Adolf Hitler

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I thank you for your kindly remembrance of my birthday, Duce, and for your heartfelt words. With this expression of gratitude, I wish to associate a renewed assurance of my unshakeable attachment to you and to Fascist Italy, which you have created, as well as my best regards,

Adolf Hitler

In the following official statement, Hitler gave thanks for the wishes extended by both Germans living in the Reich and by members of “the German Volkstum abroad.”⁴⁵⁴

On my fiftieth birthday, I have received countless congratulatory messages and other signs of remembrance from all walks of life of the German Volk and members of the German Volkstum abroad. Since it is absolutely impossible to reply to these individually, I ask my Volksgenossen to accept this expression of my sincere gratitude to all those who remembered me on this day.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler established a “special edition of the merit badge of the German Eagle”⁴⁵⁵ to add to his enjoyment of the birthday celebration. The Great Cross of the German Eagle could now be awarded in gold as well. The number of recipients was to be restricted to sixteen. One sentence in the charter was rather peculiar: “For military services rendered, the ‘merit badge of the German Eagle with swords’ will be awarded.”

The net result of the birthday celebrations was a meager one. Aside from the customary appearances and congratulations by foreign dignitaries, only a few of the Balkan states, Italy, Japan, and Spain had proven willing to still stand by Hitler. The Great Powers and the neutral states had displayed marked restraint. Moreover, the four-hour military parade completely failed of its purpose. It had not created the impression desired with the Western Powers. Even had Hitler ordered the parade to last twice or thrice as long, this provocative display could only reinforce the Western Powers’ determination and add justification to their military countermeasures. Chamberlain announced the introduction of universal conscription to the United Kingdom on April 25, three days before Hitler’s Reichstag speech.

Reports in Germany’s print media revealed the embarrassing failure of the festivities. Given the conspicuous absence of any other laudations, bold-letter headlines were used to highlight an odd expert appraisal of the military displays. Its author was Lieutenant General With, the Commander in Chief of the Danish Armed Forces, a man unknown in Germany, who had distinguished himself merely as one of the few men favorably impressed by the parade.

In the meantime, Hitler continued his inspections of military installations, reviewing troops at the Infantry Training School and Döberitz Air Base on April 22.⁴⁵⁶

On April 26, Hitler received the Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovich at the Chancellery. Reportedly, the “friendly discussions” had served to “deepen and underscore the sincere friendship which has bound both states for many years already.”⁴⁵⁷ In the evening, Hitler visited Hess at his private apartment to congratulate him on his forty-fifth birthday.⁴⁵⁸

On April 27, Hitler wired his congratulations to Professor Messerschmitt, who had set a new record with the ‘ME 109’ fighter plane. It had attained a speed of 755.11 km per hour.⁴⁵⁹

At noon on April 28, Hitler finally held the long awaited speech before the Reichstag. Given its undeniable importance for the foreign policy both states would have to conduct in the future, Great Britain and France returned their ambassadors to Berlin on this special occasion.⁴⁶⁰ Both governments had recalled their representatives on March 17/18 in protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. By contrast, the United States, which had already severed diplomatic ties to Berlin in the aftermath of the Crystal Night the year before, did not send any official emissaries to the German capital to attend the session of the Reichstag.

As mentioned earlier, Hitler had declared that his speech before the Reichstag would serve as a reply to Roosevelt’s message. In the beginning of his speech, it appeared as though he intended to come immediately to the point:⁴⁶¹

Deputies, Men of the Reichstag!

The President of the United States of America has addressed a telegram to me, whose peculiar contents you are aware of. Since, as the addressee of this document, I saw it only after the rest of the world had gained knowledge of it on the radio and in the press, and after countless commentators from international democratic institutions had kindly informed us that this telegram was a very adroit tactical paper which was to burden those states governed by the people with the responsibility for the aggression perpetrated by the plutocracies, I resolved to convene the German Reichstag to afford you, my Deputies, the opportunity—in your capacity as the elected representatives of the German nation—to be the first to hear my response which you may either confirm or reject.⁴⁶²

Beyond this, I thought it expedient to adopt the method employed by Herr President Roosevelt and, for my part, to proceed to inform the rest of the world of my answer by the means at our disposal. I should like equally to take

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advantage of this occasion to express those sentiments which have deeply moved me in light of the stunning historic events of the month of March of this year.

These, my deepest sentiments, compel me to turn to Providence in humble gratitude, to thank it for calling on me, an unknown soldier in the World War, to rise to the heights of Führer of my dearly beloved Volk. Providence permitted me to find the appropriate path, one not smeared with blood, to free my Volk from misery and to lead it upward once again. Providence granted me the fulfillment of what I consider the mission of my life: to uplift the German Volk from its defeat; to free it from the shackles of this most shameful Diktat of all time!

Hitler's audience soon realized that, having summoned the aid of Providence, he had immediately digressed into a lengthy "party narrative." Wilson's Fourteen Points naturally occupied center stage: they had heralded "the darkest period of its national misfortunes" for the German Volk which bore guilt itself for this by allowing itself "a moment of weakness in placing faith in the promises of democratic statesmen."

Hitler then spoke of the "peaceful dictators of American and European origin." He portrayed his own policies as conciliatory ones, and pointed to Germany's good-neighborly relations with Yugoslavia, and to what he considered his eminently reasonable stance on the question of Alsace-Lorraine:

I have not, as France did in the years 1870-71, referred to the cession of Alsace-Lorraine as intolerable in the future. No, I carefully differentiated between the Saar territory and the two other former Reichsländer. And I have not revised my stance on the matter, nor will I revise it in the future. Not once have I allowed my views to be violated or questioned in the interior, either for the sake of publicity, or for any other reason. The return of the Saar has removed from the face of the earth all territorial disputes between France and Germany in Europe.

Nevertheless, I have always regretted that French statesmen take this, my stance, for granted. Things are not so simple. I have not preached this stance for fear of France. As a former soldier, I have no reason for such fear. Moreover, in the context of the Saar settlement, I have left no doubt that a refusal to return this territory to Germany was unacceptable to us. No, I have assumed this attitude towards France as an expression of my realization that it is necessary for Europe to find peace somehow, and that open, limitless demands for ever new [territorial] revisions would merely sow the seeds of lasting insecurity and tensions. If tensions have now arisen, Germany does not bear the responsibility for this. Instead, this is to be blamed on international elements intentionally promoting tensions to serve their capitalist interests.

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I have extended binding assurances to a series of states. Not one of the states can lament so much as an insinuation by Germany of any demands in violation thereof. Not one Nordic statesman can claim, for instance, that either the German Reich Government or German public opinion forced on him an unreasonable request which was incompatible with the territorial integrity or the sovereignty of his state.

I was glad that a number of European states took advantage of the opportunity presented by the German Reich Government's declaration to express, in turn, their unequivocal willingness to espouse a stand of unconditional neutrality and hereby to strengthen this avowal. This is true of Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, and so on. I have already mentioned France. I need not mention Italy, as it is tied to us by bonds of a friendship both close and profound. Neither need I speak of Hungary or Yugoslavia, neighbors with whom we are fortunate to enjoy a heartfelt friendship.

By the same token, from the first moment I actively involved myself in politics, I have left no doubt that there do exist certain states of affairs which represent so base and crude an infringement on our Volk's right to self-determination, that we can never be expected to accept or tolerate these. I have not written a single line or a single speech in which I have ever expressed a stance contrary to the one indicated on the subject of the states mentioned before. Neither does there exist a single line or a single speech concerning other instances in which the stand I espoused was not retroactively confirmed by the actions I later took.

Soon it became apparent what "other instances" Hitler was referring to: Austria and Bohemia-Moravia. Hitler's claim that his actions by necessity always conformed to statements he had made earlier in this context ought to have been qualified to read "conformed to statements he chose to recall." In the case of truncated Czechoslovakia, Hitler completely ignored earlier assurances such as "we do not want any Czechs at all."

In this speech, Hitler once again repeated the accusations and precedents with which he had earlier justified Germany's legal claims to the Sudetenland, albeit with greater pertinence at that time than in the present case. Obviously he labored to create the impression that these legal claims applied equally to the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

Hitler enumerated the following points:

First: Austria. This oldest Ostmark of the German Volk once shielded the Reich to its southeast, as the protective march of the German nation. The Germans who settled in these lands were recruited from among all German tribes, although it may well be true that the majority of them were Bavarians. Later this Ostmark became the seat of dynastic power of a German empire which lasted half a millennium, while Vienna became the capital city of the

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German Reich. Already in gradual dissolution, this German Reich was finally shattered by the Corsican Napoleon. Still, it lived on in the framework of the German Union (*Deutscher Bund*). Although no longer sharing a common statehood, its people recently came together, in yearned-for *völkisch* unity, to fight and suffer side by side in the greatest war of all time, though not united in the form of a common statehood. I myself am the child of this Ostmark.

Not only did the criminals of Versailles hack this German Reich to pieces and dissolve Austria, what was worse they forbade the Germans to avow their allegiance to the one community to which Germans have belonged for more than one thousand years. To alter this state of affairs is a task I have always regarded as the most lofty and most hallowed of missions in my life. To proclaim this will is something I have never failed to do. I stand ready to realize this will at any time in my life; it is a thought that haunts me day and night.

I would have sinned against Providence's calling, if I had become a traitor to this endeavor to return my homeland and my German Volk of the Ostmark to the Reich, and thereby to the German Volksgemeinschaft. I have erased the most shameful page of the Versailles Treaty. I have restored the right of self-determination to seven-and-a-half million Germans. I have put an end to the persistent democratic rape of these seven-and-a-half million people. They were forbidden to take their destiny into their own hands—I have rescinded this prohibition. I have conducted this plebiscite before the eyes of history. Its results confirmed my expectations.

Those democratic rapists of the peoples (*Völkervergewaltiger*) conferring at Versailles had apparently shared them. Why else would they have forbidden a referendum on the Anschluss?

After this excursion into Germany's past, Hitler gave his listeners the following peculiar and highly questionable rendition of the history of Bohemia and Moravia.

When in the course of the migration of the peoples, German tribes for inexplicable reasons began to leave the area which today is Bohemia and Moravia, a foreign, Slavic people penetrated this area and drove a wedge between those Germans who had remained behind. Ever since, this people's Lebensraum was embraced by the German Volkstum in the form of a horseshoe. In economic terms, an independent existence of this area is conceivable only in connection with the German Volk and the German economy.

Besides this, nearly four million Germans live in the Bohemian and Moravian area. Pressure by the Czech majority has brought a policy of annihilation to bear, especially apparent since the Diktat of Versailles, but which has also been in part due to the economic situation and an increasing poverty, which, in turn, has led to an exodus of the German elements from the area. The numbers of the remaining Germans there dropped to approximately 3.7 million. While the fringes of this area are populated exclusively by Germans, there are several big islands of German speech in its interior.

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The Czechs are a people alien to us, given their foreign heritage. Through a community formed over a thousand years, German influence has largely molded and fashioned their culture. Their economy is the result of affiliation with the greater German economy. At times, the capital of this area was a German Imperial city. It is home to the oldest German university. Numerous cathedrals, city halls, palaces of noblemen and burghers attest to Germany's cultural influences. Throughout the centuries, the Czech people have fashioned their relations to the German Volk now the more closely, now the more distantly. Closeness of relations leads to a bloom of both the German and the Czech peoples; separation to catastrophe.

The merit and value of the German Volk is known to us. The Czechs also deserve our respect for the sum of their skills and abilities, their enterprise and diligence, their love for their homeland and folklore.⁴⁶³ And, indeed, there were periods in which respect for each other's national conditions was considered most natural.

The credit for assigning to the Czech people the special role of a satellite state that can be set against Germany goes to the democratic architects of peace (*Friedensmacher*) at Versailles. To this end, they arbitrarily appropriated the possessions of other peoples to this state, not viable in its Czech ethnic core (*Volkssubstanz*). This meant that it was allowed to rape other nationalities in order to secure a state-financed latent threat to the German nation in Central Europe. For this state, whose so-called state people (*Staatsvolk*) was in the minority, could survive only due to the brutal oppression of its ethnic majorities. This oppression, in turn, was unthinkable unless the European democracies granted this state protection and assistance. This assistance would only be granted, however, if this state was willing to assume and play the role assigned to it at birth. To play this role meant preventing the consolidation of Central Europe constituting a bridge for Bolshevik aggression into Europe, and, above all, to serve as a mercenary for the European democracies' agitation against Germany. Everything else arose then of itself.

The more actively this state pursued its mission, the greater became the resistance of the ethnic minorities opposed to it. The greater the resistance, the greater the need for suppression. The resulting hardening of the inner antagonism led to an ever greater dependence on the democratic European founders of this state and its benefactors. For they alone were in a position to maintain economically the unnatural, artificial existence of this edifice.

Essentially, Germany primarily pursued only one interest, namely, to deliver the nearly four million Germans in this country from this unbearable situation, and to enable them to return to their homeland: the one-thousand year old Reich. Of course this problem brought up immediately the entire question of the remaining nationalities. That the removal of these nationalities would rob the remainder of this state of its viability was equally clear, as the founders of this state at Versailles had been only too aware. It was because of this that they decided on the suppression of the other minorities and their forced integration into this dilettantish state structure against their will.

Never have I left any doubt of this, my view and opinion. Certainly, as long as Germany itself was impotent and defenseless, this rape of nearly four

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million Germans could take place without the Reich being able to mount any resistance to it. However, only a political tot could seriously believe that the German nation would forever remain in the state of the year 1919.

It was only as long as those international traitors, who were financed abroad, held the leadership of the German State that a patient acceptance of this shameful state of affairs could be expected. Ever since the victory of National Socialism forced these traitors to take up residence in those countries from where they received their subsidies, the resolution of this problem has become merely a question of time. And it was a question exclusively of the concerned nationalities, not of Western Europe. It was only natural that Western Europe should take an interest in the artificial state structure created in its interest. That the nationalities surrounding this state should consider this interest decisive for them was perhaps a regrettable fallacy for some. Insofar as this interest exclusively concerned the financial foundations of this state, no objections to this would have been voiced by Germany, had not this financial interest in the end been subservient to the power politics and ambitions of the democracies.

Even the financial sponsorship of this state served one central idea: to create a state, militarily armed to the teeth, with the task of forming a bastion reaching far into the Reich. There was no doubt of its value and the promise it held, either as a base for military operations in the context of Western incursions into the Reich or simply as an air base. A comment by the French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, left no doubt of what was expected of this state. Calmly he spoke his mind, saying that it would be the task of this state, in the event of conflict, to serve as a port for arrival and departure for bombers. From there it would be possible to destroy the most important industrial centers in Germany within hours.⁴⁶⁴ Hence, it was only natural that the German state leadership, for its part, resolved to destroy this port of departure for bombers. It arrived at this decision not because of hatred for the Czech people. On the contrary, in the thousand years they have lived together, the German and the Czech peoples have enjoyed centuries of close cooperation, interrupted by only short periods of tension.

Admittedly, in such times of tension, the passions of the men fighting on the front lines of such ethnic conflicts may well dim their sense of justice and thus lead to a false assessment of the overall situation. This is a trait characteristic of any war. However, in the great epochs of understanding coexistence, both peoples have always agreed that each of them had an inalienable right—mutually—to the esteem and respect of its *Volkstum*.

Even in these years of struggle, I approached the Czech people not only in my capacity as the protector of the biased interests of his Volk and Reich, but also as one who never failed to respect the Czech people itself. One thing is certain, however: had the democratic midwives of this state been allowed to realize their ultimate goal, the German Reich would not have been eliminated, although, undoubtedly, we would also have had to take some losses. Rather the Czech people would in all likelihood have had to bear far more horrendous consequences, as regards its size and position. Indeed, I am convinced these consequences would have been catastrophic.

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I am happy that we were able to prevent this catastrophe in Central Europe, albeit to the great irritation of democratic interests, thanks to the restraint we exercised and the insight of the Czech people. For the National Socialist German Reich grants its citizens from the start what the best and most insightful Czechs have fought for throughout the decades. It is the right to one's own Volkstum, the right to cultivate it and to enjoy it freely. National Socialist Germany has no intention whatever of renouncing the racial principles on which we pride ourselves. They will not only benefit the German, but also the Czech Volk. What we demand is respect for the historic necessity, for the economic predicament that confronts us all.

As I announced the solution of this problem on March 22, 1938⁴⁶⁵ before the Reichstag, I was convinced that I was attending to a Central European necessity. In March 1938, I still believed that we could resolve the minorities question in this state by a slow evolution and that, sooner or later, we would be able to assure a common platform by means of contractual cooperation, which would benefit the interests of all of us not only politically, but also economically.

It was only when Herr Beneš, by then completely in the hands of his international democratic financiers, added a military aspect to the problem and unleashed a wave of repressions on the Germans and simultaneously attempted the well-known mobilization to deal the German state a defeat internationally and to damage its prestige, that I finally realized that a solution in this manner was no longer possible. For the lie about a German mobilization at the time had obviously been inspired by foreign powers and proposed to the Czechs in order to deal a blow to the prestige of the German Reich.

I do not need to repeat once again that Germany had not mobilized a single man in May of last year. By contrast, all of us had been of the opinion that the fate of Herr Schuschnigg would induce others to seek an understanding, by means of a more just treatment of their national minorities. For my person, I had been prepared to undertake patiently such a peaceful evolution, if necessary, over a number of years.

However, it was precisely these peaceful intentions which represented a thorn in the side of the fomenters in the democracies. They hate us Germans and would much prefer to wipe us out completely. And, what are the Czechs to them? A means to an end! What interest do they have in the fate of such a brave little people? What do they care for the lives of a few hundred thousand brave soldiers who unwittingly became the victims of their politics?

These Western European fomenters of peace (*Friedenshetzer*) did not seek to promote peace, but to spill blood. And this bloodshed did enable them to rouse people yet again and thereby to let more blood flow. That is why the mobilization was made up and the public in Prague was told a pack of lies. These were intended to serve as arguments for a Czech mobilization. Above all, they were to furnish an excuse to exert highly welcome military pressure on the pending elections in the Sudetenland.

According to these men's convictions, there remained only two possibilities for Germany: either it accepted the Czech mobilization and hence suffered a

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shameful defeat, or it openly confronted Czechoslovakia in a bloody war. This would have made it possible to mobilize the peoples of Western Europe, who had no real interest in this matter, to plunge them into the necessary frenzy of bloodlust and mankind into a new catastrophe. Some would have the honor to lose their lives in this war, while others would profit from it.

You are aware of the decision I made instantly at the time, my Deputies. First: resolution of this question before the year 1938 ended, by October 2 at the latest. Second: preparations for a solution by all those means which would leave no doubt that any attempts at interference would be thwarted by the united strength of the nation.

Apparently, Hitler thought this an opportune moment to point to the strength of the West Wall, claiming that "no power on earth" could ever pierce it. After all, ever since the autumn of 1938, Hitler had firmly believed that a similar bluff had been instrumental in eliciting the leniency displayed by the Western Powers at the time. In his opinion, it had prevented a declaration of war, in spite of the blatantly obvious nature of his designs on Czechoslovakia. Hence, a renewed reference to the "mightiest fortification of all time" might prove salutary and once again prevent a declaration of war as Germany turned against Poland.

At the time, I directed and gave orders for the expansion of our fortifications in the west. By September 25, 1938, they were already in such a condition as to surpass the power of resistance of the former Siegfried Line by thirty to forty times. Since then, they have essentially been completed. At present, the sections I later ordered to be added, running from Saarbrücken to Aix-la-Chapelle, are under construction. To a high degree, they are ready to assume their defensive role.

The state in which this mightiest fortification of all time finds itself today affords the German nation the reassuring knowledge that no power on earth shall ever be able to pierce this front.

When the first attempt at provocation by means of the Czech mobilization had not produced the desired results, a second phase set in. It revealed all the more the true nature of the interests involved in this affair which concerned Central Europe exclusively. And when today a cry rings out in the world, "Never again Munich," this is ample evidence that these warmongers regard the peaceful solution of this problem as the most ruinous outcome that ever happened.

They regret that no blood was shed. Not their blood, of course, since these fomenters never stand where the shots are being fired, but where the money is being made. What is at stake is the blood of many nameless soldiers.

By the way, it was not even necessary for this Conference at Munich to convene. After all, it came about only because those states which agitated for resistance at all costs later on began to search for a more or less decent escape route, once the problem called for a solution in one way or another. For without Munich, i.e. without the Western European states' intervention, the

solution of this entire problem—had there ever been a like escalation of events—would have been child's play.

The strong language Hitler employed in this context revealed once more his frustration with the Munich Agreement. A military annexation of Czechoslovakia “would have been child's play” had not Chamberlain, that “bastard,” ruined his entry into Prague.⁴⁶⁶ In the next section of the address, Hitler tried to blame the Western Powers for what actually was his breach of the Munich Agreement. According to his analysis, the Western Powers ought to have voiced any potential objections in November 1938 when Hungary and Slovakia had approached Germany and Italy for assistance in realizing their ambitions for territorial gains at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The two states had thereby demonstrated their lack of respect for the integrity of the Munich Agreement.⁴⁶⁷ Since Britain had remained silent then, it had forfeited its right to reproach Hitler for the invasion of truncated Czechoslovakia at a later point!

The decision at Munich resulted in the following:

1. Return of substantial parts of the German frontier areas in Bohemia and Moravia to the Reich.

2. Preservation of options for a resolution of the other problems with this state, i.e. the return or the migration of the remaining Hungarian and Slovak minorities.

3. Issue of a guarantee. From the start, as far as Germany and Italy were concerned, the guarantee of this state was made conditional on the consent of all interested parties bordering the state and, thus, depended on the actual resolution of those questions concerning the interested parties.

The following questions remained open:

1. Return of the Magyar parts to Hungary;
2. return of the Polish parts to Poland;
3. resolution of the Slovak question; and
4. resolution of the Ukrainian question.

As you are aware, barely had the negotiations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia begun, when the Czechoslovakian as well as the Hungarian negotiators approached Germany and Italy, standing at our side, with the request to undertake, as arbitrators, the drawing of the new borders between Slovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine, and Hungary. In so doing, they themselves failed to exhaust the possibility of an appeal to the Four Powers, and, thus, waived this right, i.e. declined to take advantage of it.

And this was quite understandable. All those residing in this Lebensraum wished to preserve peace and quiet. Italy and Germany were ready to heed this call. Neither England nor France objected to this agreement, which in its nature had already bypassed the formalities of the Munich Agreement. After all, it would have been crazy if either London or Paris had protested against

an act by Germany or Italy which had taken place on the request of those concerned.

As always in such cases, the award arbitrated by Italy and Germany could not completely satisfy both sides. Its major shortcoming was that both parties had to agree to submit to the arbitration voluntarily. Shortly after this award was settled, two states immediately mounted strong protests. Hungary claimed the Carpatho-Ukraine based on its general interests and certain specific ones. Poland, on the other hand, demanded a direct link to Hungary. In view of these claims, the remainder of this state born at Versailles was destined to perish. In all likelihood, only one other state was interested in maintaining the status quo: Rumania. A competent authority⁴⁶⁸ personally informed me of how desirable he felt it was that Rumania should be granted a direct link to Germany through the Ukraine and Slovakia. I am citing this particular example to illustrate how threatened Rumania must have felt by Germany, as certain American clairvoyants would have had it. It was clear, however, that it was neither Germany's duty to oppose such a development in the long run, nor to fight for a state of affairs for which we could never have assumed responsibility.

Hence came the moment in which I resolved to declare, on behalf of the Reich Government, that we had no intention to continue to be bothered with the odium of opposing the Polish and Hungarian desire for a common border, just perhaps to secure a route of advance into Rumania. And since the Czech government resorted once more to its methods of old, and Slovakia revealed its desires for independence, there could be no talk of maintaining this state any longer. The Czechoslovakian state constructed at Versailles had outlived its purpose. It broke up not because Germany wished this. It broke up because it is not possible to construct and maintain at the conference table artificial states which are not viable in themselves.

Thus when, a few days before this state disintegrated, England and France inquired about a guarantee, Germany rejected this because the conditions stipulated at Munich no longer applied. To the contrary, when the German Reich Government finally resolved to intervene on its part—now that this whole structure was in the process of disintegration and, for all practical purposes, had already disintegrated—then this occurred in the fulfillment of a self-evident duty. In this context, the following ought to be noted:

On the occasion of the Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky's first visit to Munich, the German Reich Government clearly expressed its views on the future of Czechoslovakia. At the time, I myself assured Herr Minister Chvalkovsky that, given a decent treatment of the large remaining German minorities in Czechia and a pacification of the whole state, Germany would assume a fair attitude. We did not wish to create difficulties for this state.

I left no doubt that, if Czechia undertook any steps reminiscent of the political tendencies of the retired Herr Dr. Beneš, Germany would not tolerate a development along this line. Such a development would be nipped in the bud. At the time, I also pointed out that the maintenance of huge military arsenal in Central Europe without aim and object had to be regarded as a source of danger.

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Later developments proved how right this warning of mine had been. A continually worsening whispering campaign as well as a lapse of the Czech newspapers into the old style made it clear to even the most simple-minded that a return to the old state of affairs was imminent.

The danger of a military confrontation was ever present in view of the possibility that some lunatics could seize the enormous stockpile of war material. This involved a certain danger of explosions of incalculable consequences.

To prove this to you, my Deputies, I have no choice but to give you a general idea of the numerical proportions of the international arsenal of explosives in Central Europe, which strike me as downright gigantic.

Once again Hitler succumbed to his passion for numbers. They proved nothing and were intended merely to impress and mesmerize his audience.

Since this territory has been occupied, the following items were confiscated and secured:

1. Air Force: 1,582 planes; 501 anti-aircraft guns;
2. Army: 2,175 fieldguns (light and heavy); 785 mortars; 469 tanks; 43,876 machineguns; 114,000 pistols; 1,090,000 rifles;
3. Ammunition: 1,000,000,000 shells (infantry); 3,000,000 shells (artillery and gas);
4. Other weaponry of all types, such as devices for building bridges; listening devices; searchlights; measuring instruments; cars and special vehicles in great numbers.

I believe that it was fortunate for millions and millions of people that I was able to prevent this explosion, thanks to the insight which the responsible men on the other side had at the last minute. It is my conviction that we found a solution which has settled this dispute and has eliminated it as a source of danger for Central Europe.

The claim that this solution contradicts the Munich Agreement cannot be justified any more than it can be substantiated. Under no circumstances can the Munich settlement be regarded as a final one. After all, it makes concessions for the solution of additional questions and the need to resolve them. Truly, and this is decisive, it cannot be held against us that the concerned parties appealed to Italy and Germany, and not to the Four Powers. Nor can it be held against us that Czechoslovakia disintegrated on its own and, hence, ceased to exist. It is only natural that, once these ethnographic principles no longer applied, Germany again took charge of its one-thousand year old interests, which are not only of a political, but also of an economic nature. Time will tell whether the solution Germany found was the right one.⁴⁶⁹

One thing is sure, however: this solution should not be subject to English control or criticism. For the Länder of Bohemia and Moravia have nothing at all to do with the Munich Agreement since they constituted the final remnants of the former Czechoslovakian state.

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With the brazen remark that the remainder of Czechoslovakia had “nothing at all to do with the Munich Agreement,” Hitler opened his verbal assault on the British. He maintained that his personal understanding with Chamberlain, which had been arrived at on September 30, 1938,⁴⁷⁰ and which had provided for mutual consultations, was not applicable to his move against the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Hitler argued that if it was applicable, this would oblige him to monitor British actions in Northern Ireland and Palestine. Should Great Britain be “incapable of understanding this, our attitude” and should the Prime Minister believe that Britain could not possibly “place any trust in assurances by Germany,” this meant that the “foundations” for the Anglo-German Naval Agreement had been destroyed. Thus he had resolved “to inform the British Government of this today.”

These arguments were textbook examples of the “slap in the face” tactics Hitler employed in his dealings with the British. Their forceful nature would frighten them and induce them to search for ways of obtaining his favor. In order not to prevent the British from showing themselves to be conciliatory, Hitler yielded and expressed his hope that “an arms race with England” could still be avoided. He detailed:

As little right as we have to subject English measures, whether just or unjust, to German control and criticism, for instance in Northern Ireland, as little right does England possess to do this in the case of the old German electorates. I completely fail to understand how the personal understanding reached by Mr. Chamberlain and myself at Munich can be applied to this case. After all, the case of Czechoslovakia was dealt with in the Munich Agreement insofar as it was possible to deal with it at that point. Beyond this, it was only planned that, should the concerned parties be unable to arrive at a agreement themselves, they could appeal to the Four Powers. After a period of three months, the Four Powers would meet again for further consultations.

Now the concerned parties have not appealed to the Four Powers, but to Germany and Italy. Evidence for the legitimacy of this step lies in the fact that neither England nor France voiced any objections. Moreover, they have accepted without any further ado the award arbitrated by Germany and Italy.

No, the agreement Mr. Chamberlain and I entered into has nothing to do with the problem at hand. It applies exclusively to questions concerning the coexistence of England and Germany. This is equally evident in the statement that such questions, in the future, ought to be dealt with in the spirit of the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which advocate friendly relations by means of mutual consultations. Should this agreement apply to any and all future German political activities, then England could not take any further steps, for instance, in Palestine or anywhere else for that matter, without consulting Germany before taking action. We certainly expect

nothing of the kind and, in turn, we protest that this is expected of us. When Mr. Chamberlain now concludes that the Munich Agreement is null and void, because we abrogated it, I shall take note of his disposition as of today and I shall draw the proper conclusions.

Throughout my years of political activities, I have always advocated the idea of establishing close Anglo-German friendship and cooperation. I found countless congenial people in my Movement. Perhaps they even joined my Movement because of this conviction of mine. The desire for Anglo-German friendship and cooperation not only reflects my own proper sentiments on the topic, derived from the common heritage of our two peoples, but also my opinion that the existence of the British Empire is of importance to mankind and in its best interest. Never have I left any doubt about my conviction that the maintaining of this empire is an object of inestimable value to mankind's culture and economy.

By whatever means Great Britain may have gained its colonial possessions—and I know this entailed the use of force, the use of the most brutal force in many instances—I nevertheless realize that no other empire has ever been created by different means. In the end, world history values not the method so much as the success; and this not in terms of the success of the method employed, but of the general utility derived from the method.

Undoubtedly the Anglo-Saxon people have accomplished a great colonizing work on this earth. I sincerely admire this achievement. From a higher humanitarian point of view, the thought of its destruction has always seemed to me, and seems to me today, the product of a wanton thirst for fame (*Herostratentum*). However, my sincere respect for this attainment does not mean I will refrain from assuring the life of my own Volk. I believe it is not possible to bring about a lasting friendship between the German and the Anglo-Saxon peoples if the other side fails to realize that next to British interests there are German ones also. As for the men of Britain the sustenance of the British Empire lends meaning and purpose to life, so the sustenance and liberty of the German Reich does for the men of Germany! A lasting friendship between these two nations is conceivable only in the framework of mutual respect.

The English rule a mighty empire. They built this empire in the days of the German Volk's slackening. In former times, the German Reich also was a mighty empire. It once ruled the West. In bloody battles and religious confrontations, as well as because this state split up internally, this Reich lost its might and greatness and finally fell into a deep sleep. Still, as the old Reich was nearing its end, the seed for its ultimate rebirth began to germinate. A new Germany grew out of Brandenburg and Prussia: the Second Reich. And, in the final instance, this became the German Volksreich of today.

Perhaps now the English will understand that we have no reason to feel in the least inferior to them. For this, truly, our historic past is too colossal! England has given the world many a great man; Germany has done no less. The difficult struggle for the survival of our Volk has demanded of us, in the course of three centuries, a blood sacrifice in the defense of the Reich far outstripping the sacrifices other peoples had to make to secure their

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existence. That, perpetually the victim of aggression, Germany was not able to maintain its assets, that it had to sacrifice many provinces, has been the result of the state's undesirable development which caused its impotence.

We have now overcome this condition. We, as Germans, therefore do not feel inferior to the British. Our respect for our country is just as great as that of every Englishman for England. The history of our Volk throughout the past two thousand years affords us grounds enough and deeds to fill us with sincere pride.

Should England declare itself incapable of understanding this, our attitude, and should it instead perhaps regard Germany as a vassal state, then our offer of love and friendship for England will have been for naught. We shall neither despair nor lose heart because of this. Instead, we shall then set out on a path—conscious of our own strength and that of our friends—which shall secure our independence and not prejudice our dignity.

I am aware of the British Prime Minister's declaration in which he maintains he cannot place any trust in assurances by Germany. Under the circumstances, I felt that we should no longer burden him or the English people with conditions, unthinkable without mutual trust. When Germany became National Socialist and thus initiated its resurrection, I made a proposal, for my part, in pursuit of my stalwart policy of friendship for England, to impose voluntary limits on German armament at sea. This implied the will and conviction that war should never again be possible between England and Germany. And this remains my will and my conviction even today.

However, I am now forced to concede that England's official and unofficial policies leave no doubt that London no longer shares this conviction. Quite the contrary, it is my conviction that, irrespective of what type of conflict Germany might be drawn into, Britain will always oppose Germany. War with Germany is regarded as a matter of course.

I deeply regret this since my only demand of England today is, and will continue to be, the return of our colonies. However, I have always made it perfectly clear that this does not constitute grounds for a war. I remain true to my conviction that England, for whom the colonies have no value, would come to understand Germany's position one day. Then it would undoubtedly realize that Germany's friendship far outweighed these objects, which, while they are of no real use to England, are of vital importance to Germany.

Beyond this, I have never made any demands which affected British interests, posed a real danger to its world empire, or were detrimental to England in some other manner. I have restricted myself to demands in the framework of Germany's Lebensraum, questions closely tied to the German nation's eternal possessions. Now that journalists and officials in England publicly advocate opposition to Germany in any case, and this is confirmed by the well-known policy of encirclement, then the foundations on which the Anglo-German Naval Agreement rested have been destroyed.

Thus, I have resolved to inform the British Government of this today. This is not a question of a material affair—since I continue to cherish the hope that an arms race with England can be avoided—but a question of self-respect.

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Should the British government reconsider and wish to negotiate this matter with Germany in order to reach a clear and definite understanding, then no one would be happier than I.

Beyond this, I know my Volk—I rely on it. We desire nothing that was not ours before. Never will we rob another state of its rightful possessions. Alas, he who believes he can attack Germany will encounter such a power and such a resistance that those of the year 1914 will have been negligible in comparison.

Before landing his second strike, namely, the unilateral abrogation of the German-Polish Treaty of 1934, Hitler took a few minutes to give an overview of the process of the reintegration of the Memel territory into the Reich's administrative structures. He then tried to illustrate the peaceful intentions of the policies of Germany, which exclusively engaged in the pursuit of economic prerogatives, by talking at length of the relations between the Third Reich and the Baltic States.

I would like to discuss in this context a matter which those circles that earlier occasioned the mobilization of Czechoslovakia have taken up as a point of departure for a new campaign against the Reich. In the introduction to my speech, my Deputies, I already assured you that never in my political life, neither in the case of Austria nor in the case of Czechoslovakia, have I assumed an attitude which was incompatible with the measures now executed. On the question of the Memel Germans, I have always pointed out that, should Lithuania not resolve this problem in a refined and generous manner, Germany would have to appear on the scene one day.

You know that the Diktat of Versailles arbitrarily tore the Memel territory from the German Reich, and that in 1923, in the midst of peace, Lithuania occupied these areas and confiscated them more or less. The fate suffered by the Germans living there has become tantamount to martyrdom since then. In the framework of the reintegration of Bohemia and Moravia into the German Reich, I was able to reach an agreement with the Lithuanian government, which allowed for the return of these areas to Germany without any violent act or bloodshed. And here, too, I did not demand even one square mile more than what we originally had possessed and had been robbed of.

This means that only those areas torn from us by the insane dictators of peace at Versailles returned to the German Reich. I am convinced that this solution will have a favorable effect on the relations between Germany and Lithuania. Our behavior has clearly shown that Germany now has no interest in anything other than to live in peace and friendship also with this state. We seek to establish and cultivate economic ties with it.

And, in principle, I wish to explain the following here: the significance of economic agreements with Germany lies not only in its ability to produce nearly all industrial goods in demand, but also in its role as a gigantic consumer. As the buyer of numerous products Germany makes it possible for

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many other countries to participate in world trade in the first place. Hence, it is in our own best interest not only to preserve these markets, but to cultivate them as well.

For this is what the existence of our Volk is based on to a high degree. It is once more a sign of the greatness of the so-called democratic statesmen that they believe they have won an eminent political success when they manage to prevent a people from making sales, for example, by boycotting its markets, in order to starve them out, I presume. I need not tell you that, in accordance with my convictions, a people will not starve because of this, but it will be all the more willing to fight under such circumstances.

As far as Germany is concerned, it is determined not to allow certain markets which are of vital interest to the nation to be taken from it by terrorist interventions from abroad or by threats from there. This is not only in our interest, but also in the interest of our trading partners. In this case, as in any type of business, dependency is not unilateral but mutual.

We often have the pleasure to read dilettantish treatises in the democratic press which in all earnest maintain that, because Germany has close economic relations with a country, it is trying to make that country dependent on it. What truly hair-raising Jewish nonsense! For, if today the German Reich delivers machinery to an agricultural state and receives foodstuffs in return, then the Reich as a consumer of these foodstuffs is at least as dependent—if not more dependent—on this agricultural state as the agricultural state is on Germany from which it receives industrial products as payment.

Germany regards the Baltic States as its most important trading partners. It is hence in our own interest to see that these lead an independent, orderly national life of their own. In our eyes, this is a prerequisite for any economic development domestically, which in turn creates the prerequisites for our barter trade.

I therefore am happy that in the case of Lithuania, too, we have been able to remove the bone of contention between our two countries. Thus, we have cleared away the only obstacle in the way of a friendly policy. It does not consist of political compliments, but can and will hold its own, I am convinced, in practical work in the economic sphere.

The democratic world profoundly regrets that no blood was shed in this instance, too. It regrets that 175,000 Germans were able to return to their beloved German homeland without a few hundred thousand others being shot in the process! This truly pains the humane world apostles. It is not surprising in the least that they immediately set out to search for new means of once again upsetting the European atmosphere thoroughly. And this time, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, they again alleged that Germany had taken military measures, that is they claimed that a so-called German mobilization had taken place. And the object of this mobilization was Poland.

Now finally the time had come for Hitler to vent his anger at the impudent Poles' refusal to let him have Danzig and the extraterritorial motorway. He openly admitted to the demands he had made on

Poland, the territorial nature of which could not be denied. They stood in contrast to his earlier assurances that the return of the Sudetenland had been “his last territorial demand in Europe.”⁴⁷¹ Notwithstanding this openness, Hitler remained silent on his explicit insistence to the Poles that any contract to be entered into by Poland and Germany would have to contain a decidedly anti-Soviet element.

Instead, Hitler claimed that Poland had rejected his proposals although they represented a “truly unique compromise.” To add insult to injury, Poland had concluded a mutual assistance pact with Great Britain which forced him, so Hitler lamented, to “regard the agreement reached at the time with Marshal Pilsudski as unilaterally abrogated by Poland and therefore null and void.” Hitler declared:

There is little to be said on the topic of Polish-German relations. In this instance as well, the Peace Treaty of Versailles has grievously and intentionally wounded the German Volk. Above all, the strange delimitation of the Corridor, granting Poland access to the sea, was to preclude a reconciliation between Poland and Germany for all time. And, as emphasized earlier, this problem is perhaps the most painful one for Germany to bear.

This notwithstanding, I remained steadfast in my conviction that the necessity of granting the Polish state free access to the sea cannot be ignored. Moreover, in principle, I have always maintained that it would be expedient that people whom Providence has destined—or damned, for all I care—to live next to one another, did not needlessly and artificially poison their relations. The late Marshal Pilsudski, who adhered to this view also, was willing to review the issue of a decontamination of Polish-German relations and finally to arrive at an agreement, in which Germany and Poland pledged themselves to renounce war as a means of settling conflicts between them.

Poland was granted one exception from this agreement: the provision that pacts of assistance previously entered into by Poland would not be affected by this regulation. Reference here was solely to the Mutual Assistance Pact with France. It was accepted as a matter of course that this provision applied only to the pact already concluded and was not to be extended to pacts to be concluded in the future. It is a fact that this German-Polish Pact considerably contributed to a relaxation of tensions in Europe.

Nevertheless one question remained open, one issue which would naturally have to be resolved sooner or later: the question of the German city of Danzig. Danzig is a German city and it wishes to return to Germany. On the other hand, this city does have contractual obligations to Poland, although they were forced on it by the dictators of peace at Versailles. Now that the League of Nations—previously a great contributor to the unrest—has commissioned a most tactful High Commissioner to represent its interest, the question of Danzig was destined to land on the conference table once more, at the very latest when this ominous institution itself began to fade. I regard the peaceful resolution of this question as a further contribution to a final

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relaxation of tensions in Europe. This relaxation of tensions is assuredly not promoted by the smear campaign of warmongers gone crazy, but rather by the elimination of real sources of danger.

Since the problem of Danzig was discussed several times a few months ago, I forwarded to the Polish Government a concrete proposal. I will now inform you, my Deputies, of the contents of this proposal. You shall be able to judge for yourselves whether this proposal was not the most gigantic concession imaginable in the service of peace in Europe.

As emphasized previously, I have always recognized the necessity for this state to have access to the sea and I have taken account of this. I am not a democratic statesman; I am a realistic National Socialist. However, I held it equally necessary to point out to the government in Warsaw that, just as it desires access to the sea, Germany desires access to its province in the East. These are indeed difficult problems. Germany bears no responsibility for this. The ones to be blamed are the magicians of Versailles who either out of malice or thoughtlessness set up a hundred powder kegs all around Europe, each equipped with a fuse virtually impossible to extinguish.

You cannot solve these problems in the same old way. I hold it to be absolutely essential that new ways be found. After all, Poland's access to the sea and Germany's access to the Corridor are devoid of any military significance. Their significance is of a psychological and economic nature exclusively. To assign military significance to this traffic route would mean succumbing to military naivety to an exceptional degree.

I have therefore made the following proposal to the Polish Government:

1. Danzig is reintegrated into the framework of the German Reich as a Free State.

2. A highway and a railroad line through the Corridor are placed at Germany's disposal. They are accorded the same extraterritorial status which the Corridor now enjoys.

In return, Germany is willing:

1. to recognize all economic rights of Poland in Danzig;

2. to secure for Poland a free port of whatever size it desires in Danzig and to guarantee free access thereto;

3. to regard and accept the borders between Germany and Poland as final;

4. to enter into a twenty-five-year pact of non-aggression with Poland, a pact which would far outlive me, and

5. to secure the independence of the Slovak state through cooperation between Germany, Poland, and Hungary, which is tantamount to a virtual renunciation of a one-sided German hegemony in this area.

The Polish Government has refused this proposal of mine and has declared itself willing:

1. to discuss only the question of a potential replacement of the present League of Nations' High Commissioner and

2. to consider facilitating transit traffic through the Corridor.

I sincerely regret the attitude of the Polish government which I fail to understand. This alone is not decisive, however. What is far worse is that Poland, like Czechoslovakia a year ago, now apparently believes it has to call

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up troops, under pressure from a mendacious worldwide campaign of rabble-rousing. And this though Germany has conscripted not one man nor in any way intended to take action against Poland.

As stated earlier, all this is regrettable in itself. It will be up to posterity to decide whether it was wise to refuse the unique proposal which I had made. As stated earlier, this was an attempt to resolve a question which moves the entire German nation emotionally through a truly unique compromise, and to solve it to the advantage of both countries.

It is my conviction that Poland was not interested in the give and take of this solution—it sought exclusively to take. That Danzig could never again become Polish was completely beyond doubt. And the plans for an attack, falsely attributed to Germany by the international press, now led to the so-called offers of guarantee. It also led to a commitment by the Polish government to a pact of mutual assistance which would force Poland to oppose Germany militarily, in the event of war between Germany and another power—in which England would appear on the scene again. This commitment violates the agreement which, at the time, I had entered into with Marshal Pilsudski. For this agreement bore solely on commitments then already in existence, i.e. on Poland's commitment to France, of which we knew. To expand on these commitments retroactively is inconsistent with the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact. Under the circumstances, I would never have concluded this Pact. For what is the meaning of a non-aggression pact, when one party leaves open countless exceptions to the rules!

Either collective security exists, that is collective insecurity and the perpetual threat of imminent war, or there are clear agreements, which, in principle, prevent the contracting parties from resorting to arms. Thus, I regard the agreement reached at the time with Marshal Pilsudski as unilaterally abrogated by Poland and therefore null and void. I have informed the Polish Government of this. I can only repeat once again that this does not signify a fundamental change in principle in my views of the stated problems.

Should the Polish Government consider it worth its while to arrive at a renewed contractual regulation of its relations to Germany, then I shall naturally welcome this with the one provision that such a regulation must contain clear commitments, which must be mutually binding for both parties. Germany is gladly willing to undertake such obligations and to fulfill them as well.

Hitler's words clearly indicated that, at this point, he had not given up hope that his abrogation of the treaty would frighten the Poles into submission to his demands. Hence, he did not hesitate to use Spain as an example of the gruesome fate international Bolshevism held in store for countries such as Great Britain and Poland, should they fail to comply with his requests and speedily place themselves under his protection.

There have been repeated claims that Hitler, in order not to alienate a potential ally, refrained from verbally assaulting the Soviet Union and

Bolshevism in his April 28 speech. This is incorrect. Given the focus of his talk on Great Britain, Poland, and the United States, it is true that Bolshevism and the Soviet Union did not play a major role, as they had in earlier speeches. Nonetheless, token references to the dangers of world Bolshevism, intended to frighten the bourgeois Western Powers, were contained in the Reichstag address also. For example, Hitler spoke of the threat of "Bolshevism's annihilation of European culture;" of the dangers posed by "Bolshevist murderers and incendiaries;" not to mention "the Bolshevist subhumans in Spain." He maintained that "Soviet Russia has been involved in ten wars and military actions since 1918 carried out by use of force and bloodshed." On the topic of Spain, Hitler argued the following:

When, for these reasons, new unrest took hold in Europe during the past weeks, the propaganda at the service of the international warmongers was responsible, a form of propaganda perpetrated by numerous organs in the democratic states. They seek to continuously exacerbate nervous tensions by fabricating persistent rumors; to make Europe ripe for a catastrophe; that catastrophe which they hope will achieve what has not been achieved by other means up to now: Bolshevism's annihilation of European culture! The rabble-rousers' hatred is easily understood if one considers that in the meantime one of the crisis spots in Europe has been pacified, thanks to the heroism of one man and his people, and—if I may say so—thanks to the Italian and German volunteers. During these last weeks, Germany has joined in the experience and celebration of Spain's victory with heartfelt sympathy.

When, at the time, I resolved to heed the request by General Franco for assistance by National Socialist Germany in his struggle against the international backing of the Bolshevist murderers and incendiaries (*Mordbrenner*), the same international warmongers misinterpreted and abused this step by Germany in the most shameful manner.

At the time, Germany was accused of seeking to gain a foothold in Spain; of coveting Spain's colonies; there was the base lie of 20,000 men landing in Morocco. In brief, everything possible was done to discredit the idealism of our men and the Italian reinforcements and to provide new fodder for yet another campaign of warmongering.

In a few weeks, the victorious hero of Nationalist Spain will make his solemn entry into the capital of his country. The Spanish people will jubilantly cheer him as their savior from unspeakable horrors, as their liberator from gangs of murderers and incendiaries, on whose conscience are the execution and the murder of an estimated 775,000 human beings. Entire populations of villages and cities were literally slaughtered under the silent, gracious patronage of humanitarian world apostles from the democracies of Western Europe and North America. In this victory parade, side by side with their Italian comrades, the volunteers of our German Legion will march in the rows of valiant Spanish soldiers.

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Shortly afterwards we hope to welcome them here in the homeland. The German Volk will then find out how, in this instance also, its valiant sons fought in the defense of the freedom of a most noble people and how, in the end, they contributed to the rescue of European civilization. For the victory of Bolshevik subhumanity (*Untermenschentum*) in Spain could only too easily have swept over Europe. Hence, the hatred felt by those who regret that Europe did not go up in flames. Now, they are all the more determined to make use of every opportunity to sow the seeds of distrust between nations and to whip up the enthusiasm for war, desirable from their point of view, somewhere else.

What these international warmongers have come up with, in the last weeks, in terms of mendacious statements and falsified reports, which were circulated in numerous newspapers, was partially as childish as it was spiteful. And its first success—insofar as it did not serve the domestic politics of the democratic governments exclusively—has been the spread of a type of nervous hysteria which in the land of unlimited possibilities has presently already led to people thinking that a landing by Martians is possible.⁴⁷² However, the actual purpose is to prepare public opinion to accept the English policy of encirclement as necessary and, if worse comes to worse, to support this policy.

By contrast, the German Volk can calmly go about its daily work. The best army in Germany's history defends its frontiers; a gigantic Luftwaffe protects its air space; its coasts have been made unassailable by any enemy power. In the West the mightiest bulwark of all time has been erected.

What is decisive, however, is the unity of the Volkskörper, the trust all Germans place in their Wehrmacht, and—I believe I can say this—the trust that all place in their leadership.

Hitler now turned to discuss his remaining friends, the Italians and the Japanese.

No less is the trust our leadership and our Volk place in our friends. At their fore stands the one state, which in its fateful solidarity is closest to us in all respects. And in this year also, Fascist Italy has shown the greatest possible understanding for Germany's justified interests. No one should be surprised that, for our part, we reciprocate these sentiments for Italy's vital necessities.

The alliance which binds the two peoples can never come apart! Any attempt to rock it is ludicrous in our eyes. In any event, a few days ago, one great democratic newspaper published an article which illustrates and elucidates this well. It maintained that one could no longer count on playing Italy and Germany against each other in order to destroy them separately later.

Thus, the German Reich Government has profound understanding for the lawfulness of the action of our Italian friend against Albania and has welcomed it. Yes, Fascism has not only the right but the duty to attend to the preservation of order in this Lebensraum, which nature and history have assigned to Italy. Only such an order can lay the foundations for the bloom

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of human civilization and its maintenance. And the rest of the world can no more doubt, in the end, the civilizing works of Fascism than it can doubt those of National Socialism. In both cases, undeniable facts speak against untenable fibs and unproven assertions by the other side.

It is the long-term goal of the German State leadership to bring about increasingly close relations between Germany, Italy, and Japan. We regard the continued existence and the preservation of the freedom and independence of these three world powers as a strong element in the maintenance of a truly human civilization, a practical civilization, as well as a more just world order for the future.

After this digression of one-and-a-half hours, he finally addressed the issue of the day: Roosevelt's telegram. Hitler again resorted to a sarcastic and presumptuous tone of discourse which, so he believed, had proven its value in the long years of domestic struggle. As mentioned before, Hitler greatly overestimated the importance of propaganda. The speech before the Reichstag on April 28, 1939 also proved that he failed to realize that even the most skilled arguments and oratorical masterpieces were ineffective against an external adversary of superior strength.

Hitler sought to discredit Wilson and Roosevelt as "magicians"⁴⁷³ whose sole ambition was to rhetorically deceive and seduce both German and international public opinion. He failed to realize that the military and political might of the United States or, as the case might be, the Anglo-Saxon world, gave powerful and decisive weight to the statements of American presidents. Hitler obviously had resolved to outdo Roosevelt by presenting him with an even longer and more detailed reply. Whereas Wilson had restricted himself to his famous "Fourteen Points," Hitler listed twenty-one points of contention with the Anglo-Saxon Powers.

Many of Hitler's remonstrances were well-founded. After all, the history of the United States is full of military interventions in Latin American states. In his attempt, however, to use these historic facts as precedents for his own actions in Eastern Europe, his arguments lost their persuasiveness. Neither Austria nor Germany had the military potential to successfully carry out such military ventures without suffering retribution; and neither of the Anglo-Saxon Powers was willing to allow the territorial expansion of Germany or Austria by force, irrespective of what particular direction this might lead them. The Anglo-Saxon Powers and their allies stood prepared to thwart any such aggression by force of arms. And in this context, Hitler's feeble attempts at belatedly rationalizing his actions were simply grotesque.

His reply to Roosevelt's telegram comprised twenty-one separate answers to each of the posed questions:

As I mentioned in my introduction earlier, the world was informed of the contents of a certain telegram on April 15, 1939. I did eventually see this telegram myself, though not until somewhat later. It is difficult to classify this document. It simply fits into no known category. Therefore, my Deputies of the German Reichstag, standing before you and hence before the German Volk, I will try to analyze the contents of this curious document. From there I will go on to give the necessary answers in your name and in the name of the German Volk.

1. Mr. Roosevelt is of the opinion that I also ought to be aware that "throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars." This was of definite concern to the United States, for whom he spoke, "as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire western hemisphere."

Answer:

To this I would like to say that the fear of war has undoubtedly haunted mankind throughout the ages, and rightly so. For example, from the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1919 until 1938, fourteen wars alone have been waged,⁴⁷⁴ in none of which Germany has been involved. However, the same cannot be said of states of the "western hemisphere" in the name of which Mr. President Roosevelt claims to be speaking. To these wars one must add, within the same time period, twenty-six armed interventions and sanctions imposed by brute force, and resulting in bloodshed. And in this, too, Germany has not been involved in the least.

The United States has participated in six cases of armed intervention since the year 1918 alone⁴⁷⁵ Soviet Russia has been involved in ten wars and military actions since 1918 carried out by use of force and bloodshed.⁴⁷⁶ And in this, too, Germany has not been involved. Nor has it caused any of these incidents. Hence, in my eyes, it would be a mistake to attribute the fear of war of the peoples of Europe and beyond right now to precisely those wars for which Germany could be held responsible.

Instead, the cause for this fear lies in an unbridled smear campaign in the press, as mendacious as it is vile, in the dissemination of nasty pamphlets to foreign heads of state, in the artificial scaremongering which has even made interventions from other planets⁴⁷⁷ seem possible, which, in turn, has led to dreadful scenes of utter confusion.

I believe that the minute the responsible governments exercise the necessary restraint themselves and demonstrate greater love of truth, and impose this criterion on their journalistic organs, with regard to international relations and the internal affairs of other people, then assuredly this constant fear of war will vanish immediately. And then, the peace we all desire will be forthcoming.

2. Mr. Roosevelt professes the belief in his telegram that "any major war even if it were to be confined to other continents must bear heavily on everyone during its continuance and also for generations to come."

Answer:

No one knows this better than the German Volk. The Peace Treaty of Versailles placed so heavy a burden of debt on its shoulders that even a hundred years would not have sufficed to pay it off. And all this despite the fact that it was American specialists in constitutional law, historians, and professors of history who proved conclusively that Germany could not be blamed for the outbreak of the World War any more than any other nation.

Still, I do not believe that every struggle has catastrophic consequences for the environment, i.e. the entire earth, especially if it is not artificially drawn into this conflict by a system of impenetrable alliances. Since the world has experienced wars not only in the past centuries, but also frequently in more recent decades, as I have demonstrated in my earlier comments, then this would mean that, if Mr. Roosevelt's views are correct, the sum of the consequences of these wars would bear heavily on mankind for millions of years to come.

3. Mr. Roosevelt declared that already "on a previous occasion"⁷⁸ he had addressed me "on behalf of the settlement of political, economic and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to war."

Answer:

This is precisely the same opinion I have always advocated myself. Also as history proves, I have settled the necessary political, economic and social problems without resort to arms, without resort to war. Regrettably, a peaceful settlement has been rendered more difficult through the agitation by politicians, statesmen, and news reporters, who were neither concerned nor in the least affected by the issues in question.

4. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin."

Answer:

As far as Germany is concerned, I am not aware of such threats to other nations. Nevertheless, each day in democratic newspapers I read lies concerning such threats. Daily I read about the mobilization of German troops, troop-landings, and blackmail. And all this is supposedly directed against states with whom we live in peace and enjoy the most friendly of relations.

5. Mr. Roosevelt further believes that, in the event of war, "all the world, victor nations, vanquished nations, and neutral nations will suffer."

Answer:

This is a conviction I have expressed as a politician during twenty years in which, regrettably, the responsible statesmen in America could not bring themselves to see their involvement in the World War and the nature of its outcome in this light.

6. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends."

Answer:

If this is indeed clear, then it must be truly criminal negligence—not to employ a less refined expression—by the leaders of these peoples if they

prove incapable of curtailing, in view of the powers at their command, the excesses of their warmongering press⁴⁷⁹ and thereby of sparing the world the disaster which threatens in the case of armed confrontation.

Moreover, I fail to comprehend how the responsible leaders, instead of cultivating diplomatic relations internationally, can recall their ambassadors⁴⁸⁰ or take like actions to disrupt and render these relations more difficult without a good reason.

7. Mr. Roosevelt declares that "three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated."⁴⁸¹

My answer:

I do not understand which three nations in Europe are being referred to. Should reference be made to the provinces which have been reintegrated in the German Reich, then I must bring a mistaken notion of history to the attention of the President. These nations have by no means lost their independence within Europe. Rather it was in the year 1918 when, through the breach of a solemn promise, they were torn from the communities they belonged to. The stamp of nationhood was imprinted on their brow, one they neither desired nor deserved. Independence was likewise forced on those who gained no independence thereby, but who instead were forced into a dependency on foreign powers whom they despised.

As far as the nation in Africa is concerned which supposedly lost its freedom too, this is evidently yet another case of mistaken identity. Not one nation in Africa has lost its freedom. Rather nearly all former inhabitants of this continent have been subjected by brute force to the sovereignty of other peoples. This is how they lost their freedom. The people of Morocco, the Berbers, the Arabs, the Negroes, and so on, all of them became the victims of foreign powers, whose swords assuredly did not bear the inscription "*Made in Germany*," but instead "*Made by Democracies*."⁴⁸²

8. Mr. Roosevelt then says that reports, which he trusts are not true, "insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations."

Answer:

I hold such rumors, devoid of any basis in reality, to constitute a violation of peace and quiet in the world. I perceive therein an attempt to frighten small nations or at least an attempt to make them increasingly nervous. Should Mr. Roosevelt have concrete cases in mind, then I would request that he name the states threatened by an attack and the potential aggressors in question. Then it will be possible to eliminate from the face of this earth these outrageous and general accusations by short declarations.

9. Mr. Roosevelt declares that "plainly the world is moving toward the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found." He then goes on to declare that I have repeatedly asserted that I and the German people "have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war."

My answer:

Once again, I would like to state that, first of all, I have not waged war. And, second, I have lent expression to my distaste for war as well as for

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warmongering for many years.⁴⁸³ Third, I do not know why I should wage war.⁴⁸⁴ I would be greatly indebted to Mr. Roosevelt if he could explain all this to me.

10. Mr. Roosevelt finally espouses the opinion that “nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has the right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the case of self-evident home defense.”

My answer:

I hold this to be the attitude embraced by all reasonable men. Only it seems to me that in almost every war both parties tend to claim to be acting in self-evident home defense. Regrettably, the world does not possess any institution, including the person of Roosevelt, able to resolve this problem unequivocally. For example, there is no doubt that America did not enter into the World War in “self-evident home defense.” A commission appointed by Mr. Roosevelt himself to investigate the reasons for America’s entry into the World War arrived at the conclusion that this entry had been essentially for the realization of capitalist interests.⁴⁸⁵ Now, all there is left for us to do is to hope that the United States itself shall adhere to this noble principle in the future and will not make war on another people “save in the case of self-evident home defense.”

11. Mr. Roosevelt further argues that he speaks “not through selfishness or fear of weakness, but with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind.”

My answer:

Had America raised its voice of strength and friendship for mankind in a more timely fashion and, above all, had this voice carried with it practical applications, then at least the treaty could have been prevented, which has become the source of the greatest disruption for mankind of all time, namely, the Diktat of Versailles.

12. Mr. Roosevelt further declares that it is clear to him that “all international problems can be solved at the Council table.”

My answer:

Theoretically that may well be possible, since one ought to think that, in many instances, reason would prevail in pointing to the justness of the demands on the one side, and to the necessity of making concessions on the other. For example, according to all laws of reason, logic, and the principles of an all-encompassing higher justice, even according to the commandments of a divine will, all nations should equally partake in the goods of this world. It is not right that one nation should occupy so large a Lebensraum that not even fifteen inhabitants live on one square kilometer, while other nations are forced to sustain themselves with 140, 150, or even 200 inhabitants per square kilometer. And, under no circumstances, could these fortunate nations then seek to restrict the existing Lebensraum of those already impoverished, for example, by taking away their colonies. Thus, I would be happy if these problems could actually be solved at the Council table.

My skepticism is based on the fact that it was America which lent expression itself to pronounced reservations regarding the effectiveness of

conferences. Without doubt, the greatest council of all time was the League of Nations. It was the will of an American President which created this body. All nations of this world together were to solve the problems of mankind at its Council table. However, the first state to withdraw from this endeavor was the United States. And this was the case because President Wilson himself already had voiced severe misgivings about the possibility of solving truly decisive international problems at the Council table.

With all due respect to your opinion, Mr. Roosevelt, it is contradicted by the actual fact that, in the nearly twenty years of the League of Nations' existence—this greatest permanent conference of the world—it did not manage to solve even one truly decisive international problem.⁴⁸⁶

Throughout many years, the Treaty of Versailles had selectively excluded Germany from active participation in this great international conference in breach of the promise given by President Wilson. In spite of the bitter experiences of the past, the German Government nevertheless did not believe it ought to follow the example of the United States, but instead chose to occupy its seat at the Council table at a later date. It was not until after many years of futile participation that I finally resolved to imitate the Americans and withdraw from this greatest conference in the world. And since then I have set out to solve the problems concerning my Volk, which regrettably were not solved at the Council table of the League of Nations like all the others, and, without exception, I solved them without resort to war!⁴⁸⁷

Beyond this, many problems were brought to the attention of international conferences in the past years, as emphasized earlier, without a solution of any kind being found. And, Mr. Roosevelt, if your view is correct that all problems can be solved at the Council table, then all nations, including the United States, must have been led either by blind men or criminals in the last seven or eight thousand years. For all of them, including some of the greatest statesmen in the United States, have made history not by sitting at Council tables, but by making use of the strength of their nation. America did not gain its independence at the Council table any more than the conflict between its northern and southern states was solved at the Council table. I am leaving out of consideration here that the same holds true for the countless wars in the course of the gradual conquest of the North American continent. I mention all this only to observe that, with all due respect to the assuredly noble nature of your views, Mr. President Roosevelt, they are not in the least confirmed by either the history of your own country or the history of the rest of the world.

13. Mr. Roosevelt further asserts that "it is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussion for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs they will not lay aside their arms."

My answer:

Truly, Mr. Roosevelt, you cannot believe that when the fate of the nation is at stake any government or leadership of the nation will lay down its weapons before a conference, or surrender them, simply in the blind hope that the intelligence or insight, or whatever, of the other participants in the conference will make the right decision in the end? Mr. Roosevelt, there has

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been only one people and one government in all of world history, which has adhered to the formula which you recommend: that of Germany. Acting on solemn promises by the American President Wilson and the endorsement of these assurances by the Allies, the German nation once trustingly laid down its arms. It approached the Council table unarmed. However, once it had laid down its arms, the German nation no longer was even invited to the conference. Instead, contrary to all assurances, the greatest breach of promise of all time was affected.

And then, one fine day, instead of resolving the greatest confusion of all time at the Council table, the most inhuman Diktat in the world brought about even more terrible confusion. The representatives of the German Volk, having laid down their arms and trusting in the solemn assurances of the American President, appeared unarmed to accept the Diktat of Versailles. They were received not as the representatives of a nation, which throughout four years had withstood the whole world with immense heroism in the struggle for its freedom and independence, but instead they were treated in a more degrading manner than could have been the case with Sioux Chiefs.

The German delegates were called names by the mob, stoned. They were dragged to the greatest Council table in the world no differently than prisoners to the tribunal of a victor. There, at gunpoint, they were forced to accept the most shameful subjugation and pillage of all time.⁴⁸⁸

Let me assure you, Mr. Roosevelt, that it is my own unshakeable will to see to it that not only now, but in the future as well, no German ever again shall step into a conference room defenseless. Instead, every representative of Germany shall perceive behind him the united force of the German nation, today and in the future, so help me God.

14. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "in Conference rooms as in Courts it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both."

Answer:

The representatives of Germany shall never again enter into a conference, which means nothing other than a tribunal for them. For who is to judge them? In a conference, there is neither a prosecution nor a judge, there are only two warring parties. And if the common sense of the concerned parties cannot find a solution or a settlement, then surely they will not submit themselves to a judge's verdict by disinterested foreign powers. Besides, it was the United States which declined to step before the League of Nations for fear of becoming the unwitting victim of a court which could decide against the interest of individual parties, provided the necessary majority vote was attained.

Nevertheless, I would be greatly indebted to Mr. Roosevelt if he could explain to me how precisely this new world court is to be set up. Who are to be the judges? How shall they be selected? To whom shall they be held responsible? And, above all, for what shall they be held responsible?

15. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of Governments."

Answer:

In countless public addresses, Mr. Roosevelt, I have already done this. And in today's session, I have made such a frank statement before the forum of the Reichstag—insofar as this is possible within the span of two hours. I must decline, however, to make such statements to anyone but the Volk for whose existence and life I am responsible. It alone has the right to demand this of me. I render account of German policy objectives in so public a manner that the whole world can hear it anyway. Alas, these clarifications are of no consequence to the rest of the world, as long as there is a press capable of distorting any explanation, making it suspect, placing it in question, and concealing it beneath new mendacious answers.

16. Mr. Roosevelt believes that “the United States, as one of the nations of the western hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe.” Hence, he trusts that I should “be willing to make such a statement of policy to him as the head of a nation far removed from Europe.”

Answer:

Apparently Mr. Roosevelt seriously believes it would render a service to the cause of peace worldwide if the nations of the world would make such frank statements relating to the present policy of governments.

Why does President Roosevelt burden the German head of state so selectively with the request to make such a statement without inviting other governments to make similar statements relating to their policies?

I do not believe that it is permissible at all to demand that such statements be made to a foreign head of state. Instead, in accordance with President Wilson's demand at the time for the abolition of secret negotiations, such statements should best be made to the entire world. I have not only consistently been willing to do this, but—as mentioned before—I have also done so all too frequently. Regrettably, it was precisely the most important statements on the goals and intentions of the German policies which the press in many of the so-called democratic states either withheld from the people or misrepresented.

When, however, the American President Roosevelt feels called on to address such a request to Germany or Italy of all states simply because America is far removed from Europe, then, since the distance between Europe and America is equally great, our side also would have the right to question the President of the United States on the foreign policy goals pursued by America and the intentions on which this policy is based, for instance with regard to the states of Central and South America. In this case, Mr. Roosevelt surely would refer us to the Monroe Doctrine and decline this request as an uncalled-for interference in the internal affairs of the American continent. Now, we Germans advocate exactly the same doctrine with regard to Europe and, in any event, we insist on it insofar as this regards the domain and the interests of the Greater German Reich.

Besides this, of course, I would never allow myself to direct a similar request to the President of the United States of America, as I assume he would justly regard this as tactless.

17. Mr. Roosevelt now declares further that he is willing to “communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your Government may take.”

Answer:

By what means does Mr. Roosevelt determine which nations are apprehensive as to the course of the policy of Germany and which do not? Or is Mr. Roosevelt in a position, in spite of the surely enormously heavy load of work on his shoulders in his own country, to assess by himself the inner state and frame of mind of foreign peoples and their governments?

18. Mr. Roosevelt demands finally that we “give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran.”⁴⁸⁹

Answer:

As a first step, I took pains to inquire from the cited states whether, first, they are apprehensive. Second, I asked whether Mr. Roosevelt’s inquiry on their behalf was initiated by them or whether, at least, he had secured their consent in this. The responses obtained were negative throughout, in part even marked by outright indignation. However, a number of the cited states could not forward their response to us because, like Syria for example, they are presently not in the possession of their liberty since their territories are occupied by the military forces of the democratic states which have robbed them of all their rights.⁴⁹⁰

Third, far beyond this, the states bordering Germany have all received many binding assurances, and many more binding proposals, than Mr. Roosevelt requested of me in his peculiar telegram.

Fourth, should there be a question as to the value of these general and specific statements which I have repeatedly made, then would not any additional statement of this nature, even if it was made to Mr. Roosevelt, be equally worthless? After all, what is decisive is not Mr. Roosevelt’s opinion of such statements, but the value assigned to them by the states in question.

Fifth, I must yet point out to Mr. Roosevelt a few additional mistaken notions of history. For instance, he mentions Ireland and requests a statement that Germany not attack Ireland. Now, I have just read a speech by the Irish Prime Minister De Valera, in which, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Roosevelt, he oddly enough does not accuse Germany of oppressing Ireland and instead reproaches England for the persistent aggressions under which his state suffers. And, despite Roosevelt’s great insight into the needs and concerns of other states, it can safely be assumed that the Irish Prime Minister knows better what threatens his country than the President of the United States does.

Equally, it appears to have slipped Mr. Roosevelt’s mind that Palestine is not being occupied by German troops but by English ones. By brute force, England is curtailing Palestinian freedom and is robbing the Palestinians of their independence to the advantage of Jewish intruders for whose cause the

Palestinians suffer the most cruel of abuses. The Arabs living in this territory assuredly have not complained to Roosevelt of German aggressions. Rather, in persistent appeals to international public opinion, the Arabs lament the barbaric methods by means of which England seeks to overpower a people who loves its freedom and fights only to defend it.

This may well be one of the problems Mr. Roosevelt would like to see solved at the Council table. It ought to be decided by an impartial judge and not by brute force, military means, mass executions, the torching of villages, the dynamiting of houses, and so on. One thing is certain: in this case, England cannot claim to be repulsing the threat of an Arab attack on England. Instead England is the invader, whom no one bade come, and who seeks to establish his reign by force in a country not belonging to him. A number of similarly mistaken historic notions of Mr. Roosevelt are to be noted; not to mention how difficult it would be for Germany to conduct military operations in states and countries some of which are at a distance of two to five thousand and more kilometers.

I wish to state the following in concluding: the German Government nonetheless is willing to extend an assurance of the type desired by Roosevelt to each and every one of the cited states, if this state desires it and approaches Germany with such a reasoned request. However, there is one prerequisite: this assurance must be absolutely mutual in nature. This will be superfluous in a number of the cases of the states cited by Roosevelt since we are either already allied to them or, at the very least, enjoy close and friendly relations with them. And, beyond the duration of such an arrangement, Germany will gladly enter into agreements with each of these states, agreements of the nature desired by this state.

I would not like to let this opportunity pass without extending assurances to the President of the United States on the issues of territories of most immediate concern to him, namely, the United States itself and the other states of the American continent. And herewith, I solemnly declare that any and all allegations of a planned German attack on American territories or an intervention to be pure swindle and crude fabrication. Not to mention that, assessed from a military standpoint, such allegations can only be the products of an overwrought imagination.

19. Mr. Roosevelt declares in this context that he considers of crucial importance the discussions that are to "relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament."

Answer:

Mr. Roosevelt apparently is not aware that this problem already was completely resolved as far as Germany was concerned. In the years 1919 to 1923, the German Reich completely disarmed, as explicitly confirmed by the allied commissions, to the extent enumerated below.

And here once again followed Hitler's favorite listing in which he detailed the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, yes millions of guns, machineguns, trench mortars, and the like which Germany had

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been forced either to surrender or to destroy after its defeat in the First World War. Hitler had used exactly the same listing on many previous occasions.⁴⁹¹ He could not well let this opportunity pass him by without demonstrating his intricate knowledge of military affairs.

The following were destroyed in the Army:

59,000 fieldguns and barrels; 130,000 machineguns; 31,000 trench mortars and barrels; 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 243,000 MG barrels; 28,000 gun carriages; 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 38,750,000 shells; 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 60,400,000 live fuses; 491,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition; 335,000 tons of shell cases; 23,515 tons of cartridge cases; 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 79,000 ammunition gauges; 212,000 telephone sets; 1,072 flamethrowers, and so on.

Further destroyed were: sledges, mobile workshops, flak vehicles, limbers, steel helmets, gas masks, machines of the former war industry, and rifle barrels.

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

At sea, the following were destroyed:

26 heavy battleships; 4 coastal armored ships; 4 battlecruisers; 19 light cruisers, 21 training ships and special ships; 83 torpedo boats; 315 U-boats.

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

In accordance with the solemn assurances, which were given to Germany and corroborated in the Peace Treaty of Versailles, this was to constitute merely an advance payment to enable the outside world for its part to disarm without danger. As in all the other cases, having placed its faith in the promises given, Germany was to be shamefully deceived once more. As you are aware, all subsequent attempts sadly failed, in spite of years of negotiation at the council table, to bring about a disarmament of other states, which would have constituted no less than an element of intelligence and justice and the fulfillment of commitments made. I myself have contributed to these discussions a series of practical suggestions, Mr. Roosevelt, and I sought to initiate debate to at least reduce armament as much as possible. I suggested a 200,000-man ceiling for standing armies, an abolition of all offensive weapons, bombers, gas warfare, and so on.

20. Mr. Roosevelt finally asserts his preparedness to "take part in discussions looking towards the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life."

Answer:

I believe, Mr. Roosevelt, that it is not a matter of discussing these problems in theory. Instead, it is imperative to take concrete actions to remove actual

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impediments to the international economy. The greatest impediments lie within the respective states themselves. Previous experiences have shown that all great international conferences on trade failed simply because the respective states were not capable of keeping their domestic economies in order. Currency manipulation carried this insecurity to the international capital market. Above all, this resulted in constant fluctuations in the exchange rates.

It likewise places an intolerable burden on world trade relations if, because of ideological considerations, it is possible for certain countries to unleash a campaign of wild boycotts of other peoples and their goods, and thereby to practically exclude them from participation in the market. I believe you would render us a great service, Mr. Roosevelt, if you took advantage of your strong influence in the United States to eliminate these particular impediments to the conduct of truly free trade.

However, it did not prove possible to see through these proposals in the rest of the world, in spite of Germany's complete disarmament.⁴⁹² I therefore advanced proposals for a ceiling of 300,000 men to be put up for discussion. The result was equally negative. I thereupon continued to place a series of other detailed disarmament proposals before the forum of the German Reichstag and hence before the international public.

Nobody even thought of joining in these discussions. Instead, the rest of the world began to reinforce its existing vast armament. It was not until the year 1934 that I ordered a thorough German rearmament, after the last of my comprehensive proposals on behalf of Germany, regarding the 300,000-man army, had been rejected for good.

Still, Mr. Roosevelt, I should not like to stand in the way of the discussion of armament questions in which you intend to participate. I would only like to request that, before you turn to me and Germany, you contact the others. I can still see in my mind's eye a sum of practical experiences and I am inclined to remain skeptical until reality sets me right. For I simply cannot believe that, if the leaders of other peoples are not even capable of putting in order production in their own states and of eliminating the campaign of wild boycotts for ideological reasons which so detrimentally affect international economic relations there can be much hope of international accords bearing fruit in the improvement of economic relations. Only in this manner can we secure the right for all to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market.

Besides this, the German Volk has made concrete demands in this context. I would be delighted if you, Mr. President, as one of the successors to the late President Wilson, would speak up for finally redeeming the promise which once led Germany to lay down its arms and to surrender to the so-called victors. I am speaking, in this context, not so much of the countless billions of so-called reparation payments extorted from Germany, as of the return of the areas stolen from Germany. The German Volk has lost three million square kilometers of land both within and beyond Europe. Moreover, unlike the colonies of other nations, the colonial possessions of the German Reich were not acquired by conquest but instead by treaties and purchase. President Wilson solemnly pledged his word that Germany's claims

to its territorial possessions, as well as all others, would undergo just scrutiny. Instead, those nations, which have already secured for themselves the mightiest colonial empires of all time, have been awarded the German possessions. This causes our Volk great concern especially today, and will increasingly in the future as well. It would be a noble deed if President Franklin Roosevelt redeemed the promise made by President Woodrow Wilson. This would constitute a practical contribution to the moral consolidation of the world and the improvement of its economy.

21. Mr. Roosevelt declared in conclusion that "Heads of great Governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war." I, too, would be held "accountable."

Mr. President Roosevelt! Without any difficulty, I do understand that the greatness of your empire and the immense riches of your land allow you to feel responsible for the fate of the entire world and for the fate of all peoples. However, Mr. Roosevelt, my situation is much more modest and limited. You have 135 million inhabitants living on nine-and-a-half million square kilometers. Your land is one of untold riches and vast natural resources. It is fertile enough to sustain half a billion human beings and to provide them with all necessities.

I once took over a state on the brink of ruin thanks to its ready trust in the assurances of the outside world and the feeble leadership of a democratic regime. Unlike America, where not even fifteen persons live on one square kilometer, this state has 140 persons per square kilometer. The fertility of our soil does not equal yours. We lack the numerous natural resources which nature places at the disposal of your people. The billions of German savings, accumulated in the form of gold and currency during the years of peace, were extorted from us and taken away.⁴⁹³ We lost our colonies. In the year 1933, there were seven million unemployed in my country.⁴⁹⁴ Millions worked part-time only, millions of peasants were reduced to misery, commerce was nearly destroyed, trade was ruined; in short: chaos reigned.

I have been able to accomplish only one task in the years since, Mr. President Roosevelt. I could not possibly feel myself responsible for the fate of a world which showed no sympathy for the woeful plight of my own Volk. I saw myself as a man called on by Providence to serve this Volk and to deliver it from its terrible hardships. Within the six-and-a-half years now lying behind us, I lived day and night for the one thought: to awaken the inner forces dormant in this Volk forsaken by the outside world, to increase them to the utmost, and, finally, to use them in the salvation of our community.

I overcame chaos in Germany. I restored order, enormously raised production in all spheres of our national economy, labored to create substitutes for a number of the raw materials we lack, smoothed the way for new inventions, developed traffic, ordered the construction of gigantic roads. I had canals dug, colossal new factories brought to life. In all this, I strove to serve the development of the social community of my Volk, its education, and its culture. I succeeded in bringing those seven million unemployed, whose plight truly went to heart, back into a useful production process. Despite the

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difficulties faced, I managed to preserve his plot of soil for the German farmer, to rescue this for him. I brought about a bloom in German trade and fostered traffic.

To preclude threats from the outside world, I have not only united the German Volk politically, I have rearmed it militarily. Further, I have sought to tear to shreds page upon page of this Treaty, whose 448 articles represent the most dastardly outrage ever committed against a people and man. I have restored those provinces to the Reich which were stolen from it in 1919.⁴⁹⁵ I have led home to the Reich millions of despondent Germans torn from us. I have restored the one-thousand-year old, historic unity of the German Lebensraum. And I have labored to do so, Mr. President, without bloodshed and without bringing either upon my own Volk or other peoples the hardships of war.⁴⁹⁶

I have done this all by myself, Mr. President, although a mere twenty-one years ago, I was but an unknown laborer and soldier of my Volk. And, hence, before history, I can truly claim the right to be counted among those men who do the best that can reasonably and in all fairness be expected of them individually.

Your task is infinitely easier, Mr. President. In 1933, when I became Reich Chancellor, you became the President of the United States. From the start, you thereby placed yourself at the head of the largest and richest state in the world. It is your good fortune to have to nourish barely fifteen human beings per square kilometer in your country. You have virtually never-ending natural resources at your disposal, more than anyone else in the world. The vastness of the terrain and the fertility of the soil are capable of providing each individual American with ten times the foodstuffs possible in Germany. Nature permits you to do this. While the inhabitants of your country number barely a third more than those of Greater Germany, they have fifteen times its Lebensraum at their disposal.

Thus, the vastness of your country allows you to have the time and leisure to attend to problems of a universal nature. You hence conceive of the world as so small a place that you can intervene beneficially and effectively wherever this might be required. In this sense, your concerns and suggestions can be far more sweeping than mine. For my world is the one in which Providence has put me, Mr. President Roosevelt, and for which I am responsible. It is a much smaller one. It contains only my Volk. But I do believe I am thereby in a better position to serve those ends closer to the hearts of all of us: justice, welfare, progress, and peace for the entire community of man!

Hitler had instructed the German Chargés d'Affaires both in London and Warsaw to present to their host country's governments memorandums containing a formal abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 and the 1934 Pact⁴⁹⁷ at the same time as he was giving the speech before the Reichstag. The American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin received a transcript of the Reichstag speech as

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Germany's official response to Roosevelt's message. Hitler assuredly thought he had achieved a great deal in the two-and-a-half hours he spoke before the Reichstag. He had relied both on tirades and sarcasm to give the English and the Poles a salutary shock by shredding the two treaties. Undoubtedly, they would now be reduced to subservience. The American President would be so embarrassed and disgraced by this forceful and cunning response to his ludicrous telegram that he would assuredly never again expose himself in a like manner. Instead, he would keep silent in the future, desist from speaking out against Hitler, and cautiously follow in the footsteps of a Brüning, von Papen, or Wels.

In spite of the great effort Hitler invested in his masterly speech, which represented beyond doubt an impressive rhetorical and mnemonic achievement, its effect abroad was negligible at best. The situation would not have been any different had he not said anything.

What counted in the end were not so much words as deeds, and the Führer's actions spoke against him. Anyone who employed phrases as grandiose as Hitler did, needed real power to back them up. In spite of impressive military displays, Germany's armed forces were obviously inferior to the united might of the Anglo-Saxon powers—not to forget their potential ally, Russia.

5

On April 29, Hitler wired his congratulations to the Japanese Emperor on his birthday.⁴⁹⁹

The next day, a festive session of the Reich Chamber of Labor took place in the Mosaic Hall of the new Chancellery at noon. The meeting prolonged the privileged status of the existing 103 “NS Musterbetriebe,”⁵⁰⁰ and bestowed the same title on 99 additional firms.⁵⁰¹ Once more speaking on the subject of economics, Hitler spoke for the “greatest of efforts in the production of foodstuffs and efficiency in the organization of labor.” In the service of the greater good of the collective, Hitler maintained that, by keeping its own affairs in order, each and every factory and farm, as a primary production cell, could greatly contribute to an increase in the productivity of the whole economy. It was hence the moral obligation of every man involved in the production process to view his work as service to the community, whether he was a simple worker, a foreman, an organizer, or a leader. Hitler then officially declared the “Third Industrial Productivity (*Leistungskraft*) Competitions” to be open.

In the afternoon of April 30, two politicians from the Balkans paid tribute to Hitler. The Hungarian Minister-President Teleki and his Foreign Minister Csáky called on Hitler at the Chancellery for a “lengthy discussion,” as the official Party newspaper put it.⁵⁰² Though Teleki was generally known both in his native country and in Italy as decidedly anti-German, he lavished praise on the German dictator that day. Despite his pronounced disdain for Hungarians in general, Hitler was forced to comport himself in a most congenial manner on this occasion in view of the highly conspicuous absence of other foreign dignitaries at the time. Hence, he even asked this politician from a country he had previously characterized as *Gerümpel* to a gala dinner at the Reich Chancellery that night. Hitler’s customary entourage

welcomed Teleki and the Governor of Rome, Count Colonna, as well as the latter's spouse.

On May 1, the celebration of the "German Volk's National Holiday" afforded Hitler the opportunity to deliver two major speeches. He was painfully aware that the tide of public favor had turned against him after the events in Prague. Despite his speech before the Reichstag with its staged applause and paid claqueurs, the dictator felt the lack of enthusiasm throughout the country. After all, the public was well aware that Hitler's reckless undertakings could spell ruin not only for himself, but for all of Germany. While Hitler indulged in rhetoric, his words revealed that friendly relations with Britain and Poland were no longer possible. The German public's appraisal of the situation was decidedly more realistic than Hitler's. The man in the street understood perfectly well that, if the German Government insisted on continuing its present course, Germany was headed for collision with numerous other states, primarily with the Western Powers and Poland, and would soon find itself entangled in another world war, unless a miracle occurred at the last minute.

It was hardly surprising that the prevailing opinion in the country greatly infuriated Hitler. Who did these ungrateful people think they were? Had not the incredible, indeed miraculous, story of his life demonstrated over and over again that he was always right? Had not his domestic struggle lent credence to the fact that he always reigned supreme in the end, and that it would be no different in his dealings abroad? Why did they no longer trust him?

Hitler finally arrived at the conclusion that it would be best for all concerned if he simply ignored the opinions of this "stubborn German Volk,"⁵⁰³ and these "old troublemakers,"⁵⁰⁴ who constantly indulged in undue criticism of their leaders. And it was thus that Hitler came to address Germany's youth which he hoped to prevent from following along the same path as their fathers before them. Hitler was still confident that, provided there was sufficient and systematic indoctrination, he could instill in the next generation the unshakeable belief in their Führer, to whom they owed blind obedience. Germany's youth was to be "steeled" against any foreign interference. If he were ever forced to call on them, so he contemplated, Germany's youth would stand united behind him and head off to do battle unto death in the name of their beloved Führer.

In the morning hours of May 1, Hitler addressed a crowd of 100,000 Hitler Youth members gathered at the Olympia Stadium in Berlin. In

the course of the past six years, this annual address to Germany's youth had become a national institution. Launched in 1933, in the days when Hindenburg was still alive, this forum served Hitler exceedingly well in his effort to rally Germany's youth around their leader. Without fail, every year, he found it necessary to remind them of how fortunate they were to live in "such great times as these." Since the tide was to turn against National Socialist Germany soon, this speech held on May 1, 1939 constituted the last in the series of Hitler's addresses to the youth. In the future, he would restrict his efforts to inspire proper young Germans to a selective grouping of officer cadets joining the Wehrmacht.

On May 1, 1939, Hitler would no longer speak of the "great times" in store for the German youth. At this point, appropriately, he placed many a demand on the unsuspecting young people whom he forewarned to stand ready "should the hour come." He challenged them to "steel" themselves to become "tough men" who "know from the start that nothing in life is free." Hitler's May 1 address had the following content:⁵⁰⁵

My German Youth!

In 1933 I was able to greet you for the first time, standing alongside the venerable Field Marshal von Hindenburg, in the Berlin Lustgarten. In greeting you then, my youth of Berlin, I greeted the youth of the Germany of that time! Six years have passed by since; years in which our Volk underwent a tremendous, historic transformation. The Germany then trod upon, an impotent empire, has become today's Greater Germany. The nation then not worthy of respect has become a Volk greatly respected. A people without arms has become one of the best armed nations in the world. What was then at the mercy of its surroundings has become something secure today, secure thanks to our own force and to the friends we possess today.

That you, the youth of today, should belong to a respected and strong Volk is exclusively the result of the work we wrought domestically. When, twenty years ago, the National Socialist Party was created, it already raised a new banner for the new Germany to be born. After barely fifteen years of struggle this symbol has become the official flag of the German state. Ever since, the resurrection of Germany has been inexorably tied to this new symbol.

You German boys and girls will one day be called on to assume the protection of this flag. But you shall be able to carry it forth and protect it successfully with dignity only if you stand by this flag with the same unity as does the National Socialist Movement and, through it, the German Volk of today. And for you, it will be decidedly easier. We had to laboriously fight for this flag. It is yours already today; you have been raised beneath this flag. In your youth already, you bear this symbol on your sleeves, you march on its orders. I count on you! You shall never forget what has made Germany

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great. In your youth, you have witnessed the most profound and rare of historic transformations. Many of you cannot quite grasp this yet. Those among you who are more mature have experienced, and reflected on, its glowing essence. I know that your young hearts already beat strongly and sensitively when, in this year, I strode forth to fashion the Greater German Reich and to reassert its rights derived from a history one thousand years old.

You shall be called on, in light of the greatness of this time, to fulfill tasks as they confront you, and assuredly they will confront you above all. The German nation will one day in the future represent a power that has its point of departure in youth. We shall never be more than what we are essentially ourselves. And we shall never be more than what our youth is today.

And I expect of you that you shall become straightforward, tough German men and reliable German women. You shall be men who know from the start that nothing in life is free. You must struggle for everything in this world; you can keep only that for which you are willing, at all times, to stand up in defense, if necessary. The deceptive slogans of an outside world shall not penetrate your hearts; it tries to poison an upright Volk and thereby to introduce divisions and to destroy it. In your youth, you must already attend to both body and spirit. You must be healthy. You must resist everything which might conceivably poison your body. For the future will assess the individual German in accordance with the works of his spirit and the strength of his health. Above all, we want to see in you a youth which crosses its arms and forms a solid, impenetrable communion.

Germany has witnessed many years of profound inner divisions and impotence. These days are over now thanks to the inner resurrection of our Volk. It shall find its ultimate embodiment in you. And thus it is of supreme importance that you should be aware of this in your youth.

We are surrounded by peoples who do not desire this realization on our part. They wish to deny our Volk the plain necessities of life, the right to life so accepted as a matter of course for so many other peoples. We and the other young peoples must laboriously seek to regain this right to life which our forefathers so thoughtlessly forfeited.

Perhaps one day we shall even need to stand up for it. And in this, too, I count on you primarily, my German boys!

Above all, I expect that, should the hour come in which an outside world believes it can reach out for the freedom of Germany, a cry of millions will shatter the air. It will be a cry in unison and hence so forceful that all will have to acknowledge that the times of inner divisions in Germany are finally over. The hard school of National Socialist education will then have successfully fashioned the German Volk.

And thereby we shall obey the commandment of the Almighty who has imparted to us a common blood and a common language. In the acknowledgment of this commandment within the past six years, Germany has once more become great and respected, albeit perhaps not very popular [!]. Alas, we Germans shall have to be content with the love of our Volksgenossen.

And I am content to know that you, my Volksgenossen and my German youth, above all, stand behind me. I know I am in your hearts just as you know my heart belongs to you without reservation! And should the outside world

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threaten us and thunder against us—they shall not succeed for the very reason they have never yet succeeded: German unity! That it will prevail in the future, for this you are the guarantors just as the great men of today guarantee this at present. Just as you have every right to look back to those who created Germany with great pride, so we wish to rest at ease looking to you in the future! The days in which our youth had to be ashamed of the generation then alive are over. You can truly be proud of the men who lead Germany today. And I am equally proud that you constitute the German youth of today.

In this spirit, we come together on this day which once marked Germany's inner divisions. Today it is the day of the unity of the German Volksgemeinschaft. It is the day of our faithful avowal; our avowal of our Volk and of our thousand-year-old Greater German Reich.

To our Volk and to our Greater Germany: *Sieg Heil!*

A mass rally of “creative laborers” took place in the Berlin Lustgarten at noon.⁵⁰⁶ The occasion was most opportune for Hitler to speak yet again. For once, he could uninhibitedly vent his frustration with the mood in Germany in general and its intellectuals in particular, the “educated class” whose members always knew everything much better than he did. By this time, the German workers formed the only social class still receptive to National Socialist propaganda. They were easily impressed by displays of military might and promises of a better future. Before this forum, Hitler felt he could make several caustic references to those who possessed their own “purse” and hence feared for their possessions in light of his reckless, haphazard politics, and to those who valued education sufficiently to clearly perceive just how dangerous the foreign policy pursued by Hitler was to the life and limb of the ordinary German.

Unwittingly, Hitler began what was to be his last May Day speech with sentimental reflections on springtime. The subsequent “party narrative” climaxed in the following exclamation: “Who can still doubt that we face the most epochal transformation of all time?!” Then he continued to speak on the subject of Lebensraum once again.

The foundations for the life of a people are not to be found in doctrines and theories, but in its Lebensraum, in what the earth affords it for sustenance. Hence, Lebensraum cannot be regarded separately from the *Lebenshöhe* (peak of life) of a Volk. And this Lebensraum is not enough by itself—and this also is a truly revolutionary realization—it must be complemented by a Volk's diligence, its energy, and its ability to manage to get the most out of its Lebensraum. And a still greater insight: this necessitates a Volksgemeinschaft, even if blood alone is insufficient for this.

My Volksgenossen! No leader can command greater strength than that accorded to him by his followers. What am I without you?! If you refuse me

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your unanimous solidarity, what am I to do?! I am only one man. I can possess the greatest good-will possible—my will is of no greater worth to you than your will is worth to me!

He then spoke of his critics with great acerbity. Summarily, he mocked German intellectuals whom he had never yet won for his cause because they were not easily deceived by his rhetoric and most likely were aware of Germany's limited potential and the true distribution of power internationally. His contempt for science and education was reminiscent of the character Faust, influenced by Mephisto.⁵⁰⁷ Hitler's acidulous remarks revealed his great insecurity, his fundamentally pessimistic nature, and the characteristic inferiority complex. He philosophized:

How petty are all other vain differences in our lives in view of this! How easily is the individual deceived by vanity and notions of his own supreme importance, my Volksgenossen! One man thinks a great deal of himself for one reason, another for another reason. One prides himself on being ten centimeters taller than the other, yet another is happy simply because he considers himself better looking than the first. Yet another man thinks he looks even better because his ancestors already looked better—nothing is proven, of course. Yet another man holds himself to have an advantage because momentarily his purse is fuller than that of another. I say "momentarily" for experience has shown this phenomenon to mostly be short-lived.

Another man yet says: "I have graduated from more classes than you have. Do you have degrees like those I have?"—"No."—"Therefore I am worth more than you. My degrees prove this conclusively." So the story goes. So many men have extremely important degrees furnishing the basis for their own personal brand of arrogance.

How ludicrous is all this in view of the common fate we all share and which hangs so compellingly above all our heads! It is void of any significance before the one truth that all of us either unite in our struggle to survive or perish together. This applies just as much to the man with the so-called fatter purse as it does to the man with an older family name and his ancestors, and the man with the allegedly more thorough education. For better or for worse, we all depend on one another.

And to any man who fails to grasp this—I have no idea where he might be hiding out—the attitude of the outside world toward us should serve as ample proof. How do these people behave towards us? What can we expect of them? Are these not once again the very same advocates of a strategy of encirclement, the very same people who knew nothing but hatred in the year 1914? Yes, indeed, it is once more the same clique of warmongers which haunted us back then already. What can we expect of them, my Volksgenossen? I believe it is essential that all Germans throw overboard these ridiculous prejudices insofar as remnants of them exist yet today. It is imperative that we move closer together

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in the conviction that together and united we can face off any danger. United we stand, divided we fall.

Hence we wish to educate our Volk in this spirit. And if one of those stubborn old heads is driving me to despair, then all I need to do is look at his son to regain hope. Even if all hope is lost with some of these old troublemakers (*alte Stänkerer*), the youth has already outgrown them—praise the Lord! This youth represents a new breed of man, the type we hope to introduce to the future.

We are doing everything that can be done in this educational undertaking. True, at times, we do overlook the so-called freedom of the individual in the process. I can easily imagine one man or another saying: “It is beyond me why my son should have to serve with the labor service just now. He was born for something greater than that. Why should he now be running around with a spade in his hand? Would it not be better if he exercised the powers of his intellect instead?” For goodness sake, what is it precisely you understand as “intellect,” my dear friend?! If your boy spends six months in the West wielding his spade for the sake of Germany, it may well be that he is doing Germany a greater service than your “intellect” could in a lifetime. And, above all: he has contributed to the overcoming of the worst form of “intellectual” confusion possible, namely, the inner fractures within a Volk. Of course, we cannot simply say: “Oh, if he does not want to, he need not work.” Do you truly believe that work at a chemical factory in one of the democracies is something so infinitely more delightful? Do not come up to tell me: “Oh, truly, this is the magic of work which smells so enticingly.” Assuredly not! It stinks, my dear gentlemen! But a few hundred thousands of workers simply have to take this on themselves and take it on themselves they do. Therefore, another can assuredly take on himself to pick up the spade. And he will pick up this spade.

And this brings up the problematic topic of liberty. Liberty? Insofar as the interests of the Volksgemeinschaft permit the exercise of liberty by the individual, he shall be granted this liberty. The liberty of the individual ends where it starts to harm the interests of the collective. In this case the liberty of the Volk takes precedence over the liberty of the individual.

By the way, in no other state is intellectual work as highly esteemed as in ours. I believe this is evident already in its leadership. In Germany, we pride ourselves in having men head our state who can well withstand any type of “intellectual” comparison to the representatives of any other state. Above the liberty of the individual, however, there stands the liberty of our Volk. The liberty of the Reich takes precedence over both.

In the concluding statements of this speech, Hitler returned once more to the question of “the securing of German Lebensraum.” In this context, he declared that he was arming Germany “with all [his] might.” Certain “international scribblers,” Jewish “cerebral parasites,” and “warmongers who do not do anything themselves” had already made the mistake of underrating him in 1933. And these same forces were mistaken once again on his account. He declared:

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The commandment of the hour is the securing of German Lebensraum. There is no need for me to stress that we love peace above all. I know that a certain international clique of journalists is spreading lies about us on a daily basis, placing us under suspicion and committing libel against us. This does not surprise me in the least. I know these creatures from back in the old days. They, too, are export articles for which the German nation has no use. In the American Union, a veritable campaign for boycotts against our German exports has been organized. It would have been more intelligent, so I believe, had they imported German goods instead of the most inferior German subjects. Well, at least, we can rejoice in having rid ourselves of these. How the people there will handle them, that is truly their problem. We shall see to it that these subjects do not pose an actual threat to us. I have taken the necessary precautions. I still recall vividly my political "friends" from the days before our rise to power. These fellows always insisted they knew no Fatherland. And, indeed, this is true as they are Jews and have nothing to do with us. These fellows now are reaffirming their attitudes and their pledges of old: they have launched a campaign of hatred against Germany which they pursue with all their might.

And I? I arm with all my might!

I love peace; my work perhaps best attests to this. And in this I differ from these warmongers. What is it I have wrought and what is it these elements are undertaking? There is a great Volk here for which I bear responsibility. I am attempting to make this Volk both great and happy. Enormous projects are being undertaken here: new industries are being born; enormous buildings are undergoing construction. They are to serve the uplifting of the Volk and to bear witness to our culture—not only here in Berlin, but also in a multitude of other German cities. The things we have created in the course of these years! The countless projects we have begun in these years! And so many of them will take ten to twenty years to be completed! Therefore, I have cause aplenty to desire peace. Yet, these warmongers need no peace. They neither advance peace nor do they labor for it.

There is no need for me to name names in this context. They are unknown international scribblers. They are ever so clever! They are truly omniscient. There is only one thing that they failed to foresee, namely, my rise to power. Even in January 1933, they could simply not believe it. They also failed to foresee that I was going to remain in power. Even in February 1934, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to liberate Germany. Even in 1935 and 1936, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to liberate our German Volksgenossen and to return them home. Even in 1937 and 1938, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was determined to liberate and return home the rest of them, too. Even in February of this year, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to eliminate the unemployment afflicting seven million. Even two, three years ago, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to implement the Four-Year Plan in Germany with success. This they simply could not believe either. They foresaw nothing! And they know nothing even today!

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These people have always been parasites. Lately I do not know, but I have the feeling sometimes that they are a kind of cerebral parasite. They know only too well what is happening in my brain, for instance. Whatever I say today, as I stand before you, they knew of it yesterday already. And even if I myself did not know of it yesterday—they did, these most excellent receptacles of wisdom!¹⁵⁰⁸

Actually, these creatures know everything. And, even if facts prove their pronouncements blatant lies, they have the nerve to come up with new pronouncements immediately. This is an old Jewish trick. It keeps the people from having time for reflection. Should people truly reflect on all these various prophecies, compare them to reality, then these scribblers would not get a penny for their false reports. Therefore their tactic and trick is, once one prophecy has been disproved, to come up with three new ones in its stead. And so they keep on lying, according to a type of snowball-tactics, from today until tomorrow, from tomorrow until the next day.

The current version of this is the claim that 20,000 Germans have failed to land in Morocco, although their imminent arrival had been reported earlier. Instead of landing in Morocco, they have landed in Liberia. Considering the initial report's assertion that these landings were supposed to be carried out by the Luftwaffe, it seems as though these planes have been floating about in mid-air ever since and have now unwittingly gone down over Liberia. Should no German be found in all of Liberia eight days hence, they will no doubt maintain: "It was not Liberia, after all, but Madagascar where they were heading." And if this turns out to be wrong also—well, then it must have been another place—I already have enumerated all the locations allegedly threatened by us before the Reichstag.

The warmongers who do not do anything and, in any event, cannot step before the world to say: "I have created this or that!"—they are the men who are attempting to plunge the rest of the world into disaster once again. And you will understand, that I cannot possibly rely on assertions or declarations by people who themselves are paid servants of these warmongers. No, indeed, I rely exclusively on my German Volk—on you!

Better safe than sorry. A declaration by the League of Nations is all very well, but I prefer our freedom to be guaranteed by the far more reliable fortifications protecting Germany in the West. And this, too, is the product of the diligent work wrought by Germans just as the inner attitude of our Volk is the product of the diligence and work of millions of its most active members. There is the German peasant who, loyally and bravely, assures bread for us by plowing his acres diligently and honestly. There is the German worker who, loyally and bravely, goes to work at the factory to assure other consumer goods for us earnestly and honestly. This is the basis of our existence.

As we reflect on the immense work done within these past six years, then I do believe we have a right to appoint a day once a year on which we shall join together to celebrate what we call the German Volksgemeinschaft. For this conveys the meaning of the First of May: a day to celebrate the work of Germans in the cities and in the countryside; a day to celebrate the creative

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man; a day to celebrate our Volksgemeinschaft. My Movement vouches for the proper education of our Volk! The German Wehrmacht vouches for its brave defense!

And, all of you whom I greet at this moment, you millions of Germans in the cities and in the countryside, you who constitute the German Volksgemeinschaft, you are the guarantors that it shall never again fall apart internally!

To our Greater German Reich and to our Volk, in East and West, and in North and South: *Sieg Heil!*

In the afternoon hours of May 1, Hitler attended the customary banquet at the Reich Chamber of Culture at the German Opera House. On this occasion, Goebbels publicly named the recipients of the annual awards in the service of German culture. The award for the best film went to movie director Carl Froehlich for his film *Heimat*. A Sudeten German author by the name of Bruno Brehm received the literary award for a trilogy on the First World War. Thereafter, Hitler hosted delegations from the German Labor Union and the national award winners of the professional competitions. According to the German News Bureau, Hitler's guests "enjoyed the good fortune of being received at the new Chancellery building." In the Mosaic Hall, Hitler personally shook hands with each of his guests whom he subsequently treated to an hour-long address.

The DNB summarized the contents of the speech in the following manner:⁵⁰⁹

All work is work for our Volksgemeinschaft. Everything we own is based on attainment. In the end, a steady and intensive increase in efficiency serves to render our lives more satisfactory and ever the more beautiful.

Following the speech, Hitler asked his guests to the Garden Room for coffee. On May 1, Hitler also established several awards, one of which was called the "Honorary Badge for the Cultivation of the German Volk."⁵¹⁰

I hereby found the Honorary Badge for the Cultivation of the German Volk for accomplishments in the promotion of the Volk's welfare, the Winterhilfswerk, the caring for the sick and injured in times of peace and war, the rescue services, the cultivation of German Volkstum and caring for German Volksgenossen abroad. I shall enumerate details on the artistic design, classifications, and form of the award in the by-laws to be decreed by my person.

Another award established that day bore the title "Medal in Commemoration of the Return of the Memel territory."⁵¹¹

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As a tangible expression of my appreciation and gratitude for services rendered in the reunion of the Memel territory with the German Reich, I hereby establish the Medal in Commemoration of the Return (*Heimkehr*) of the Memel territory to the German Reich. Details are enumerated in the by-laws.

Furthermore, Hitler honored military and civilian personnel who partook in the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia on March 15 with a special medal to be awarded for merits earned there.⁵¹²

In extension of my ordinance on the establishment of the Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938, dated October 18, 1938 (RGBl. I, p. 1527), and the statutes pertaining thereto, I decree the following:

Article I

The Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938 shall be extended for services rendered in the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Article II

Those persons who have received the Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938 for meritorious service in the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich and who have equally earned merits in the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, shall be awarded a clasp to be worn on a band.⁵¹³

Article III

The clasp bears a relief reproduction of the Prague fortress on its face.

Article IV

I charge the Reich Minister of the Interior, in connection with the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, with the implementation of this ordinance.

On May 2, Hitler congratulated Franco in a telegram on the occasion of the Spanish national holiday.⁵¹⁴ The following day Hitler left Berlin and headed for the Obersalzberg. He stopped in Nuremberg to inspect the construction site of the Reich Party Congress. There Albert Speer personally reported to him on the progress of this particular project.⁵¹⁵ Only a few days later, Speer visited the Berghof to discuss plans for the construction of a new opera house in Linz.⁵¹⁶

The time Hitler spent on the Berghof afforded him the opportunity of reflecting on the political and military situation. News from London and Warsaw had been anything but encouraging. The April 28 speech had failed to intimidate his opponents. Instead, speaking before a gathering of the Sejm on May 5, the Polish Foreign Minister had insisted on the previous stance espoused by Poland in both the issues of Danzig and the Polish Corridor.

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Apparently, Hitler's castigations impressed neither the Poles nor the British. Undaunted, Hitler initiated steps in another direction. Should his strategy of intimidation indeed fail, then, so Hitler reasoned, a Russo-German pact, which he had earlier called a "devilish potion," would do the trick. Prospects for an alliance between National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union were most promising. Soviet leaders had long advocated a similar rapprochement with Germany. In the days of the Weimar Republic close ties had developed between the Reichswehr and the Red Army. Command units had participated in exchange programs. The Red Army had trained German officers in the handling of modern weaponry, the possession of which the Versailles Treaty had prohibited to Germany, such as fighter planes, tanks, and heavy artillery; and Russia had clandestinely supplied the Reichswehr with the desired equipment.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, Russia desired to settle accounts to regain possession of the territories lost to Poland as a consequence of the 1920–21 Polish-Russian War. The Soviet Union sought to profit from Germany's efforts to re-establish the boundaries of 1914 in order to reclaim these lands located in Belorussia and the Ukraine. Russia had already made an overture to Germany in the dismissal of Litvinov on May 3. The Jewish origin of the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs had always been a thorn in the side of National Socialist Germany. His replacement by the highly conservative Molotov signaled Russia's favorable disposition to potential German advances.

Despite this most opportune climate in German-Soviet relations, Hitler was hesitant in the matter. Only if all hopes for coming to terms with Great Britain were shattered, would he turn to a possible alliance with Russia as a last resort. Not surprisingly, the progress of the talks in Moscow between May and July⁵¹⁸ was slow even though Hitler himself had initiated them.

In the meanwhile, Hitler was actively searching for alternative approaches to overcoming Britain's lack of interest in his proposals. He firmly believed that the British could be brought to reason by the display of Germany's sheer invincible military might, by the extension of diplomatic feelers and, in particular, by the introduction of a military component to the Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact. Concluding a like intimidating military alliance was fraught with difficulty at this time as Japan sought to keep its distance from Germany after the embarrassment of Hitler's Czechoslovakia venture. While Mussolini was not favorably inclined towards a like revision of the Anti-Comintern Pact

either, he was not in a position to debate the virtue of Hitler's forays to the East. In the course of the past years, he had grown increasingly dependent on Germany as Italy's partner in European affairs. Moreover, he was haunted by the political repercussions of his own military faux pas. The Italian invasion of Albania had isolated Rome internationally. Thus Mussolini found his fate inextricably tied to Germany, and Hitler, all too well aware of this, justly felt confident that he could successfully pressure Italy into a military alliance with the Third Reich.

Hitler had dispatched the Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, to Italy as early as April 30. In the course of his stay, which lasted ten days, Brauchitsch repeatedly consulted with both King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini. On May 4, Göring followed in his footsteps and even put up temporary residence in San Remo. On May 6, Ribbentrop arrived in Milan to confer with Ciano. Following breakfast at the City Hall, the two Foreign Ministers had lengthy discussions on topics, so say the official reports, of "great historic significance." These talks allegedly served to restore "the balance of power in Europe" with the obvious intent of tilting it in the Axis' favor. After two days of discussion, Ribbentrop triumphantly wired Berlin the report of Italy's acquiescence to an extensive political and military agreement. Boldface headlines immediately informed the German public of this.

In his notes,⁵¹⁹ Ciano made a deliberate effort to portray the situation in Rome as though, after a telephone conversation with Berlin, Mussolini himself had proposed the conclusion of the treaty. However, this assertion was apparently intended to soothe Mussolini's wounded ego instead of serving to record a historic truth. In view of the extensive preparations made for the treaty in Berlin and the dispatching of three members of Hitler's immediate entourage to Italy, the evidence in support of this thesis was as meager then as it is today. At the time, it was clear beyond any doubt who initiated the conclusion of this particular military alliance and who sought to profit by it. Once more, Mussolini and Ciano fell prey to Hitler's persuasive powers.

On May 10, shortly after the good news from Milan reached Hitler, he found himself dictating the terms of a trade war which included protectionist measures in defense of Germany's domestic economy. The guidelines therefore complemented the domestic policy provisions of the April 11 directive for "Case White."⁵²⁰

Hitler believed the time had come to renew his psychological assault on the West, in a type of war of attrition, with a tour of the "West

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Wall.” He aimed to intimidate the Western Powers by thus drawing media attention to the supposedly invincible, “mightiest fortress of all time.”⁵²¹ First, Hitler traveled to Aix-la-Chapelle for the inspection of a segment of the West Wall, the line of fortification which, in a speech on October 9, 1938, he had singled out in an intentional affront to the British.⁵²²

Accompanied by Himmler, Dietrich, and Bormann, Hitler reached the site early on May 14. Colonel General Keitel and General von Witzleben, in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Second Army Group, along with Lieutenant General Jacob, the supervisor responsible for the fortifications, welcomed Hitler and his entourage there. Proceeding to the site where “work was either completed or nearing completion,” Hitler scrutinized the progress made in the building process.

On May 15, Hitler examined the strongholds erected in the Eifel region and in the Moselle River Valley. The next day, Hitler inspected construction in progress in the Saar. There Colonel General von Brauchitsch detailed the military aspects of the West Wall, “an impregnable wall of iron and steel,” to the Gauleiters and Reichsleiters assembled. Later in the day, Hitler attended a performance of Karl Millöcker’s operetta *Gräfin Dubarry* in the “Gautheater Saarpfalz” recently built in Saarbrücken. Incidentally, the foundations of the theater building formed part of the West Wall’s substructure along the Saar River.

On May 17, Hitler closely examined the Air Defense Zone West which, so he maintained, “extended in great depth far behind the lines of fortifications and tanks.” Along the Lorraine frontier, the various Gauleiters and Reichsleiters rejoined Hitler once again. With their “expert assistance,” Hitler observed the maneuvers taking place in the area. In the evening, Hitler took advantage of a conference of military and Party leaders to stress once more the importance of close cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the NSDAP. This communiqué summarized the contents of Hitler’s address:⁵²³

In the course of the evening, the Führer took the floor to outline the importance of the mighty bulwark (*Schutzwall*) to the west. In recapitulating the political situation, he lent expression to his confidence in the invincible nature of the Reich. Faith in the Reich suffused his person as well as the entire Volk, the Party, and the Wehrmacht.

On May 18, Hitler continued his tour of the West Wall by inspecting the segment linking Karlsruhe and Kehl. The next day, he speedily

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toured the remaining sections in the area between Kehl and the Swiss border. In the afternoon, a gathering of generals took place at the train station at Efringen (Baden). Hitler spoke before them, expressing once more his profound gratitude to General von Witzleben and the General Building Inspector, Todt. The DNB published the following summary of Hitler's speech in appreciation of the work accomplished:⁵²⁴

The Führer underlined once more how profoundly impressed he had been with the exemplary comportment and spirit of each member of the border guards and each West Wall worker. This had reassured him a hundred percent in his existing belief in the present invincibility of the German West Wall.

On May 19, having spent six days inspecting and touring the West Wall, Hitler issued the following order of the day to the Wehrmacht from Efringen. In this context, Hitler's characterizing of the border in the West as "Western Front" was truly remarkable:⁵²⁵

Soldiers and Workers of the Western Front!

My tour of inspection of the West Wall has convinced me of its impregnability. The entire German Volk joins me to thank all those who have erected, through their unconditional all-out effort, the foundations for Germany's security in concrete and steel within a remarkably short time. In addition to the soldiers, construction workers, and the men of the Labor Service, I owe gratitude to the civilian population in the border region for proving the exemplary sense of solidarity of the National Socialist through its willingness to sacrifice.

On the same day, Hitler sent Franco a congratulatory telegram marking the Spanish Generalissimo's victorious entry into the city of Madrid:⁵²⁶

On this day, as your battle-tested troops celebrate the victory of Nationalist Spain over the forces of blind destruction in a parade, my thoughts and those of the German Volk turn to your person and equally to all contingents of your proud army in heartfelt solidarity. May a long period of peaceful recovery be bestowed on the Spanish people under your powerful leadership.

Hitler left Efringen by special train and headed for the Munsterlager training area in the Lüneburg Heath region where members of the SS Standarte *Deutschland* were conducting maneuvers. This final highlight of Hitler's inspection tour emphasized the enormous importance Hitler attached to the Waffen SS in view of the pending armed conflict.

On May 20, SS Obergruppenführer Heissmeyer and SS Brigadeführer Hausser, a former Reichswehr General, greeted Hitler at the Munster

station. Heissmeyer was in charge of the local SS headquarters while Hausser served as Inspector of the SS Verfügungstruppe. Surrounded by his hosts, Hitler reviewed the troop maneuvers in which live ammunition was used. The evening culminated in a military field parade which filed by Hitler,⁵²⁷ who returned to Berlin in the late evening hours. Here Ribbentrop signed an economic agreement with Lithuania before the day was through.

Sunday May 21 marked the celebration of Mother's Day in Germany. The political and military tensions overshadowed the carefully planned festivities, including the first presentation of the Mother's Honorary Cross Medal which Hitler himself had established.⁵²⁸

At 11:00 in the morning, Ciano reached Berlin intending to add the final touches to the German-Italian Pact.⁵²⁹ In the afternoon hours at the new Chancellery, Hitler received Ciano for a lengthy discussion of the situation.⁵³⁰ The Führer was most cordial on this occasion and even feigned enthusiasm when Ciano stated Italy's intent to turn Albania into "a stronghold which will inexorably dominate the Balkans."

On May 22, Ciano and Ribbentrop placed their signatures beneath the German-Italian "Pact of Friendship and Alliance" in the presence of Hitler. Great attention was paid to protocol on this day. Upon Ciano's arrival at the Chancellery at 11:00 a.m., Meissner and Ribbentrop first welcomed him. Then they led him to the Marble Gallery where Germany's leading military men awaited him. From there, all those assembled proceeded to a large reception hall where both the German and the Italian delegation lined up along the walls. Hitler then made his entrance and the party gathered around a large table. Seated between Ribbentrop and Ciano, the Führer attentively observed the signing of the treaty reproduced below:⁵³¹

Pact of Friendship and Alliance
between Germany and Italy

The German Reich Chancellor and His Majesty, the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia, deem that the time has come to strengthen the close relationship of friendship and homogeneity, existing between National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy, by a solemn Pact.

Now that a safe bridge for mutual aid and assistance has been established by the common frontier between Germany and Italy fixed for all time, both Governments reaffirm the policy, the principles and objectives of which have already been agreed upon by them, and which has proved successful, both for promoting the interests of the two countries and also for safeguarding peace in Europe.

Firmly united by the inner affinity between their ideologies and the

comprehensive solidarity of their interests, the German and Italian nations are resolved in future also to act side by side and with united forces to secure their Lebensraum and to maintain peace.

Following this path, marked out for them by history, Germany and Italy intend, in the midst of a world of unrest and disintegration, to serve the task of safeguarding the foundations of European civilization.

In order to lay down these principles in a pact there have been appointed plenipotentiaries:

by the German Reich Chancellor:
the Reich Foreign Minister,
Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop;
by His Majesty the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia:
the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Count Galeazzo Ciano di Cortellazzo;

who having exchanged their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed on the following terms.

Article I

The High Contracting Parties will remain in continuous contact with each other in order to reach an understanding on all questions affecting their common interests or the general European situation.

Article II

Should the common interests of the High Contracting Parties be endangered by international events of any kind whatsoever, they will immediately enter into consultations on the measures to be taken for the protection of these interests.

Should the security or other vital interests of one of the High Contracting Parties be threatened from without, the other High Contracting Party will afford the threatened Party full political and diplomatic support in order to remove this threat.

Article III

If, contrary to the wishes and hopes of the High Contracting Parties, it should happen that one of them became involved in warlike complications with another Power or Powers, the other High Contracting Party would immediately come to its assistance as an ally and support it with all its military forces on land, at sea and in the air.

Article IV

In order to ensure in specific cases the speedy execution of the obligations of alliance undertaken under Article III, the Governments of the two High Contracting Parties will further intensify their collaboration in the military field, and in the field of war economy.

In the same way the two Governments will remain in continuous consultation also on other measures necessary for the practical execution of the provisions of this Pact.

For the purposes indicated in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, the two Governments will set up commissions which will be under the direction of the two Foreign Ministers.

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Article V

The High Contracting Parties undertake even now that, in the event of war waged jointly, they will conclude an armistice and peace only in full agreement with each other.

Article VI

The two High Contracting Parties are aware of the significance that attaches to their common relations with Powers friendly to them. They are resolved to maintain these relations in the future also and together to shape them in accordance with the common interests which form the bonds between them and these Powers.

Article VII

This Pact shall enter into force immediately upon signature. The two High Contracting Parties are agreed in laying down that its first term of validity shall be for ten years. In good time before the expiry of this period, they will reach agreement on the extension of the validity of the Pact.

In witness whereof the Plenipotentiaries have signed this Pact and affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate in the German and Italian languages, both texts being equally authoritative.

Berlin, May 22, 1939, in the XVIIth year of the Fascist Era

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Galeazzo Ciano

After the treaty was ratified, Ribbentrop officially reported to Hitler that the pact had indeed been signed. Thereafter, Hitler presented Ciano with the newly established Golden Grand Cross of the German Eagle.⁵³² Following the carefully orchestrated exit of the Führer, Ribbentrop and Ciano made the obligatory official statements to the journalists. Once the press conference was over, Hitler received the two Foreign Ministers in his study for further talks. At this time, Hitler also ordered the telegrams below to be sent to Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini respectively:⁵³³

Your Majesty!

Our foreign ministers have just set their signatures, as plenipotentiaries, beneath the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance. In this historic hour, I wish to express to Your Majesty my profound satisfaction at seeing both our peoples united in unshakeable friendship and community of fate.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

In this historic hour which witnesses the jubilation of the entire German Volk at the signature of the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance, I feel compelled to express to Your Excellency my great joy at seeing the inseparable bonds existing between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany embodied in a formal, solemn treaty. Now the world can see that

the hopes placed in a weakening of the Rome-Berlin Axis were all in vain. As a block consisting of 150 million people, Germany and Italy stand side by side today, and shall continue to stand side by side in the future, in the defense of the holy heritage of civilization and in the securing of a peace founded in justice.

Adolf Hitler

After the official ceremonies, Ciano held a lunch reception at the Italian Embassy which Hitler himself attended.⁵³⁴ Later in the day, the Führer appeared sporting a white tunic [!] at an evening-dinner in honor of the Italian Foreign Minister which Ribbentrop had arranged at his residence in Berlin-Dahlem. A sash woven with gold threads worn by Hitler on other official occasions had already heralded the dawn of this more refined life-style in the Third Reich.⁵³⁵

On May 23, Ciano departed Berlin at 11:00 a.m., accompanied to the train station by Meissner who conveyed Hitler's regards to the Italian Foreign Minister. The German print media celebrated the so-called "Pact of Steel" as the "mightiest alliance in world history."⁵³⁶ The media accorded great attention to the treaty, and much *tamtam*, to use Hitler's expression,⁵³⁷ followed in its wake. The treaty, naturally, represented a renewed attempt to intimidate the Western Powers. Today it is not difficult to understand why this military alliance failed of its purpose. London interpreted the Pact of Steel as a thinly-veiled admission of insecurity by Hitler. Not surprisingly, England was to assess the "Three-Power Pact" of September 1940,⁵³⁸ which allied Germany, Italy, and Japan, in a similar manner. Hitler concluded both agreements from the need somehow or other to get around the unyielding English, who did not want to give in to his proposals.

The "Pact of Steel" did not impress the German public favorably. After all, the "unshakeable friendship" with Italy had always been loudly proclaimed and praised in the National Socialist media. And, in the course of his visit to Berlin in September 1937, the Duce himself had reaffirmed his country's determination to march side by side "to the end" with Germany.⁵³⁹ And Hitler had repeatedly pledged himself to "go through thick and thin" with his Italian colleague.⁵⁴⁰ Given all these grandiose proclamations, so "the man in the street" reasoned, why should the partners in this "unbreakable Axis"—which obliged them to assist one another in any event—feel the necessity of entering into yet another alliance?

There was no perceptible reason why another formal avowal of the commitment of Germany to Italy should have become necessary all of

a sudden—unless, of course, rifts in the relationship made the conclusion of this Pact necessary. Recollections of Italy's behavior in 1914 and 1915 caused many Germans to doubt its loyalty in any event. It was highly questionable, if push came to shove, whether Mussolini and the Italians would sacrifice themselves for the greater good of Hitler and his Third Reich.

Furthermore, Germany's military men knew all too well that should this German-Italian Pact have been intended as a balance to the military alliance of the Western Powers, this merely rendered the undertaking all the more questionable. Italy more likely constituted a weak point militarily in the Axis alliance. Given its long stretches of coastlines, it was indeed more vulnerable to attack than Germany itself. Hitler was greatly irked by the Armed Forces' misgivings on account of the Pact of Steel. Hence, he resolved to take up the issue at once and to dispel the military's fears in an address lasting several hours.

At midday on that May 23, Hitler attended the state funeral of the late Graf von der Schulenburg,⁵⁴¹ a retired Cavalry General and SS Obergruppenführer. The funeral service was held in the Potsdam Lustgarten where all Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht were in attendance, alongside various commanders of the Waffen SS; numerous Reichswehr generals; as well as a number of Reichsleiters and Gauleiters. Brauchitsch gave the commemorative address and Hitler placed a huge wreath on the coffin of the deceased, carried by twelve junior officers.

This state affair had induced the appropriate mood in Hitler to reprimand the top brass of the Wehrmacht, along with their military adjutants, for their lack of confidence in his policies. How could they dare question his ability to bring about an understanding with Great Britain and how could they be so skeptical regarding the freshly concluded "Pact of Steel"? Outraged by the impertinence of his subordinates, Hitler summarily ordered the officers to his study in the new Reich Chancellery in the afternoon. Had not the late Graf von der Schulenburg "blindly" subjected his ambitions to the cause of the National Socialist Movement in his days as Chief of Staff of the Army Group *Deutscher Kronprinz*; had not the Heir to the Throne himself officially avowed his allegiance to Hitler in a public declaration in 1932;⁵⁴² and had not countless renowned generals of the Empire unconditionally subjected themselves to Hitler's will, amongst them General Litzmann ("the Lion of Brzeziny"), and General von Epp ("the Deliverer of Munich"). Even Field Marshal von Hindenburg finally

came to sign whatever he, Hitler, placed before him and did whatever he demanded of him. Equally pleasant were Hitler's recollections of Field Marshal von Mackensen who had turned his back on his beloved *Stahlhelm* solely because he, Hitler, so desired.⁵⁴³ The great warlord Ludendorff also had come to admit towards the end of his life that he, Hitler, indeed embodied the salvation of the German Fatherland. And now, these generals serving with the Wehrmacht he had just created possessed the impudence to doubt the wisdom of his policies, to regard with skepticism the Pact of Steel, and to question his ability to arrive at a settlement with England?!

He would teach these puny doubters a lesson. In the beginning of this lecture, which lasted several hours, Hitler set out to portray himself as the omniscient and omnipotent man of the hour, as a statesman of unequalled abilities. Indeed, to judge from his assertions, he was the only man who knew of every problem worldwide; the only man who could handle a difficult situation properly and resolve it as though it were mere child's play. Men led by such a "Führer" ought not trouble themselves with worries about the country's future or with recollections of the tragic course of events in the last World War. For he, Hitler, had no doubt: had he led Germany in 1914, there would not have been a disastrous defeat on the scale of that of 1918. The German military would not even have suffered partial defeats. He would have simply deployed "two more battleships and two more cruisers" and the victory would have been his. Even the battle for the Skaggerak could have been won had the assault been launched "in the morning." Had the German Navy proceeded in this manner, then "the British fleet would have been defeated and England forced to her knees. It would have meant the end of the World War."

Questions of the past were followed by a discussion of the current problems and Germany's prospects for the future. In swiftly addressing these unspoken questions of the military, doubts plaguing many ordinary German citizens as well, Hitler discussed the central issues of the day: the reliability of the pacts with Italy and Japan, the question of Danzig and Poland, the future stance of Great Britain and of Russia, and the alternatives facing the German military. To end debate as to whether there would be a war or not, and to convey to his audience that all discussion represented a waste of time in his opinion, Hitler declared that it was his goal "to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity." Laconically, he stated, "we cannot expect another Czechia. There will be war."

May 23, 1939

He stressed the supreme importance of absolute secrecy surrounding Germany's military designs: "Secrecy is the decisive prerequisite for success. Our objects must be kept absolutely secret from both Italy and Japan." Hitler then dealt a slap in the face to the generals by declaring: "These studies [of the enemy's weak points] must not be left to the General Staff. Secrecy would then no longer be assured." Hitler's May 23 speech has survived in the form of a protocol drawn up by his Wehrmacht adjutant, then Lieutenant Colonel Schmudt, who took notes on the "general sense" of his superior's comments. Undoubtedly, the "party narrative" recapitulating the days before and after Hitler's rise to power, was far more lengthy and detailed than appears from Schmudt's minutes. The remaining passages must also have spanned several hours. Schmudt's protocol has the following wording:⁵⁴⁴

TOP SECRET

To be handled by officer only.

Place: The Führer's study, New Reich Chancellery.

Adjutant on Duty: Lt. Col. (General Staff) Schmudt.

Present: The Führer, Field Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, Colonel General Keitel, Colonel General Milch, General (of Artillery) Halder, General Bodenschatz, Rear Admiral Schniewind, Colonel (attached to the General Staff) Jeschonnek, Colonel (General Staff) Warlimont, Lieutenant Colonel (General Staff) Schmudt, Captain Engel (Army), Lieutenant Commander Albrecht, Captain von Below (Army).

Subject: Briefing on the Situation and Political Objectives

The Führer gave as the purpose of the conference:

- (1) Review of the situation.
- (2) To set the Armed Forces the tasks arising from the situation.
- (3) Definition of the conclusions to be drawn from these tasks.
- (4) Ensuring that secrecy is maintained on all decisions and measures resulting from these conclusions. Secrecy is the prerequisite for success.

The gist of the Führer's statements is as follows.

Our present position must be viewed under two aspects.

(a) Actual development from 1933-1939.

(b) Germany's never-changing situation.

From 1933-1939 progress in all spheres. Our military situation is improved enormously.

Our situation vis-à-vis the surrounding world has remained the same.

Germany was outside the circle of the Great Powers. A balance of power had been established without Germany's participation. This balance is being disturbed by Germany claiming her vital rights and her reappearance in the circle of Great Powers. All claims are regarded as "breaking in". The English are more afraid of economic dangers than of ordinary threats of force.

The ideological problems have been solved by the mass of 80,000,000 people. The economic problems must also be solved. To create the economic conditions necessary for this is a task no German can disregard. The solution of the problems demands courage. The principle must not prevail that one can accommodate oneself to the circumstances and thus shirk the solution of the problems. The circumstances must rather be adapted to suit the demands. This is not possible without "breaking in" to other countries or attacking other people's possessions.

Living space proportionate to the greatness of the State is fundamental to every Power. One can do without it for a time but sooner or later the problems will have to be solved by hook or by crook. The alternatives are rise or decline. In fifteen or twenty years' time the solution will be forced upon us. No German statesman can shirk the problem for longer. At present we are in a state of national ebullience as are two other states: Italy and Japan.

The years behind us have been put to good use. All measures were consistently directed towards the goal. After six years the present position is as follows:

The national political unification of the Germans has been achieved bar minor exceptions. Further successes can no longer be won without bloodshed.

The delineation of frontiers is of military importance. The Pole is not a fresh enemy. Poland will always be on the side of our adversaries. In spite of treaties of friendship Poland has always been bent on exploiting every opportunity against us.

It is not Danzig that is at stake. For us it is a matter of expanding our living space in the East and making food supplies secure and also solving the problem of the Baltic States. Food supplies can only be obtained from thinly populated areas. Over and above fertility, the thorough German cultivation will tremendously increase the produce.

No other openings can be seen in Europe.

Colonies: A warning against gifts of colonial possessions. This is no solution of the food problem. Blockade!

If fate forces us into a showdown with the West it is good to possess a largish area in the East. In wartime we shall be even less able to rely on record harvests than in peace time. The populations of non-German territories do not render military service and are available for labor service.

The problem "Poland" cannot be dissociated from the showdown with the West. Poland's internal solidarity against Bolshevism is doubtful. Therefore Poland is also a doubtful barrier against Russia.

Success in war in the West with a rapid decision is questionable and so is Poland's attitude. The Polish régime will not stand up to Russian pressure. Poland sees danger in a German victory over the West and will try to deprive us of victory. There is therefore no question of sparing Poland and we are left with the decision: to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity.

We cannot expect a repetition of Czechia. There will be war. Our task is to isolate Poland. Success in isolating her will be decisive. Therefore the Führer must reserve to himself the final order to strike. It must not come to a simultaneous showdown with the West (France and England).

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If it is not definitely certain that a German-Polish conflict will not lead to war with the West, then the fight must be primarily against England and France. Thesis: Conflict with Poland—beginning with an attack on Poland—will only be successful if the West keeps out of the ring.

If that is not possible, it is better to fall upon the West and finish off Poland at the same time. Isolating Poland is a matter of skillful politics.

Japan is a difficult proposition. Though at first she was rather reluctant to collaborate with us for various reasons, nevertheless it is in Japan's own interest to proceed early against Russia.

Economic relations with Russia are only possible if and when political relations have improved. In press comments a cautious trend is becoming apparent. It is not ruled out that Russia might disinterest herself in the destruction of Poland. If Russia continues to agitate against us, relations with Japan may become closer.

An alliance with France-England-Russia against Germany-Italy-Japan would lead me to attack England and France with a few devastating blows.

The Führer doubts whether a peaceful settlement with England is possible. It is necessary to be prepared for a showdown. England sees in our development the establishment of hegemony which would weaken England. Therefore England is our enemy and the showdown with England is a matter of life and death.

What will this conflict be like? England cannot finish off Germany with a few powerful blows and force us down. It is of decisive importance for England to carry the war as near as possible to the Ruhr. French blood will not be spared (West Wall!). The duration of our existence is dependent on possession of the Ruhr.

The Dutch and Belgian air bases must be militarily occupied. Declarations of neutrality can be ignored. If France and England want a war between Germany and Poland to lead to a showdown then they will support Holland and Belgium in their neutrality and have fortifications built in order eventually to force them to join company with them. Belgium and Holland will yield to this pressure albeit under protest. Therefore, if England wants to intervene in the Polish war, we must make a lightning attack on Holland. We must aim at establishing a new line of defense on Dutch territory as far as the Zuyder Zee. The war with England and France will be a war of life and death.

The idea of getting out cheaply is dangerous; there is no such possibility. We must then burn our boats and it will no longer be a question of right or wrong but of to be or not to be for 80,000,000 people.

Question: Short or long war? Everybody's Armed Forces and/or Government must strive for a short war. But the Government must, however, also prepare for a war of from ten to fifteen years' duration.

History shows that wars were always expected to be short. In 1914 it was still believed that long wars could not be financed. Even today this idea buzzes in a lot of heads. However, every State will hold out as long as it can unless it is immediately seriously weakened (for instance the Ruhr). England is similarly vulnerable. England knows that to lose the war means the end of her world power.

England is the motive force driving against Germany. Her strength lies in the following:

(1) The Briton himself is proud, brave, tough, dogged and a gifted organizer. He knows how to exploit every new development. He has the love of adventure and the courage of the Nordic race. The increase in quantity involves a lowering of quality. The German average standard is higher.

(2) England is a World Power in herself. Constant for three hundred years. Increased by alliances. This power is to be regarded as embracing the whole world not only physically but also psychologically.

Add to this immeasurable wealth and the solvency that goes with it.

(3) Geopolitical security and protection by a strong sea power and valiant air force. England's weaknesses.

If in the last war we had had two more battleships and two more cruisers and had begun the battle of Jutland in the morning, the British fleet would have been defeated and England forced to her knees. It would have meant the end of the World War. In former times it was not sufficient to defeat the Fleet. To conquer England she had to be invaded. England could feed herself. Today she no longer can.

The moment England is cut off from her supplies she is forced to capitulate. Imports of food and fuel oil are dependent on naval protection.

Luftwaffe attacks on England herself will not force her to capitulate in a day. But if the Fleet is annihilated instant capitulation results. There is no doubt that a surprise attack might lead to a quick decision. But it is, however, criminal for a government to rely on the element of surprise.

Experience has shown that surprise can fail because of:

- (1) Betrayal of secrets to individuals outside the competent military circles.
- (2) Some common occurrence that wrecks the whole action.
- (3) Human shortcomings.
- (4) Weather conditions.

The date for striking must be fixed well in advance. Over and above this one cannot endure tension long. It must be taken into account that weather conditions may render surprise attacks by the Fleet and Luftwaffe impossible.

Planning must be based on the most unfavorable conditions.

(1) The aim must be to deal the enemy at the start a smashing blow or the smashing blow. Here right or wrong, or treaties, play no part.

This is only possible if we do not "slide" into a war with England on account of Poland.

(2) Preparations must be made for a long war as well as for a surprise attack and every possible intervention by England on the Continent must be smashed.

The Army must occupy the positions important for the Fleet and the Luftwaffe. If we succeed in occupying and securing Holland and Belgium, as well as beating France, the basis for a successful war against England has been created.

The Luftwaffe can then closely blockade England from western France and the Fleet undertake the wider blockade with submarines.

Results:

England cannot fight on the Continent. The daily attacks by the Luftwaffe and the Fleet sever all vital arteries. Time will decide against England.

Germany does not bleed to death on land.

The necessity of such conduct of the war is proved by the World War and military operations since. The World War compels us to draw the following conclusions for the conduct of war.

(1) Had the Fleet been stronger at the beginning of the World War or had the Army been switched to the Channel Ports the war would have had quite a different outcome.

(2) A country cannot be forced down by the Air Arm. All objectives cannot be attacked simultaneously and a few minutes' interval brings into action anti-aircraft devices.

(3) It is important to use all means ruthlessly.

(4) Once the Army in cooperation with the Luftwaffe and the Fleet has taken the most important positions, industrial production will cease to flow into the bottomless Danaid cask of the Army's battles but will be available for the benefit of the Luftwaffe and the Fleet.

Therefore the Army must be able to capture these positions. The attack must be prepared according to plan.

Study of this is the most important task.

The aim will always be to force England to her knees.

The effect of any weapon will decide a battle only as long as the enemy does not possess it.

This goes for gas, submarines and the Luftwaffe.

This applies to the Luftwaffe as long as, for instance, the English Fleet has no defense against it but that would no longer be so in 1940 and 1941. Against Poland, for instance, tanks will be effective as the Polish Army lacks defense against them.

Where the effect can no longer be regarded as decisive it must be replaced by surprise and masterly handling.

This is the program of attack. The program demands

(1) The correct assessment of weapons and their effects, e.g.

(a) battleships or aircraft carriers: which is the more effective both in single cases and considered as a whole? The aircraft carrier is the better protection to a convoy.

(b) Is air attack on a factory more important than that on a battleship? Where are the bottlenecks in manufacturing?

(2) Rapid mobility of the Army. It must move straight from its barracks to overrun neighboring countries.

(3) Study of the enemy's vulnerable points. These studies must not be left to the General Staff. Secrecy would then no longer be assured.

The Führer has therefore decided to order the setting-up of a small planning staff in the OKW, composed of the representatives of the three branches of the Armed Forces and calling in, whenever necessary, the three Commanders in Chief or their Chiefs of Staff. The staff will have to keep the Führer currently informed and report to him.

This planning staff will undertake the planning preparations for the operations to the utmost degree and the resultant technical and organizational preparations. The object of any of the schemes drawn up is the concern of no one outside the staff.

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However much our enemies may increase their armaments they must, at some time or other, come to the end of their resources and our armaments will be the greater.

French age groups yield only 120,000 recruits!

We shall not be forced into a war but we will not be able to avoid one.

Secrecy is the decisive prerequisite for success. Our objects must be kept secret from both Italy and Japan. As for Italy, we shall continue to abide by the Maginot Line break-through, which is to be studied.

The Führer thinks this break-through possible.

On studying the problem as a whole, coordination (grouping together) of the branches of the Armed Forces is important.

The object.

(1) Study of the problem as a whole,

(2) Study of how to set about it,

(3) Study of the resources needed,

(4) Study of the necessary training.

Members of the staff must be men of great imagination and the highest specialist competence as well as officers of sober and critical judgement.

Principles to be applied to this work.

(1) No one to be initiated who does not have to be.

(2) No one to know more about it than he has to.

(3) When is the latest for him to know? No one to know anything sooner than he has to.

Undoubtedly, this was one of the most muddled speeches ever delivered by Hitler. Contrary to a similar discussion with the generals on November 5, 1937, it completely lacked inner cohesion. No outline was discernible. Hitler appeared to be rambling on without any clear purpose other than to dispel the justified and well-founded misgivings of the military, to impress on the generals how self-confident he remained, and how little cause they had to doubt him. The only one who ventured to question Hitler in response to his convoluted state-ments was Göring. He inquired of the Führer as to what precisely constituted the concrete tasks to be carried out by the Wehrmacht. Further, he wanted to know when this war was anticipated to break out. Hitler was never short of a reply and, as Schmundt dutifully recorded in this notes, he responded in the following fashion:

In reply to Field Marshal Göring the Führer lays down that:

(a) the branches of the Armed Forces determine what is to be constructed;

(b) nothing will be changed in the shipbuilding program;

(c) the armaments program will be completed by 1943 or 1944.

Certified correct
Schmundt (Lt. Col.)

Item (c) above undoubtedly relieved the generals attending this confused conference at the Chancellery. 1943 and 1944 seemed far off in the distance in May of 1939. Four or five years hence—who knew what could happen by then? And, if one recalled the briefing in November 1937, the timeframe for a potential war then had been equally comfortably distant: the period 1943 through 1945.

Hitler's reference to this particular period in his speech of May 23 was remarkable in another context as well. Without doubt, Hitler referred to a similar time-frame in his talks with the Italian Foreign Minister in the course of the previous two days. Ciano confirmed this in his diaries.⁵⁴⁵ A letter Mussolini penned only eight days later, on May 30, 1939, further substantiates this theory. It contained the Duce's warning that Italy would not be ready for war until late 1942. On receiving this document from the hands of General Cavallero, a member of Italy's military mission in Berlin, Hitler replied that he intended to meet with Mussolini in the near future anyway.⁵⁴⁶ While Hitler did not say so, he apparently intended to make it perfectly clear to Mussolini orally that he, the Führer, exclusively had the right to set a particular date for the strike.

On May 24, Hitler attended the official opening of the Municipal Theater in Augsburg. The Berlin Professor Baumgartner had refurbished the building according to Hitler's instructions. A festive rendition of Wagner's *Lohengrin* served to celebrate the occasion.⁵⁴⁷

In the meantime, the Japanese had apparently determined that etiquette required the conveying of Japan's congratulations to Hitler on the conclusion of the "Pact of Steel." This did not indicate a change of heart on the part of the Japanese as they persisted in their refusal to join the pact.

On May 30, the German News Bureau published the following telegram in which Hitler expressed his thanks to the Japanese Prime Minister Baron Kishiro for the sentiments conveyed:⁵⁴⁸

Rejoicing in the realization that Your Excellency's assessment of the significance of the Italo-German Alliance Pact corresponds to my own interpretation, I wish to express to you my heartfelt thanks for the congratulations extended on the conclusion of this Pact.

Adolf Hitler

On May 31, a German-Danish Non-Aggression Pact was signed in Berlin. It was the first, though meager, fruit to be borne by Hitler's diplomatic campaign in response to Roosevelt's telegram. The treaty read as follows:⁵⁴⁹

May 23, 1939

Having resolved to firmly uphold the peace between Germany and Denmark under all circumstances, the German Reich Chancellor and His Majesty the King of Denmark and Iceland have agreed to reaffirm and reinforce this resolve by entering into a treaty. To this end, the German Reich Chancellor has appointed the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, as his plenipotentiary; His Majesty the King of Denmark and Iceland has appointed the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister in Berlin, Herr Herluf Zahle, as his plenipotentiary. After due and proper exchange of powers of attorney, they have agreed on the following:

Article I

The German Reich and the Kingdom of Denmark shall not wage war against each other, in any case, and shall desist from the application of force. Should a third power undertake an action of the nature described in Sentence 1 against one of the parties to this treaty, the other party to this treaty shall not lend its support to such an action in any way, manner, or form.

Article II

This treaty shall be ratified and the documents attesting to this ratification shall be exchanged in due form in Berlin as soon as possible. This treaty shall enter into force as of the day of the exchange of the documents attesting to its ratification. It shall enter into force for a period of ten years. Should neither party to this contract abrogate this treaty within one year prior to its expiry, it shall enter into force for another ten years. The same shall apply to subsequent time periods.

In acknowledgement thereof, the signatory powers below have affixed their signatures thereto. Drawn up in duplicate, the German and Danish texts of this treaty being equally authoritative.

Berlin, May 31, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Herluf Zahle

Additional Protocol

By their signature of this German-Danish Pact on this day, both parties thereto have agreed on the following:

For the purposes of this treaty, a status of belligerency on the part of the party to this treaty not involved in the conflict shall not be considered to exist in the sense of Article I, Paragraph 2, of this treaty, if this behavior complies with the customary rules affecting neutrality. It shall hence not be regarded as a violation of the terms of this treaty if the party to this treaty not involved in the conflict continues to pursue the normal exchange of goods with this third power and allows for the transit of these goods.

Berlin, May 31, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Herluf Zahle

There was no festive occasion to celebrate the signature of this pact in striking contrast to the official reception a few days later following

the conclusion of two similar pacts with Estonia and Latvia. It appeared as though Hitler was flustered by Denmark's failure to send a minister to Berlin to sign the document. In an apparent effort to avoid drawing attention to the conclusion of this ignominious pact, the Danish Government had simply empowered Herluf Zahle, its Envoy to Berlin, to act as plenipotentiary in this matter. Barely ten months after its signature, Hitler flagrantly broke with the provisions of the agreement on April 9, 1940.⁵⁵⁰

On May 31, Hitler also toured the Bellevue Castle in Berlin which had been transformed into an official guest house for prominent foreigners hosted by the Third Reich. Professor Baumgartner had supervised the refurbishing of the facilities.⁵⁵¹ Hitler displayed particular interest in the rooms assigned to foreign dignitaries. In spite of his ambitious intentions, these rooms were destined to serve only a second-rate clientele, insignificant politicians from the various Balkan states, because of the increasing isolation of Germany internationally.

On June 1, Hitler welcomed the first in a series of such visitors to Berlin: the Yugoslav Prince Regent Paul and his spouse Princess Olga.⁵⁵² Rejoicing in the fact that once more he found himself surrounded by foreign dignitaries paying a state visit to Germany, Hitler relished playing the role of the congenial host. He personally rushed to the Lehrte station at 3:50 p.m. to greet his guests and presented a bouquet of flowers to the Princess. Indeed, the entire visit of the royal couple in Germany bore striking similarity to the visit of the Yugoslav Minister-President Stojadinovic and his wife on January 15, 1938.⁵⁵³ After a triumphant entry into the city of Berlin, Hitler accompanied his guests to the Bellevue Castle. In the course of the afternoon, the royal couple called on Hitler at the Chancellery; he returned their call thereafter. On the latter occasion, he presented Princess Olga with a special issue of the honorary Red Cross Medal.⁵⁵⁴

At 8:30 p.m., Hitler gave a large dinner banquet in honor of the Prince and the Princess. The Yugoslav Foreign Minister attended the gathering, as did Göring, Ribbentrop, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and various Reichsleiters. Neurath was also present, as he had consulted with Hitler at noon on matters regarding the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Hitler extended his welcome to the Yugoslav royalty in the following address:⁵⁵⁵

Your Royal Highness!

It is both a great honor and pleasure to welcome Your Royal Highness, the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia, and Her Royal Highness, Princess Olga, to

June 1, 1939

the capital of the German Reich. I also greet you in the name of the entire German Volk. It is suffused with sentiments of the most heartfelt friendship for His Majesty King Peter II, for your Fatherland, and for the Yugoslav people.

The friendship of Germans for the Yugoslav people is not only a spontaneous one. It gained in depth and substance amidst the tragic confusion of the World War.⁵⁵⁶ The German soldier then learned to respect and hold in high esteem his ever-so-valiant adversary. I believe this has been the case in reverse also. This mutual respect has found expression in common political, cultural, and economic interests. And hence we regard your present visit, Your Royal Highness, as evidence of the justness of this, our view. It instills in us the hope that the German-Yugoslav friendship will evolve further in the future and will become closer in nature.

We regard the presence of Your Royal Highness as a joyous opportunity for the friendly and open exchange of opinions. In this sense, it will assuredly prove beneficial to both our peoples and states. I am all the more convinced of this because firmly established, trusting relations between Germany and Yugoslavia have now taken hold, since historic events made us neighbors whose borders have been delineated for all time.⁵⁵⁷ This will serve not only to assure a lasting peace between our two countries and our two peoples, it will also serve to calm our nervously agitated continent.

This peace is the goal of all who are willing to work for a true recovery. I myself am filled with the hope that Your Royal Highness, in the course of your short stay in Germany, will gain an impression of the recovery, the desire for peace and work of the German Volk. It cherishes no other ambition than, given the preservation of the foundations of its existence and its natural rights, to advance toward a secure future in a pacified Europe through tireless work. Rest assured that Germany and its Government follow with sincere sympathy the ascent which, true to the legacy of King Alexander, the Yugoslav people have begun so successfully and which is so similar to ours. My best wishes and those of the German Volk accompany you in this work you are undertaking. In this spirit, I raise my glass to toast the health of His Majesty King Peter II, the personal happiness of Your Royal Highness and Her Royal Highness, Princess Olga; the welfare of the Regency, and the prosperity of the Yugoslav people.

On June 2, another impressive military parade filed by the Technical University in Berlin for two hours, only about half the time and length of the parade on Hitler's birthday on April 20. Hitler's intent to demonstrate to his guests the military potential of the Third Reich was all too obvious.⁵⁵⁸ Hitler apparently judged half the ceremony sufficient to duly impress his guests from Yugoslavia. In the evening, he accompanied them to a festive performance of *Die Meistersinger* at the State Opera.

On June 3, the royal couple toured Potsdam and placed a wreath at the tomb of Frederick the Great. In the evening, Ribbentrop asked the couple to attend a gala dinner at the Kaiserhof Hotel. Hitler

June 2, 1939

personally saw his guests from the Bellevue Castle to the hotel where he also attended a dinner in their honor.⁵⁵⁹ The next day, however, the Yugoslav royalty had to make do with Göring since Hitler was busy with more important matters.

On June 4, the first Greater German Reich Warriors' Convention convened in Kassel. This gathering of veterans appeared to Hitler precisely the forum required to deliver yet another intimidating speech against England. Hitler had a new interpretation of the First World War ready, one which he would present to a series of foreign guests throughout the subsequent weeks.⁵⁶⁰ He now maintained that Germany itself bore responsibility for its dismal performance in the First World War and its ignominious defeat, as it had "through a criminal neglect of German armament" allowed an "incompetent state leadership" to decide its fate.

Times had changed, so Hitler insisted. Under his leadership, there would be no more such nonsense. And he would not allow himself to be threatened by foreign statesmen pursuing their "policy of encirclement" of the German Reich. Further he declared: "I do not in the least suffer from an inferiority complex." This fact assured that "threats by whatever party do not intimidate me in the least." Though the "British policy of encirclement has remained the same as before the war, Germany's policy of defense has undergone thorough revision!" Hitler then expressed his hopes that this policy of strength "should not only be warmly welcomed by the veterans, but also merit their zealous support." The speech had the following content:⁵⁶¹

My Comrades!

It is for the first time today that I partake in a Reich Warriors' Convention; the first time that I speak before you, the veterans of the old and of the new Wehrmacht.

The Reichskriegerführer of the NS Reichskriegerbund, Comrade Reinhard, has greeted me, on your behalf, both as a soldier of the World War and as the Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk and Reich. In this, my dual capacity, I wish to return this greeting. As the Führer, I greet you as representative of the German Volk in the name of millions of Germans. These have placed their trust, their personal destinies, and hence the destiny of the Reich in my hands. They have done so not because of a constitutional exigency. This year especially the German Volk is inspired by a feeling of profound gratitude for all those who once fulfilled the most difficult and noble duty.

As an old soldier, I greet you with the feeling of comradeship, which can reveal itself in the deepest sense only to one who in war experienced the noblest transfiguration of this idea. For the magnificent spirit of manly

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communion discloses itself in the most captivating manner only to him who has seen it stand the test of time in this, the toughest trial of manly courage and manly loyalty.

When I speak to you today, my Comrades, then I myself relive in my memory the violence of those times which now lie a quarter of a century behind us and which the soldiers of the Old Army in particular have felt to be the greatest in their own human existence and which still have them under their spell today.

Nearly twenty-five years now lie behind us since those spellbound, violent weeks, days, and hours in which the German Volk was forced to stand up for its existence after a period of peaceful, well-protected ascent. Twenty years have now passed since, in spite of an unequaled, heroic resistance, a Diktat was forced on us which, in theory, was to bestow upon the world a new order, and which, in practice, bore the curse of destroying any reasonable order founded on the recognition of the most natural rights to life.

The fateful grandeur of those five years from 1914 to 1919! The jolts and mortifications this meant for our Volk! What suffering followed in the wake of our collapse! What depths of degradation, deprivation, and destitution was Germany to suffer!

Still, how enormous a change which this doomed Reich underwent in the end—how it pulled itself back from the brink of imminent destruction and moved towards a renewed rise, regarding which we believe that it shall be better and, above all, more lastingly founded than any similar process in German history!

When soldiers gather their thoughts, conversations usually turn back to the years shared. Remembrance allows that to arise anew before their mind's eye which once constituted the shared meaning of their lives. As in epochs of long years of peace, the daily chores with their harsh demands on a sense of duty and on the bodily ability to perform constitute the sum of memories which are recollected at such gatherings, so, with us, these are made up of the memories of the greatest time with which human beings have ever been confronted on this earth. A quarter of a century then begins to pale before us, and the ever-present force of the most difficult, but greatest epoch in our history, casts its spell on us once more. Whatever the individual among us may wish to exchange from the cherished treasure of these, his dearest recollections with others, it is surpassed by what this period in its entirety meant for our Volk, as fateful as this may well have been for our individual lives. For me as the Führer of the German nation, when engaged in critical reflection, time and time again the question presents itself, which I judge as infinitely important not only for the fate we met with then, but also for the correct fashioning of our future, namely, the question of the inevitability of the events back then.

Twenty years ago, a miserable state leadership felt compelled—as it may well have believed—by an irresistible force to place its signature beneath a document which sought to burden Germany finally with the war guilt. Scientific research in the meantime has revealed this to be a lie and a deliberate deception. I solemnly undertook to erase this signature—given against better knowledge—beneath the Diktat of Versailles—and have

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thereby paid a formal tribute to honor. Still, beyond this, we all must realize for ourselves: war guilt is inexorably linked to the presupposition of a war aim. No people and no regime will wage war simply for the sake of waging war. That anyone would stride forth into a war merely for the pure joy of killing and bloodshed—such a delusion can take hold only in the brains of perverted Jewish literati.

What is decisive in this context is that the German Government not only pursued no war aim in the year 1914, but also, in the course of the war, never managed to arrive at a reasonable or even precise determination of an aim to be pursued. The Peace Treaty of Versailles, by contrast, clearly reveals the true war aims of the British and French encirclement politicians: the theft of the German colonies; the elimination of German trade; the destruction of all bases for German life and existence; Germany's removal from all positions in power and politics. All in all this added up to precisely the same war aim the British and French encirclement politicians still pursue today.

In Germany at the time, regrettably, there were men who thought they need not pay any attention to the extremist proclamations of English papers and English politicians on the necessity of taking away the German colonies, of eliminating German trade, all goals already apparent in peacetime. The World War and the Peace Diktat of Versailles have instructed the German nation differently. What in former times apparently irresponsible journalists pronounced as the sick products of their own fantasy or hatred, became the goals of British policy, namely, the theft of the German colonies, the elimination of German trade, the destruction of the German merchant marine, the power-political nervous breakdown and destruction of the Reich, and by inference the political and bodily extermination of the German Volk. These were the goals of the British policy of encirclement before the year 1914.

And it is good that we should recall now that when faced with these intentions and war aims of our enemies, later to be affirmed in the Peace Diktat of Versailles, the German state leadership of the day was left without direction and, regrettably, completely without any willpower. And thus it came to pass that there were not only no aims in the war for Germany, but also that the necessary German preparations for the war, in the sense of an effective defensive build-up, were never undertaken. And in this the great guilt of Germany in the World War must be seen. Namely, it is the guilt of having facilitated for the surrounding world (*Umwelt*), through a criminal neglect of German armament, the propagation of thoughts of the destruction of Germany and the realization of these in the end.

In the year 1912, under pretexts incomprehensible to us today, expenditures for the necessary armament were cut; trivial appropriations were stinted; aspiring, honest soldiers banished to the desert; and thereby the convictions of our enemies reinforced the idea that a successful campaign against Germany might well be worth trying. Beyond this, the simple mustering of all men fit for service was conducted only to an insufficient extent and thereby many hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men did not receive training. In critical hours, a high percentage of those who were nonetheless drafted had to pay for this with their lives. All this only reinforces the picture of an

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incompetent state leadership and therefore the only genuine conception of guilt, not only regarding the outbreak of the war, but, above all, the outcome of the fight.

When in spite of all of this the memory of the World War in particular has become a source of proud reminiscences, this is due not to the all-too-weak armament, the incompetent state leadership, and so on, but to the inner value, the unequalled instrument of the German Wehrmacht then, of the Army, the Navy, and later of the Luftwaffe. In terms of numbers the latter often faced an adversary who was many times superior to it, but who never attained its inner value.

Reflection on and recollection of this great time must make more firm in all of us, my Comrades, one conviction and one resolve:

1. The conviction that the German Volk can only reflect in general on its past with the greatest pride, and in particular on the years of the World War. As the Führer of the German nation, I may never for a second, as a former fighter, admit that anyone in the ranks of our Western enemies has the right to think himself or regard himself as someone superior to us Germans! I do not in the least suffer from an inferiority complex. On the contrary, I regard the memory of the four years of war, which I had the good fortune to experience thanks to a most gracious Providence, as a cause of proud trust in my German Volk and, as a soldier, in my own person, too. Deep inside, these years cause me to long for and desire peace in the recognition of all the horrors of war, and make me all the more convinced of the value of the German soldier in the defense of our rights. Hence threats by whatever party do not impress me in the least.

2. I and all of us have derived from this period the resolve never to allow the interests of our Reich and nation to be as criminally neglected as it was before the year 1914.

And now I wish to assure you, my old Comrades, of one thing: whereas the British policy of encirclement has remained the same as before the war, Germany's policy of defense has undergone thorough revision! It has already changed in that, at the head of the Reich, no longer is a civilian disguised as a major⁵⁶² seeing to affairs, but rather a soldier who will wear civilian clothes on occasion! There are no more Bethmann-Hollwegs amongst the German state leadership today.

I have taken care that anyone who has anything to do with state leadership is a hundred-percent man and soldier. Should I nonetheless perceive that the behavior of any one person cannot stand up to critical strain, then I shall immediately remove this individual, whoever he may be.

The Peace Diktat of Versailles did not come about coincidentally. It was the goal of those who throughout the years sought to encircle Germany, and who finally realized this goal.

We have no right to doubt that this same policy is being employed in the pursuit of the same goals today. We hence have the duty to tell this truth to the nation, without much ado, and to strengthen it in its resistance and in its defensive capacities to the utmost. I believe that I am hereby acting in the spirit of those comrades who once, regrettably and apparently in vain, had to give their lives for Germany. Just as I believe that now, twenty-five years after the

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outbreak of the World War and twenty years after the Diktat of Versailles, the German state leadership and behind it the entire German Volk can for the first time step up to the tombs of our heroes with their heads held high. At the very least, some atonement has been made for the sins once committed against them by weakness and a lack of direction and unity. Hence I expect that the policy to strengthen Germany's defensive capacities should not only be warmly welcomed by the veterans, but should also merit their zealous support. This policy should not conceive of its goal as a temporary recasting of civilians as military men, but rather of the education in principle of an entire nation to soldiership and soldierly behavior.

It is no coincidence that National Socialism was conceived in the Great War. For it is nothing other than the suffusion of our entire existence with a true fighting spirit for Volk and Reich. May none of us ever doubt one thing: as soon as the German Volk possesses a totally heroic leadership, it will adjust its own behavior to that of the leadership. It is my irrevocable determination to make certain that the highest political and military leaders of the nation think and act as courageously as the brave musketeer must whose task it is to give his own life, and who does so if he receives orders or necessity dictates as much. The heroic leadership of a nation, however, rests on a conscience compelled by the question whether or not a people shall exist.

When I speak to you in this manner especially, my Comrades, then I can already claim of German history the justification bestowed on him who not only speaks through words, but whose deeds attest to the same spirit and to the same persuasion. And this is why I can share more than any one else in the great comradeship of the eternal German soldiery. And because of this I am happy to be able to welcome you here in Kassel on the *Reichskriegertag*, as the representative of this soldiery.

Behind us lies the transfigured memory of the greatest time of our Volk and of our own existence. Before us lies the fulfillment of what this time, too, once, albeit unconsciously, struggled for: *Grossdeutschland!*

Over 300,000 German front-line soldiers attended the speech in Kassel, according to official reports. To hear Hitler speak, the military attachés of Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia had assembled along with the Japanese Ambassador, the Spanish general Queipo de Llano, a Finnish military delegation, and the President of the Italian Front-Line Soldiers' Association.

On June 5, Hitler personally accompanied Prince Paul and Princess Olga to the Lehrte station to see the couple off. They left the capital city at 7:38 p.m.⁵⁶³ for a subsequent tour of a number of German cities.

One day later, Hitler gave yet another speech to stress the might of the German Wehrmacht. A parade of the Condor Legion⁵⁶⁴ through Berlin's streets and a state occasion afterwards in the Lustgarten provided an excellent frame of reference for a like undertaking. Around 12:30 p.m., Göring reported the troops present. After this,

Hitler stepped up to review the troops, soldiers clad in camouflage uniforms and naval personnel. He was accompanied by the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht and the last Commander in Chief of the Condor Legion, Freiherr von Richthofen.⁵⁶⁵ At the foot of the monument, Hitler laid down a huge wreath, the ribbon of which bore the inscription "Adolf Hitler." At the same time, members of the Hitler Youth arrayed themselves on either side of the tribune, raising plaques bearing the names of German military personnel who had perished in the Spanish Civil War. Then Göring stepped up to the rostrum to welcome those assembled.

When Hitler took center stage, he first sought to justify his 1936 decision to send German soldiers to Spain. In an aside, he claimed that this had constituted "the gratitude of the German nation" for Spain's benign behavior in the First World War. Moreover, this deployment of troops had precluded "a new international war in Europe." In a revealing manner, he commented on the "international forces" which had sought the escalation of the conflict in Spain.

This June 6, 1939 address represented the first documented case in which Hitler no longer spoke of the "Bolshevist enemy of the world," despite the appropriateness of such references in the context of the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the years 1936 and 1937 in particular, every speech on this topic had been replete with accusations of the Soviet Union. Hitler then had sought to instill in the German people the belief that international Bolshevism had raised its ugly head in Spain and that the German fighters there were indeed struggling against the Communist foe. With a swift change of heart and unprecedented rhetoric, Hitler now incongruously claimed that the "democracies" had instigated the civil conflict in the interest of "war-mongers" and "encirclement politicians." There was no longer any doubt that Hitler was seriously contemplating cooperation with the Bolsheviks of Moscow to force acquiescence by the unyielding British. His speech had the following wording:⁵⁶⁶

My Comrades!

Finally I can now greet you myself. I am so happy to see you here before me. And, above all, I am so proud of you! And the entire German Volk shares my feelings at this hour. All those millions who over the loudspeakers witness your entry and this reception, they are with you in their thoughts. They have taken you to their hearts, grateful and joyous that you are back with us in the homeland once again.

In the summer of 1936, Spain seemed lost. International forces fanned the flames of revolution there, which was earmarked not only to raze Spain to the

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ground, but Europe. And even the Christian democracies could not resist supplying weapons, fuel, and so-called volunteers, to this end. A terrible fate hovered threateningly above our continent. The most ancient civilized countries of Europe appeared to be in danger. Tens of thousands of Germans had to flee Spain. Everything they had was destroyed. Many were murdered. What, in a long, laborious, and honest struggle for existence, the Germans there had built up as the basis of their existence, was destroyed and eliminated within a few weeks.

German battleships, which I dispatched to Spain immediately upon hearing cries for help by our Volksgenossen, helped by assuming the protection of life and limb and by evacuating our Volksgenossen to the homeland, insofar as this was possible. And then, ever more clearly, a man rose up in this country, who seemed to be called on, according to the dictates of his own conscience, to act on behalf of his people.

Franco began his struggle for the salvation of Spain. Against him stood a conspiracy fed by all the world.

In July of 1936, I briskly determined to fulfill the request for help which this man directed to me, and to help him to the extent that and as long as the rest of the world lent its support to the internal enemies of Spain.

And thus National Socialist Germany began to take an active part in the struggle for the resurrection of a national and independent Spain under the leadership of this man. I ordered this in the realization that this would not only spare Europe, but also our Fatherland at a later point, a similar catastrophe. I did this also because of profound sympathy for the suffering of a country which maintained a friendly neutrality towards us in the World War despite all English attempts at extortion. I have hereby expressed the gratitude of the German nation.

Moreover, this occurred in complete agreement with Italy. For Mussolini, inspired by the same idealistic considerations, had likewise resolved to grant Italy's assistance to the saviour of Spain in his struggle against the internationally organized destruction of his country. For the first time, we witnessed a practical demonstration of the *weltanschaulich* solidarity between our two countries.

The international plutocracies were neither capable of comprehending nor accepting these idealistic motives. Throughout the years, British and French papers lied to their readers, claiming that Germany and Italy sought the conquest of Spain, its division, and the theft of its colonies. These trains of thought do appear less unnatural for the representatives of these countries than with us, since the theft of other peoples' colonies has apparently always belonged to the well-tried methods judged permissible by these democracies.

All of us still recall the infamous assertion, disseminated one fine day, that Germany had landed 20,000 men in Morocco in order to occupy it and to take it away from Spain. This libel helped politicians and journalists to stir up their peoples. Time and time again, they tried to have that catastrophe begin in Spain which the encirclement politicians, warmongers, and war profiteers, so eagerly longed for: a new international war in Europe.

Now, my Comrades, you have returned from Spain. Today's festive reception in the Reich capital at the same time signifies the conclusion and

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the settlement of this mendacious democratic swindle. For I once sent you out to help an unfortunate country, to support a heroic man who, as a passionate patriot, sought to save his people from destruction and who has gloriously achieved its salvation.

You have now returned as the brave executors of my order. I would like to impart to the entire German nation, at this moment, how much cause it has to be grateful to you. You reported for the duty assigned to you, as upright and conscientious German soldiers, who are courageous and loyal and, above all, self-effacing. The high praise which the Spanish freedom fighter gave you can only make the German Volk all the more proud of you. It was painful for all of us to have to remain silent about your struggle throughout the years. However, at the time, I already had the idea, once this war was over, to give you the type of reception which all brave, victorious soldiers deserve.

Today, I have realized this project of mine for both you and myself. The entire German Volk greets you with joyous pride and in heartfelt solidarity. It also thanks all those who, as soldiers, had to sacrifice life and limb, and their health, in the fulfillment of this mission, and, finally, it thanks the survivors who today lament the sacrifice of such brave husbands and sons.

They fell, but their death and suffering will bestow life on countless other Germans in the future. No one appreciates this more than National Socialist Germany which itself, emerging from the struggles of the World War, has made so many sacrifices for the resurrection of Germany in the face of the same enemies. I thank you soldiers of the Legion, as well as the soldiers of the Navy for your readiness for service, your spirit of sacrifice, your loyalty, your obedience, your discipline, and, above all, for your silent fulfillment of duty.

Above all, my Comrades, your example will increase the German Volk's belief in itself all the more. It will strengthen the ties of comradeship to our friends and will leave the world in no doubt that—should the international warmongers realize their plan to attack the German Reich—then their attempt will be repulsed by the German Volk and the German Wehrmacht in a manner at which the imagination of the encirclement propagandists boggles. And in this sense, my Comrades, your struggle in Spain taught our opponents a lesson and, thus, it was a struggle for Germany.

Now that you yourselves have returned as hardened soldiers, this has not only enhanced your appreciation for the accomplishments of the German soldiers in the World War, but has also rendered you capable, to a high degree, of serving as examples and teachers for the young soldiers of our new Wehrmacht. Thus, you have helped to reinforce the belief in our new German Wehrmacht and in the quality of our new weapons.

At this point, we also wish to remember those at whose side you have fought. We remember the Italian comrades, who courageously and loyally gave their blood and life in this struggle of civilization against destruction. And above all, we remember the country itself from which you have just returned. Spain has suffered a terrible ordeal.

Soldiers of the Legion, you have seen the destruction with your own eyes. You have further lived to see the cruelty of this fight. But you have also gotten

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to know a proud people, which has fought with determination for nearly three years, daringly and heroically, to preserve its freedom, its independence, and, hence, its national existence. Above all, you have been fortunate to be under the command of a military leader there, who, with a strength of purpose, staunchly believed in victory and became the saviour of his people. At this moment, all of us have the sincere and heartfelt desire that now the noble Spanish people may be permitted, under the inspired leadership of this man, to effect its ascent anew and with pride.

Legionaries and soldiers! Long live the Spanish people and its leader Franco! Long live the Italian people and its Duce Mussolini! And long live our Greater German Reich! German Volk, long live our German Legion! *Sieg Heil!*

After the official celebration, Hitler received the Spanish and Italian officers present, headed by General de Llano, at the new Chancellery. Also present on this occasion were the commanders of the German contingents deployed in Spain and of the naval units involved in the conflict. In addition, bearers of the Cross of Spain in gold were asked to attend the occasion.⁵⁶⁷

On June 7, Hitler signed several decrees into law. A number of these concerned urban construction projects in the cities of Düsseldorf, Cologne, and Weimar. Others pertained to the granting of a general amnesty in celebration of the “restitution of the Sudeten German territories and the appropriation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.”⁵⁶⁸ In the early morning hours of the same day, the Foreign Ministry in Berlin added the final touches to two non-aggression pacts linking Germany to Estonia and Latvia respectively. The contents of both were absolutely identical.⁵⁶⁹ Karl Selter signed the one for Estonia while Vilhelm Munters represented the Latvian Government. Afterwards, both Foreign Ministers were asked to join Hitler and Ribbentrop at the new Chancellery for “extensive talks.”⁵⁷⁰ In recognition of their obliging attitude, the representatives of these two Baltic states were awarded the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, though not in gold.

Given the headlines burgeoning with military parades and state visits—all of them supposedly having a great impact on world history—by officials of neighboring, small countries and the Balkan states, the German public had little opportunity to keep current on events elsewhere in the world. Little attention was paid in the German media to a visit by the British Royal Family to America. This high-level meeting with President Roosevelt was obviously intended to underline the strength of the ties existing between the United Kingdom and the United States.

6

In the afternoon of June 7, Hitler “unexpectedly” appeared at the construction-site of a new Volkswagen work at Fallersleben in the afternoon hours. He himself had placed the cornerstone for the factory on May 28, 1938.⁵⁷¹ Ferdinand Porsche, Robert Ley, and the factory director Werlin briefed Hitler on the progress being made there.

On June 9, the victory celebration of the Spanish troops occasioned an exchange of telegrams between Franco and Hitler. The contents of the two telegrams were not published in their entirety. Hitler found it awkward to remain consistent with his newly discovered affection for Bolshevist Russia in this context. After all, Spain had just recently assented to the Anti-Comintern Pact solely as a favor to Germany and Italy.⁵⁷² The press carried the following short note on Hitler’s telegram in reply to Franco:⁵⁷³

The Führer responded by conveying his own and the German Volk’s sincere wishes for a prosperous future for Spain and by expressing his conviction that ineradicable bonds between the German and Spanish peoples had formed in this common struggle against the forces of Bolshevism, which destroy culture and nations.

On June 10, Hitler congratulated the Reich Postal Minister, Ohnesorge, on his birthday.⁵⁷⁴ In the afternoon, once again “unexpectedly,” Hitler arrived in Vienna to participate in the various activities surrounding the Sixth Reich Theater Festival Week. At 8:00 p.m., the State Opera featured a performance of the Richard Strauss opera *Friedenstag* which Hitler attended in celebration of the composer’s seventy-fifth birthday.⁵⁷⁵

The next day, Hitler was present at a rendition of Nestroy’s farce *Einen Jux will er sich machen* at the Burgtheater.

On the morning of June 12, Hitler left the Imperial Hotel in Vienna to head for the Aspern airfield shortly after 9:00. One hour later, he

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caught his flight to Linz. He stayed in this city for a short time and then traveled on to Berchtesgaden by motorcar.

On June 15, Hitler appropriated direct control for himself over the Reich's monetary institution by signing a "Law on the German Reichsbank" at the Berghof.⁵⁷⁶ He had already announced this intention in his speech of January 30.⁵⁷⁷ On the same day, Hitler wired congratulations to the King of Sweden on the monarch's birthday.⁵⁷⁸ In addition, he exchanged telegrams in the customary manner with the Old Guard which was then touring Westphalia.

The following day, Hitler appointed the tank warfare instructors' regiment as the traditional troop component for the Army units deployed in the Spanish Civil War, the so-called *Imker-Verbände* (Bee-Keeper Contingents).⁵⁷⁹

On June 17, Hitler received the Saudi Royal Counselor Khalid Al Hud, sent as special envoy by King Ibn Saud, for a lengthy consultation at the Obersalzberg. After the talk, Hitler asked the emissary to join him and his entourage for tea.⁵⁸⁰

On June 18, Hitler expressed his condolences to the French State President Lebrun on the sinking of the French submarine *Phénix*.⁵⁸¹ Later in the day, he inspected a mobile, motorized drivers' education van which the NSKK had sent to the Berghof.⁵⁸² On the same day still, Hitler's "shield bearer,"⁵⁸³ Goebbels, delivered a speech from the balcony of the Danzig municipal theater. Undoubtedly at Hitler's instigation, he stated:⁵⁸⁴

German Men and Women of Danzig!

I have come from the Reich to convey to you the greetings of the Führer and of the German Volk. [—]

The Führer made the following perfectly clear in his last Reichstag address when he said: "Danzig is a German city and it wishes to return to Germany." One would think the world would have grasped this by now. It should know by now, based on past experiences, that the Führer's words are never empty ones. The world is committing a dangerous error if truly it believes he can be easily intimidated by threats or coerced by blackmail. There can be no talk of anything of the sort. [—]

On June 19, Hitler bestowed the Eagle's Shield of the German Reich on Dr. Heinrich Schrey and Professor Heinrich Sohnrey.⁵⁸⁵

On June 20, the topic of the day at the Berghof was the Fifth Olympic Winter Games scheduled to take place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1940. The Reich Sports Leader von Tschammer und Osten, the President of the Organizational Committee Ritter von Halt,

General von Reichenau, and State Secretary Esser called on Hitler to inform him of the progress made in preparation for the Games. In this context, he approved of blueprints for the expansion of the sport complexes and also gave his blessings to the program worked out for the competitions.⁵⁸⁶

It was high time now for Hitler to take further preparatory steps in view of the upcoming launch of "Case White," scheduled for September 1 at the latest. As in the case of the planned war against Czechoslovakia ("Case Green") the year before, no official mobilization of reserve units was to be made public. To avoid attracting unwelcome attention, "autumn maneuvers" had started several weeks earlier and reserve units were called up in due course. These military exercises also served as a pretext for the requisitioning of motor vehicles, horses, and the like.

On June 22, Hitler effected the necessary measures.⁵⁸⁷ He was hesitant still, on the other hand, as far as the deployment of "training ships of the Navy" was concerned. He deferred decision on this matter to early August. At this time, Hitler apparently still considered it a distinct possibility to seize Danzig without simultaneously launching the war against Poland. A directive issued on June 24, in which he ordered the OKH to "prepare measures to capture intact the bridges over the Lower Vistula" and, "in view of the importance of the bridge at Dirschau, to consult with the Navy as to whether in the event of a *coup de main* against this bridge the surprise element might be endangered by previous naval measures in the Bay of Danzig,"⁵⁸⁸ indicated as much. This theory was substantiated further by another directive ordering the "occupation of the German Free State of Danzig" in late July.⁵⁸⁹

For the time being, Hitler cautiously proceeded with his strategy of intimidating England by displays of military might and political maneuvering. London had forwarded a memorandum to the Reich Government in Berlin on June 23 in which the British expounded their position on the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.⁵⁹⁰ The British Government pointed out the agreement itself had provided that a party signatory to the treaty could withdraw from this pact or effect a revision only after mutual consultations. Should the German government be interested in entering into another agreement with different terms distinguishing it from this particular treaty, then His Majesty's Government inquired as to the proposals of the German government to secure, for the course of its duration, the assent of both

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contracting parties to either abrogation or change in the terms of the treaty.

Hitler did not deign to respond to so impudent an inquiry. Instead, he preferred to publicly emphasize the comradeship in arms between Germany and Italy. On June 25, a rally in Munich afforded him a proper setting for this undertaking. Approximately 500 front-line soldiers had arrived from Italy. They received a festive and warm welcome at the ancient City Hall. In the afternoon, several wreaths were placed at the the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in front of the Army Museum as well as at the Pantheons on the Königlicher Platz. Numerous contingents of the NS Reich Warriors' Association and the NS War Victims' Association marched up. Hitler made his appearance at 5:00 p.m. Accompanied by the president of the Italian Front-Line Soldiers' Association, Delcroix, who had lost his eyesight in battle, Hitler reviewed the line-up.

Later, a reception for the Italian guests at the Führerbau allowed Hitler once again to speak out against England:⁵⁹¹

Herr Präsident! Soldiers of Italy! Comrades!

I greet you in the city in which the National Socialist Revolution once had its beginnings. I greet you in the building which was erected as the headquarters of this revolution. You are visiting the German Reich at a time when all of us, the revolutionaries of the National Socialist Movement and those of Fascist Italy, together face a world filled with antagonism, envy, hatred, and animosity toward us. I am happy, however, that this visit is taking place at a time when, through our alliance, we form a united front against our common enemies. I am firmly convinced that any attempt by the democracies and the capitalist plutocracies to impose on us the destiny they have planned for us, will come to nothing because of the combined strength of our two nations and revolutions, the force of our ideals, our courage, and our determination.

After all, life belongs to those peoples who are prepared, if necessary, to give everything to secure their existence for the present and for the future. You yourselves once extended yourselves fully for your people, and we Germans did no less for our Volk. In the future, we shall extend ourselves fully together for Germany and for Italy; for our Reich which has risen up under the National Socialist Revolution; and for your Empire which your great Duce, Benito Mussolini, has created and formed. Despite the rest of the world's persuasions and prophecies, this man has made Italy great, strong, and mighty.

I believe that all the attacks by this outside world will come to nothing against this ineradicable community of our two nations and their common revolutionary ideals, and that, in spite of everything, the future will belong to us: to Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany.

These boasts failed to impress the Western Powers. Experts in the West were too well aware of the true value of the alliance between Germany and Italy to be frightened by it.

Hitler's June 25 speech likewise failed to make an impression on the Germans and Italians in the audience. The public shrugged the matter off. The address with its customary proclamations of the related nature of the National Socialist and Fascist philosophies was not capable of allaying the animosity still existing between German and Italian front-line soldiers who, after all, had been enemies in the First World War. Having spent two hours in the futile attempt to bring about changes in the public perception of his strategy, Hitler left his guests behind at the Führerbau. In the days to follow, the Italians toured Germany and the official itinerary of their visit naturally could not spare them the dutiful inspection of the new German fortifications in the West.

On June 26, Hitler conveyed by telegram his sympathies to the Italian Foreign Minister on the demise of his father, Count Constanzo Ciano.⁵⁹²

Two days later, the Commanding General of the Tenth Army Corps and Commander in Chief of the Tenth Defense District (Hamburg), Knochenhauer, passed away. Hitler ordered a state funeral for the departed and sent his widow a telegram.⁵⁹³

On June 29, Franz Seldte received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his fifty-seventh birthday.⁵⁹⁴

On July 2, in the company of Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Himmler, Hitler attended the commemorative services in honor of General Knochenhauer in Hamburg.⁵⁹⁵ Standing on the square in front of the City Hall, Brauchitsch delivered the address required by the occasion. Hitler placed a wreath adorned with orchids on the coffin and expressed his condolences to the bereaved. Passing through the City Hall, he returned to his quarters at the Atlantic Hotel.

In the course of the following day, Hitler toured a Luftwaffe test flight air base at Rechlin in the Brandenburg March. An extraordinarily large entourage followed him to the site.⁵⁹⁶ Göring and Lieutenant General Udet, a specialist for aerial mechanics, informed Hitler of the latest developments in the field of aerial technology.

On July 4, the Spanish Ambassador de Magaz secured an audience with Hitler at the new Chancellery and presented the German head of state with personal gifts sent by Franco (three paintings by the Spanish artist Zuloaga).⁵⁹⁷

July 5, 1939

The next day, statesmen from the Balkans called at the Reich Chancellery once again.⁵⁹⁸ The first in this succession was Infantry General von Werth, the “Chief of Staff of the Royal Hungarian Honveds.” At noon, Hitler received this guest at his study and subsequently sent him off to tour the fortifications in the West. Georgi Kiosseivanov, who served in the dual capacity of Bulgaria’s Minister-President and Foreign Minister, made an appearance at the Chancellery in the afternoon hours.⁵⁹⁹ Hitler spoke with him for one hour. The envoys of Germany and Bulgaria also attended this meeting, at which Ribbentrop and numerous other Bulgarian diplomats were present as well.

On July 6, Hitler personally expressed his best wishes to Lammers, the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, on the occasion of his fortieth service anniversary. For his loyal and long-standing support, Lammers received the *Treuedienst-Ehrenzeichen* award.⁶⁰⁰ Later in the day, Hitler flew aboard the new Condor airplane ‘Grenz-mark,’ a four-engine machine.⁶⁰¹

One day later, Hitler appointed Lieutenant Commander Albrecht, his former personal assistant for naval affairs, as his personal adjutant. In connection with the captain’s honorary discharge from the Navy, Hitler promoted him to NSKK Oberführer.⁶⁰² The appointment of the former adjutant, retired Captain Wiedemann, as Consul General to San Francisco had vacated this post.⁶⁰³

On July 10, in an apparent effort to underline the peaceful intent of the policies he pursued, Hitler had the Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP issue the statement below concerning the upcoming “Reich Party Congress of Peace”:⁶⁰⁴

The annual Reich Party Congress of the NSDAP will be held in Nuremberg from September 2 to September 11. The duration of the Reich Party Congress has been extended. This will not entail any substantial revisions of any particular section contained in the program of the Reich Party Congress, although the sequence of events may well differ from the one customary in earlier congresses.

This pronouncement, as well as the large-scale preparations for the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Battle of Tannenberg underway as of late June, was supposed to conceal the true nature of Hitler’s designs. The festivities in commemoration of the battle were scheduled for August 27 and over 100,000 participants were expected.

On July 11, Hitler and Reich Minister Rust exchanged the customary telegrams connected to the maneuvers at Lake Faaker conducted by the National Political Educational Institutes.⁶⁰⁵

July 14, 1939

July 14 marked the Day of German Art,⁶⁰⁶ and the festivities in Munich were hailed as a “true celebration of peace.” At 8:00 p.m., an official reception at the Führerbau brought together the entire leadership of Party, State, and Wehrmacht. Hitler had also asked the Italian Minister for Popular Culture, Dino Alfieri, to attend.⁶⁰⁷ He had come up with a splendid idea on how to honor Mussolini in a special manner. And, on this occasion, he informed Alfieri of his designs, namely, that he had decided to construct a new “representative train station for arrivals and departures of foreign high-ranking guests of state visiting the Reich capital” close to the previous “Heerstrasse” leading to the existing station. This was where Mussolini had arrived for his state visit to Berlin in 1937. Hence, so Hitler had magnanimously resolved, the adjacent street was to be named “Mussolini Street.” Hitler also announced that—one of the greatest concessions to date—the “Adolf Hitler Square”⁶⁰⁸ nearby was to be christened “Mussolini Square.”

On July 15, the Reich Chamber of Creative Arts held its convention in the festival hall of the *Deutsches Museum*. Hitler honored this conference with a personal appearance. He lavishly distributed titles such as “professor,” “councilor,” and “state actor,” on this occasion.

On July 16, Hitler laid a wreath at the tomb of Professor Troost. Afterwards, at 10:00 a.m., he went to speak at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst. Cannons fired salutes as he stepped up to review the guard of honor awaiting him. At approximately 11:00 a.m., an hour of commemoration (*Weibestunde*) began at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, in the course of which Hitler launched what was fated to be the last “culture speech” in his lifetime. It started with the customary retrospective on cultural life in Germany before he came to power. He referred to Imperial Germany not necessarily in uncongenial, though in decidedly critical terms.⁶⁰⁹

I most assuredly do not wish to side with those who utterly condemn the artistic achievements of the latter half of the 19th century simply because they hold them to be the more or less glutted reflection of the styles of various past epochs. For I do not believe that this can ever be completely avoided, and I do not think that this must necessarily be detrimental. [—]

It is perhaps not so much the multifariousness of the artistic work back in the early days of the new Reich’s foundation to which we owe the general characteristics of this period, which are so unsatisfactory to us. Rather this is due to the obvious failure to give cultural expression to the recent, great historic accomplishment in an original manner. In other words, what was lacking was the strength to transform the total output into a cohesive whole,

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to go beyond partially ingenious individual works, and to express all this in a manner worthy of a truly great age.

Perhaps the fundamental reason for this lay in the fact that a number of the men making history then lacked I would not say an appreciation of art, but had a more or less pronounced lack of interest in the arts. It even reached the point where the most successful statesmen, the greatest warlords, and the immortal artists of this otherwise great age did not know one another. Actually, this is a shameful as well as a shattering realization!

Naturally, Hitler reasoned, things had changed in the Third Reich. Despite the burden of his role as “the most successful statesman” and his aspirations to become the “greatest warlord,” he had always maintained close contacts to the Volk as well as to the “immortal artists” of his day. However, the differences between Hitler and his predecessors were not as great as he would have had them. For instance, William II, following in the footsteps of Frederick the Great, was well known for his patronage of the arts. Throughout his life, he was in touch with all sorts of artists: painters, sculptors, architects, and the like. His influence on the taste of his contemporaries has led to his age being referred to as *wilhelminisch* in some contexts. Even today, numerous cities in Germany bear the imprint of the Emperor’s style. The city of Wiesbaden is a textbook example.

Having laid his own claim to the culture of his day, Hitler pronounced the decision to apply more “stringent criteria” to subsequent exhibitions, to limit these to the display of “works of true talent.” To add an additional wing to the gallery, a “wonderful plan” had already been drawn up, Hitler announced, for a new building across the Prinzregentenplatz. He declared:

The primary goal of our artistic work in Germany has no doubt already been attained today. Just as the campaign for architectural recovery had its beginnings in this city, Munich, a cleansing of the perhaps even more devastated field of sculpture and painting was launched here three years ago. The whole swindle of fashionable art—decadent, diseased, and dishonest—has been swept away. A decent standard has been achieved, which means a lot. It has an uplifting effect on the truly creative genius. Not only do we believe, we know, that today already many bright stars have appeared on the horizon of artistic work in Germany.

This third exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst reinforces this belief. Therefore, we hope and expect all the more that those called on to practice art will approach their work with holy zeal. From one exhibition to the next, we are prepared to apply ever-more stringent criteria to select from the mass of decent average ability the works of true talent. We have already reached a level which makes it difficult to decide between two or three works

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of equal merit. Therefore, I have ordered that, as last year, a part of the exhibited works shall be replaced, after their sale, by works of equal quality which were excluded solely from lack of space. Also I would like to express the hope that perhaps individual artists of true calibre will devote themselves to the experiences, the events, and the intellectual foundations of that age, which affords them the outward, material prerequisites for their work.

For as thousandfold as those earlier historic visions or other memories of the artist's life may well be, which stimulate his work, which he has in mind, and which inspire him, they are all surpassed by the greatness of his own era today, which is on a par with the most majestic epochs in our German history. Still we had to reject some works which placed themselves in the service of this cause since, regrettably, the force of the artistic design did not suffice to render justice to the intent, so that they could not withstand comparison to other works of similar inspiration of the past. Thus they failed of their purpose in the last instance. Still, insofar as these works reflect—as they so often do—the innocence of the soul, they do nonetheless merit our gratitude. Their almost pious undertaking, I would say, must be seen as an obligation for all those whom Providence has blessed and who can express in a more accomplished fashion what moves all leading and thinking men in our time.

I do not wish to let this hour pass without affording you and thereby all Germans an interest in the arts—perhaps a professional interest, perhaps just an enthusiasm—and those who follow with great sympathy the new ascent of our art, a brief insight into the planned further extension of this house.

We have secured the financial prerequisites for the construction of an additional building, thanks to the dedication of those already involved in the financing of the present Haus der Kunst and thanks to the magnanimous contributions received from German patrons of the arts. Professor Gall has come up with a truly wonderful plan for it. The building is being constructed on the opposite side of this unique street.

Thus, in the future, it will be possible for the Great German Art Exhibition to bring together all creations in the domain of the creative arts: the masterpieces of architecture, painting, and sculpture in a general survey of the work of German artists.

The cornerstone will be laid before this year is out. We hope to open this building in a few years. It will help to increase the significance of an event which I now declare open to the public.

A festive parade depicting “200 years of German culture” filed past Hitler in the afternoon hours of July 16.

The following day, Hitler entertained guests at his apartment at Prinzregentenplatz No. 16 at a breakfast meeting in honor of Dino Alfieri. A number of Third Reich notables were present that morning: Goebbels, Ley, Dietrich, Bormann, Epp, and Gauleiter Adolf Wagner. On this occasion, Hitler engaged the Italian in a lengthy conversation.⁶¹⁰

On July 18, Hitler forwarded a congratulatory telegram to General Franco:⁶¹¹

July 18, 1939

I extend to Your Excellency the most heartfelt congratulations on the anniversary of Spain's national uprising, on behalf of both myself and the German Volk, in the firm conviction that the glorious victory of the Spanish national uprising shall serve as a pledge of a proud future for your country.

Three days later, Hitler congratulated King Leopold in a telegram on Belgium's national holiday.⁶¹²

On July 24, Hitler instructed Meissner to present the Reich Minister of Transportation, Dorpmüller, with the Eagle's Shield of the German Reich on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. On the same day, the former president of the Reich Institute for Physics and Technology, Professor Johannes Stark, was awarded the Goethe medal for meritorious achievements in the arts and sciences.⁶¹³ Indeed, Hitler's activities in the month of July 1939 sought to impress on the contemporary, in Germany as well as abroad, the peaceful intentions of his regime, which apparently found nothing better to do than to dedicate itself exclusively to matters of culture.

On July 25, Hitler reviewed the progress made in the construction of the Congress Hall at the new Party Congress grounds at Nuremberg.⁶¹⁴ In the evening, he attended a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Bayreuth Festival and one day later a performance of *Tristan und Isolde*.⁶¹⁵ Still in Bayreuth on July 27, Hitler held a reception for Lord and Lady Kimsley at Wagner's estate Haus Wahnfried.⁶¹⁶ On the same day, his directive for the military occupation of Danzig was issued.⁶¹⁷ The order concerning "The occupation of the German Free State of Danzig on ... (Y-Day)" stated that

... the Führer has ordered the reunion of the German Free State of Danzig with the Greater German Reich and the immediate occupation of Danzig by the Wehrmacht for the protection of the German population. No hostile intentions are entertained towards Poland, as long as the latter does not resist the occupation by armed force.

On July 29, Hitler congratulated Mussolini on his birthday in the following telegram:⁶¹⁸

On the occasion of your birthday today, I greet you in loyal solidarity and extend my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and the future success of your historic work. In gratitude, my thoughts today turn to the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance concluded in May of this year, which unites our two peoples in an inseparable community of fate. It will prove its strength in the preservation of the vital rights of our peoples as well as in the maintenance of peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler

From Bayreuth, Hitler flew to Saarbrücken to inspect once more the “works to secure the defense zones of the Saar territory and the Saarpfalz.”⁶¹⁹ Troop maneuvers to demonstrate the “invincibility” of the fortifications occasioned this renewed visit. Reassured by the advanced condition of the structures intended to defend this section of the border, Hitler accepted “reports on the readiness of the security forces as well as of the troops exercising in the zone.” In the evening hours, Hitler returned to Bayreuth from the excursion, accompanied by Ribbentrop. On July 30, he attended a performance of *Die Walküre*.⁶²⁰ Two days later, he invited the artists who participated in the Bayreuth festival to a reception at Haus Wahnfried.⁶²¹

On that August 1 also, Hitler signed a decree which dealt with public relief and providing for members of armed SS units and their survivors.⁶²² It granted the same privileges as regular Wehrmacht units enjoyed to the SS Verfügungstruppen, SS Junkerschulen, SS Totenkopfverbände, and their reinforcements.

On August 2, the anniversary of Hindenburg’s death, Hitler ordered General von Kücheler, the Commander of Wehrkreis I (East Prussia), to place a wreath in honor of the Field Marshal at the foot of the Tannenberg memorial.⁶²³ On this day as well, Hitler established a decoration for those who had assisted in the construction of the “bulwark in defense of Germany,” i.e. the West Wall.⁶²⁴

The next day, Hitler had Speer show him cast models of the envisioned Party buildings to be constructed at Bayreuth. He himself issued detailed instructions to the architect on how to proceed with this particular project.⁶²⁵

On August 4, on the occasion of his chief Wehrmacht adjutant Schmudt’s twenty-fifth service anniversary, Hitler promoted him to the rank of colonel.⁶²⁶ Afterwards, the Führer withdrew to the Obersalzberg for the next three weeks.

At the Berghof on August 7, he received Gauleiter Albert Forster of Danzig for a talk. This meeting resembled that with Konrad Henlein on September 2, 1938.⁶²⁷ As with Czechoslovakia, reports of border incidents appeared in the daily newspapers with increased frequency. New reports from the border with Poland reached the Reich nearly every day. No one could doubt any longer that the patience of the Führer would be worn thin shortly. The only tangible outcome of the talks was a highly inflammatory speech Forster delivered at the Langer Market square in Danzig on August 10. The Gauleiter reiterated Hitler’s arguments for a resolution of the problem in the interest of Germany.

Particularly revealing in this context was the quotation of an alleged statement by Lloyd George concerning the ramifications of the Versailles Treaty on Poland.⁶²⁸

On August 8, another guest from the Balkans called at the Berghof: Count Csáky. Hitler again showered abuse on Hungary's Foreign Minister.⁶²⁹ The cause for the German Chancellor's fury was easily discerned. On July 24, the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki had addressed to Hitler and Mussolini one and the same correspondence and had declared that, while Hungary would indeed follow the lead of the Axis Powers in the event of a war, Budapest was not willing to engage in an armed aggression against Warsaw.⁶³⁰ This was truly unheard of in Hitler's view. The Hungarians had proven themselves a thankless lot. They had accepted his offer of the Carpatho-Ukraine yet now they failed to heed his summons.

In his harangue, Hitler simply reiterated the arguments he used with any other visitor at the time. First of all, he was a man of character. He would not be wearied by any threats; he knew no fear; the West Wall was invincible. Moreover, Poland stood isolated. Neither England nor France could make any moves at this point. Assuredly, Russia had better things to do than to come to Poland's rescue. For a man such as Count Csáky, Hitler's words fully sufficed to revise Hungary's foreign policy stance on the spot. He implored the Führer to disregard Count Teleki's letter.

On August 9, Hitler attended a performance of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* at the Salzburg music festival. This was the first time he participated in this particular event.⁶³¹ To judge by his demeanor there could truly not be a large-scale military conflict looming on the horizon.

Contrary to the rehearsed gaiety of the Salzburg celebration, the atmosphere on the streets of Germany was a gloomy one. Barely suppressed tension was compounded by the persistent hot and humid temperatures during those early days of August, 1939. Mobilization orders, requisitioning of vehicles, etc.—all these governmental measures betrayed the regime's far from peaceful intent. Indeed, a feeling of foreboding reigned everywhere. As though to warn the world of things to come, the planet Mars stood visibly closer to earth than usual. Of a dark red hue, it shone bright in the sky on every one of those August nights. Roman antiquity would have interpreted the odd appearance of this planet named in honor of the god of war as a sign of the imminence of war.⁶³²

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Voices from abroad which managed to penetrate the walls of propaganda spelled out the Western Powers' intent to respond to the first shot fired from German guns with an unequivocal declaration of war. Chances for a last minute reprieve, of the 1938 Munich variant, became ever the more remote. The maze of Hitler's convoluted intentions, beliefs, and convictions had taken him prisoner. He knew of no way out of the situation. Only his most loyal followers among the German workers—unless they were die-hard communists—could still be so deceived as to believe that the Führer would “get things right in the end,” and thus prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

Individuals who were in a position to assess the situation better nonetheless also hoped that some type of timely occurrence would prevent the outbreak of war: after all, foreign powers might intervene, Poland might relent, or a change within Germany might still come about. Such hopes are all too easily understood, for who among ordinary Germans truly desired war?

Among all of Hitler's war adventures, however, his plan for a campaign against Poland made the most sense yet within the framework of the German mentality. Already in the days of the Weimar Republic, the existing situation had become intolerable in the eyes of many Germans because of the unfortunate delimitation of the eastern border of the Reich, the half-measures of Versailles, and the constant frictions along the border. Before and after 1933, the generals of the Reichswehr had almost exclusively concerned themselves with a possible war with Poland in their plans for the military. What they had had in mind at the time, however, was to retake the territories lost by the Reich in 1919. Opportunity for such a German move might arise in the course of an outside conflict such as a war between Poland and Russia. Also, a conflict between Moscow and the Western Powers seemed in the offing. By the summer of 1939, this no longer appeared within the realm of the possible. The outbreak of a war pitting a grand coalition of the Western Powers and the Soviet Union against a Germany under Hitler's regime had become decidedly more likely.

Hitler was right to suspect that his generals were less than thrilled with his plans for war. He had already noticed their lack of enthusiasm in 1938.⁶³³ They had grown fat in the years of peace and they liked it. Hitler showered money and awards on the military. Admittedly, medals for wartime performance were difficult to obtain without a bona fide war, but most German generals still had enough badges for outstanding service left over from the First World War. And the

younger members of Germany's military elite chose to satisfy this need in small-scale ventures abroad, as in the Spanish Civil War for example. In any event, Germany's military was not about to throw overboard the obvious benefits of peacetime service. Nor did the industrial complex desire a disruption of its lucrative trade by an involvement in a real war. While everyone seemed to enjoy drawing up operational plans, throwing about military terminology, watching parades and the like, no one wished to accept the final consequence of these engaging activities. However, like the legendary magician Dr. Faustus, the German military men would find it difficult to rid themselves of the evil spirits they had summoned.

Hitler's Chief of Staff Halder, who had drawn up the plans for an armed aggression against Poland, became increasingly anxious, as the long summer months dragged on. He encouraged the British Ambassador Henderson to remain unyielding in his defense of England's policy towards Hitler. This was to avoid war, so Halder hoped.⁶³⁴ Likewise, State Secretary von Weizsäcker and Erich Kordt, the German Legation Counselor in London, labored to persuade the British to make a determined stand against the German dictator.⁶³⁵

In all of this the British truly required little prompting. Ever since March 15, leading members of His Majesty's Government, e.g. Chamberlain, Halifax, and various prominent public figures had repeatedly and consistently underlined Great Britain's determination. They insisted that any form of aggression directed against Poland, inclusive of a military move against the Free City of Danzig, would entail a declaration of war against Germany. They maintained that, in the future, it would no longer be up to Germany to decide whether or not there was to be war.

For instance, on June 29, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax had unequivocally stated at Chatham House:⁶³⁶

It is our foremost resolve to end these attacks. Our second resolve is to abide by the world's desire and to secure the peace. Once we have been satisfactorily convinced that we all desire a peaceful settlement, then—this I will say definitely—we can discuss all problems which today trouble the world.

In a like new atmosphere we can resolve the colonial problem, the question of raw materials, of trade restrictions, the claims to 'Lebensraum,' and any other questions which touch upon the life of all European peoples.

Now, in a broadcast to the United States from London on August 8, Churchill declared:⁶³⁷

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The architects of the American Constitution were as careful as those who shaped the British Constitution to guard against the whole life and fortunes, and all the laws and freedom of the nation, being placed in the hands of a tyrant. Checks and counter-checks in the body politic, large devolutions of State government, instruments and processes of free debate, frequent recurrence to first principles, the right of opposition to the most powerful governments, and above all ceaseless vigilance, have preserved, and will preserve, the broad characteristics of British and American institutions. But in Germany, on a mountain peak, there sits one man who in a single day can release the world from the fear which now oppresses it; or in a single day can plunge all that we have and are into a volcano of smoke and flame.

If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one else is going to make war. Britain and France are determined to shed no blood except in self-defense or in defense of their Allies. No one has ever dreamed of attacking Germany. If Germany desires to be reassured against attack by her neighbors, she has only to say the word and we will give her the fullest guarantees in accordance with the principles of the Covenant of the League. We have said repeatedly we ask nothing for ourselves in the way of security that we are not willing freely to share with the German people. Therefore, if war should come there can be no doubt upon whose head the blood-guiltiness will fall. Thus lies the great issue at this moment, and none can tell how it will be settled.

It is not, believe me, my American friends, from any ignoble shrinking from pain and death that the British and French peoples pray for peace. It is not because we have any doubts how a struggle between Nazi Germany and the civilized world would ultimately end that we pray tonight and every night for peace. But whether it will be peace or war—peace with its broadening and brightening prosperity, now within our reach, or war with its measureless carnage and destruction—we must strive to frame some system of human relations in the future which will bring to an end this prolonged hideous uncertainty, which will let the working and creative forces of the world get on with their job, and which will no longer leave the whole life of mankind dependent upon the virtues, caprice, or the wickedness of a single man.

The British stance was clear. Any attempt on the part of Germany, by whatever party, to bring about a revision of this political stand was doomed from the outset. Prior to armed hostilities, negotiations with the English remained possible. That the so-called German opposition still held a negotiated settlement with Britain to be a distinct possibility after the clash of arms, and advised the English what to do, amply illustrated their lack of understanding of the British mentality. This ignorance apparently pervaded all political circles within Germany. Hitler held the English to be senile and incapable of mounting serious opposition to the moves of his Third Reich. Members of the opposition thought they could prompt Great Britain to support a regime of

German generals and bring to power men such as Goerdeler, whose foreign policy goals were not perceptibly different from those Hitler pursued.⁶³⁸ Certainly, a change in leadership might have benefited Germany domestically. However, this consideration alone would not have sufficed to induce the British to intervene in Germany's internal affairs on behalf of the German population. Why should the British bolster those circles in Germany which had profited from Hitler's rise to power and now lacked the courage to move against him on their own?

Undoubtedly, one of the most curious German diplomatic undertakings before the outbreak of World War II was the attempt launched with the instrumental assistance of Göring's "personal friend," the Swedish merchant Birger Dahlerus, to plead with Britain not to oppose Germany's aggression against Poland. It was Hitler himself who had masterminded this peculiar venture behind the scenes.⁶³⁹ It officially began with a meeting of Dahlerus, accompanied by Göring, and several British emissaries at Sönke Nissen Koog in Schleswig Holstein on August 7. With numerous intermissions this curious attempt at mediation was to last until August 31. Dahlerus repeatedly flew to London, at Göring's bidding, carrying with him the latest of Hitler's friendship proposals and the treaties he desired to enter into with Britain. As time passed, the German proposals took on a note of urgency and desperation. Nevertheless, the British politely insisted they were willing to negotiate any subject short of the use of armed force.

It was not surprising that Hitler entrusted Göring with the conduct of this mission: of all his Unterführers, Göring was undeniably the most intelligent. Hitler relied on Göring's powers of persuasion, confident that this subordinate would not fail with the British where he had succeeded, in 1932, with the German Nationalists and other figures of importance.⁶⁴⁰ It was well known that Göring had great talent for adopting Hitler's ideas, repeating them verbatim to outsiders as his own. The conviction he demonstrated had a strain of loyal obedience and apparently naive ingenuousness.

For nothing in this world did Germany desire to enter into a war with Britain, so Göring declared. This was true indeed as neither Göring himself nor Hitler wished for complications in the West while they were engaged in the East. On the other hand, they were not willing to scale down their demands in the East. Both were convinced there was ample time as yet to bring the British to accept their position

by the force of persuasion, persistence, and insistence. Once the initial talks had been concluded, one of the participants, General Bodenschatz, traveled to Berchtesgaden to brief the Führer on the meeting's preliminary outcome. At this point still, Hitler might well have believed that decisive advances towards overcoming the stalemate in the West had truly been made.

August 11 presented the Führer with an ideal opportunity to engage in precisely the threatening rhetoric he was confident would frighten the British into submission. On this particular day, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for the Free City of Danzig, Professor Carl Jakob Burckhardt was scheduled to call on Hitler at the Obersalzberg. The declared purpose of the meeting was naturally a discussion of the situation in Danzig.⁶⁴¹ Hitler perverted the occasion to instill the fear of the Lord in Burckhardt. For hours, he raved that "even the slightest attempt" by Poland to intervene in Danzig would force him to deal with the situation in one "lightning strike" (*wie der Blitz*). And he would do so with the help of weapons of which the unsuspecting Poles knew nothing. In fact, and here Hitler reiterated previous comments on the subject, Imperial Germany had refrained from employing the full force of its weaponry in the First World War because the Kaiser had feared doing so. For himself, as the Führer of the Greater German Reich, he could only state that this was no longer the case. He would fight "relentlessly" (*unbarmherzig*), "with all means at our disposal."

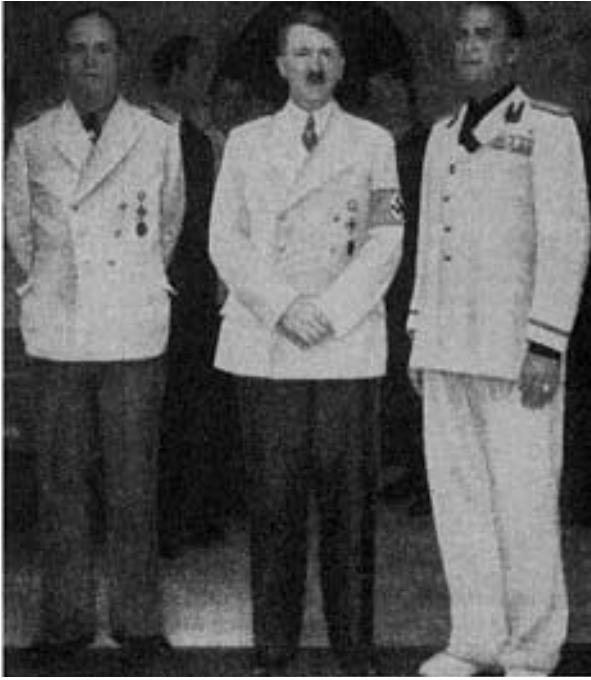
On August 12, Hitler employed similarly grandiose phrases as he bade Ciano welcome to a lengthy conference at the Obersalzberg. Ciano had been forced to listen to the same arguments the day before, at a meeting with Ribbentrop in Fuschl near Salzburg. For several hours, Ribbentrop had reiterated point for point the Führer's claims in this context. Schmidt recalled that on this occasion the German Foreign Minister had once more proven himself well-worthy as the "voice of his master." Only a day later, the master himself imparted the familiar platitudes to Ciano:⁶⁴² "Everything is the fault of the English. The Polish direly need to be taught a lesson. The democracies are inferior to Germany. They will not fight." Should a war in the West become unavoidable, it was imperative to get it over with while both he and the Duce were still young.⁶⁴³ Hitler had decided, as he stated on this occasion, that within forty-eight hours of the next act of provocation he would "solve the problem" once and for all by attacking Poland. He warned that "in the present circumstances a move against Poland must be expected at any moment." Once Warsaw had fallen, the German

military would be in a position to concentrate one hundred divisions along the western frontier. Italy he expected "to give Yugoslavia a coup de grâce as soon as possible."

On this occasion, Ciano proved himself a worthy negotiator. Faced by this full attack of Hitler's rhetoric, he remained largely steadfast. He criticized the fact that Italy had not been fully informed of the German plans and voiced his conviction that a war with Poland could not remain limited for long. Hitler could not possibly tolerate such objections: "I retain my steadfast conviction that the western democracies will not risk unleashing a full-fledged general war." Undaunted, Ciano pointed to Italy's dependence on raw material imports. Rome could not possibly withstand more than a few months of war and being cut off from these sources. Again Ciano introduced into the discussion an earlier suggestion by Mussolini, who had advocated an international resolution of the issues threatening the peace in Europe. Questions of international competence in the resolution of conflicts between states had always irked Hitler. At the time, he had only grudgingly accepted the League of Nations' proposals on the Saarland and Sudeten German questions.⁶⁴⁴ To once more submit to the dictate of an international committee was out of the question as far as he was concerned. In order to preclude the success of an advance by Mussolini or Ciano from the outset, Hitler insisted that the Soviet Union be granted a seat on any international forum.

On August 13, in the course of the second talk with Ciano, Hitler became increasingly forward. He frankly rebuffed the Italian call for an international conference. Once again he stressed his determination to deal with Poland swiftly. When Ciano inquired as to the date of a strike against Poland, Hitler responded, "in late August." Hitler then commented once again on the supposed weaknesses of the French and the English, on the military superiority of the German Wehrmacht, on Germany's acknowledgment of the Mediterranean as an exclusively Italian sphere of interest, and on his personal admiration and respect for Mussolini. In conclusion, he stated: "I am firmly convinced that neither England nor France will enter into a general war." Faced with this display of Hitler's power of persuasion, Ciano's resistance faded and he replied meekly: "You have been right so many times before when we were of a different opinion that I believe it to be quite possible that you perceive things more correctly this time also."

Comfortably seated in the plane taking him back to Rome, Ciano apparently had second thoughts on this topic. He felt Hitler had out-



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Glorious uniforms-gloomy faces. At the Obersalzberg, talks have turned sour on a potential Italian participation in the war. From left to right: Ribbentrop, Hitler, and Ciano.

Photo: Domarus archives



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In the Mosaic Hall of the new Reich Chancellory, Hitler speaks before an informal gathering of Reichstag deputies. “Applause on proper cues, but thin,” as Halder records. For the last time, Hitler was to wear his brown tunic with the swastika band.

Photo: Domarus archives

maneuvered him once again. Frustrated, he entered the following into his diary: "I return to Rome, completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things." He felt the Germans "have betrayed us and lied to us," and that they "are dragging us into an adventure which we have not wanted."⁶⁴⁵

Apparently, Ciano was not as disgusted by the Germans as this entry in his diary would intimate. Only six weeks later, he was back in Germany to assure Hitler and Ribbentrop of his loyalty.⁶⁴⁶ While Ciano had a better character and sense of judgment than Mussolini, he also sported the attitude of many Italians of the time—and in particular the boastful Duce himself—who grumbled constantly about the barbaric and arrogant Germans, but then, when facing them personally, were nevertheless impressed and gave in at the decisive moment.

The following communiqué was published on the first round of the Hitler-Ciano talks in Germany:⁶⁴⁷

The meeting between the Führer and the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, who is presently residing in Salzburg, took place at the Berghof on Saturday [August 12], in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The members of the Italian delegation, Ambassador Attolico and Legation Counselor Count Magistrati⁶⁴⁸ attended a breakfast given by the Führer in honor of the Italian Foreign Minister. In attendance were: the Reich Foreign Minister, Reich Press Chief Dr. Dietrich, Reichsleiter Bormann, Ambassador von Mackensen,⁶⁴⁹ Under State Secretary Gaus, the gentlemen of the Reich Foreign Minister's entourage, as well as the personal and military adjutants of the Führer.

In the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer had a lengthy exchange of views with the Italian Foreign Minister. Afterwards, Count Ciano accepted the Führer's invitation to tea at the Kehlsteinhaus located near the Obersalzberg.

This note was published on the second round of the talks:⁶⁵⁰

The meeting between Count Ciano and the Reich Foreign Minister ended on Sunday [August 13]. According to well-informed circles, the two Foreign Ministers called at the Berghof again on Sunday. At noon, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop gave a breakfast at the Österreichischer Hof Hotel in honor of Count Ciano and several of his closest co-workers. The Reich Foreign Minister accompanied Count Ciano to the airport from where the latter's plane departed at 2:15 p.m. Members of the Reich Foreign Minister's staff, Ambassador Attolico and Legation Counselor Count Magistrati, as well as Gauleiter Rainer and his deputy Gauleiter Wintersteiner were on hand to take their leave of Count Ciano.

The ceremony demonstrated the heartfelt nature of the friendship of the two representatives of the leaders of Germany and Italy.

The tortuous nature of these two official notes, and the detailed listing of second-rank dignitaries, alone sufficed to reveal that the talks had not gone according to plan. The German side was far from pleased with their outcome: no joint communiqué on the “agreements reached” at this conference was published. To gloss over the obvious discord, the German News Bureau published a series of “press commentaries from abroad,” which it claimed had originated in Italy. The *Messagero* had allegedly maintained that it was simply absurd to even contemplate the possibility that there existed any differences of opinion between Germany and Italy on questions concerning the fate of their two peoples. Germany and Italy would continue to stand side by side on the issue of Danzig and on any other matter. They would march side by side to the end. Danzig was merely one aspect of the much larger, all-encompassing problem of obtaining a revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty. At stake was the attainment of a higher international justice according the “proletarian peoples” of this world a place in the sun and just access to the material goods of this earth.⁶⁵¹

If the move against Poland was to be launched in “late August,” as Hitler had insisted in his meeting with Ciano on August 13, then time was beginning to run out. Barely two weeks remained to get either the British or the Soviets to commit themselves. While Hitler felt confident that Dahlerus’ secret negotiations with the British would ultimately bear fruit, the question was when. Quick results were far from certain. To force England to its knees in a more timely manner as necessitated by the circumstances, Hitler resolved to pull the one ace he still held out of his sleeve: the “devilish potion.”⁶⁵² The prospects for an agreement with the Soviets were good. Hastening its conclusion seemed not only possible, but attainable within a short time. There were many reasons for this. For centuries, Russians had cherished a certain weakness for Germans, irrespective of whatever regime ruled their vast lands. Time and time again, negotiated settlements between the two countries had been called into being with surprising swiftness.⁶⁵³ This was particularly true of all matters concerning Poland. The three partitions of that unfortunate country provided ample proof.⁶⁵⁴ Why should Germany and Russia fail to arrive at an understanding in this respect at this particular point in time? Why not seek a fourth partition of Poland? The Russians were still hurting from the loss of the Tsarist provinces in the Ukraine and in Belorussia which they had been forced to cede as a result of the war against Poland in 1920–21. Given the general propensity for revising the peace settlements of 1919–20 and

restoring national borders to what they had been in 1914, why should the Soviets not share in the spoils of such a revisionary movement? Why should they not demand or force a restitution of the territories lost to Poland, in the Baltic States, in Finland, and in the Balkans, in the course of the past two decades?

And ever since the Munich Agreement, the Russians could not help but feel that the Western Powers had resigned themselves to allowing Hitler to proceed as he desired and to conquer the Lebensraum he coveted in the East at the expense of the Soviet Union. The slow pace of the negotiations led by the British to integrate Russia into a unitary front in opposition to National Socialist Germany may well have reinforced them in this mistaken conviction, and the fact that only second-rank diplomatic personnel had been sent to Moscow to debate the potential role of the Soviets in the upcoming conflict lent further credence to this false notion.

In the meantime, not much progress had been made in the secret German talks with Moscow either, although they had led to Litvinov's dismissal, due to the German hesitancy to get involved too deeply. Up to this point, Hitler had been confident he could bring about a change of heart in the British attitude by continuing to pronounce exaggerated threats. As he was becoming increasingly pressed for time, he now began to take up the Russian matter once more. On August 14, Ribbentrop relayed an offer for an agreement to Moscow and proposed to travel there in person to conclude it.⁶⁵⁵ Based on what Hitler had experienced domestically in the Berlin traffic workers' strike in 1932, he firmly believed he could quickly reach an understanding with the "primitive" Bolsheviks, if this proved necessary.

In anticipation of what he considered the certain success of Ribbentrop's mission, Hitler made the following statements, according to Halder's notes, in a speech before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht on August 14:⁶⁵⁶

England's position must be viewed in the light of internal politics. Decision in 1914. England would not have stepped in if she had foreseen the consequences. [—] England only stands to lose. [—] Even when a war is won the victor emerges with diminished strength. This is the key to an understanding of the actions of men of less than heroic cast. [—] In view of their experiences in the World War, there is little chance that opponents will deliberately run the risk of a major war. [—]

Russia is not in the least disposed to pull chestnuts out of the fire. Nothing to gain, but much to fear. War at the periphery a possibility, perhaps even welcome. Not so in the centre. A war lost as much a threat as a victorious army.

Interested in disruption of the Western States, access to Baltic. [—] Norway, Sweden, Denmark. Will be genuinely neutral, from inner convictions. Britain's overtures to Russia have caused intense irritation. [—] Switzerland will certainly remain neutral. Holland: neutral on principle; danger to Far East possessions. Belgium will endeavor to remain neutral. [—]

Hungary requires no mention. Italy is not interested in a major conflict, but would we come certain adjustments. A victory of the democratic nations would be the end of Italy. [—]

Spain will look with disfavor upon any victory of the Western Democracies. Democracies would introduce a monarchy and dependence on Western Powers. [—] England and France will have to shoulder burden alone. [—]

Offensive: Between Basle and Saarbrücken hopeless. [—]

No immediate relief could be afforded by any Anglo-French action. There is nothing to force them into a war.

The men of Munich⁶⁵⁷ will not take the risk. [—] Were England resolved to help, she would have given money to the Poles. But the English will not put any more money into a bankrupt business. [—] If England had made any positive commitments, the Poles would be much more cocky. [—] Führer concerned lest England hamper showdown by last-minute offers. [—]

Under consideration whether a negotiator should go to Moscow, and whether or not this should be a prominent figure. [—]

[Führer] has hinted to England that he will approach her with a new offer after disposal of the overriding Polish question. Has registered in London. Paris, too, is informed about his determination. So the great drama is now approaching its climax. [—] The British commotion happened because of some careless German boast that the Führer's calculations had always proved correct.

The other nations must be given proof that there will be a shooting war no matter what. (Poland will be polished off in six to eight weeks. Even if England should step in.) [—]

Central problem is Poland. Must be carried through at all costs. [—]

Attack possible with violation Belgian-Dutch neutrality. [—]

Success, political or military, cannot be had without taking risks. The Führer regards the foreign policy risks involved in a German attack on Poland in the light of the risks which he had to take in all his decisions to date, and which, to his mind, were great at first and then steadily decreased.

As opponents, only a matter of England—apart from Poland herself—with France towed in her wake.

England, unlike in 1914, will not allow herself to blunder into a war lasting for years. Talk of England wanting a long war discounted. No Government will make a long war their primary aim. England, knowing war, is well aware that she stands to lose in a war, and that even a victorious war would not make up for the cost of such a war.

Such is the fate of rich countries. England is overburdened with responsibilities because of the excessive size of her empire. She has no leaders of real calibre. ("The men I got to know in Munich are not the kind that start a new World War.") [—]

Further evidence that no determined action is to be expected on the part of England may above all be inferred from Poland's attitude. Poland would be even more cocky if she knew she could depend on England. [—] Even now England is putting out feelers to find out how the Führer envisages developments after Poland has been disposed of.

All this supports the conviction that while England may talk big, even recall her ambassador, perhaps put a complete embargo on trade,⁶⁵⁸ she is sure not to resort to armed intervention in the conflict.

In the eyes of the generals present at the talk, many of whom cherished fond memories of the Reichswehr's highly rewarding cooperation with the Red Army, the chances for Britain remaining uninterested seemed good at this point. That evening, Hitler once more journeyed to Salzburg to attend a performance of the Mozart opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.⁶⁵⁹

August 16 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Hitler's entry into the military on August 16, 1914, with the Bavarian Infantry Regiment List. This was cause for a solemn celebration on the Obersalzberg.⁶⁶⁰ While Hitler had successfully claimed, and had indeed impressed on his generals ever since the Röhm Purge,⁶⁶¹ that he had issued forth from the ranks of the Reichswehr, he was by no means a professional soldier, and at best could commemorate his fifth anniversary as "Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht." Nevertheless, the story had to be upheld and thus the elaborate pomp and circumstance of the celebration.

Festivities surrounding the anniversary began as early as the night of August 15. At midnight, Hitler's personal staff, led by his two chief adjutants SA Obergruppenführer Brückner and Colonel Schmundt,⁶⁶² called on him to secure for themselves a first place at the head of the long list of those to congratulate the Führer. At noon, Göring made his entry as senior officer and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe. Raeder and Brauchitsch had to confine themselves to sending congratulatory notes to Hitler as their military duties required their presence elsewhere.

In the afternoon, a delegation of the Infantry Regiment 19 (Munich), which was the successor to the original Infantry Regiment 16 (List) and whose barracks had been named "Adolf-Hitler-Kaserne" in 1934, ceremoniously delivered its congratulatory address.⁶⁶³ In appreciation of their efforts, Hitler presented each member of the delegation with a signed photograph of himself. In the course of the day, the following individuals came to pay tribute to their Führer: Reichsführer SS Himmler, the two SS Gruppenführers Heydrich and

Wolff, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Reich Press Chief Dietrich, Reichsleiter Bormann, and General Building Inspector Speer. A list of the prominent figures to call on Hitler on the occasion was highly reminiscent of his fiftieth-birthday celebration.

In the meantime, Danzig was preparing for a reunion by force with the Greater German Reich. An "SS Heimwehr" (SS home defense militia) had sprung up. Officially created to supplement an already well-armed police unit—standing at readiness at its barracks—it consisted of individuals the Waffen SS had all too obviously trained in military matters.

On August 18, members of the SS Heimwehr, wearing field-gray SS uniforms and steel helmets and carrying rifles, marched up in the center of the town. Gauleiter Forster presented their commander, SS Obersturmbannführer Goetze, with a new ensign, a swastika flag sewn on the coat of arms of the city of Danzig in the manner of a cross. Afterwards, the company paraded down Hindenburgallee at a brisk pace. At the same time a 286-meter long water-way was declared open for traffic along the Weichsel (Vistula) river. It was to afford "Danzig a direct link to East Prussia."⁶⁶⁴

On August 19, the Soviet-German Commercial Agreement was concluded. The German News Bureau reported the following on the matter:⁶⁶⁵

The negotiations between Germany and the USSR concerning an expansion of bilateral trade, underway for a considerable time already, came to a successful conclusion on August 19, 1939. The outcome of the negotiations has been a trade and credit agreement signed by the deputy Legation Counselor Schnurre on behalf of Germany, and the deputy head of the Soviet Russian trade legation in Germany, E. Barbarin. The trade agreement provides for Germany extending a credit to the amount of RM 200 million to the USSR, the money being earmarked for the purchase of German goods. The agreement further stipulates that the USSR shall see to the delivery of goods to Germany, within the subsequent two years, to the amount of RM 180 million.

The text of the DNB note made perfectly clear that a rapprochement between Germany and the Soviet Union was being actively pursued. At least, by establishing ties with the Russians, the Germans hoped to thwart the effectiveness of potential economic sanctions by the Western Powers. These now appeared certain if there was an attack on Poland. Meanwhile, in spite of repeated interventions by the German Ambassador in Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg,⁶⁶⁶ the

Russians proved insufficiently receptive to the urgency of the matter for Germany. Apparently, they could not, or were unwilling to, understand why such haste was suddenly needed for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany. Further, a division of Eastern Europe between Soviet and German spheres of interest was not a matter to be clarified in the shortest possible time in the eyes of the Soviets.

Hitler, by contrast, grew increasingly nervous as the timeframe he had named for the attack, "late August" and "September 1," drew ever closer.⁶⁶⁷ Time was running out and the English appeared no less intransigent. They seemed not about to allow a German military intervention in Poland. Hitler urgently needed the Russians to cover for him in the East, unless he wished to scrap the plans for the war in view of the rapidly advancing cold season.

On August 20, given the pressure for a timely conclusion of the affair, Hitler once more resorted to his persuasive powers and penned the following personal note:⁶⁶⁸

Herr Stalin, Moscow

1) I sincerely welcome the signing of the new German-Soviet Commercial Agreement as the first step in the re-shaping of German-Soviet relations.

2) The conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union means to me the establishment of German policy for a long time. Germany thereby resumes a political course that was beneficial to both States during bygone centuries. The Government of the Reich are therefore resolved in such a case to accept all the consequences of such a far-reaching change.

3) I accept the draft of the non-aggression pact that your Foreign Minister, Herr Molotov, handed over, but consider it urgently necessary to clarify the questions connected with it as soon as possible.

4) The substance of the supplementary protocol desired by the Soviet Union can, I am convinced, be clarified in the shortest possible time if a responsible German statesman can come to Moscow himself to negotiate. Otherwise the Government of the Reich are not clear as to how the supplementary protocol could be cleared up or settled in a short time.

5) The tension between Germany and Poland has become intolerable. Polish demeanor toward a great Power is such that a crisis may arise any day. Germany is at any rate determined, in the face of this presumption, from now on to look after the interests of the Reich with all means at her disposal.

6) In my opinion, it is desirable in view of the intentions of the two States to enter into a new relationship to each other, not to lose any time. I therefore again propose that you receive my Foreign Minister on Tuesday, August 22, but at the latest on Wednesday, August 23. The Reich Foreign Minister has full powers to draw up and sign the non-aggression pact as well as the protocol. A longer stay by the Foreign Minister in Moscow than one to two

August 20, 1939

days at most is impossible in view of the international situation. I should be glad to receive your early answer.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler was pressed for time indeed. The Reich Foreign Minister was to travel to Moscow on August 22, "at the latest on Wednesday, August 23." Ribbentrop was entitled to spend no more "than one or two days at most" in the Soviet capital. By August 25, Hitler wished the matter to be settled. Ribbentrop was to receive "full powers," i.e. the permission to sign anything the Russians desired so long as things moved along in a speedy fashion. To lure Stalin into cooperation with National Socialist Germany, Hitler insisted the agreement signified the "establishment of German policy for a long time." Close cooperation had always proven "beneficial to both States during bygone centuries."

On August 21, Hitler spent nearly the entire day at the Obersalzberg, waiting for news from Moscow. The atmosphere was tense. Only a call by von Papen relieved the situation a bit. Papen proposed to the Führer to reconcile Turkey to his plans by granting it deliveries of war weaponry from German suppliers.⁶⁶⁹ Hitler was content to agree with this proposal, restricted to items such as gun powder and anti-aircraft equipment. This was generally not considered "war material."

Another reprieve came from an exchange of telegrams between the Reich Chancellor and the International Viticulture Congress then convening at Bad Kreuznach. Hitler replied to the greetings received in the following manner:⁶⁷⁰

I thank the participants in the International Viticulture Congress in Bad Kreuznach for the cordial reetings telegraphed to me. I sincerely reciprocate in the hope that your congress may proceed with all success.

In the late evening hours of August 21, Hitler finally received recompense for his persistence. A telegram from Moscow conveyed that Stain had fallen for the all too tempting offers made in Hitler's telegram. Stalin wired the following reply:⁶⁷¹

August 21, 1939

To the Chancellor of the German Reich, Herr A. Hitler:

I thank you for the letter. I hope that the German-Soviet non-aggression pact will bring about a decided turn for the better in the political relations between our countries.

The peoples of our countries need peaceful relations with each other. The assent of the German Government to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact provides the foundation for eliminating the political tension and for the establishment of peace and collaboration between our countries.

The Soviet Government have instructed me to inform you that they agree to Herr von Ribbentrop's arrivin in Moscow on August 23.

J. Stalin

The German News Bureau speedily informed the public of this sensational and unanticipated turn of events that same evening. A radio broadcast at 11:30 p.m. carried the following official announcement:⁶⁷²

Berlin, August 21

The Reich Government and the Soviet Government have agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact. The Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop will journey to Moscow on Wednesday, August 23, to finalize negotiations.

Now Hitler felt in control of the situation once more. No doubt, so he thought, the Russians would not mount any opposition to a German attack on Poland. Faced with a like cooeration between Germany and Russia, the Western Powers would capitulate. They would bow to his will. Filled with renewed confidence, Hitler summoned his military commanders to the Obersalzberg for August 22. There he addressed them in the early morning hours. He was even more arrogant on this occasion than he had been on August 14. The outcome of his wager on Russia had greatly increased his confidence. His vanity knew no bounds. He claimed his "own personality," his "existence," and his "political talents" to be of historic importance. Mocking his opponents, he confidently proclaimed: "There is no outstanding personality in England and France." He spoke of his adversaries on the world stage in precisely the same terms he had already employed to deal with domestic opposition in 1932.⁶⁷³ At the time, he had maintained that, in regard to his opponents internally, he would consider himself better off "if [I] were faced with worthy fighters and not this stuff, this nature's run of the mill." Now he congratulated himself that "our enemies have leaders who are below the average. No masters, no men of action." These men he knew only too well: "Our enemies are little worms; I came to know them in Munich." In the end, he had always been right. After all, as he himself put it: "I should have been stoned if I had not been proven right."

A long and tiresome list of figures followed this peculiar self-laudation. Hitler strove to prove England's weak points. London commanded no more than "150 anti-aircraft guns." Certainly, it could "send at the most three divisions to the Continent." This was compounded by the fact that, so Hitler argued, "at the moment the English

Air Force has only 130,000 men.” Assured of the Luftwaffe’s superiority, he maintained: “England does not really want to support Poland. She is not risking eight million pounds in Poland, although she poured five hundred million into China.”

Hitler’s arguments boiled down to the fact that, as he himself proclaimed, “England cannot help Poland.” The Russians had been England’s last hope. The English had failed to take account of his “great strength of purpose” in their speculations. Certain that he himself had ruled out any adversity, he declared: “Personal contact to Stalin is established.” He continued: “Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her.”⁶⁷⁴

The surviving notes on Hitler’s talk before his generals detail the following:⁶⁷⁵

I have called you together to give you a picture of the political situation, in order that you might have some insight into the individual factors on which I have based my decision to act and in order to strengthen your confidence.

After this we shall discuss military details.

It was clear to me that a conflict with Poland had to come sooner or later. I had already made this decision in the spring, but I thought that I would first turn against the West in a few years, and only after that against the East. But the sequence of these things cannot be fixed. Nor should one close one’s eyes to threatening situations. I wanted first of all to establish a tolerable relationship with Poland in order to fight first against the West. But this plan, which appealed to me, could not be executed, as fundamental points had changed. It became clear to me that, in the event of a conflict with the West, Poland would attack us. Poland is striving for access to the sea. The further development appeared after the occupation of the Memel Territory and it became clear to me that in certain circumstances a conflict with Poland might come at an inopportune moment. I give as reasons for this conclusion:

1. First of all two personal factors:

My own personality and that of Mussolini.

Essentially all depends on me, on my existence, because of my political talents. Furthermore, the fact that probably no one will ever again have the confidence of the whole German people as I have. There will probably never again in the future be a man with more authority than I have. My existence is therefore a fact of great value. But I can be eliminated at any time by a criminal or a lunatic.

The second personal factor is the Duce. His existence is absolutely decisive. If anything happens to him, Italy’s loyalty to the alliance will no longer be certain. The Italian Court is fundamentally opposed to the Duce. Above all, the Court regards the expansion of the empire as an encumbrance. The Duce is the man with the strongest nerves in Italy.

The third personal factor in our favor is Franco. We can ask only for benevolent neutrality from Spain. But this depends on Franco’s personality.

He guarantees a certain uniformity and stability in the present system in Spain. We must accept the fact that Spain does not yet have a Fascist party with our internal unity.

The other side presents a negative picture as far as authoritative persons are concerned. There is no outstanding personality in England and France.

It is easy for us to make decisions. We have nothing to lose; we have everything to gain. Because of our restrictions (*Einschränkungen*) our economic situation is such that we can only hold out for a few more years. Göring can confirm this. We have no other choice, we must act. Our opponents will be risking a great deal and can gain only little. Britain's stake in a war is inconceivably great. Our enemies have leaders who are below the average. No masters, no men of action.

Besides the personal factors, the political situation is favorable for us: In the Mediterranean, rivalry between Italy, France and England; in the Far East, tension between Japan and England; in the Middle East, tension which causes alarm in the Mohammedan world.

The English Empire did not emerge stronger from the last war. Nothing was achieved from the maritime point of view. Strife between England and Ireland. The Union of South Africa has become more independent. Concessions have had to be made to India. England is in the utmost peril. Unhealthy industrialization. A British statesman can only view the future with concern.

France's position has also deteriorated, above all in the Mediterranean.

Further factors in our favor are these:

Since Albania, there has been a balance of power in the Balkans. Yugoslavia is infected with the fatal germ of decay because of her internal situation.

Rumania has not grown stronger. She is open to attack and vulnerable. She is threatened by Hungary and Bulgaria. Since Kemal's death, Turkey has been ruled by petty minds, unsteady, weak men.

All these favorable circumstances will no longer prevail in two or three years' time. No one knows how much longer I shall live. Therefore, better a conflict now.

The creation of Greater Germany was a great achievement politically, but militarily it was doubtful, since it was achieved by bluff on the part of the political leaders. It is necessary to test the military [machine]. If at all possible, not in a general reckoning, but by the accomplishment of individual tasks.

The relationship with Poland has become unbearable. My Polish policy hitherto was contrary to the views of the people. My proposals to Poland (Danzig and the Corridor) were frustrated by England's intervention. Poland changed her tone towards us. A permanent state of tension is intolerable. The power of initiative cannot be allowed to pass to others. The present moment is more favorable than in two or three years' time. An attempt on my life or Mussolini's could change the situation to our disadvantage. One cannot forever face one another with rifles cocked. One compromise solution suggested to us was that we should change our convictions and make kind gestures. They talked to us again in the language of Versailles. There was a danger of losing prestige. Now the probability is still great that the West will

not intervene. We must take the risk with ruthless determination. The politician must take a risk just as much as the general. We are faced with the harsh alternatives of striking or certain annihilation sooner or later.

Reference to previous hazardous undertakings.

I should have been stoned if I had not been proven right. The most dangerous step was the entry into the neutral zone. Only a week before, I got a warning through France. I have always taken a great risk in the conviction that it would succeed.

Now it is also a great risk. Iron nerves, iron resolution.

The following special reasons fortify me in my view. England and France have undertaken obligations which neither is in a position to fulfil. There is no real rearmament in England, but only propaganda. A great deal of harm was done by many Germans, who were not in agreement with me, saying and writing to English people after the solution of the Czech question: The Führer succeeded because you lost your nerve, because you capitulated too soon. This explains the present propaganda war. The English speak of a war of nerves. One factor in this war of nerves is to boost the increase of armaments. But what are the real facts about British rearmament? The naval construction program for 1938 has not yet been completed. Only the reserve fleet has been mobilized. Purchase of trawlers. No substantial strengthening of the Navy before 1941 or 1942.

Little has been done on land. England will be able to send at most three divisions to the Continent. A little has been done for the Air Force, but only a beginning. Anti-aircraft defense is in its initial stages. At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns. The new anti-aircraft gun has been ordered. It will take a long time before sufficient numbers have been produced. There is a shortage of anti-aircraft warning devices. England is still vulnerable from the air. This can change in two or three years. At the moment the English Air Force has only 130,000 men, France 72,000, Poland 15,000. England does not want the conflict to break out for two or three years.

The following is typical for England. Poland wanted a loan from England for her rearmament. England, however, only granted credits in order to make sure that Poland buy in England, although England cannot make deliveries. This suggests that England does not really want to support Poland. She is not risking eight million pounds in Poland, although she poured five hundred million into China. England's position in the world is too precarious. She will not take any risks.

France is short of men (decline in the birth rate). Little has been done for rearmament. The artillery is obsolete. France did not want to embark on this adventure. The West has only two possibilities for fighting against us:

1. Blockade: It will not be effective because of our autarky and because we have sources of supply in Eastern Europe.

2. Attack in the West from the Maginot line: I consider this impossible.

Another possibility would be the violation of Dutch, Belgian and Swiss neutrality. I have no doubt that all these States, as well as Scandinavia, will defend their neutrality with all available means. England and France will not violate the neutrality of these countries. Thus in actual fact England cannot

help Poland. There still remains an attack on Italy. Military intervention is out of the question. No one is counting on a long war. If Herr von Brauchitsch had told me that I would need four years to conquer Poland I would have replied: "Then it cannot be done." It is nonsense to say that England wants to wage a long war. We will hold our position in the West until we have conquered Poland. We must bear in mind our great production capacity. It is much greater than in 1914–1918.

The enemy had another hope, that Russia would become our enemy after the conquest of Poland. The enemy did not reckon with my great strength of purpose. Our enemies are little worms (*kleine Würmchen*); I came to know them in Munich.⁶⁷⁶

I was convinced that Stalin would never accept the English offer. Russia has no interest in preserving Poland, and Stalin knows that it would mean the end of his regime, no matter whether his soldiers emerged from a war victorious or vanquished. Litvinov's replacement was decisive. I brought about the change towards Russia gradually. In connection with the commercial treaty we got into political conversations. Proposal for a non-aggression pact. Then came a comprehensive proposal from Russia. Four days ago I took a special step, which led to Russia replying yesterday that she is prepared to sign. Personal contact to Stalin is established. The day after tomorrow von Ribbentrop will conclude the treaty.

Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her.

We need not be afraid of a blockade. The East will supply us with grain, cattle, coal, lead and zinc. It is a mighty aim, which demands great efforts. I am only afraid that at the last moment some cur (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.

The political objective goes further. A start has been made on the destruction of England's hegemony. The way will be open for the soldiers after I have made the political preparations.

Today's announcement of the non-aggression pact with Russia came as a bombshell. The consequences cannot be foreseen. Stalin also said that this course will benefit both countries. The effect on Poland will be tremendous.

Once Hitler had concluded his talk, as the record noted, Göring "thanked the Führer and assured him that the Wehrmacht would do its duty." Then, those assembled dined together. Apparently, the mood of the generals, who had remained silent throughout, was far from what Hitler held to be desirable. In spite of their surprise at the unexpected accord with the Soviet Union, many of the generals still seemed to wonder whether England would go along with a German attack on Poland. They were far from convinced that the Western Powers, though held in check by this latest diplomatic victory, would indeed abandon Poland. And what if Hitler was mistaken on this account? Neither the Army nor the Navy were ready to engage in any venture directed against Great Britain.

His discomfort with these largely unspoken apprehensions on the part of Germany's leading military men led Hitler to speak again in the afternoon. In his mind, he simply had to instill some courage and confidence in these weaklings whom he had learned to despise over the years. It was immaterial, so he argued, what turn events would actually take, as he surely would emerge the undisputed victor from any type of conflict. After all, Germany had the "better men," not to mention the "spiritual factors" essential to the successful waging of a war. What mattered in a war was "not right ... but victory." He was determined to fight and to give "a propagandist reason for starting the war—never mind whether it is plausible or not." Backbone was what the generals needed: "Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally! . . . The stronger man is right! The greatest harshness!"

The memorandum on Hitler's admonitions to the generals that afternoon read as follows:⁶⁷⁷

Things can also work out differently regarding England and France. It is impossible to prophesy with any certainty. I am expecting an embargo on trade, not a blockade, and furthermore that relations will be broken off. The most iron determination on our part. No shrinking back from anything. Everyone must hold the view that we have been determined to fight the Western Powers right from the start. A life and death struggle. Germany has won every war when she was united. An inflexible, unflinching bearing, above all on the part of superiors, firm confidence, belief in victory, overcoming the past by becoming accustomed to the heaviest burdens. A long period of peace would not do us any good. It is therefore necessary to be prepared for anything. A manly bearing. It is not machines that fight each other, but men. We have the better men as regards quality. Spiritual factors are decisive.

On the opposite side they are weaker men. The nation collapsed in 1918 because the spiritual prerequisites were insufficient. Frederick the Great only achieved final success by his fortitude.

The destruction of Poland has priority. The aim is to eliminate active forces, not to reach a definite line. Even if war breaks out in the West, the destruction of Poland remains the priority. A quick decision in view of the season.

I shall give a propagandist reason for starting the war, never mind whether it is plausible or not. The victor will not be asked afterwards whether he told the truth or not. When starting and waging a war it is not right that matters, but victory.

Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally! Eighty million people must obtain what is their right. Their existence must be made secure. The stronger man is right! The greatest harshness! Swiftly in making decisions is necessary. Firm faith in the German soldier. Crises are due solely to leaders having lost their nerve.

First requirement: Advance up to the Vistula and the Narev. Our technical superiority will shatter the nerves of the Poles. Every newly formed active Polish force is to be destroyed again immediately. A continuous process of attrition.

New German frontier delimitation according to sound principles and possibly a protectorate as a buffer state. Military operations will not be influenced by these considerations. The wholesale destruction of Poland is the military objective. Speed is the chief thing. Pursuit until complete annihilation. Conviction that the German Wehrmacht is equal to all demands. The order for the start of hostilities will be given later, probably Saturday morning.

Halder's entry into his diary for that day likewise affirms that, by this date, Hitler had already determined to begin the war against Poland on August 26.⁶⁷⁸ This reflected his general propensity for launching major military missions on a Saturday.⁶⁷⁹ Thereby he believed he would be able to catch the English off-guard, most of whom would already have set out to enjoy a long weekend. This, in turn, Hitler speculated, would slow the British ability to react to his moves in a timely fashion and hence would limit their room for action.

In the meanwhile, Ribbentrop had set out for Moscow, traveling from Berlin to Königsberg. Hitler had provided him the following sweeping authority:⁶⁸⁰

Full Powers

Obersalzberg, August 22, 1939

I hereby grant to the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, full power to negotiate in the name of the German Reich with authorized representatives of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics regarding a non-aggression treaty, as well as all related questions, and to sign both the non-aggression treaty and other agreements resulting from the negotiations, with the provision, if need be, that this treaty and these agreements shall come into force immediately on signature.

Adolf Hitler

Nevertheless, Ribbentrop was not left solely to his own devices. Instead, in addition to the usual Foreign Ministry entourage, Ribbentrop found Heinrich Hoffmann at his side.⁶⁸¹ This odd procedure greatly upset Soviet protocol. Notwithstanding the strangeness of the situation, Hitler had appointed his friend and personal photographer Hoffmann his official representative on the occasion of the state visit. Needless to add, the public was not informed of this measure.

Hitler apparently placed greater stock in a frank report by Hoffmann than on the official and tedious account Ribbentrop was bound to render. Hoffmann would assuredly recount the impressions Stalin

made on him more colorfully and truthfully. While Hitler publicly placed great emphasis on “blind obedience,” he personally felt only contempt for those who obeyed him so unquestioningly. Ribbentrop’s fawning annoyed him at times despite the Foreign Minister’s undeniable dedication and professed desire to serve his Führer well. Undoubtedly this all contributed to Hoffmann’s singular commission. Stalin, however, accepted the presence of the German Head of State’s peculiar “special emissary” at the talks. He even toasted the well-being of “Herr Hitler and his friend, Herr Heinrich Hoffmann.”⁶⁸²

Speaking before the generals, Hitler had maintained that the “announcement of the non-aggression pact with Russia came as a bombshell.” This was doubtless true, but especially for Hitler’s friends, Japan and Italy, whom he had obviously not apprised in any way of his secret negotiations. They felt they had been lied to and betrayed, and rightly so. The Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, Hiroshi Oshima, went white as a sheet when the German State Secretary von Weizsäcker called on him to present him with the news.⁶⁸³ The completely unexpected turn of events ultimately forced the Japanese Prime Minister to step down.⁶⁸⁴

Mussolini was also nettled by this latest in a series of “surprise” moves Hitler had presented him with. This contributed to Mussolini’s decision of August 25 to remain neutral in the upcoming conflict.

Hitler’s alliance with Bolshevik Russia did not meet with approval in Germany either. Though there were voices which applauded this diplomatic feat as a “masterpiece of the Führer,” most Germans were appalled. They were outraged less at the thought of Germany becoming the ally of a communist state than at the lack of character this implied on the part of Hitler, the self-proclaimed enemy of all Bolsheviks. As once before domestically, after the Röhm Purge, this complete turn-about in foreign policy revealed Hitler as a hazardous desperado, an opportunist of whom only the worst was to be expected in the future. To secure an advantage for himself, this man was ever ready to abandon the best and most worthy of his friends to the knife. Many Germans remembered only too well Hitler’s resounding proclamations, his raving against the dangers of Bolshevism just three years earlier:⁶⁸⁵

And I believe that this ruin would come at that point at which the leadership 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. 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.

More pertinently, in a speech a year after these remarks, Hitler had insisted:⁶⁸⁶

I hold the Bolshevik 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 Bolshevik 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 would we on our side accept any aid from the Bolshevik state. For I fear that every Volk which reaches out for such aid will find it to be its own demise.

In 1939, nevertheless, the question remained of how this “devilish potion” now would truly affect those it had been brewed for. How would England and France react to news of the Soviet-German Agreement?

Papers in Paris carried one particularly revealing headline commenting on the new alignment of powers: “Brest-Litovsk 1939.” This was a succinct summation of the situation as it appeared to the perceptive French in 1939: Just as the conclusion of the separate peace⁶⁸⁷ between Germany and Russia at Brest-Litovsk had failed to prevent an Allied victory in 1918, the agreement binding the Soviet Union to Germany in 1939 would not prove effective. As unpleasant a reality as this may well have been for Germany’s leadership, “Brest-Litovsk 1939” simply meant that, while a German-Soviet collaboration might delay victory for the West, the Western Powers would, nevertheless, be victorious in the end.

Reactions in London were more pronounced still. At 2:40 p.m., Lord Halifax informed Warsaw by telephone that the Pact “does not modify the attitude or the policy of His Majesty’s Government or the relations between His Majesty’s Government and Poland.”⁶⁸⁸ The

August 22, 1939

Cabinet convened at 3:00 p.m. on August 22 and declared that "they had no hesitation in deciding that such an event [the German-Soviet Pact] would in no way affect their obligations to Poland."⁶⁸⁹

To assure that Hitler comprehended just how determined England was in the Polish case, Chamberlain addressed the letter below to the German Head of State. Once more he stressed the certainty of a British declaration of war in the event of a German attack on Poland and pointed to the experience of 1914.⁶⁹⁰

August 22, 1939

Your Excellency:

Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening.

These steps have, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, been rendered necessary by military movements which have been reported from Germany and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet Agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with. No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligation to Poland, which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfill.

It has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in this allegation,⁶⁹¹ His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

Having thus made our position perfectly clear, I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people nor by yours, and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails today.

We have been, and at all times will be, ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place, and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future international relations, including matters of interest to us and to you.

The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussions in the present state of tension are, however, obvious, and the longer that tension is maintained, the harder it will be for reason to prevail. These difficulties, however, might be mitigated if not removed, provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides, and indeed on all sides, to press polemics and to all incitement.

If such a truce could be arranged, then, at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them (with the aid of a neutral intermediary, if both sides should think that would be helpful).

But I am bound to say that there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to a successful issue, unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would, when concluded, be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to make such contribution as they could to the effective operation of such guarantees.

At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war.

In view of the grave consequences to humanity, which may follow from the action of their rulers, I trust Your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

Neville Chamberlain

Instructions to request a reception by the German Reich Chancellor immediately reached the British Ambassador in Berlin at about 9:00 p.m. Henderson was to personally present Chamberlain's message to Hitler.⁶⁹² Hitler had no wish to engage in any direct discussions with the British prior to formal signature of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact. And, besides, what was it that this "little worm" desired at this hour? What else than to dissuade him from concluding the pact with Moscow? Moreover, it was actually not his responsibility at all to see to the Ambassador's wishes. After all, this was Ribbentrop's job. There was really no compelling reason why he, as the Reich Chancellor, should have to grant Henderson's request.

Somewhat uncertain about his arguments, Hitler determined how to proceed in this case in a rather peculiar manner: from the Berghof, he telephoned von Weizsäcker in Berlin to ask his opinion. "This was the first and last time," the State Secretary later recalled,⁶⁹³ "that Hitler spoke to me on the telephone. He wanted to know whether an Ambassador had the right to request an audience with him in the absence of the Foreign Minister. I said, yes, of course."

Well, if he did have to swallow this bitter pill, then he, Hitler, would do his best to make it a most unpleasant experience for the administering

nurse as well. He would make an unprecedented scene for Henderson. He would shout; he would scream; he would rant and rave. He would weary him with long lists of figures and resort to similar techniques pulled from the long register of his sublime rhetorical and theatrical accomplishments.

Henderson's reception at the Berghof was scheduled for 1:00 pm. Weizsäcker and Hewel⁶⁹⁴ joined the British Ambassador on his flight from Berlin to the Reich Chancellor's retreat. By all appearances, Weizsäcker had already relayed the contents of Chamberlain's letter to Hitler by this time.⁶⁹⁵

Once the men arrived at their destination, with Hewel serving as interpreter in the absence of Schmidt who was visiting Moscow with Ribbentrop, a reception of 45 minutes' duration began. Hitler used most of this time to hurl one accusation after the other at Poland. He spoke of persistent Polish transgressions; of provocations; of hundred of thousands of German refugees supposedly driven from their homes. He found fault with England for rebuffing his offers of friendship for over twenty years. Instead of an amelioration of the situation, what was it he had to bear witness to now? England was actively backing an insolent Warsaw Government just as it once had incited the Czechs to agitate against Germany. This was all a bit much, but the tirade did not fundamentally differ from the one he had confronted Chamberlain with the year before in the case of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹⁶

All Henderson could do in light of this verbal assault was to insist on the British determination to fight. Time and time again, he emphasized that London would react to any form of aggression against Poland with an open declaration of war. As far as the Soviet-German Pact was concerned, Henderson remarked that he was relieved to see Germany rather than England allied with the Bolsheviks. This latter turn of phrase momentarily disconcerted Hitler, as Henderson reported.⁶⁹⁷ The German protocol of the conversation between Hitler and Henderson read as follows:⁶⁹⁸

The British Ambassador opened the conversation by stating that he was delivering a letter on behalf of the British Government. At first a more worthy personage was to have done this.⁶⁹⁹ However, the course of events had demanded speedy action especially since the news of the German-Soviet Russian Pact had come as a great surprise to the British Government.

The Führer stated that he already had a translation of the letter before him. He was about to prepare a written reply, but in the meantime he wished to make a few oral observations to the Ambassador on the same lines.

Henderson replied that it was to be hoped that a solution might be found to the difficult situation; it was understood in England that Anglo-German cooperation was necessary for the well-being of Europe.

The Führer replied that this ought to have been realized earlier. When the Ambassador objected that the British Government had given their guarantees and must now honor them, the Führer replied: "Then honor them. If you have given a blank check⁷⁰⁰ you must also meet it." He had, he added, made it clear in his reply that Germany was not responsible for the guarantees given by England, but England would be responsible for the consequences of these commitments.

It was England's business to realize this clearly. He had informed the Polish Government that any further persecution of the Germans in Poland would immediately entail action by the Reich. As he had learned from other sources, Chamberlain had provided for increased military preparations in England. Germany's preparations were confined to purely defensive measures. "If," said the Führer, "I should hear of any further measures of this sort being taken by England today or tomorrow, I shall immediately order general mobilization in Germany."⁷⁰¹

When the Ambassador remarked that war would then be inevitable, the Führer repeated his pronouncements regarding mobilization.

He then stated that the people in England were always talking about the "poisoned atmosphere." The fact was that the "atmosphere" had been "poisoned" by England. If it had not been for England he would have achieved a peaceful settlement with Czechoslovakia last year, and would certainly have done the same with Poland this year as regards the Danzig problem. England alone was responsible, and the whole of Germany was firmly convinced of this. Today, hundreds of thousands of *Volksdeutsche* were being ill-treated in Poland, dragged off to concentration camps and driven from their homes. He was in possession of extensive material on this which he had hitherto refrained from publishing. England had given a blank check for all this, and now she must pay for it. Since England had given the guarantees, he, the Führer, had been obliged to take a firm stand on this question. He could not allow tens of thousands of fellow-Germans to be slaughtered for the sake of one of England's whims.

He recalled that Germany had previously lived on good terms with Poland, and he had made a reasonable and fair offer to Poland. This offer had been sabotaged by the Western Powers and, as previously in the case of Czechoslovakia, largely by reports from the Military Attachés who spread false rumors about German mobilization.

Here the Ambassador objected that the Polish Government had turned down the German offer before England had given the guarantees.

The Führer went on to say that Chamberlain could not have found a better plan for ranging every German solidly behind the Führer by supporting Poland and a settlement of the Danzig question in Poland's favour. He saw no possibilities in negotiation because he was convinced that the British Government were simply not interested in such a settlement. He could only repeat once more that general mobilization would be proclaimed in Germany

should further military measures be adopted in England. The same applied to France.

When the Führer had emphasized that all this would be set down in writing, he declared that he had done everything humanly possible. England had made an enemy of the man who had wished to become her greatest friend. England would now make the acquaintance of a Germany very different from that which she had imagined for so many years.

Henderson replied that the people in England knew that Germany was strong and she had often demonstrated this in recent times.

The Führer declared that he had made Poland a generous offer, but England had interfered.

To this the Ambassador retorted that although the offer was made, it was nevertheless in the nature of a "dictate."

The Führer then described how several months before in this very place he had discussed the same settlement with Colonel Beck⁷⁰² who had described it as too sudden at the time, but had nevertheless seen possibilities in it.

He had repeated his proposals in March, and stated in addition that in this case Germany would renounce her interests in Slovakia. At that time, the Führer emphasized, Poland would have declared herself willing if England had not interfered. At the time the English press had said that now the freedom of Poland and also of Rumania was threatened. The Führer then continued that in the event of the slightest attempt by Poland to make any further move against Germans or Danzig, he would immediately intervene, and furthermore that mobilization in the West would be answered by German mobilization.

Ambassador Henderson: "Is that a threat?"

The Führer: "No, a protective measure!"

He then declared that the British Government had given preference to everything rather than cooperation with Germany. They had turned to France, Turkey and Moscow.

The Ambassador objected that it was now Germany who was coming to terms with Moscow; to which the Führer retorted that he was forced to do so because of the will to destruction of the Western Powers. The Ambassador disputed this and maintained that Britain did not wish to destroy Germany.

The Führer retorted that he was nevertheless firmly convinced; he had therefore built a Western Wall costing nine thousand millions in order to protect Germany from an attack from the West.

Henderson pointed out that the change in British opinion had taken place after March 15, to which the Führer retorted that Poland had become agitated about the Carpatho-Ukraine out of self-interest. Furthermore, conditions within Czechoslovakia had become intolerable for Germany. After all, Bohemia and Moravia had received their culture from the Germans and not from the English. He was convinced that the Czech solution was the best one. President Hácha had been happy to see a way out of the crisis; it was naturally a matter of indifference to the English whether there was any shooting in the heart of Central Europe.

Finally, the Führer assured the Ambassador that he was not blaming him, and that he had always appreciated his personal efforts on behalf of German-English friendship.

The Ambassador alluded to the great tragedy which would now be enacted, whereupon the Führer declared that, should it come to war, it would be a war of life and death, judging by English intentions in this respect. In this England had more to lose. Henderson observed that according to Clausewitz, war always brought surprises; he only knew that every one would do his duty.

The Führer said that Germany had never done anything to damage England, nevertheless England was taking her stand against Germany. He referred again to the question of Danzig and Poland, about which England adopted the attitude of "better war than anything to Germany's advantage."

Henderson declared that he had done his best. He had recently written to a Reich Minister saying that the Führer, who had taken ten years to win over Germany, would have to give England a longer period of time.

The Führer declared that the fact that England had taken a stand against Germany in the Danzig question had deeply shaken the German people.

Henderson objected, saying that they had only opposed the principle of force, whereupon the Führer countered by asking whether England had ever found a solution for any of the idiocies of Versailles by way of negotiation.

The Ambassador had no reply to this, and the Führer declared that according to a German proverb it always takes two to make love. The Ambassador emphasized that Chamberlain had always championed Germany, and the Führer declared that he too had always believed that until the spring.

Thereupon Henderson emphasized that he personally had never believed in an Anglo-Franco-Russian Pact. His view was that Russia only wished to be rid of Chamberlain by procrastination and then to profit from a war. He personally preferred that it should be Germany rather than England who should have a treaty with Russia.

The Führer answered: "Make no mistake. It will be a long treaty."⁷⁰³

Henderson said he thought that the Führer knew as well as he did that the Russians always made difficulties. In any case it was certain that Chamberlain had not changed.

To this the Führer replied: "I must judge by deeds in this matter."

The interview ended with the Führer stating that a written reply would be handed to the Ambassador in the afternoon.

As on many previous occasions, Hitler was exuberant immediately after the talk. He was certain he had just achieved a great rhetorical feat, as Weizsäcker recorded in his memoirs:⁷⁰⁴ "Hardly had the door shut on the Ambassador, when Hitler slapped himself on the thigh, laughed and said: 'Chamberlain will not survive that conversation; his Cabinet will fall this evening.'"

Hitler had always retained the conviction that his demands in his speech before the Reichstag on February 20, 1938⁷⁰⁵ had brought about the removal of the British Foreign Secretary Eden. Against the

background of the Hitlerian mental attitude, his hope that Chamberlain would be removed after reproof by the German Reich Chancellor—albeit expressed in a private discussion at the Berghof—was perhaps not a non sequitur as it may seem at first glance. The further course of events was to prove just how wrong Hitler's speculations had been. Neither the most cleverly thought-out speeches or declarations, nor the most refined letters, could move the British in their stand toward Germany. Unaware of these actual facts, Hitler penned a swift reply to Chamberlain's admonitions of August 22:⁷⁰⁶

August 23, 1939

Your Excellency!

The British Ambassador has just handed to me a communication in which Your Excellency draws attention in the name of the British Government to a number of points which in your estimation are of the greatest importance.

I may be permitted to answer your letter as follows:

1. Germany has never sought conflicts with England and has never interfered in English interests. On the contrary, she has for years endeavored—although unfortunately in vain—to win England's friendship. On this account she assumed in a wide area of Europe voluntary limitations of her own interests which from a national-political point of view it would otherwise have been very difficult to tolerate.

2. The German Reich, however, like every other State, possesses certain definite interests which it is impossible to renounce. These do not extend beyond the limits of the necessities imposed by earlier German history and conditioned by vital economic prerequisites. Some of these questions held and still hold a significance both of a national-political and of a psychological character which no German Government is able to ignore.

To these questions belong the German City of Danzig and the connected problem of the Corridor. Numerous statesmen, historians, and men of letters, even in England, have been conscious of this at any rate up to a few years ago. I would add that all these territories lying in the aforesaid German sphere of interest, and in particular those lands which returned to the Reich eighteen months ago, received their cultural development at the hands not of Englishmen but exclusively of Germans, and this, moreover, from a time dating back over a thousand years.

3. Germany was prepared to settle the question of Danzig and of the Corridor by the method of negotiation on the basis of a proposal of truly unparalleled magnanimity. The allegations disseminated by England regarding a German mobilization against Poland, the assertion of aggressive designs towards Rumania, Hungary, etc., etc., as well as the so-called guarantee declarations which were subsequently given, had, however, dispelled Polish inclination to negotiate on a basis of this kind which would have been tolerable for Germany also.

4. The general assurance (*Generalzusicherung*) given by England to Poland, that she would render assistance to that country in all circumstances,

August 23, 1939

regardless of the causes from which a conflict might spring, could only be interpreted in that country as an encouragement thenceforward to unloose, under cover of such a charter, a wave of appalling terrorism against the one and a half million German inhabitants living in Poland. The atrocities which since then have been taking place in that country are terrible for the victims, but intolerable for a Great Power such as the German Reich, which is expected to remain a passive onlooker during these happenings. Poland has been guilty of numerous breaches of her legal obligations towards the Free City of Danzig, has made demands in the character of ultimata, and has initiated a process of economic strangulation.

5. The Government of the German Reich therefore recently caused the Polish Government to be informed that they are not prepared passively to accept this development of affairs, that they will not tolerate further addressing of notes in the character of ultimata to Danzig, that they will not tolerate a continuance of the persecution of the German minority, that they will equally not tolerate the extermination of the Free City of Danzig by economic measures, in other words, the destruction of the vital bases of the population of Danzig by a kind of customs blockade, and that they will not tolerate the occurrence of further acts of provocation directed against the Reich. Apart from this, the questions of the Corridor and of Danzig must and shall be solved.

6. Your Excellency informs me in the name of the British Government that you will be obliged to render assistance to Poland in any such case of intervention on the part of Germany. I take note of this statement of yours and assure you that it can make no change in the determination of the Reich Government to safeguard the interests of the Reich as stated in point 5 above. Your assurance to the effect that in such an event you anticipate a long war, is shared by myself.

Germany, if attacked by England, will be found prepared and determined. I have already more than once declared before the German people and the world that there can be no doubt concerning the determination of the new German Reich rather to accept, for however long it might be, every sort of misery and tribulation than to sacrifice its national interests, let alone its honour.

7. The Government of the German Reich have received information to the effect that the British Government intend to carry out measures of mobilization which, according to the statements contained in your own letter, Mr. Prime Minister, are clearly directed against Germany alone. This appears to be true of France as well. Since Germany has never had the intention of taking military measures, other than those of a defensive character, against either England or France, and, as has already been emphasized, has never intended, and does not in the future intend, to attack England or France, it follows that this announcement as confirmed by you, Mr. Prime Minister, in your own letter, can only refer to a proposed act of menace directed against the Reich.

*I therefore inform Your Excellency that, in the event of these military announcements being carried into effect, I shall order immediate mobilization of the German forces.*⁷⁰⁷

8. The question of the treatment of European problems on a peaceful basis is not a decision which rests with Germany, but primarily with those who, since the crime committed by the Versailles Dictate, have stubbornly and consistently opposed any peaceful revision. Only after a change of spirit on the part of the responsible Powers can there be any real change in the relationship between England and Germany. I have all my life fought for German-English friendship; the attitude adopted by British diplomacy—at any rate up to the present—has, however, convinced me of the futility of such an attempt. Should there be any change in this respect in the future, nobody could be happier than I.

Adolf Hitler

At 5:00 p.m., Henderson called on Hitler at the Berghof a second time. Hitler handed the British Ambassador the written answer he had prepared in the meantime. In the ensuing discussion, Henderson emphasized that “the hostile attitude to Germany did not represent the will of the British people. It was the work of Jews and enemies of the Nazis.” The German protocol recorded the following:⁷⁰⁸

The Ambassador first read through the Führer’s written reply and expressed his regret at its contents. The Führer declared that there were people in the British Government who wanted war. The Ambassador vigorously denied this and declared that Chamberlain had always been a friend of Germany. The Führer mentioned the Minister of War,⁷⁰⁹ saying he could not imagine him as one. Henderson said he thought that the proof of Chamberlain’s friendship was to be found in the fact that he had refused to have Churchill in the Cabinet. The hostile attitude to Germany did not represent the will of the British people. It was the work of Jews and enemies of the Nazis.

The Führer assured the Ambassador that he did not include him personally among the enemies of Germany. His, the Führer’s, relationship with England had been a series of disappointments. Even before he came to power he had been warned by experts not to cherish too great hopes. However, as far as he was concerned the position was very simple:

He was now fifty, therefore if war had to come, it was better that it should come now than when he was fifty-five or even sixty years old. There could only be understanding or war between England and Germany. England would do well to realize that as a front-line soldier he knew what war was and would utilize every means available. It was surely quite clear to everyone that the World War would not have been lost had he been Chancellor at the time.⁷¹⁰

“At the next instance of Polish provocation,” continued the Führer, “I shall act. The questions of Danzig and the Corridor will be settled one way or another. Please take note of this. Believe me, last year—on October 2—I would have marched either way.⁷¹¹ I give you my word of honor on that!”

The Ambassador observed that after all England and Germany were equals and had equal rights, whereupon the Führer replied that, in that case,

England ought not to intervene against Germany if she were clearly safeguarding her own rights. He had once before handed the Baldwin Government a definite proposition, but it had met with no response.⁷¹²

The interview concluded with the Führer stating that the text of the letter would be delivered in London by the Ambassador⁷¹³ on the following day.

The official communiqué published on the meeting between Henderson and Hitler read:⁷¹⁴

On the explicit desire of the British Government, the Führer received the British Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, at the Berghof today. The Ambassador presented the Führer with a letter written by the British Prime Minister. This correspondence was penned in the spirit of yesterday's communiqué published after the Cabinet session. The Führer unequivocally stated that, irrespective of the obligations entered into by the British Government, Germany cannot be induced to desist from the pursuit of the nation's vital interests.

At the same time, the German press received instructions to portray the British policy as "muddled." The reason for this assessment was England's insistence on "blindly" fulfilling its obligations towards Poland.⁷¹⁵

As ratification of the Soviet-German Pact was scheduled for August 23, Hitler issued orders for the attack on Poland to be launched on August 26. Halder recorded in his diary: "Day Y definitely set for the 26th (Saturday)."⁷¹⁶ Simultaneously, a rationing of foodstuffs, fossil fuels, textiles, and certain raw materials was to enter into force.

Already on August 23, the Danzig senate passed a resolution elevating Gauleiter Albert Forster to the post of Head of State. This move was unconstitutional, as the statutes of the Free City of Danzig provided for no such office. However, Hitler had long resolved to see through a virtual coup d'état there and, for this purpose, he needed a reliable man in this key position. Forster, who apparently had been summoned to Hitler on August 21 once again,⁷¹⁷ was to take over the city. As soon as Hitler so desired, Forster would then be in a position to remove the troublesome City Senate and institute a "basic law." This in fact meant nothing less than presenting the world with the fait accompli of an annexation of the Free City by the Greater German Reich.

This curious undertaking reflected the excessive precautions Hitler always took in cases related to power politics. Undoubtedly, Danzig's Senate could well have passed a "basic law" without outside prodding. Its president, SS Gruppenführer and deputy Gauleiter Arthur Greiser,⁷¹⁸

might well have seen to this on his own. Nevertheless, Hitler was not taking any risks. He feared that, if he left the Senate to its own devices, legal bickering could delay timely action at a crucial moment. So he needed an absolutely reliable man, i.e. a stooge, to wield uncontested power in Danzig.

In the evening hours of August 23, the Berghof established yet another telephone connection with Moscow. Ribbentrop was confronted with a minor difficulty in his negotiations with Stalin, as the Soviets insisted on the Latvian ports Libau and Windau. And despite the vast power of attorney supplied by Hitler, Ribbentrop did not want to give in on this point on the Russians' agenda, unless he had Hitler's written approval in hand, on which he must insist, as he informed Hitler.⁷¹⁹ By 11:00 p.m., a telegram lay on the Foreign Minister's desk reading:⁷²⁰ "Answer is: Yes, agreed."

The swiftness of Hitler's decision in favor of the Soviets came as no surprise. He was understandably eager to have the treaty with the Russians signed and was largely indifferent to the precise terms of the contract laying the groundwork for such a collaboration, as he never really intended to uphold the provisions of the contract in any event. At this point, he would willingly have made even greater concessions to the Russians in the East: Belorussia, the Polish section of the Ukraine, Latvia, and Estonia could have belonged to the Soviet Union. Moscow could even have demanded Finland, half the Balkans, and perhaps Turkey. Hitler, however, stood always prepared to launch a surprise attack tomorrow on the ally of today.⁷²¹ Whatever he had to cede to Russia voluntarily during those days, he would surely try to take from it again by force at a later time.

On August 23, the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union was signed shortly before midnight. At 1:00 a.m. on August 24, Ribbentrop reported its successful conclusion to Hitler on the phone.⁷²²

The agreement read as follows:⁷²³

Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany
and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Treaty of Neutrality, which was concluded between Germany and the U.S.S.R. in April 1926, have reached the following agreement:

Article I

The two Contracting Parties undertake to refrain from any act of violence, any aggressive action and any attack on each other either severally or jointly with other Powers.

Article II

Should one of the Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third Power, the other Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third Power.

Article III

The Governments of the two Contracting Parties will in future maintain continual contact with one another for the purpose of consultation in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests.

Article IV

Neither of the two Contracting Parties will join any grouping of Powers whatsoever which is aimed directly or indirectly at the other Party.

Article V

Should disputes or conflicts arise between the Contracting Parties over questions of one kind or another, both Parties will settle these disputes or conflicts exclusively by means of a friendly exchange of views or if necessary by the appointment of arbitration commissions.

Article VI

The present Treaty shall be concluded for a period of ten years with the proviso that, in so far as one of the Contracting Parties does not denounce it one year before the expiry of this period, the validity of this Treaty shall be deemed to be automatically prolonged for another five years.

Article VII

The present Treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The instruments of ratification will be exchanged in Berlin. The treaty shall enter into force immediately upon signature.

Done in duplicate in the German and Russian languages.

Moscow, August 23, 1939

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop

With full power of the Government of the U.S.S.R.: V. Molotov

A secret additional protocol, which was not published at the time, was added to this:⁷²⁴

Secret Additional Protocol

On the occasion of the signature of the Non-Aggression Treaty between the German Reich and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the undersigned plenipotentiaries of the two Parties discussed in strictly confidential terms the question of the delimitation of their respective spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. These conversations led to the following result:

1. In the event of a territorial and political transformation in the territories belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern frontier of Lithuania shall represent the frontier of the spheres of interest both of Germany and the U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna territory is recognized by both Parties.

2. In the event of a territorial and political transformation of the territories belonging to the Polish State, the spheres of interest of both Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula, and San.

The question whether the interests of both Parties make the maintenance of an independent Polish State appear desirable and how the frontiers of this State should be drawn can be definitely determined only on the course of further political developments.

In any case both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly understanding.

3. With regard to South-Eastern Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares complete political désintéressement in these territories.

4. This Protocol will be treated by both Parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
With full power of the Government of the U.S.S.R.: V. Molotov

On the morning of August 24, Hitler summoned State Secretary von Weizsäcker for a discussion.⁷²⁵ The Führer was exuberant and certain of the future. He was fully confident that, after the scene he had made with Henderson, the British would yield finally. And once a change of heart was evident on the part of England, Poland had no choice but to retreat. A solution could then be reached “step by step and peacefully.” In fact, England would shortly drop Poland just as it had abandoned Czechoslovakia earlier when the danger of war was imminent.

Nonetheless, to Hitler’s astonishment, none of the news from London carried any reports of the fall of Chamberlain’s Cabinet.⁷²⁶ Flying back to Berlin and landing at the Tempelhof airport at 6:35 p.m., he was baffled and visibly disappointed not to find any such news on his desk at the Reich Chancellery.⁷²⁷

During the next hours, however, Hitler was far too busy to concern himself with the “confused” statesmen across the Channel. Ribbentrop had also just arrived in Berlin, at 6:40 p.m., together with his entourage—including the “special emissary” Heinrich Hoffmann. At 7:00 p.m., the Führer told Germany’s diplomatic delegation to the Soviet Union to report on its experiences.

The stories Hoffmann and Ribbentrop told of their days in Moscow left Hitler wide-eyed with the same utter disbelief Marco Polo once encountered when summoned to speak before the Doge of Venice of his journeys to the Far East. Napoleon had reacted in a similar manner to the tales Caulaincourt told of St. Petersburg. Ribbentrop declared to

have felt in Moscow “as though amongst old Party comrades, so to speak.”⁷²⁸ Hoffmann praised Stalin’s acumen, the authority he exuded, the sincerity and warmth of his speech.⁷²⁹

The persistent ridicule of the Russians in the German press was beginning to exact its toll. German propaganda had described the Bolsheviks as subhumans (*Untermenschen*), wild, raving animals, assuredly going about clad in nothing but furs and hides, gnashing their teeth. And now the representatives of National Socialist Germany had traveled to Moscow only to report back that the city looked like any other European metropolis. And people even drove cars in its streets—astounding, truly! Apparently, Russians were completely normal human beings. One could negotiate with them in a civilized manner, provided one treated them with friendship. Such a striking contrast to the official black-and-white propaganda naturally had to elicit a corresponding reaction, especially with many Germans of the time, who loved to rush from one extreme to the other.

Hitler truly desired nothing less than cultivating friendly relations with the Soviet Union in the future. The present alliance served as a means to an end. It was a last resort in his drive to eliminate Poland. A surprise military attack would do if all else failed. He must have been no more pleased than Napoleon⁷³⁰ at the sudden pro-Russian sentiments of his closest colleagues. If a two-day stay in Moscow was enough to turn convinced National Socialists into friends of Russia, then how much more detrimental to his cause might it be to allow further contacts with Russians?

Under no circumstances, thought Hitler, could he allow himself now to stray from the path assigned to him by his notions dating back to 1919. After all, the Russians were a notoriously primitive nation. Their lot was subservience to the German master race. They were to be subdued and their soil converted into “Lebensraum for Germany.” Germany’s true friends were England and Italy, even if the English failed to perceive this at this time. Surely England and Italy would allow their enthusiasm to surface once presented with the fait accompli of German territorial conquests in the East.⁷³¹ It might well prove disastrous to cede ground now. He simply had to persevere. The Italians and the British needed perhaps little more than yet another thorough working-over to come to see his point of view, which was inherently theirs as well.

7

On August 25, Hitler summoned the British Ambassador Henderson to the Reich Chancellery for a meeting at 1:30 p.m. Before this reception, he also addressed a lengthy correspondence to Mussolini. Hitler was aware that he needed to furnish the Duce with a rationale for having concluded the pact with the Soviet Union two days before. Once more Hitler proved himself extraordinarily adept at devising excuses for himself. Everything had been the fault of the Japanese and their “constant procrastination” over concluding a military pact with Germany and Italy, he argued.

Hitler’s letter to Mussolini read as follows:⁷³²

Duce!

For some time Germany and Russia have been engaged in an exchange of views concerning a reshaping of their mutual political relations. The necessity of achieving results in this direction was increased by:

1. The general situation of world politics in so far as this is decisive for the Axis Powers.

2. The constant procrastination of the Japanese Cabinet over taking a definite attitude. Japan had agreed to an alliance against Russia, which in the prevailing circumstances would have only a secondary interest for Germany, and, in my opinion, for Italy also. She had not, however, agreed to an equally definite obligation against England, and this, from the standpoint not only of Germany but also of Italy, would have been one of the decisive factors. Months ago the military party had asserted that it would be able to induce the Japanese Government in a short time to take up a definite attitude towards England too, but this had not been realized in practice.

3. Germany’s relations with Poland, through no fault of the Reich, but largely as a result of England’s interference, have been unsatisfactory since the spring, and in recent weeks simply intolerable. The reports about the persecution of the Germans in this area are not invented press reports but represent only a fraction of the terrible truth. Poland’s throttling of Danzig by a customs policy which for weeks past has led to a complete paralysis of all trade, will destroy the City if continued even for a short time.

August 25, 1939

These reasons led me to hasten the conclusion of the German-Russian conversations. I have not yet informed you in detail, Duce, since I had no idea of the possible extent of these conversations, or any assurance of the possibility of their success.

The readiness of the Kremlin to reshape its relations with Germany, which became apparent after the departure of Litvinov,⁷³³ has become ever stronger in the last few weeks and has now made it possible for me, after a preliminary clarification, to send my Foreign Minister to Moscow for the conclusion of a treaty which is the most extensive non-aggression pact in existence and the text of which has been made public. The pact is unconditional and includes also the obligation for consultation on all questions affecting Russia and Germany. Over and above that, however, I must tell you, Duce, that, through the agreements, the most benevolent attitude on the part of Russia in case of any conflict is assured, and, above all, that the possibility of intervention by Rumania in such a conflict no longer exists!

Even Turkey in these circumstances can only proceed to revise her previous position. But I repeat once more, that Rumania is no longer in a position to take part in any conflict against the Axis! I believe I may say to you, Duce, that through the negotiations with Soviet Russia a completely new situation in world politics has been produced which must be regarded as the greatest possible gain for the Axis.

As to the situation on the German-Polish frontier, I can only inform Your Excellency that for weeks we have been standing by for action (*Alarmzustand*); that, keeping pace with Polish mobilization, German preparations have naturally also gone forward; and that in case of intolerable events in Poland I will act immediately. The assertion of the Polish Government that they are not responsible for the inhuman activities, for the numerous frontier incidents (last night alone there were twenty-one Polish frontier violations), and for firing on German civil aircraft—which had already received orders to fly to East Prussia over the sea in order to avoid incidents—merely shows that the Polish Government are no longer in control of the soldiery which they have themselves stirred up. Since yesterday Danzig has been blockaded by Polish troops, a situation unendurable in itself. In these circumstances no one can say what the next hour may bring. I can only assure you that there is a definite limit beyond which I can in no circumstances retreat.

In conclusion I can assure you, Duce, that in a similar situation I should have complete understanding for Italy and that in any such case you could be sure of my attitude from the outset.

Adolf Hitler

Having penned this “diplomatic” correspondence to Italy, Hitler focused his attention on Great Britain once more. He began preparations for his talk with Henderson scheduled for the afternoon. Chamberlain and Halifax had delivered speeches before the House of Commons a day earlier. Hitler asked Schmidt to translate the text of the addresses for him,⁷³⁴ and listened thoughtfully. He remained silent as Schmidt

reiterated Great Britain's position. The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact had dissuaded neither London nor Paris from seeing to the fulfillment of their respective contractual obligations towards Poland.

So much for the effectiveness of Hitler's "devilish potion": it was a complete failure. To restore the stubborn English to reason, so Hitler felt with an ever-increasing sense of urgency, he would have to resort to quite different means. Since the specter of a Bolshevist threat to the world had failed to give them the required start, he resolved to take refuge once again in his highly acclaimed oratorical powers and to approach the British with yet another "magnanimous offer" of friendship on his part. Indeed, he was ready to "accept the British Empire" and "to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to commit the power of the German Reich for this."

That this "magnanimous offer" might represent a serious affront to the British—perhaps the worst conceivable insult—never occurred to Hitler. And even had he been aware of this, his tactics towards England had always been one of carrots and sticks. It simply had to work—what the devil!

While Hitler had acted like a madman in his discussion with Henderson two days earlier, he presented himself as a most congenial host at the meeting of August 25. Arriving at the Chancellery at 1:30 p.m., Henderson remarked that Hitler seemed "absolutely calm and normal and spoke with great earnestness and apparent sincerity."⁷³⁵

The notes on the conversation, which lasted nearly one hour, recorded the following:⁷³⁶

By way of introduction the Führer declared that the British Ambassador had given expression at the close of the last conversation to the hope, that, after all, an understanding between Germany and England might yet be possible. He, the Führer, had therefore turned things over in his mind once more and desired today to make a move towards England which should be as decisive as the move towards Russia which had led to the recent agreement.

Yesterday's sitting in the House of Commons and the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also moved the Führer to talk once more to the British Ambassador. The assertion that Germany affect to conquer the world was ridiculous. The British Empire embraced 40 million square kilometers, America 9 1/2 million square kilometers, whereas Germany embraced less than 600,000 square kilometers. It is therefore quite clear who it is who desires to conquer the world.

The Führer makes the following communication to the British Ambassador:

1. The Polish acts of provocation have become intolerable. It makes no difference who is responsible. If the Polish Government deny responsibility, that only goes to show that they no longer themselves possess any influence

over their subordinate military authorities. In the preceding night there had been a further twenty-one new frontier incidents; on the German side the greatest discipline had been maintained. All the incidents had been provoked by the Polish side. Furthermore, commercial aircraft had been shot at. If the Polish Government stated that they were not responsible, this showed that they were no longer capable of controlling their own people.

2. Germany was in all circumstances determined to abolish these Macedonian conditions on her eastern frontier, and that not only in the interests of quiet and order but also in the interests of European peace.

3. The problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved. The British Prime Minister had made a speech which was not in the least calculated to induce any change in the German attitude. At the most, the result of this speech could be a bloody and incalculable war between Germany and England. Such a war would be bloodier than that of 1914 to 1918. In contrast to the last war, Germany would no longer have to fight on two fronts. The agreement with Russia was unconditional and signified a change in the foreign policy of the Reich which would last a very long time. Russia and Germany would never in any circumstance again take up arms against each other. Apart from this, the agreements reached with Russia would also render Germany secure economically for the longest possible period of war.

The Führer had always wanted German-British understanding. War between England and Germany could at the best bring some profit to Germany but none at all to England.

The Führer declared that the German-Polish problem must be solved and would be solved. He is, however, prepared and determined, after the solution of this problem, to approach England once more with a large comprehensive offer. He is a man of great decisions, and in this case he will be capable of a great action. He accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to commit the power of the German Reich for this, if:

(1) His colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods, are fulfilled and in this case he is prepared to fix the longest time limit;

(2) His obligations towards Italy are not touched—in other words, he does not demand that England give up her obligations towards France and similarly for his own part he cannot withdraw from his obligations towards Italy.

(3) He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Führer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as he had already emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but would also if necessary assure the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary. The Führer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which would correspond to the new political situation and be economically tolerable. Finally, the Führer renewed his assurances that he is not interested in Western problems and that a frontier

modification in the West does not enter into consideration. The Western fortifications (*Westwall*), which have been constructed at a cost of thousands of millions, were the final Reich frontier on the West.

If the British Government would consider these ideas, a blessing for Germany and also for the British Empire might result. If they reject these ideas, there will be war. In no case would Great Britain emerge stronger from this war; the last war had already proved this. The Führer repeats that he is a man of great decisions by which he himself is bound, and that this is his last offer. Immediately after the solution of the German-Polish question he would approach the British Government with an offer.

This discussion was going nowhere, so it seemed. Hitler continued to insist that, before the launching of a new round of Anglo-German talks, the German-Polish question must be resolved. If necessary, this would be attained by force. Henderson repeated his Government's determination to enter into negotiations only provided the use of force against Poland was excluded *a priori*.

To impress upon Henderson the sincere nature of his arguments, Hitler finally became nearly sentimental and claimed:⁷³⁷

. . . that the only winner of another European war would be Japan; that he was by nature an artist not a politician, and that once the Polish question was settled he would end his life as an artist and not as a warmonger; he did not want to turn Germany into nothing but a military barracks and he would only do so if forced to do so; that once the Polish question was settled he himself would settle down; that he had no interest in making Britain break her word to Poland; that he had no wish to be small-minded in any settlement with Poland and that all he required for an agreement with her was a gesture from Britain to indicate that she would not be unreasonable.

Henderson, however, was not moved in the least. He declared the British Government willing to accept Hitler's "offer" exclusively provided that Germany was envisioning a peaceful settlement of its differences with Poland. To this Hitler replied: "If you think it useless then do not send my offer at all." This remark was not to be taken literally, of course. Once Henderson had left, Hitler sat down to write a message to him outlining the proposal. The note to be relayed by Schmidt contained an urgent request to consider this offer very seriously and to personally fly to London to convey the message.⁷³⁸

At 3:00 p.m., confident that his "magnanimous offer" had appeased the British and that all was well, Hitler summoned Keitel and ordered the attack on Poland to begin at 4:30 the next morning, August 26.⁷³⁹

In the interim, the Italian Ambassador Attolico had arrived in Berlin. Hitler had asked him to the Reich Chancellery, wishing to know

whether a response from Mussolini to his letter of that morning was forthcoming or not. Attolico found himself forced to reply in the negative, which left Hitler exceedingly displeased. After weeks of silence on his part, he had condescended to give Mussolini greetings in a telegram. And now, almost five hours later, an answer was still outstanding. Attolico maintained that an imminent receipt of a reply from Mussolini had already been announced.⁷⁴⁰ Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to immediately phone Ciano to inquire as to the whereabouts of this missing response. Ciano could not be reached, and so Hitler was forced to dismiss Attolico for the time being.

At 5:30 p.m., Hitler received Coulondre⁷⁴¹ in order to subject the French Ambassador to the same tirade Henderson had already been forced to endure. Raging against the Poles, he asserted his determination to proceed by force, if necessary, to “protect German interests.” The extent and impunity of the Polish provocations had become intolerable. He would greatly regret it, should this force Germany and France into yet another war against each other. His anguish would be augmented by the fact that, through his solemn renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, he had felt certain he had removed the last bone of contention between the two neighboring states. While Hitler spoke in the most eloquent and convincing terms, his interpreter Schmidt could not help remarking that, “at times, he appeared lost in thought, he recited his arguments mechanically, in the sequence already rehearsed in the talks with Henderson. Obviously, he had other things on his mind and was in a hurry to end the conversation.”

Undaunted by this, the French Ambassador took the liberty to answer Hitler in as unequivocal a fashion; with nearly the same words as François-Poncet on September 28, 1938, at the height of the Sudeten crisis,⁷⁴² Coulondre stated: “In a situation as perilous as the present, Herr Reichskanzler, misunderstandings represent a grave danger. To provide clarity, allow me to give you my word of honor as a French officer that the French Army shall fight on the side of Poland, if this country should be attacked.” To this, Hitler replied: “I would be greatly grieved to lead a war against France. Yet the decision is not mine. Please tell this to M. Daladier.”

Hitler naturally placed even less stock in French assurances than he did in those of the English. Ever since the French had failed to take military measures against Germany after the Reich’s withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933,⁷⁴³ as he himself would have done had he been in their shoes, he no longer respected France. And

he knew only too well that France would be forced to follow the British no matter what they did. Now, too, everything hinged on the British. Was it not high time for them to bow to his command now that he had assured them of Germany's benign support in the defense of the British Empire?

Hitler was greatly upset in these rosy contemplations when the sobering news reached Berlin that afternoon: London had just made public that the military pact drawn up on April 6, 1939⁷⁴⁴ was to be ratified by both Poland and Britain in the evening hours of August 25; it hereby entered into force. Confronted with this revelation, Hitler could only stare at the floor speechlessly.⁷⁴⁵

In Hitler's eyes, this British move implied an unequivocal rejection of his "offer of friendship" that morning. In all likelihood, this was indeed the case.⁷⁴⁶ The British intended to prove to Hitler, by the ratification of the treaty with Poland, that they were determined to stand by their word. No hand extended in friendship, no other attempts at public deception and convolution of the issues, could induce them to abandon their opposition to the use of force in resolving the German-Polish differences. Still the Reich Chancellor was not about to heed such timely warnings.

Instead, baffled by England's behavior, Hitler clung ever more desperately to the conceptions he had developed regarding Hugenberg.⁷⁴⁷ After all, it had not been until January 30, 1933—literally five minutes before twelve o'clock—that Hugenberg had capitulated, yielding to the persistent pressure Hitler had exerted, and agreed to the Reichstag's dissolution. Thus, he had bowed to the Führer's command, and—of this Hitler was certain—Chamberlain would likewise give in in the end. Hitler could not allow himself to be duped by this "umbrella-carrying prototype."⁷⁴⁸ Rather, he would postpone the entire venture against Poland and send yet another host of messages to the British Government.

Shortly after 6:00 p.m., news of yet another development reached Berlin which would have forced Hitler to reschedule in any event. The Italian Ambassador asked to be received by the Führer, for the second time that day. Attolico wished to present him with Mussolini's reply to his letter of that morning. Mussolini detailed the following, after a few platitudes concerning the Soviet-German alliance:⁷⁴⁹

If Germany attacks Poland and the conflict remains localized, Italy will afford Germany every form of political and economic assistance which is requested of her.

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If Germany attacks Poland, and the latter's allies open a counter attack against Germany, I inform you in advance that it will be opportune for me not to take the initiative in military operations in view of the present state of Italian war preparations, of which we have repeatedly and in good time informed you, Führer, and Herr von Ribbentrop. Our intervention can, nevertheless, take place at once if Germany delivers to us immediately the military supplies and the raw materials to resist the attack which the French and English would predominantly direct against us.

At our meetings, the war was envisaged for after 1942, and by that time I would have been ready on land, on sea, and in the air, according to the plans which had been concerted. I am furthermore of the opinion that the purely military measures which have already been taken, and other measures to be taken later, will immobilize, in Europe and Africa, considerable French and British forces.

I consider it my binding duty as a loyal friend to tell you the whole truth and inform you beforehand about the real situation. Not to do so might have unpleasant consequences for us all. This is my view, and since within a short time I must summon the highest governmental bodies, I beg you to let me know yours.

Mussolini

It was clear that the Duce had severe misgivings about engaging his country in the type of general European war which he feared that any German move against Poland at this point would engender.

Truly, this was not Hitler's day. Everything seemed to go wrong. First, the English turned down his offer of friendship. And now the Duce backed out! Throughout the next hour, "the Chancellery literally resounded with derogatory remarks about the disloyal Axis partner."⁷⁵⁰ As Schmidt recalled later, once Attolico was out of the room, Hitler could not help exclaiming: "The Italians are acting just as in 1914!" Indeed, the Italians were behaving in precisely the same manner, and so did the English. The simple reason for this was that the situation was the same both then and in 1939. Hitler was busily making precisely the same mistakes in the case of Poland which the Reich Government had already made with regard to Belgium in 1914, and which the Austro-Hungarian Empire had committed in its dealings with Serbia that same year.

Halder, who diligently recorded everything, even whether or not Hitler had passed the night well, described Hitler as "considerably shaken" in the evening hours of that fateful August 25, 1939.⁷⁵¹

However, it did not take Hitler long to recover from the shock. The world would learn that he was not the man to bow to the will of the decrepit English or of an Italian Duce. According to his revised strategy,

the order to attack Poland the next morning had to be rescinded immediately. Then a renewed effort to persuade England's leaders with rhetoric had to be launched instantaneously. He would curry their favor, even if he had to promise them "the moon and the stars."

Hitler lost no time. He summoned Keitel and instructed him, hastily: "Stop everything immediately! Get Brauchitsch here at once, I need time for negotiations."⁷⁵² He himself phoned Göring. As in 1932–33 with Papen and the German Nationalists, it seemed imperative to Hitler to devise an elegant and effective strategy. And, toward this end, Hitler knew he could rely on his "best man," who instinctively grasped his master's intentions and thus had proven himself a most worthy ally in the negotiations with the reactionary German Nationalists then in power. First, Hitler decided to inform Göring that "he had stopped the planned invasion of Poland." When Göring inquired whether this postponement was temporary or final, Hitler replied: "No, I will have to see whether we can eliminate England's intervention."⁷⁵³ He then asked Göring to the Reich Chancellery for further instructions.

In the meantime, Hitler dictated the following answer to Mussolini:⁷⁵⁴

Duce!

You have informed me that you can enter a major European conflict only if Germany supplies you at once with implements of war and raw materials in order to resist the attack which the French and British would launch predominantly against you. I would ask you to inform me what implements of war and raw materials you require and within what time, so that I may be in a position to judge whether and to what extent I can fulfil your demands for implements of war and raw materials. Furthermore, I thank you heartily for Italy's military measures, of which I have been acquainted in the meantime and which I already regard as a great relief.

Adolf Hitler

Under the circumstances, this letter could truly be called tame. Given Hitler's outrage at Mussolini, it demonstrated once again how well Hitler could control himself—if he so desired. The wording of this particular correspondence betrayed little of what had come to pass. Hitler acted as though nothing had happened. Apparent assent to Italy's requests and demands followed warm-hearted thanks for Mussolini's response. In the course of the war, Hitler continued to adhere to this strategy, remained indifferent to Mussolini's ill-concealed affronts, and proceeded as though no differences clouded German-Italian relations. This applied to Mussolini's invasion of Greece in October, 1940 as well as to his removal from office in July, 1943.

Hitler's behavior has led many historians to speculate that, perhaps, he did cherish sentiments of true friendship for Mussolini⁷⁵⁵ which blinded him to Italy's true colors and intentions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hitler was an opportunist par excellence, incapable of feeling friendship for anyone. His support for Mussolini, and the tolerance displayed in his dealings with the Duce, had causes far different from any personal inclinations. Aside from ideological considerations, it was based firmly on Hitler's conceptions of 1919. Central to these was the notion that "in Europe there will be only two allies for Germany in the foreseeable future: England and Italy."⁷⁵⁶ This he had preached, and so it had to be—irrespective of a contrary reality. Mussolini and the Italians were his friends. They must remain his friends, no matter what the circumstances. If he admitted that, indeed, they no longer felt friendship for Germany and its Führer, this would mean that he had been wrong. And this was inconceivable. To acknowledge a mistake, to concede the Führer was only human and not infallible, this would have been tantamount to resigning all political office. He himself had demanded no less of any leader whose conduct revealed erroneous conceptions.⁷⁵⁷

The minute Göring arrived at the Chancellery, the Führer and his "best man" went into seclusion to confer privately on the options at hand. The question was how to proceed strategically to bring England to reason. A best-case scenario naturally demanded that the British stand by and observe Poland's destruction in silence.

Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. Once normal diplomatic procedure failed, it had to be replaced by other means: a secret avenue for negotiations with Great Britain had to be found. In this context, it was most fortunate that Göring's close friend, the Swede Birger Dahlerus, could walk in and out of His Majesty's Government's offices as though he himself were a British diplomat. Dahlerus had to be recruited immediately for this new, ingenious venture. The grounds for a like undertaking were well prepared. Already on August 24, Göring had revealed to Dahlerus portions of Hitler's offer of friendship to England while the Swede was staying at Karinhall.⁷⁵⁸

On August 25, Dahlerus had flown to London in the early morning. His mission had been to inform Downing Street of Hitler's most recent friendly advances toward England. Lord Halifax had received Dahlerus in the late afternoon. It was most opportune that the Swede called the Chancellery at 10:20 p.m., while Göring and Hitler were still in session, to inquire about the latest developments. Göring immediately seized

the opportunity to assure Dahlerus that he placed “high hopes on his trip to London.”

On August 26, the day on which Hitler had initially scheduled the war to be launched, the situation in Germany was a peculiar one indeed. Naturally, the day was a Saturday, as was customary with Hitler’s surprise ventures. Preparations for the attack on Poland had been halted the night before, but not the conversion of civilian enterprises and activities to wartime ones. Measures effecting the covert mobilization of forces rolled on.

The German public was completely taken by surprise by the sudden rationing of foodstuffs and raw material deemed essential to the war effort. This resulted in quite a few difficulties. Many Germans were still abroad, as the vacations in many Länder had not yet officially ended. A rush of anxious vacationers sought to return home as quickly as possible. Huge lines formed in front of those few gasoline stations still permitted to distribute fuel from their stocks in limited amounts. Train service was curtailed as well. Military supply convoys occupied most major routes leading East to West. Military trains followed one another at short intervals. Civilian carriers were grounded. Likewise, postal services were to be cut completely for ten days.

Several official announcements further instilled a feeling of dejection in the public. These shed much light on the actual situation and bore no good tidings:⁷⁵⁹

—Official communication: In view of the tense situation, the Tannenberg celebration scheduled for Sunday, August 27, will be cancelled.

—The Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP announces: The Reich Party Congress scheduled to convene from September 2 through September 11⁷⁶⁰ will not take place. Whether the Congress can be expected to convene at a later point in time depends on the situation then.

—The *Schleswig-Holstein*⁷⁶¹ in Danzig: From a crowd of rejoicing citizens of Danzig lining the harbor, shouts of jubilation accompanied the arrival of the *Schleswig-Holstein*, the training ship of the German Kriegsmarine, on Friday morning. Two ocean-going tugboats, the *Albert Forster* and the *Danzig*, dressed with flags, hauled the large vessel into the Danzig harbor. Swastika flags were hoisted on all flagpoles along the stretch traversed by the ship. No flag decoration adorned the Westerplatte under Polish occupation. Proudly the gray ship sailed by the Polish part of the harbor where not a soul was to be seen. The enthusiastic crowd of citizens of Danzig all the more jubilantly and joyfully hailed the ship’s entry into the port. With renewed frenzied cries of joy, the people of Danzig accompanied the ship to its berth where it anchored at 10:00 a.m.

After repeated calls to Rome, ever more urgent in character, Hitler finally obtained a list of the raw materials Italy required. At around 1:00 p.m. on August 26, Attolico transmitted to him the desired paper.⁷⁶² The list of Mussolini's minutely detailed requests was so voluminous that Ciano remarked in his diary: "We go over the list. It's enough to kill a bull—if a bull could read it."⁷⁶³ All in all, the Duce asked for seventeen million tons of coal, steel, and crude oil. For the transport of such quantities at least 17,000 trains would have been necessary. The Italian dictator wanted everything on the spot, before the outbreak of hostilities. As ill-concealed as the true nature of these outrageous demands was, Hitler decided to let nothing show and to reply in all earnest:⁷⁶⁴

Duce!

Ambassador Attolico has just handed to my Foreign Minister the additional requirements which Italy would claim from Germany for the duration of a war. These requirements could be met in full as regards coal and steel, i.e. 6 million tons of coal and 2 million tons of steel. It would be impossible for Germany to deliver 7 million tons of petroleum. At the moment I cannot state exactly what amount we could contribute. Germany would be in a position to deliver a million tons of timber. The delivery of 150,000 tons of copper would be impossible; in anticipation of the shortage of copper, Germany herself has already changed over to the use of light metals and other substitute materials in most fields. The delivery of nickel in the quantity asked for could not nearly be met, for German industry itself has almost completely gone over to steels containing little or no nickel. Our own requirements in this field are therefore completely vanishing. If Italian workers were brought in, Germany would, however, be able in principle so to increase German munitions production, which has already changed over to available materials, that a great part of Italy's munitions requirements could be met. As regards anti-aircraft guns, the Reich would be able to contribute their 4-gun batteries at once; after the end of operations in Poland a further 30 batteries, and within a year another 30, all with German gun crews and predictors. Potassium salts could be sent at once. As for explosives, I must first obtain exact data. I consider it important, however, Duce, to send you this information at once.

Acting on verbal instructions, Ambassador Attolico stated that all material must be in Italy before the beginning of hostilities. This, Duce, is impossible for reasons of organization and transport. The 30 heavy anti-aircraft batteries could be sent at once; all the rest must be fitted into the general transport system. Since Ambassador Attolico described this request for immediate delivery of all the material before the outbreak of war as decisive, I regret that I regard it as impossible to fulfill your requests, as I have already stated, purely for reasons of organization and for technical reasons. In these circumstances, Duce, I understand your position, and would only ask you to try to achieve the pinning down of Anglo-French forces by active propaganda and suitable

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military demonstrations such as you have already proposed to me. As neither France nor Britain can achieve any decisive successes in the West, and as Germany, as a result of the Agreement with Russia, will have all her forces free in the East after the defeat of Poland, and as air supremacy is undoubtedly on our side, I do not shrink from solving the Eastern question even at the risk of complications in the West.

Adolf Hitler

The German Ambassador von Mackensen transmitted this wire to Mussolini shortly after 5:00 p.m. Having read Hitler's letter, the Duce did feel compelled to back down in his demands. Mussolini conceded that "even the Almighty Himself could not transport such quantities here in a few days."⁷⁶⁵

The Duce swiftly penned a second letter to Hitler. Wired at 6:42 in the evening, it reached Hitler in Berlin at 8:00 p.m.⁷⁶⁶ Mussolini openly stated that Italy was exhausted after the war in Abyssinia and its involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It was not in a position to withstand the pressures England and France were certain to exert on Rome in the event of war. Hence, Mussolini himself was in favor of a negotiated, political settlement.

In the course of that afternoon, the French Ambassador Coulondre also called on Hitler. He had received instructions to deliver a telegram from the French Premier to the Chancellery.⁷⁶⁷ In this correspondence, Daladier responded, albeit in a more cordial manner than the English, to Hitler's jeremiad of the day before which had hailed down on Coulondre. Daladier stressed the possible consequences of an armed confrontation with Poland. He now felt compelled to remind Hitler of the gravity of the situation both countries were facing at the moment.⁷⁶⁸

Paris, August 26, 1939

Your Excellency!

The French Embassy in Berlin has informed me of your personal message. Finding ourselves faced, as you remind me, with the gravest responsibility that can be assumed by the Heads of Government, that of allowing the blood to be shed of two great peoples who desire nothing but peace and work, I owe it to you and I owe it to our two peoples, to say that the fate of peace still rests in your hands alone.

You cannot doubt my sentiments towards Germany, nor France's peaceful sentiments to your nation. No Frenchman has ever done more than I have to strengthen between our two peoples not merely peace, but a sincere cooperation in their own interest as well as in that of Europe and the world. Unless you attribute to the French people a conception of national honor less high than that which I myself recognize in the German people, you cannot doubt, either, that France will be true to her solemn promises to other nations,

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such as Poland, which, I am certain, also want to live in peace with Germany. These two certainties are completely reconcilable. There is nothing today which need prevent any longer the pacific solution of the international crisis with honor and dignity for all peoples, if the will for peace exists equally on all sides.

I can vouch not only for the good will of France, but also for that of all her allies. I can personally guarantee the readiness, which Poland has always shown, to have mutual recourse to methods of free conciliation, such as may be envisaged between the Governments of two sovereign nations. In all sincerity I can assure you that there is not one of the grievances invoked by Germany against Poland in connection with the Danzig question which might not be submitted to decision by such methods with a view to a friendly and equitable settlement.

I can also pledge my honor that there is nothing in the clear and sincere solidarity of France with Poland and her allies which could modify in any manner whatsoever the peaceful inclinations of my country. This solidarity has never prevented us, and does not prevent us today, from helping to maintain Poland in her pacific inclinations.

In so serious an hour I sincerely believe that no man endowed with human feelings could understand that a war of destruction should be allowed to break out without a last attempt at a pacific adjustment between Germany and Poland. Your will for peace may be exercised in all confidence in this direction without the slightest derogation from your sense of German honor. As for myself, the Head of the French Government, concerned only for harmony between the French people and the German people and, on the other hand, united to Poland by bonds of friendship and by their pledged word, I am ready to make all the efforts that an honest man can make in order to ensure the success of this attempt.

Like myself, you were a soldier in the last war. You realize, as I do, how a people's memory retains forever a horror and condemnations of the disasters of war, whatever may be the result. The conception which I have been able to form of your eminent role as leader of the German people, to guide them along the paths of peace towards the full accomplishment of their mission in the common work of civilization, prompts me to ask you for a reply to this proposal. If the blood of France and of Germany flows again, as it did twenty-five years ago, in a longer and even more murderous war, each of the two peoples will fight with confidence in its own victory, but the most certain victors will be the forces of destruction and barbarism.

Édouard Daladier

While assuring Coulondre of a reply to be penned the next day, Hitler insisted on the strict confidentiality of the exchange. Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry received word from the British Chargé d'Affaires, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, that the British Government was reviewing the German Chancellor's proposals. Henderson would remit a definite reply the next day, August 27.⁷⁶⁹

President Roosevelt had sent similarly urgent appeals for peace to Hitler on August 24 and August 25.⁷⁷⁰ However, the German Reich Chancellor deemed neither of them worthy of a reply. After all, he still firmly believed that he had silenced Roosevelt once and for all in his Reichstag speech of April 28. How dare this “old gangster”⁷⁷¹ send him messages of this kind? In the evening of August 26, nevertheless, Hitler ordered Weizsäcker to inform the American Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin that he had submitted Roosevelt’s proposals to the scrutiny of the Reich Foreign Minister.⁷⁷²

In the course of the day of August 26, Hitler equally took care to assure Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland of Germany’s intentions to respect their status as non-belligerents.⁷⁷³ The following communiqué was published on the topic:⁷⁷⁴

The German Ambassador in Belgium and the German Envoys to the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, have transmitted to the aforementioned countries declarations by the Reich Government to the effect that, in the event of armed conflict, it shall respect the neutrality of these countries and it shall further promote the friendly relations existing with them.

At the end of the day, Hitler dictated another telegram to Mussolini. Apparently, Hitler had meanwhile come to terms with the fact that Italy was determined to remain neutral in the event of war. He set about to make the most of this disagreeable situation and signaled his assent to Italy’s policy stance. He painted the future in the rosiest colors and left Mussolini a venue for belated entry into the war.⁷⁷⁵

Duce!

I have received your communication on your final attitude. I respect the reasons and motives which led you to take this decision. In certain circumstances it can nevertheless work out well. In my opinion, however, the prerequisite is that, at least until the outbreak of the struggle (*Kampf*), the world should have no idea of the attitude Italy intends to adopt. I therefore cordially request you to support my struggle psychologically with your press or by other means. I would also ask you, Duce, if you possibly can, by demonstrative military measures, at least to compel Britain and France to tie down certain of their forces, or at all events to leave them in uncertainty. But, Duce, the most important thing is this: if, as I have said, it should come to a major war, the issue in the East will be decided before the two Western Powers can score a success. Then, this winter, at the latest in the spring, I shall attack in the West with forces which will be at least equal to those of France and Britain. The blockade will have little effect, particularly because of the new circumstance now prevailing in the East, and also thanks to my preparations for autarky. Its danger will not increase but diminish with the

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duration of the war. I must now ask a great favor of you, Duce. In this difficult struggle you and your people can best help me by sending Italian workers, both for industrial and agricultural purposes. Should you later be compelled to intervene in the course of events, or find yourself after all in a position to do so, then the reinforced autarky of the Reich would be of the greatest importance to you too. In specially commending this request of mine to your generosity, I thank you for all the efforts you have made for our common cause.

Adolf Hitler

Around midnight Hitler finally retired. He was to find repose for a short time only.

On his return flight from London, Dahlerus had landed in Berlin at approximately 7:00 p.m. Göring immediately ushered his guest to a train, initially intending to take him to the recently constructed warlike headquarters site in the woods near Oranienburg. In the train,⁷⁷⁶ Dahlerus related the contents of a letter Lord Halifax had entrusted to him. Göring was greatly impressed by what he considered reasonable demands by the British. They declared themselves willing to enter into negotiations so long as Germany desisted from the application of force in the resolution of the Polish problem. Göring ordered the train stopped at the next station where he and Dahlerus got off. From there, they hurried back to Berlin by car, as Göring wanted to inform Hitler personally of the contents of Lord Halifax's correspondence.

No more lights were burning at the Chancellery by the time Göring's car pulled up at the entrance. A colonel told him that Hitler had already retired for the night. Thereupon Göring sent Dahlerus on to the Esplanade Hotel. For his part, he went up to the Führer's room to tell him that Dahlerus had arrived. Hitler rose immediately. In the midst of night, he ordered that festive illumination be turned on, that guards of honor march up. And all this was to be done within fifteen minutes.

While his subordinates were busy elsewhere, Hitler himself prepared a rhetorical masterpiece to impress upon Dahlerus the earnestness of his cause, the power and greatness of the German Reich and, last but not least, of its Führer and his character. The English were truly ill-advised to go against a Reich such as his.

Two colonels received orders to pick up Dahlerus at his hotel and to bring him to the Chancellery. As in Hácha's case, a host of honor guards and dress uniforms set against a background of drum rolls and rifle salutes were on hand to greet the Swede. Finally, Dahlerus was

led into the anteroom to Hitler's office. Then the curtain was raised, so to speak, and Hitler entered the room. For a minute, he struck a theatrical pose in the door frame and penetratingly fixed his eyes on the caller. Göring stood at his side looking content. Dahlerus went forward and said: "*Guten Abend, Exzellenz!*"

Hitler cordially replied in a few words. He then led Dahlerus to the side of the room, to a corner where guests usually took their seats. All three men sat down, Dahlerus expecting that Hitler would inquire about the contents of the British Foreign Minister's correspondence.

Instead, as on so many previous occasions, Hitler first embarked upon a lengthy "party narrative" to weary his caller and to dull his perception. Dahlerus recalled, regarding the further course of the meeting:⁷⁷⁷

[Hitler] . . . proceeded to give a long lecture about German policy and Germany's desire to come to an understanding with Britain, without alluding either to Halifax's letter or to my account of the British attitude which he had just heard from Göring. He recapitulated the incidents which had taken place since he became Germany's leader, and recalled all the difficulties which he had encountered. Several times he emphasised his vain appeals to England for co-operation, and added that he suspected that the British were not inspired by any genuine desire to co-operate. He repeated the observations which he set down later in his letter to Daladier⁷⁷⁸ of the same day—27th August—and then began a severe criticism of Britain and the British. Throughout this speech Göring had not uttered a word, and when we reached this point I began to fear that Hitler would go on still longer and that the meeting would come to an end without achieving any result. The whole scene was a typical proof of Hitler's demagogic desire, and a typical specimen of the method he used to force his point of view upon either adversary or interlocutor.

His monologue had lasted for about twenty minutes and he was becoming very much excited, especially when criticising England.

During a brief pause in the conversation, Dahlerus ventured to point out that though he regretted this, he could not share the Führer's assessment of England and its people. After all, he had spent some time in England as a worker and thus had gotten to know the various classes of English society well. Hitler immediately interrupted him to ask: "What's that? You have worked as a common labourer in England? Tell me about it." And now, for the next half hour, Dahlerus was obliged to report on the situation in England to this man whose knowledge of the English was "nil" as he was to discover shortly. His immediate curiosity satisfied, Hitler turned his attention back to more current

matters. Displaying his exceptional command of the latest statistics and the power of his rhetoric, Hitler continued his exposition, as Dahlerus reported:

He became excited, stood up, paced to and fro, while describing his interview with Henderson;⁷⁷⁹ there was no denying his eloquence. He had a seductive way of putting his own viewpoint in the most favourable light, but he suffered from a lamentable incapacity to see or respect the other party's point of view. After commenting on his proposals to Henderson, he ended by gesticulating and saying: "*Dies ist mein letztes grosszügiges Angebot an England.*" [This is my last magnanimous offer to England.]⁷⁸⁰ He continued by underlining the superior armed might of Great Germany. While doing so his face stiffened and his movements became very peculiar.

He sounded very arrogant and overbearing while he described the armed might which his leadership had created, declaring that he personally had studied in detail all the technical and strategic questions of decisive importance; he maintained that Berlin's anti-aircraft defences alone were as strong as those of the entire British Empire, and that his air force was unconquerable. Göring who had sat listening in respectful silence, giggled contentedly as he heard his Leader commending his own Service. Hitler now went on to say that the army possessed an equipment unequalled in history; a German infantry company had no resemblance to an infantry company in the ordinary sense of the word; it was equipped with anti-tank guns, small quickfiring guns and effective machine-guns, that it was in general such a well-designed fighting unit that it could be used for the most varied tasks of attack and defence. In company with all the other branches of the service the infantry had been subjected to an extraordinary training, in which the heads of the German Wehrmacht had applied the principle of economy in human material, above all teaching the individual soldier not to expose himself unnecessarily to the risk of becoming a casualty. He spoke of the armoured divisions and how his cars were so strongly protected that the anti-tank guns of an enemy could not pierce their armour. No British or French tank, on the other hand, could resist the German anti-tank weapons. His fleet, he admitted, was inferior to the British Navy, but his submarine service was so powerful that the German Navy was superior to all others. He showed a surprising grasp of detail here, producing figures to show the thickness of the deck armour of different types of British ships, explaining that he had ordered the Luftwaffe to be supplied with bombs capable of penetrating the thickest of these decks. It was clear that Hitler was riding his favourite hobby-horse and that he was excessively well informed⁷⁸¹ concerning the most minute details of the German forces.

Once Hitler had concluded his lecture on the combat readiness and superiority of the German Wehrmacht, Dahlerus was finally allowed to speak. The Swede pointed out that the other great powers still had to be reckoned with. After all, the First World War had amply shown

which powers were the stronger ones. Islands were the pillars of the British Empire. To attack them with an inferior fleet was folly. Naturally, such arguments were not to Hitler's liking. Regarding his response, Dahlerus recorded:

Hitler listened without interrupting me. I spoke slowly and quietly to avoid irritating him unnecessarily, since his mental equilibrium was patently unstable. He seemed to ponder what I said, but then suddenly got up, and becoming very much excited and nervous, walked up and down saying, as though to himself, that Germany was irresistible and could defeat her adversaries by means of a rapid war. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the room and stood there staring. His voice was blurred and his behaviour that of a completely abnormal person. He spoke in staccato phrases, and it was clear that his thoughts were concentrated on the tasks which awaited him in case of war.

"*Gibt es Krieg,*" he said, "*dann werde ich U-boote bauen, U-boote bauen, U-boote, U-boote, U-boote.*" [If there should be war, then I shall build U-boats, build U-boats, U-boats, U-boats, U-boats.] His voice became more indistinct and finally one could not follow him at all. Then he pulled himself together, raised his voice as though addressing a large audience and shrieked: "*Ich werde Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge, Flugzeuge, und ich werde meine Feinde vernichten.*" [I shall build aeroplanes, build aeroplanes, aeroplanes, aeroplanes, and I shall annihilate my enemies.] He seemed more like a phantom from a story book than a real person. I stared at him in amazement and turned to see how Göring was reacting, but he did not turn a hair.

And, indeed, why should Göring appear moved? After all, he had witnessed countless rhetorical dramas staged by his Führer. Hitler continued, Dahlerus reported, as though in a trance:

"War doesn't frighten me, encirclement of Germany is an impossibility, my people admire and follow me faithfully. If privations lie ahead of the German people, I shall be the first to starve and set my people a good example. It will spur them to superhuman efforts." His eyes were glassy, his voice unnatural as he went on: "If there should be no butter, I shall be the first to stop eating butter, eating butter. My German people will loyally and gladly do the same." He paused, his glance wandered and he said, "If the enemy can hold out for several years, I, with my power over the German people, can hold out one year longer. Thereby I know that I am superior to all the others."

He began to pace up and down again, came close up to me, stopped, and said: "Herr Dahlerus, you who know England so well, can you give me any reason for my perpetual failure to come to an agreement with her?" He was still agitated, and I hesitated to give an honest answer. Then I began to speak very quietly and distinctly so as to underline by my severity the honesty and accuracy of my reply: "Your Excellency, with my comprehensive knowledge

of the English people, their mentality, and their attitude towards Germany, I must definitely assure you that I am absolutely convinced that these difficulties are founded on a lack of confidence in you personally and in your government.” Hitler flung out his right arm, smiting his breast with his left hand, and exclaimed: “*Idioten, habe ich je in meinem Leben die Unwahrheit gesagt?*” [Idiots! Have I ever told a lie in my life?]⁷⁸² I pointed out to him that the position was probably the same in major politics as in the business world, namely that a satisfactory agreement could only be based on mutual confidence; if this were lacking, with or without justification, then it must be created or restored.

Hitler walked backwards and forwards in his great study, pulled up and pointed at me: “You, Herr Dahlerus, you have heard my side. You must go to England at once and tell it to the British government. I do not think that Henderson understood me, and I really want to bring about an understanding.”

Dahlerus hereupon demanded more precise information from Hitler on particular subjects such as the question of the Polish Corridor.

When I said this Hitler smiled, the only time I ever, now or later, saw him do so. He turned to Göring and said: “Well, Henderson never asked me about that.” This gave me a chance to emphasise how important it was, *if* I should go to England, that I should have the most correct and exact information with me. Göring took an atlas, tore out a page and with red pencil outlined the territory to which Germany aspired.⁷⁸³ Then we went on to discuss the vital points contained in the proposal which Hitler had presented to Henderson to be forwarded to the British government. During our conversation Hitler became excited and verbose, and it was not so easy to get the gist of what he said. However, by degrees we did so.

Since he received no minutes of the highly detailed proposals Hitler had advanced, Dahlerus resolved to learn these by heart and reproduced them in the following manner:⁷⁸⁴

(1) Germany desired a pact or alliance with Great Britain, which would mean that all disputes of a political or economic nature should be eliminated by virtue of this pact.

(2) England was to help Germany to obtain Danzig and the Corridor, with the exception of a free harbour in Danzig which was to be at the disposal of Poland. Poland should also have a corridor to Gdynia, retain the whole of Gdynia and an adequate territory around it.

(3) Germany pledged herself to guarantee Poland’s boundaries.

(4) An agreement should be reached about Germany’s colonies. Germany wished to have these returned to her, or a settlement regarding colonies belonging to the British Empire, which Germany could receive as compensation. Germany required certain tropical territories to provide her with raw materials or foodstuffs which were vital for the industry and the feeding of her people.

(5) Adequate guarantees should be made for the treatment of the German minority in Poland.⁷⁸⁵

(6) Germany pledged herself to defend the British Empire with the German Wehrmacht wherever the former might be attacked (*“mit der Wehrmacht des Grossdeutschen Reiches wo immer es auch angegriffen werden könnte.”*)

This last point was the subject of much discussion. Hitler pointed out how important it would be for Great Britain to know that wherever the Empire risked attack, Germany would come to her assistance. Nor was this all. Germany pledged herself not to support any nation whatsoever which might come into conflict with the British Empire.

Throughout the conversation, which had lasted several hours, Göring had merely contributed a few brief words to underline some utterance of Hitler, but now he joined in and pointed out that this latter clause would also mean that Germany would support England against Italy, if they should ever come into conflict with one another over Mediterranean or any other interests.

After the discussion, Göring accompanied Dahlerus as he made his way out of the building. Time and time again, Göring stressed the utmost import of informing the British Government of this discussion as soon as possible.

Dahlerus not only showed remarkable skill in his reproduction of Hitler's rhetoric, he demonstrated great insight into how Hitler sought to apply the methods he had employed in Germany domestically to the realm of foreign policy. Dahlerus appended the following note to this conversation:

His successes in Germany's internal conflicts had accustomed him to getting his own way, fulfilling his own demands and breaking down all opposition. Now he made the great mistake of using the same methods when dealing with other nations.

On Sunday, August 27, Hitler spent most of the day composing a reply to the French Premier. As usual, his answer was twice as long as Daladier's original letter. He reveled in verbose claims of his good-neighborly intentions towards Germany's "erstwhile gallant foe." He claimed to have sought improved relations with France throughout his period in office. He even went as far as to contend that all his previous actions had served the cause of peace. This included everything from the renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, the "voluntary limitation of German vital claims in the West," to the billions of marks invested in the frontier fortifications in that area. The methods he had employed towards the resolution of many a dispute facing both nations had "made it possible in many instances to find a solution without fresh bloodshed." However, as far as Danzig and the Corridor were con-

cerned, a resolution had to be obtained in "one way or another." Otherwise, after all, he would have to "despair of an honorable future for my people." In the same sarcastic tone he was so well known for, Hitler paid the French Premier back for his repeated appeals to such worn concepts as "honor," and claimed that every "Frenchman of honor" would be compelled to act in the same manner.

The letter to Daladier read as follows:⁷⁸⁶

Dear Minister President!

I understand the misgivings which you express. I, too, have never overlooked the high obligations laid on those who are in charge of the fate of peoples. As an old front-line soldier, I know, as you do, the horrors of war. This conviction and this knowledge have led me, too, to strive honorably to remove all subjects of dispute between our two peoples. I assured the French nation quite openly of one thing, that the condition for this was the return of the Saar territory. When this had been returned, I at once solemnly affirmed my renunciation of any further claims whatsoever which might affect France. The German people has approved this attitude of mine. As you were able to convince yourself on your last visit here, conscious of their own attitude, they did not and do not feel any ill-will, much less hatred, for their erstwhile gallant foe. On the contrary. The establishment of peace on our Western frontier led to a growing sympathy, at least as far as the German people were concerned. A sympathy which has been shown in truly demonstrative fashion on many occasions. The construction of the great fortifications in the West, which swallowed and continues to swallow many thousands of millions, represents for both a deed of acceptance and a delimitation of the final Reich frontier. The German nation has renounced two provinces, which once were part of the old German Reich, which were conquered later at much cost in bloodshed and which, finally, were defended at still greater cost in bloodshed.

You, Your Excellency, will certainly grant me that this renunciation is indeed no tactical maneuver for foreign consumption, but a resolution which has been consistently reinforced by all the measures we have taken. You will not be able, Mr. Minister President, to adduce a single instance in which, in a single line or one speech, this final fixing of the frontier of the German Reich in the West has been repudiated. I had thought that by this renunciation and by this attitude I had eliminated every conceivable subject of dispute between our two peoples which might have led to a repetition of the tragedy of 1914-1918. This voluntary limitation of German vital claims in the West cannot, however, be taken as signifying acceptance of the Versailles Dictate for all other territories as well. Year after year I have truly striven for the revision, by way of negotiation, of at least the most impossible and the most intolerable clauses in this Dictate. But it was impossible. That revision must come was clearly realized by many intelligent people in all countries. Whatever can be adduced against my methods, whatever criticism it may be thought must be brought against them, it cannot be overlooked or gainsaid that this method made it possible in many instances to find a solution without fresh bloodshed,

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which was not only satisfactory to Germany but, by the way it was done, relieved the statesmen of other nations of the obligation, often an impossible one for them, of accepting responsibility for this revision towards their own peoples. For Your Excellency must always grant me this: Revision had to come. The Versailles Dictate was intolerable. No Frenchman of honor, certainly not you yourself, Monsieur Daladier, would, in a like situation, have acted otherwise than I did. I have also tried, in this spirit, to remove the most unreasonable provision of all in the Versailles Dictate. I made an offer to the Polish Government, which startled the German people. No one but myself could have dared to come before the public with such an offer. Therefore it could only be made once and for all. I am most deeply convinced that if England, in particular, instead of unleashing a savage press campaign against Germany and launching rumors of German mobilization, had at the time somehow persuaded Poland to be reasonable, Europe today and for twenty-five years to come could have enjoyed a state of the most profound peace. But, as it was, Polish public opinion was excited by lies about German aggression, the clear decisions required from the Polish Government were made harder to take, and, above all, their insight into what was actually possible was obscured by the promise of the guarantee which followed. The Polish Government rejected the proposals. Polish public opinion, firmly convinced that Britain and France would fight for Poland, began making demands which might, perhaps, be dismissed as ridiculous lunacy if they were not so infinitely dangerous. Then an intolerable reign of terror set in, a physical and economic oppression of the Germans, who, after all, number over a million-and-a-half in the territories ceded by the Reich. I will not here go into the atrocities which took place. Danzig, too, through the continual encroachments of the Polish authorities, was made increasingly aware that she was apparently abandoned, without hope of deliverance, to the caprice of a power alien to the national character of the City and of its population. May I now ask, Monsieur Daladier, how you, as a Frenchman, would act if, as a result of the unfortunate outcome of a gallant struggle, one of your provinces were cut off by a corridor occupied by a foreign Power, a great city—let us say Marseilles—were prevented from professing allegiance to France, and the Frenchmen precisely in this region were persecuted, beaten, ill-treated, even bestially murdered? You are a Frenchman, Monsieur Daladier, so I know how you would act. I am a German, Monsieur Daladier. Do not doubt my sense of honor or my consciousness of my duty to act in just the same way. If you were suffering the same misfortune as we are, would you, Monsieur Daladier, understand it if, for no cause, Germany wished to intervene so that the corridor through France should remain, so that the stolen territories might not be restored, and so that the return of Marseilles to France should be forbidden? I cannot in any circumstances imagine, Monsieur Daladier, that Germany would fight against you on these grounds. For I and everyone have renounced Alsace-Lorraine in order to avoid further bloodshed. Still less would we shed blood to maintain an injustice which would be as intolerable for you as it would be meaningless to us. I feel as you do, Monsieur Daladier, about everything you write in your letter. Perhaps, just because we

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are old front-line soldiers, we can understand each other more easily on a number of subjects; but I only ask you to understand that it is impossible for a nation of honor to renounce nearly two million people and see them being ill-treated on its own frontiers. I have therefore put forward a clear demand: Danzig and the Corridor must come back to Germany. The Macedonian conditions on our Eastern frontier must be removed. I can see no way of inducing Poland to adopt a peaceful resolution as, under the protection of her guarantees, she now feels unassailable. I would, however, despair of an honorable future for my people if, in such circumstances, we were not determined to solve the problem one way or another. If, in consequence, destiny again compels our two peoples to fight, then there would still be a difference between the motives of either side. I, Monsieur Daladier, would then be fighting with my people to right an injustice done to us, and the others would be fighting to perpetuate this injustice. This is the more tragic, because many of the most important men, even of your own nation, have realized alike the senselessness of the 1919 solution as well as the impossibility of maintaining it permanently. I am clear as to the grave consequences which such a conflict would entail. But I believe that Poland would have to bear the heaviest consequences, for whatever the outcome of a war fought over this question, the Polish State of today would disappear in one way or another.

That, for this reason, our two peoples should now embark on fresh bloodshed in a new war of annihilation is very painful not only to you, Monsieur Daladier, but also to me. But, as I have already said, I see no possibility of our being able, on our side, to influence Poland in the direction of reason, so as to rectify a situation which is intolerable for the German people and the German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's correspondence might well have had the desired effect had he not made so frequent use of his alleged exertions for the cause of peace and Germany's "voluntary" renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine on so many previous occasions. Even the German Embassy in Paris had no choice but to cable to Berlin on August 28 that "as far as it is concerned," French public opinion "has corrected the arguments submitted by the Reich Chancellor." The diplomatic dispatch bore the headline: "The following is published, from a special quarter, as semi-official views on the exchange between the Führer and Minister President Daladier:"⁷⁸⁷

There is no doubt that in Paris we should have been pleased to note the renewed assurances that the French frontier would be respected, but the French character of the provinces which were recovered in consequence of the world war has never been in doubt, and the fact that they were annexed for fifty years never established any legal German claim for Germany to renounce or not as she pleased. As to the reference to Hitler's writing or speeches, it should be noted that *Mein Kampf*, the French publication of

which the author himself tried to forbid, has never been a reassuring document for France. As to Poland, it has not been forgotten that a ten-year treaty of good neighborly relations was concluded between Berlin and Warsaw, and that the result of this treaty was to reassure Poland as long as Germany was amending the map of Europe to her own advantage in other regions, and that when this readjustment was completed, Germany denounced the treaty. During the period of good German-Polish relations, Hitler repeatedly made statements in which he recognized the right of the Polish nation to exist and emphasized the incompatibility of the annexation of part of Polish territory with National Socialist doctrine, and Germany's desire to live at peace with Poland.

The argument of the existence of a considerable German minority in Poland is counterbalanced by the fact that, in Germany too, there is a not inconsiderable Polish minority. Furthermore, the number of Germans who have become Polish citizens is no more than 700,000 and does not amount to about two millions, as stated by Hitler.

The postponement of the attack on Poland had greatly upset Hitler's time table. As mentioned earlier, secret mobilization had continued. Gradually civilian life was being subjected to wartime demands. Hitler had planned an extraordinary Reichstag session for August 27,⁷⁸⁸ which would have been the second day of war had everything proceeded on schedule. The Reichstag would have served as a forum before which the Führer would rationalize the opening of hostilities as the result of "unbearable Polish provocations." The order to assemble in Berlin had not been rescinded and many of the deputies had already arrived.

Meanwhile, the unresolved nature of the talks with England demanded patience. The question was what to do with the deputies in the interim? As was his custom, Hitler sought to present the Reichstag with the *fait accompli* of the conquest of Poland. In any event, he was not about to risk a confrontation with the Reichstag beforehand. Though the man on the street jokingly referred to the Reichstag as the Führer's "choral society,"⁷⁸⁹ Hitler was not so foolish as to regard the parliament as a forum to do his bidding unquestioningly.⁷⁹⁰ Under no circumstances was he willing to leave the decision over war or peace to the Reichstag.

Hitler, of course, resolved the dilemma with which he was confronted. On August 27, an "informal gathering" of the Reichstag took place in the Ambassadors' Hall of the new Reich Chancellery at 5:30 p.m. Such a meeting required no one to preside over it, nor did it allow for any deputy to speak on the occasion. The only speaker scheduled to make an appearance was Hitler, who delivered a

relatively short address on the “gravity of the situation.” On this particular occasion, he wore his brown uniform with the swastika band on his arm for the last time. The only news of this odd event to reach the public was contained in the following short note:⁷⁹¹

Yesterday the Führer spoke before the members of the German Reichstag assembled at the Ambassadors’ Hall in the new Reich Chancellery. The deputies gave the Führer an enthusiastic, standing ovation at the end of his talk, which was marked by the gravity of the situation.

Even though Hitler had only delivered this speech to fill a void, the brevity and vagueness of the note published gave rise to speculations about its contents, especially abroad. A report by the frustrated Ciano was revealing in this context:⁷⁹²

Hitler, at a secret meeting, has spoken to the Deputies of the Reichstag in strong terms. However, I do not know what he said nor has Attolico been able to tell me.

Halder entered the following passage on the talk into his diary for the day:⁷⁹³

Conference at Reich Chancellery at 17.30 [5:30 p.m.]: Reichstag and several Party notables, Führer accompanied by Himmler, Heydrich, Wolff, Goebbels, and Bormann.⁷⁹⁴

Situation very grave. Determined to solve Eastern question one way or another.

Minimum demands: return of Danzig, settling of Corridor question.

Maximum demands: “Depending on military situation.”

If minimum demands not satisfied, then war: Brutal!

He himself will be in the front line.

The Duce’s attitude serves our best interests.

War very difficult, perhaps hopeless; “As long as I am alive there will be no talk of capitulation.”

Soviet Pact widely misunderstood by Party. A pact with Satan to cast out the Devil.

Economic situation.

Applause on proper cues, but thin.

After Hitler’s speech, the deputies were dismissed and could return home for the time being, until “Day Y.”

Another telegram authored by Mussolini reached Hitler that evening.⁷⁹⁵ In it, the Duce detailed the assistance Italy was prepared to render Germany in moral and military spheres in the event of an armed confrontation. Italy aspired to tie down British and French forces in this manner. Hitler chose not to reply to this particular correspondence. In his speech before the Reichstag on September 1, he would stress that

he stood prepared to “face these tasks himself” and that he did not wish “to appeal to foreign powers for help.”⁷⁹⁶ This remark was addressed to Italy in particular.

On August 27, Hitler signed two further ordinances. One provided “new regulations on honorary pay for bearers of the highest war decorations and an additional allowance for the disabled of the *Schutztruppe*.” A second allotted payment of a “veterans’ pension to front-line soldiers.”⁷⁹⁷ This in fact included veterans of the Franco-German War of 1870–71 and of the campaigns in Bosnia in 1878 and in South Dalmatia in 1882.

The German News Bureau claimed that these compensations were being awarded in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Tannenberg. Neither of the ordinances contained any references to this event. In all likelihood, the additional monetary allotments were intended—with regard to the upcoming conflict—to reflect the dedication of the Third Reich to its soldiers and veterans. The money was to serve as a tangible expression of the stock German men could place in the “Fatherland’s gratitude” in future engagements as well.

In the late evening hours of August 27, Hitler was waiting for news of Dahlerus’ latest undertakings in London. At 8:00 a.m., the Swede had set out for England once more by plane. On arrival, he requested an interview with Chamberlain, Halifax, and Cadogan.⁷⁹⁸ He related the contents of his conversation with Hitler to them and reiterated the “six-point proposal.” In spite of small deviations, the proposals largely reflected those presented to Henderson previously.

Hence, the English had no cause to alter their stance. Nowhere in the world were Hitler and his deceptive notions of friendship and political alliances better understood than in London.⁷⁹⁹ Besides this, the obvious preparations for war in Germany made it all too clear that Hitler did not envision a peaceful settlement of Germany’s differences with Poland. As in the case of Czechoslovakia eleven months before, Hitler was set on war.

In the 1938 precedent, the English had induced Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudeten German territories on the grounds that Germany’s claims were based on international law. Perhaps a cession of Danzig and the Polish Corridor could have precluded the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939. But by spring 1940 at the latest, Hitler would have annexed the remainder of Poland, under the dubious title of a German “General Government.” Then the *casus belli* would again be given.

In view of the situation, the agitated round of negotiations between Berlin and London, in part secret, in part open, took place more for appearances' sake than for the sake of diplomacy. On the one hand, Hitler wanted to dissuade England from siding with Poland by making all kinds of promises and extending all sorts of assurances to the English. On the other hand, London sought to demonstrate and document Hitler's guilt in the upcoming conflict.⁸⁰⁰

Hence, while the English were quite willing to lend an ear to Hitler's proposals, they were equally determined to give a cordial, though unequivocal reply. Originally, the British Government had resolved to entrust Henderson with a reply to Berlin on August 27. Having obtained Hitler's consent,⁸⁰¹ London relegated this task to Dahlerus. Henderson postponed his trip for another day and set out on his journey on August 28. The message in reply to Hitler's six-point proposal, which Dahlerus took to Berlin, had the following content:⁸⁰²

With regard to Point 1, England was in principle willing to come to an agreement with Germany that would assure a peaceable solution of the political and economic problems, but it was emphasised that the details of such a solution must be the subject of special negotiation.

As far as Danzig and the Corridor were concerned, the British Government was agreeable to a solution of the problem and recommended that the German and Polish Governments begin negotiations immediately in order to settle the matter once and for all.

Concerning Point 3 (the guarantees of Poland's boundaries), the British Government considered that, in view of the events of the last few years, it was unable to accept the solution suggested by the Germans. It recommended, instead, that Poland's borders be guaranteed by Russia, Germany, Italy, France and England jointly.

Regarding Point 4 (satisfactory guarantees for the German minority in Poland), England was ready to accept the German demands, and recommended that this question be decided by negotiation directly with Poland.

The demand in Point 5 that Germany's former colonies be restored to her was rejected by the British Government, which also refused to discuss the question at this time. Cadogan declared frankly that under the obvious threat implied by Germany's mobilization no British government would dare suggest to Parliament that Germany's old colonies be returned or that other colonial territory be awarded to her. Parliament would never consent to decide such a question at the point of a gun. The British Government agreed, however, that if other problems were solved and Germany demobilized, the matter would immediately be taken up for consideration and stated that it would be handled speedily and without prejudice.

Germany's offer in Point 6 to defend the British Empire "*mit der Wehrmacht des Grossdeutschen Reiches wo immer es auch angegriffen werden könnte*" was rejected most emphatically. To accept such an "offer" would

hardly be compatible with the policy of the British Empire; nor would it serve its interests.

The plane with Dahlerus on board landed in Berlin at 11:00 p.m. on August 27. Within ten minutes of his arrival Göring came to meet him. Having heard of the British response to Hitler's advances, Göring grew increasingly concerned. He called the British reply less than satisfactory. He himself understood the British position, as he was quick to point out to Dahlerus, but he was doubtful if Hitler would. As always, Göring was exceedingly ill at ease when it came to relating bad news to the Führer. As Göring confessed once: "When I stand in front of him, I lose heart."⁸⁰³

This time, however, he need not have troubled himself. Though it was well after midnight when Göring reached the Chancellery, Hitler was glad to hear of the British proposals. At this point, he was interested in entering into any kind of agreement that might distract the British. All the better, he thought, if such an understanding could be used to bind Britain's hands while he attacked Poland. Direct negotiations between Germany and Poland? Marvelous. This gave him the time and opportunity to prove the Poles wrong through some type of legal or diplomatic trick. International guarantees for a new Poland? Of course. Such guarantees could not possibly be fulfilled or reinforced, as Munich had amply proven. Deferment of the colonial question? Agreed. Hitler had never been serious in his demands for a return of Germany's colonies. The English did not wish any German divisions to assure the security of the British Empire? Well, then, they were on their own. In time, they would become more reasonable and beg him to help.

On August 28, Göring phoned Dahlerus at 1:30 a.m. to relay Hitler's assent to the British suggestions. Dahlerus instructed the British Embassy of this. In the early morning hours, he met once more with Göring. The latter reiterated the substance of his night-time talk with Hitler. He placed great emphasis on the pledge that Germany would not lend support to any power which might become involved in a conflict with Great Britain, not even "Italy, Russia, or Japan."

August 28 was dedicated to the commemoration of the Battle of Tannenberg. While 1939 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the event, the German public felt very little like celebrating. The battle had been won at the time, the war lost. And the situation in 1939 was not too different from that of 1914. Was war in the offing once again? Were

millions doomed to death once again? Would years of struggle once more culminate in a catastrophe unforecast? Nearly all Germans were haunted by these and like questions on this August 28, 1939. Undoubtedly, Hitler was aware of the somber reflections of the German public. Celebration of the Tannenberg anniversary was decidedly subdued. One detachment of reconnaissance pilots received the honorary title "Reconnaissance Detachment Tannenberg." The following official note informed the public of the renaming:⁸⁰⁴

Berlin, August 28

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day of Tannenberg, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has issued a decree which details:

"By their reports on the advance and positions of the Russian armies of Njemen and Narev, the reconnaissance detachments decisively contributed to the victorious outcome of the Battle of Tannenberg.

In commemoration of this, I order: the Reconnaissance Detachment No. 10 shall henceforth bear the title 'Reconnaissance Detachment Tannenberg' (*Aufklärungstruppe Tannenberg*). On the right cuff of their uniforms, the officers, noncommissioned officers, and crews of this detachment shall bear a commemorative band with the inscription 'Tannenberg.'"

On the same day, Hitler also signed a "Law on the Pay, Feeding, Lodging, Clothing, and Health Care of the Relatives of Wehrmacht Members on Special Deployment," also called "Wehrmacht Deployment Taxation Law." These regulations affected the pay, housing, clothing, and health care for members of the Wehrmacht on "special deployment."⁸⁰⁵ The law was truly a wartime measure. It was to provide for family members and survivors of Wehrmacht active duty personnel. Given the widespread nervousness in the population, *Krieg* was not an opportune word to employ at this point. *Besonderer Einsatz* (special deployment) was an apt euphemism for the task at hand. The authorities judged it supremely important not to awaken memories of the horrors of the First World War, still vivid in the memories of millions of Germans, and to reinforce the perception that the move against Poland represented nothing more than a "police action" against a deviant neighbor state, an action deceptively termed "special deployment."⁸⁰⁶ The law's preamble is characteristic of Hitler's style. It made it clear that the "lives" of those entrusted with this seemingly harmless mission actually were at risk:

Every German is honor-bound to deploy (*einsetzen*) his forces and his life in the service of the honor and continued existence of Volk and Reich. The National Socialist State will treat all members of the Wehrmacht deployed in

defense of the Fatherland in accordance with an equality of principle. It will grant them, besides fair pay, free and equal provisions, and satisfactory medical care. It will equally provide for the support of their families insofar as this is not assured by other means.

Hitler had not yet completed his preparations for “the most difficult of circumstances” in terms of ordinances. On August 28 still, another “Decree of the Führer and Reich Chancellor on the Simplification of Public Administration” was signed into law:⁸⁰⁷

The Defense of Volk and Reich demands the smooth functioning of the public administration. To restore this so that, even under the most difficult of circumstances, it can fulfill its duty to Volk and Reich, I order the following:

Article I

(1) I expect unreserved efforts by all administrative bodies to make swift decisions free of bureaucratic encumbrance.

(2) I hold the heads of the Reich’s high administrative bodies responsible for the smooth cooperation among all administrative bodies in their areas and for insuring that there is no delay detrimental to the conduct of the state’s affairs.

(3) If a subordinate administrative body requires the approval of another administrative body or office in making a decision on regulations regarding laws, legal or administrative stipulations, then this assent is to be regarded as having been granted unless receipt of a written explanation of refusal of this permission has been received by the petitioning office within one week.

Article II

(1) Tasks related to the defense of the Reich take precedence over all other tasks to be attended to by administrative offices in the Reich, the Länder, the communities, and public corporations. The latter tasks are to be attended to according to remaining capacities.

(2) Every head of an administrative body is obliged to see to the conduct of his office in a manner which enables him first to attend to those urgent tasks connected to the defense of the Reich.

On August 28, the British Ambassador Henderson called at the Reich Chancellery at 10:30 p.m. to present Hitler officially with a memorandum from His Majesty’s Government answering the German proposals of August 23. The decisive passages of the British document were the following:⁸⁰⁸

1. His Majesty’s Government have received the message conveyed to them from the German Chancellor by His Majesty’s Ambassador to Berlin, and have considered it with the care which it demands.

They note the Chancellor’s expression of his desire to make friendship the basis of the relations between Germany and the British Empire and they fully share this desire. They believe with him that if a complete and lasting

understanding between the two countries could be established it would bring untold blessings to both peoples.

2. The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions: those which are the matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland, and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connection with these last, His Majesty's Government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding.

These proposals are of course stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty's Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

3. The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Germany and Poland. As to that, His Majesty's Government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of the settlement and the method by which it is to be reached. On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent, and His Majesty's Government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress. The German Government will be aware that His Majesty's Government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not, for any advantage offered to Great Britain, acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a State to whom they have given their guarantee. [—]

7. It is unnecessary in the present reply to stress the advantage of a peaceful settlement over a decision to settle the questions at issue by force of arms. The results of a decision to use force have been clearly set out in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chancellor of the 22nd August,⁸⁰⁹ and His Majesty's Government do not doubt that they are as fully recognized by the Chancellor as by themselves. [—]

8. A just settlement of these questions between Germany and Poland may open the way to world peace. Failure to reach it would ruin the hopes of better understanding between Germany and Great Britain, would bring the two countries into conflict, and might well plunge the whole world into war. Such an outcome would be a calamity without parallel in history.

Once Hitler had read through the memorandum, Henderson expanded on its contents orally. The record of the conversation read:⁸¹⁰

He emphasized once again that it was completely wrong to imagine that the British Government's aim was to destroy Germany. Britain was perfectly willing to concede to Germany her vital rights, but she had given her word to Poland and could not break her word. The British people, and Mr. Chamberlain in particular, wanted understanding with Germany, but in order

to achieve this they needed the cooperation of Germany, which must try to reach an understanding with the Poles by peaceful means.

The Führer replied that he had been quite ready to settle the questions at issue with the Polish Government on a very reasonable basis. This attempt had failed owing to the behavior of the Poles, particularly because they felt secure under the protection of the British guarantee, and now, with their Slav mentality, they were becoming provocative and insolent. Things had now reached such a pitch that every day there were fresh incidents and acts of violence against the Volksdeutsche.

The Führer then quoted individual examples of shooting and ill-treatment of Germans in Poland. When he remarked in this connection that all this was a matter of indifference to Britain, Henderson, who had wrongly taken the remark as applying to himself, replied very heatedly that such things could not be said to him, who, ever since he had occupied his post in Berlin, and particularly just recently, had done everything in his power to prevent war and bloodshed. The choice between war and peace now lay with the Führer.

The Führer replied that this was not a correct picture of the situation and declared that the alternatives before him were either to defend the rights of the German people or to abandon them at the cost of an agreement with England. For him there was no choice: his duty was to defend the rights of the German people. Furthermore a Great Power like Germany must decline to be put on the same level as a country like Poland. The former alternative in the case of Czechia had been equally insulting to Germany, when England had also placed before herself the alternative of having either Germany or Czechia as a friend.⁸¹¹ Germany could not tolerate anything of that kind.

On parting, the Führer, after expatiating on the course of his efforts to reach understanding with England, again expressed most forcibly his desire to cooperate with England. He had always cherished this desire and had endeavored to realize it. England had repulsed him again and again and had thus forced him against his will into an alliance with others,⁸¹² which had not been in keeping with his original intentions. Even now he still wanted friendship with England and he expressed the sincere hope that England would not let this last chance slip.

It was not a question of Danzig or the Polish Corridor, so Henderson strove to underline, but of Britain's resolve to respond to force with force. He then asked Hitler whether he would be prepared to discuss a potential exchange of minorities with Poland and to enter into direct negotiations with the Poles. To this Hitler assented with the reservation that he had yet to submit the British response just presented to more detailed scrutiny. Also he wished to consult Göring on the matter. Despite the sharp tone of the conversation, Hitler remained "surprisingly calm," as Schmidt reported.⁸¹³

The following communiqué on this meeting was published on behalf of the German Government:⁸¹⁴

The British Ambassador arrived at the Reich Chancellery on Monday [August 28] at 10:30 p.m. where the Führer received him. A reception for the Ambassador was held in the court of the Reich Chancellery where a guard of honor paid him the customary tribute. Soldiers presented rifles and rolled drums. From the courtyard, State Minister Dr. Meissner and the Chief Adjutant of the Führer, SA Oberguppenführer Brückner, led the British Ambassador to the Führer's office.

Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Envoy Dr. Schmidt, in his function as interpreter, were present at the talk between the Führer and the British Ambassador.

It was Meissner to whom the task fell to accompany Henderson to the door after the meeting.⁸¹⁵ Once again the British Ambassador stressed that, in the event of a German invasion of Poland, Great Britain and France would immediately declare war on the Reich. Should Hitler fail to understand this, it would prove a fateful error. If Great Britain did not instantly rush to the Poles' side in the event of a confrontation, it risked losing its credibility as an ally in the eyes of the world. After all, Britain had pledged its full support to Poland in a formal alliance pact. And the British people, though they loathed war and loved peace, would undoubtedly close ranks behind their government in the case of an attack. Henderson implored Meissner to point this out once more to Hitler.

The State Minister duly did so in the presence of Ribbentrop, who stood by silently as Hitler listened. Once Meissner had finished, the Führer shrugged his shoulders and, in parting, remarked: "They'll change their minds yet."

British statesmen and diplomats were not alone in assuring Hitler of the inevitability of a declaration of war in the event of a German attack on Poland. The Reich's diplomatic representations in other western countries also wired report upon report to Berlin detailing what type of reaction by England and France was to be anticipated. Translated into English as *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, the Foreign Ministry's papers also provide ample proof that Germany's Chargés d'Affaires in London, Paris, Washington, and Lisbon, were well aware of the situation.⁸¹⁶ They fully realized that a forceful German venture against Poland would ultimately lead to an intervention by the United States, too, on behalf of its allies.

Having returned to Berlin for his annual vacation on August 14, the German Ambassador in London von Dirksen⁸¹⁷ unequivocally reiterated the British policy in the event of a Polish-German conflict.⁸¹⁸ Hitler

refused to receive him. Later, he relieved von Dirksen of his duties as Ambassador and effected his retirement.

After all, what need had an Adolf Hitler of experts in foreign relations? He desired that no information might reach him on events running contrary to the predictions he so confidently based on his conceptions of 1919. These were correct, not the “miserable reports” of German diplomats.⁸¹⁹

After Henderson’s visit, Hitler conferred with Göring and Ribbentrop until 3:00 the next morning, discussing the situation and the latest developments. The Führer was in fact content with the course of events; his optimism was reinforced by Dahlerus’ euphemistic report. Mockingly, he turned to Ribbentrop and said: “Do you still believe that Dahlerus is a British agent?”⁸²⁰ In the same meeting, Göring finally dared to tell Hitler: “We should stop playing this *Vabanquespiel* (risky game).” Hitler—laconically and with complete frankness—retorted with the remarkable words: “I have played *Vabanque* all my life.”⁸²¹

On that August 29, Hitler took great care in composing a note in response to the British memorandum. After all, in his own words, “the great drama is now approaching its climax.”⁸²² There remained only two more acts for him to suffer through. For one, the British had to be outmaneuvered so that they could not possibly move at the crucial point. Secondly, he had to insist on Polish compliance with deadlines impossible to abide by. Then, finally, he would have cornered his foe so that he could “strike straight at his heart.”⁸²³

Hence Hitler declared himself willing, “in spite of severe misgivings as to the prospects of success” and “solely under the impression” made on him by the British friendly intentions, to agree to direct consultations with the government in Warsaw. However, he did so under the provision that a Polish negotiator arrive in Berlin by Wednesday, August 30, i.e. within 24 hours’ time. Previously, Hitler had scheduled the attack upon Poland for August 31. It now appeared opportune to him to add another day onto this deadline. He proceeded in precisely the same manner as with Czechoslovakia the year before. Then, too, he had allowed the final date (September 30, 1938) to pass unnoticed and added onto it another day to prove his extraordinary love for peace. Next, he struck unexpectedly on the morning of the third day.⁸²⁴

On August 29, summoned to the Reich Chancellery, Henderson arrived around 7:00 p.m.⁸²⁵ Hitler handed him a reply which read as follows:⁸²⁶

August 29, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor to the British Government

His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin has submitted to His Majesty's Government suggestions which I felt bound to make in order:

(1) To give expression once more to the will of the Reich Government for sincere German-British understanding, cooperation and friendship:

(2) To leave no room for doubt as to the fact that such an understanding could not be bought at the price of renunciation of vital German interests, let alone the abandonment of demands which are based as much upon common human justice as upon the national dignity and honor of our people.

The German Government have noted with satisfaction from the reply of His Majesty's Government and from the oral explanation given by His Majesty's Ambassador, that His Majesty's Government for their part are also prepared to improve the relationship between Germany and England and to develop and extend it in the sense of the German suggestions.

In this connection, His Majesty's Government are similarly convinced that the removal of German-Polish tensions, which has become unbearable, is the prerequisite for the realization of this hope.

Since the autumn of the past year, and on the last occasion in March, 1939, there were submitted to the Polish Government proposals, both oral and written, which, having regard to the friendship then existing between Germany and Poland, offered the possibility of a solution to the questions in dispute, acceptable to both parties. His Majesty's Government are aware that the Polish Government saw fit, in March last, finally to reject these proposals. At the same time, they used this rejection as a pretext or an occasion for taking military measures which have since been continuously intensified. Already in the middle of last month, Poland was in effect in a state of mobilization. This was accompanied by numerous encroachments in the Free City of Danzig due to the instigation of the Polish authorities; threatening demands in the nature of ultimata, varying only in degree, were addressed to that City. A closing of the frontiers, at first in the form of a measure of customs policy but extended later to military and traffic and communications matters, was imposed with the object of bringing about the political exhaustion and economic destruction of this German community. To this were added barbaric acts of maltreatment which cry to Heaven, and other kinds of persecution of the large German national group in Poland, which extended even to the killing of Germans living there or their forcible removal under the most cruel conditions. This state of affairs is unbearable for a Great Power. It has now forced Germany, after remaining a passive onlooker for many months, in her turn to take the necessary steps for the safeguarding of just German interests. And indeed the German Government can but assure the British Government in the most solemn manner that a condition of affairs has now been reached which can no longer be accepted or observed with indifference. The demands of the German Government are in conformity with the revision of the Versailles Treaty, which from the beginning has been recognized as being necessary in regard to this territory: viz. the return of Danzig and the Corridor to Germany,

and the safeguarding of the existence of the German national group in the territories remaining to Poland.

The German Government note with satisfaction that His Majesty's Government also are in principle convinced that some solution must be found for the situation which has arisen. They further feel justified in assuming that His Majesty's Government too can have no doubt that it is a question now of conditions, for the elimination of which there no longer remain days, still less weeks, but perhaps only hours. For in the disorganized state of affairs obtaining in Poland, the possibility of incidents supervening, which it might be impossible for Germany to tolerate, must at any moment be reckoned with.

While His Majesty's Government may still believe that these grave differences can be resolved by way of direct negotiations, the German Government unfortunately can no longer share this view as a matter of course. For they have made the attempt to embark upon such peaceful negotiations, but, instead of receiving support from the Polish Government, they were rebuffed by the sudden introduction of measures of a military character in the form of the development alluded to above.

His Majesty's Government attach importance to two considerations:

(1) that the existence of a threatening explosion should be eliminated as quickly as possible by direct negotiation, and

(2) that the existence of the Polish State, in the form in which it would then continue to exist, should be adequately safeguarded in the economic and political spheres by means of international guarantees.

On this subject the German Government make the following declaration:

Though skeptical as to the prospects of a successful outcome, they are nevertheless prepared to accept the British proposal and to enter into direct discussions. They do so, as has already been emphasized, solely as the result of the impression made upon them by the written statement received from His Majesty's Government that they too desire a pact of friendship in accordance with the general lines indicated to Ambassador Henderson. The German Government desire in this way to give His Majesty's Government and the British people a proof of the sincerity of Germany's intentions to enter into a lasting friendship with Great Britain.

The Reich Government feel, however, bound to point out to His Majesty's Government that in the event of a territorial rearrangement in Poland they would no longer be able to bind themselves to give guarantees or to participate in guarantees without the U.S.S.R. being associated therewith.

For the rest, in making these proposals the German Government have never had any intention of attacking Poland's vital interests or questioning the existence of an independent Polish State. The German Government, accordingly, in these circumstances agree to accept His Majesty's Government's offer of their good offices in securing the despatch to Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers. They count on the arrival of this emissary on Wednesday, August 30, 1939.

The Reich Government will immediately draw up proposals for a solution acceptable to themselves and will, if possible, place these at the disposal of His Majesty's Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator.

Having read the document, Henderson could only call it “a very disappointing answer to the dignified, passive, and reasoned note of His Majesty’s Government.”⁸²⁷ Baffled, Henderson objected: “That sounds like an ultimatum,” because there were only twenty-four hours left for Poland to comply with these demands. Hitler categorically denied, with vocal support from Ribbentrop, that the paper represented an ultimatum. The constraints imposed on a possible time frame were due “to the urgency of the moment when two fully mobilized armies are standing face to face.”⁸²⁸

He then took advantage of the situation to state in strong terms his outrage at the alleged Polish transgressions and provocations. Again he resorted to his well-rehearsed fits of fury to impress upon his opposite the justness of his cause. This was a bit much for Henderson under the circumstances. Enraged, he hit the table with his fist and shouted that he was not willing to listen to any more nonsense about Great Britain being indifferent to the allegation that “Germans were slaughtered in Poland.”

On this curious phase of the negotiations, Henderson reported the following to Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax:⁸²⁹

I left Herr Hitler in no doubt of my disappointment: rightly or wrongly I felt that I must play Herr Hitler at his own game. He gave me the opportunity on a minor point by asserting [that] I or His Majesty’s Government did not care a row of pins whether Germans were slaughtered in Poland or not. I therefore proceeded to out-shout Hitler. I told him that I would not listen to such language from him or anybody. Such a statement was intolerable and an example of all his exaggeration.

I added a good deal more shouting at the top of my voice.

Later that day, Henderson commented further on this verbal exchange in a letter to Halifax:⁸³⁰

It is, of course, not the duty of a British representative to shout. But Hitler is an abnormality and, after my first interview at Berchtesgaden where, while answering him back all the time, I was careful to make a distinction between his own ravings and my calmness, I felt that sooner or later he would have to learn that the monopoly on shouting was not his alone. So when he gave me the opportunity on a minor point, namely our utter disregard for Germans murdered in Poland, I did fairly let him have it. But believe me I was not merely satisfying a long-felt want, but doing something which after careful prior consideration I had decided might do good. I must add that after the worst of it I started to get up to go, but he would not budge.

The decision of the British Ambassador to resort to a shouting match in his dealings with the Reich Chancellor did indeed “do good,”

as Henderson managed to silence Hitler for once. Inside Germany, regrettably, no one was to be found with such courage.

Regarding Henderson's visit, the following official communiqué was published:⁸³¹

Berlin, August 29, 1939

At the new Reich Chancellery on Tuesday evening, the Führer received the British Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The British Ambassador was handed a reply to yesterday's note by the British Government.

Shortly after Henderson had left, i.e. before 9:00 p.m., the Italian Ambassador Attolico called on Hitler to present him with a letter penned by Mussolini and to transmit an oral message. The Duce proposed an Italian mediation between Germany and England. Rome entertained close and warm relations with London, said Mussolini. Should Hitler so desire, the Duce would be willing to relate a message to the British Government outside official channels.

One can easily imagine Hitler's outrage at such a proposal. As though he needed Mussolini's help to come to terms with the senile English! He could very well handle them himself.

As Schmidt reported,⁸³² Hitler turned to Attolico to state with pointed coldness that he had already entered into direct negotiations with London. And, moreover, he had already agreed to see a Polish negotiator.

The manner in which these "direct talks" with England had been conducted left much to be desired, however. Hitler was painfully aware of this, especially in the wake of the recent confrontation with Henderson. Who knew what reports this stubborn Englishman wired to London? It would be best, Hitler reasoned, to again ask Dahlerus to open a venue to Britain.

Hitler speedily summoned Göring. In the late evening hours, Hitler labored to detail minutely what tactics were to be employed in future negotiations with the British. It was of the highest importance to impress on the English the Führer's extraordinary love for peace. On the other hand, it was equally important to bring about a turn of events to indict the Poles should Polish-German talks fail.

Dahlerus was destined to hear of the results of this consultation between Hitler and Göring that very evening.⁸³³ Shortly before midnight, Göring asked him by telephone to come to his private apartment. There, Göring began a fervent accusation of the "inferior,

impudent Poles.” In vivid terms he described how downcast the Führer was because of the highly unpleasant confrontation with the British Ambassador. This had come at a time when he had just written a “conciliatory note” to the British Government. Now, after Henderson’s “fit of anger,” the Führer regrettably found himself forced once more to seriously question the goodwill of the English. Indeed, there seemed to be a certain “lack of will” in the English to come to an agreement.

This was all the more lamentable at this particular time, as Hitler had just sat down to compose yet another *grosszügiges Angebot* to Poland. And now, fretted Göring, this “verbal dispute” had perhaps changed everything. He, nevertheless, still cherished the hope that Hitler might persist yet in his original plans and finish the overture to Poland by the next morning. This would have been August 30. Assuredly, Hitler would then reveal the contents of his proposal. For the time being, he, Göring, was not empowered to reveal details of this plan. All he could do was to grant Dahlerus insight into the general nature of the advance toward Poland. Naturally, all this was “strictly confidential.” First among Hitler’s proposals was a return of Danzig to the Reich while, secondly, a plebiscite was to be held in the area approximately delineating the Polish Corridor. Should the population there cast its vote for Poland, then Germany would have the right to demand its own “corridor through the Polish Corridor.” When Dahlerus inquired precisely what geographical area was in question, Göring again tore a page from an atlas and sketched out a line following approximately the border of the Reich in 1914, but stretching as far south as Lodz.

In conclusion, Göring urged Dahlerus to fly immediately to London to report on the actual events of that evening. In particular, Dahlerus was to render the British Government an accurate, more insightful report on Germany’s willingness for peace. In a “strictly confidential” manner, Dahlerus was to inform them of Hitler’s intention to make renewed offers to Warsaw in the course of the next day. The conditions linked to these were of so facile a nature, Göring argued, that the Poles would assuredly agree to them shortly. The English could only favor a like resolution. Indeed, a German military plane left Berlin at 5:00 a.m. the next morning. Dahlerus was aboard, making his way to London.

8

On August 30, Hitler received the Gauleiter of Danzig, Albert Forster, at the Reich Chancellery.⁸³⁴ This early morning conference served to issue final instructions to Forster on how to proceed in staging a coup d'état. Seven days before, Forster had been appointed head of state of the Free City, in defiance of the constitution.⁸³⁵ On September 1, on Hitler's express orders, Forster would proclaim a "Basic Law for the Free State of Danzig," which would become an integral part of the Third Reich. This naturally would be done without allowing for any participation by Danzig's Senate.⁸³⁶

Besides the "generous offer" to Poland, Hitler had yet another task facing him on this August 30. Since military affairs would largely take up his time in the months to come, Hitler resolved to charge a deputy with the Reich's internal functioning. The natural choice for such a position was Göring, his "best man." In the past months, he had repeatedly proved his qualifications to represent his Führer. Hitler was content with his choice. Of course, he would not entrust even Göring with the power to make any real decisions. This function would be reserved for the "Reich Government" and the "Reichstag," in other words for Hitler himself.

Nevertheless, in spite of these efforts to provide for his anticipated absence from the domestic scene, Hitler had to ensure that the administrative apparatus functioned in the most effective manner possible. He was greatly apprehensive about the internal bickering and inability to perform so characteristic of any bureaucracy. To restrict this potential for delay, Hitler promulgated a "Führer Decree on the Establishment of a Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich."⁸³⁷

For the period of the present foreign policy tension,⁸³⁸ I order the following in the service of a coherent management of the administration and of the economy:

I

(1) As a permanent committee, a “Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich” shall be formed from the body of the Reich Defense Council.⁸³⁹

(2) The following shall serve as permanent members of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich:

Field Marshal Göring, as its president,
the Deputy of the Führer,
the Plenipotentiary General for the Administration of the Reich,⁸⁴⁰
the Plenipotentiary General for the Economy,⁸⁴¹
the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery,
the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

(3) The President shall also be entitled to consult additional members of the Reich Defense Council as well as other persons.

II

The Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich is empowered to issue decrees which shall have the force of law, unless I order the passing of a law by the Reich Government or the Reichstag.

III

The powers of Field Marshal Göring based on the instructions for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan of October 18, 1936 (RGBl., I, p. 887) shall remain in force, in particular his right to issue directives.

IV

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery shall conduct the affairs of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich.

V

I shall determine the expiry of this decree.⁸⁴²

Berlin, August 30, 1939

The Führer Adolf Hitler
Göring, Field Marshal

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

Previously, Hitler had placed the title “The Führer and Reich Chancellor” next to his signature beneath governmental decrees, ordinances, and laws. From now on, he began to prefer the abbreviated version, “The Führer,” although, along with this, the alternative “The Führer and Reich Chancellor” was still to be found on many official documents.⁸⁴³

On August 30, Hitler’s new “magnanimous offer” to Poland contained sixteen points. The Reich Government transmitted these proposals to the German Chargé d’Affaires in London personally with the provision: “Following proposals are to be regarded as strictly confidential pending further notice. They are not to be passed on to third persons.” The text of the sixteen points read:⁸⁴⁴

Proposals for a Settlement of the Danzig-Corridor Problem
as well as the German-Polish Minorities Question

The situation existing between the German Reich and Poland is at the moment such that any further incident may lead to an explosion of the military forces which have taken up their positions on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be so framed as to ensure that the events which lie at the root of this situation cannot be repeated on the next occasion offered and that thus not only Eastern Europe but also other territories shall not be brought into such a state of tension.

The causes of this development lie in:

1. the impossible delineation of frontiers as provided for by the Versailles Dictate;

2. the impossible treatment of the minorities in the ceded territories.

In making these proposals the Reich Government are, therefore, actuated by the idea of finding a final solution which will remove the impossible situation created by this frontier delineation, assure to both parties their vital lines of communication, remove the minority problem—as far as it is at all possible—and, in so far as this is not possible, make the fate of the minorities tolerable by a reliable guarantee of their rights. The German Government are convinced that in this connection it is essential that economic and physical damage done since 1918 should be revealed and full amends made. They of course regard this obligation as being binding for both parties.

These considerations lead to the following practical proposals:

1. The Free City of Danzig shall immediately return to the German Reich in view of its purely German character and also of the unanimous will of its population.

2. The territory of the so-called Corridor, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line Marienwerder-Graudenz-Kulm-Bromberg (including these towns) and thence runs in a roughly westerly direction towards Schönlanke, shall itself decide as to whether it shall belong to Germany or to Poland.

3. For this purpose a plebiscite shall take place in this territory. The following shall be entitled to vote: all Germans who were either domiciled in this territory on January 1, 1918, or who were born in these up to that date, and similarly all Poles, Cassubians, etc., domiciled in this territory on the above day or born there up to that date. The Germans expelled from this territory shall return to it in order to exercise their vote. To ensure an impartial plebiscite and also to safeguard the extensive preparations necessary for it, the above territory shall, as in the case of the Saar territory, be placed under the supervision of an international commission, to be formed immediately and consisting of the four Great Powers, Italy, the Soviet Union, France and Britain. This commission shall exercise all rights of sovereignty in this territory. With this end in view, the territory shall be evacuated by the Polish armed forces, the Polish police and the Polish authorities, within a period of the utmost brevity, still to be agreed upon.

4. The Polish part of Gdynia, which is essentially Polish sovereign territory, in so far as it is confined territorially to the Polish settlement, shall

be excluded from the above territory. The exact frontiers of the Polish port should be determined between Germany and Poland and, if necessary, delimited by an international arbitration tribunal.

5. With a view to assuring the necessary time for the extensive work involved in carrying out a just plebiscite, this plebiscite shall not take place before twelve months have elapsed.

6. In order to guarantee unrestricted communication between Germany and East Prussia and between Poland and the sea during this period, those roads and railways shall be specified which will render free transit traffic possible. In this connection only such taxes may be levied as are necessary for the maintenance of the means of communication and for the provision of transport.

7. It shall be decided by a simple majority of the votes recorded to whom this territory shall belong.

8. In order to guarantee to Germany free communication with her Province of Danzig-East Prussia, and to Poland her access to the sea, after the plebiscite—regardless of the results thereof—Germany shall, if the plebiscite area goes to Poland, receive an extraterritorial traffic zone, approximately along a line from Bütow to Danzig or Dirschau, in which to construct a Reich Autobahn and a four-track railway line. The road and the railway shall be so constructed as not to affect the Polish lines of communication, i.e., they shall pass either over or under them. The breadth of this zone shall be fixed at one kilometer and shall be German sovereign territory.

Should the result of the plebiscite be in Germany's favor, Poland shall receive rights analogous to those which she would have accorded to Germany, i.e., similar extraterritorial communications by road and rail for the purpose of free and unrestricted access to her port of Gdynia.

9. In the event of the Corridor reverting to the German Reich, the Reich declares its readiness to proceed to an exchange of population with Poland to the extent to which the Corridor lends itself.

10. Any special rights desired by Poland in the port of Danzig would be negotiated on the basis of parity against equal rights for Germany in the port of Gdynia.

11. In order to remove any feeling in those areas that either side was being threatened, Danzig and Gdynia would be given the character of purely mercantile towns, that is to say without military installations or military fortifications.

12. The peninsula of Hela, which as a result of the plebiscite would go either to Poland or to Germany, would be similarly demilitarized in either case.

13. Since the Government of the German Reich have the gravest complaints to make against Polish treatment of minorities, and since the Polish Government, for their part, feel obliged to make complaints against Germany, both parties shall declare that they agree to have these complaints submitted to an internationally constituted commission of enquiry, whose task would be to examine all complaints regarding economic or physical damage as well as any other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake

to make good all economic or other damage done to minorities on either side since the year 1918, and to cancel all expropriations or, as the case may be, to provide complete compensation to persons affected by these and any other encroachments on their economic life.

14. In order to free the Germans remaining in Poland, and the Poles remaining in Germany, from the feeling that they have no rights under international law, and above all to secure them against being called upon to perform actions or to render services incompatible with their national sentiments, Germany and Poland shall agree to protect the rights of both minorities by means of the most comprehensive and binding agreements, so as to assure to these minorities the preservation, free development and practice of their national character (*Volkstum*), and in particular to permit them such organization as they may consider necessary for this purpose. Both parties shall undertake not to call upon members of the minority for military service.

15. In the event of agreement on the basis of these proposals, Germany and Poland shall declare themselves ready to order and to carry out the immediate demobilization of their armed forces.

16. The further measures necessary for the more rapid execution of the above arrangements shall be agreed upon between Germany and Poland conjointly.

Essentially, these proposals were not any different from previous ones. As the Führer confided to Halder, the only new feature was that Germany was raising “a barrage of demographic and democratic demands.”⁸⁴⁵ Hitler actively sought to foster the impression that he was serious about conducting a plebiscite in the disputed territory. However, the proposals were tantamount to a return of Danzig to the Reich and the annexation of the Polish Corridor. Poland had already rejected similarly ill-concealed advances made by Germany in March. Acquiescence to similarly clad, allegedly justified claims by the Reich would merely signal a postponed swallowing-up of the entire state a few months later. The case of Czechoslovakia had amply proven as much. Unless the English exerted decisive pressure on Poland, Warsaw could confidently be expected to reject Hitler’s latest proposals, precisely as he desired. The methods he employed bore witness to the legacy of Graf Berchtold⁸⁴⁶ who had proceeded along similar lines in presenting Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum to Serbia in 1914.

The only reason for Hitler’s “generous offer” to Poland lay in his desire to demonstrate to Great Britain his extraordinary “restraint” and “love for peace.” He sought to afford the British the opportunity to divorce themselves from their obligations toward Poland. After all, it was hardly feasible for the Poles to send a plenipotentiary to Germany

by midnight, August 30. Their lack of compliance with this supposedly simple demand by Germany would serve as evidence of the Poles' lack of "good will." Even should a negotiator miraculously appear, the talks would undoubtedly founder because of the same "ill will." In any event, the German Chargé d'Affaires in London could step forth to emphasize once more the "generosity" of Hitler's earlier proposal to the British Government. In this scenario, Hitler was certain, England could point to his well-documented and frequently demonstrated "love for peace" and the resistance of the Poles in order to rationalize neutrality in the upcoming conflict between Poland and Germany.

This was the master plan of the Führer and Chancellor of the Greater German Reich on that fateful August 30, 1939. Later he tried to relate his general train of thought to Schmidt in the following manner:⁸⁴⁷

I needed an alibi, especially with the German Volk, to show them that I had done everything to maintain the peace. Thus I made this generous proposal about the settlement of the Danzig and the Corridor questions.

Hitler needed this "alibi" more for his dealings with the British than "with the German Volk." After all, the immediate worries of his people were of little concern to Hitler. He did not actually wish "to bear responsibility" for his actions, nor did he intend to allow his contemporaries to "crucify" him, should his notions prove mistaken.⁸⁴⁸ And in light of past experiences with the Führer, hardly anyone in Germany at the time took Hitler's last-minute overture to Poland seriously. No one truly expected him to scale down his demands to Danzig and perhaps the Corridor.

Those in the Third Reich's inner circles had long known what to think of similar assurances by their Führer. And the German public at large knew assertions such as "We do not want any Czechs at all"⁸⁴⁹ not to be worth a penny, at least ever since Hitler had ordered the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia.

While the British were to gain knowledge of his proposal, for the sake of a historical alibi, Hitler did not desire that they should exert such overwhelming pressure on Warsaw as to induce the Poles to perhaps unconditionally acquiesce to the demands contained in his offer. In the course of the day, Dahlerus twice phoned Göring. Calling from the British Foreign Ministry, he inquired as to news of the concrete nature of the proposal, announcement of which was awaited at any moment.

Dahlerus also wanted to know if it was not possible to conduct the German-Polish negotiations at a different location, somewhere other than Berlin. To this, Göring replied:⁸⁵⁰ “Nonsense; the negotiations must take place in Berlin where Hitler has his headquarters.”

The British Government informed Dahlerus as well as Ambassador Henderson⁸⁵¹ of their intent to carefully review the German note of August 29. However, they continued, it was irrational to anticipate procurement of a proper Polish negotiator to Berlin by the end of the day, August 30. At 5:30 p.m., Henderson transmitted to the Reich Foreign Minister a letter from Chamberlain. In response to the earlier correspondence received from Hitler, the Prime Minister wrote:⁸⁵²

We are considering the German note with all urgency and shall send an official reply later in the afternoon. We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoidance of frontier incidents and I would beg you to confirm similar instructions on the German side. I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views which are taking place of that desire for Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke in Parliament yesterday.

It was obvious that the English either did not desire or were unable to induce the Poles to send a negotiator to Berlin by the end of the day. This made things even easier for Hitler.

When Henderson phoned the Chancellery at around 11:30 p.m. to announce imminent delivery of a message from the British Government, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to reveal the “substance” of his sixteen-point proposal to the British Ambassador. Under no circumstances, according to Hitler’s strict instructions, was Ribbentrop to hand Henderson a written summation. This all served to preclude even the slight, though implausible, possibility that the British Ambassador might gain knowledge of the offer’s concrete terms, rush to the telephone, and swiftly urge Warsaw to accept Hitler’s conditions before midnight.

Hitler was not taking such a risk. This perhaps also reflected a dislike for written matter. Even in the negotiations with the Soviets on the Non-Aggression Pact on August 14, Hitler had insisted that Ribbentrop only read the proposals to those opposite him at the table and had explicitly forbidden the Reich Foreign Minister to present them with a printed summary of the Führer’s suggestions.⁸⁵³

The method Ribbentrop was instructed to follow in presenting Hitler’s sixteen-point proposal to Henderson at midnight both violated etiquette and standard diplomatic procedure. But Hitler had little regard for the requirements of diplomatic protocol. And Ribbentrop, as

always, was eager to comply with his master's wish. Visibly trembling with excitement, he finally received the British Ambassador.⁸⁵⁴ Henderson first presented the British Government's written communication to Ribbentrop.⁸⁵⁵ In content this reflected the general tone of Chamberlain's correspondence that afternoon:

While the British Government shared Berlin's desire for ameliorating Anglo-German relations, it also pointed out that it could not well "sacrifice the interests of friends in order to obtain that improvement." London urged transmission of concrete proposals which it promised to speedily relay to Warsaw. Though it agreed in principle to the need for swift action, "in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact" to initiate German-Polish discussions "so early as today." Both parties to the conflict would do well to assure "that during negotiations no aggressive military movements will take place." With unpleasant incidents precluded in this way, the British Government was confident that a workable *modus vivendi* could be established for the benefit of Danzig.

Henderson then offered to discuss his Government's memorandum with Hitler himself, if the latter so desired. Here Ribbentrop intervened to state that he would forward the note to Hitler. Upon this rebuff, Henderson chose to discuss the various telegrams he had received from his Government in the course of the day. When he mentioned allegations of German acts of sabotage in Poland, Ribbentrop shouted at him:⁸⁵⁶ "That is an impudent lie of the Polish Government. All I can say to you, Mr. Henderson, is that the situation is damned serious."

Now Henderson jumped up from his seat. Apparently, he had determined to give Ribbentrop the same lesson he had earlier accorded his master. Admonishingly, he shook his finger at Ribbentrop and shouted: "You just said 'damned.' That assuredly is not the language of a statesman in so grave a situation." As the interpreter Schmidt later recollected, for some time it appeared as if an exchange of blows was imminent. After a while, however, the diplomats regained their composure and returned to their seats.

Henderson then inquired whether the German proposals for Poland had yet been drafted. If this was so, he would gladly take them with him immediately. To this the Reich Foreign Minister sarcastically replied that all British efforts at mediation had previously borne fruit only in the general mobilization in Poland.⁸⁵⁷ Germany had been counting on the arrival of a Polish negotiator for this day, August 30. This deadline had not constituted an ultimatum, Ribbentrop argued,

but reflected the practical requirements of the moment. The Führer had said as much in the discussion the previous day. By midnight, the Reich Government had not received word from Warsaw on this subject. Ribbentrop claimed that therefore Germany's proposals to Poland were no longer on the table. To prove German good will, however, he would reveal the contents of Hitler's offer to England. He then pulled Hitler's "sixteen-point proposal" out of his pocket and proceeded to read it hurriedly to Henderson in German. The British Ambassador was barely capable of following. Given Ribbentrop's lack of politeness, Henderson did not even make an effort to understand, certain he would be handed the written statement after the reading. When Henderson asked for a typed copy of Hitler's proposal, Ribbentrop refused categorically, threw the document with a contemptuous gesture on the table, and said that it was now "too late" as the "Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight." Henderson then suggested that Ribbentrop might hand the proposals to the Polish Ambassador, but "in the most violent terms Herr von Ribbentrop said that he would never ask the Ambassador to visit him."⁸⁵⁸

The scene was truly a scandalous one on the eve of such historic developments. The grotesque scenario had been written by Hitler, and the entire act only served to prevent England and Poland from gaining timely knowledge of the German proposals. Hitler still feared that, if he did not take precautions, the Poles might accept his conditions. And this in turn might well delay the outbreak of hostilities in an inopportune fashion.

In an effort to rationalize his conduct before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Ribbentrop declared, under oath, in March of 1946:⁸⁵⁹

. . . [the Führer had] explicitly forbidden me to let these proposals out of my hands. Hitler told me that I might communicate to the British Ambassador only the substance of them, if I thought it advisable. I did a little more than that: I read all the proposals from beginning to end.

Ribbentrop was indeed speaking the truth. He was only playing Hitler's game. Hitler himself admitted as much in a speech on September 19, 1939:⁸⁶⁰

I sat with my Government in Berlin for two days, and waited, and waited. In the meantime, I had worked out the new proposal. You are aware of it. On the evening of the first day [August 30], I had the British Ambassador informed of it. It was read to him sentence for sentence. Moreover, my Foreign Minister

gave supplemental explanations. The next day dawned. Nothing happened—not a thing!

The most recent diplomatic setback Hitler had suffered signaled the failure of his entire policy toward England. He had not been able to induce the British to abandon Poland by entreaties, memorandums, or by ever new promises. The British memorandum of August 30 and the encounter between Ribbentrop and Henderson gave evidence that all official attempts had failed to change the British stance. Unofficial initiatives fared no better. This became clear when Dahlerus returned to Germany at 1:30 a.m. on August 31.⁸⁶¹ At once, he rushed to Göring's apartment, but all he could report was that the British Cabinet persisted in its demands for a pledge to resolve the German-Polish crisis peacefully before entering into negotiations with Germany on the topic of a potential alliance.

Göring, in turn, was equally frank. He read the ominous “sixteen points” to his guest and later even permitted him to relay the gist of the matter to the British Embassy in Berlin by telephone.⁸⁶² Göring was greatly concerned should the Führer find out about this, especially since Hitler had explicitly forbidden the Reich Foreign Minister to give a copy of his demands to the British Ambassador. Evidently, Göring was not yet aware that the game was over by this hour. It was no longer a question of Great Britain gaining knowledge of the contents of Hitler's proposal; after all, no Polish mediator had made his presence known by the deadline required. And, within a few hours, a radio broadcast was to inform the German public of Hitler's supposed overture to Poland and Warsaw's impudent rejection. This would go a long way to prove that the Führer's “love for peace” was hampered by the “ill will” of the Poles.⁸⁶³

As always, Göring was nonetheless exceedingly anxious lest he upset his Führer. Throughout the war, he apparently was haunted by memories of his indiscretion toward Dahlerus. He greatly feared that someone might remember his role in the events of that day and that this might lead Hitler to punish him later. By the time of his testimony before the Nuremberg Court in 1946, however, he publicly boasted of his exploits in the name of peace and of the enormous risks he had taken for this cause.⁸⁶⁴

On August 31, when Hitler finally realized that both his official and unofficial strategies towards England had failed, he nonetheless remained intransigent. He continued playing his games despite the reports Ribbentrop and Göring rendered in the early morning hours

of that day. To Hitler it seemed the English were trying to bend his will to theirs.

Well, he would show them who was master of this game. Surely they would not wear him out.⁸⁶⁵

By 4:45 the next morning, German troops would be marching into Poland. That would turn the English position upside down. Hitler was rejoicing that someone like this “bastard” Chamberlain⁸⁶⁶ had not come up with a second Munich this time. After all, he had greatly feared up to this point that “at the last moment some cur (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.”⁸⁶⁷ No one would ruin his entry into Warsaw. Prague was a thing of the past.

Hitler was truly furious with the present political leadership in Great Britain. If the British statesmen were so audacious as to declare war on the Third Reich, then these “little worms”⁸⁶⁸ would surely be swept out of office. He still had his friends among the English. These were men of greater standing and import, men such as Lloyd George.⁸⁶⁹ While this particular friend had somewhat disappointed Hitler by expressing his irritation with Germany, thereby displaying clear signs of senility,⁸⁷⁰ surely Lloyd George would not fail to lend his support to the Führer in this instance. And there was still the Duke of Windsor, the former King Edward VIII, to be reckoned with: in 1937, he had even called on him at the Berghof.⁸⁷¹ As recently as August 27, 1939, Hitler had received a wire from this “good friend.” This contact had to be maintained and cultivated in the interest of relations with Great Britain. Promptly Hitler undertook to respond to the Duke in a telegram.⁸⁷²

The Führer and Chancellor to The Duke of Windsor, Antibes, France

Berlin, August 31, 1939

I thank you for your telegram of August 27. You may rest assured that my attitude towards Britain and my desire to avoid another war between our peoples remain unchanged. It depends on Britain, however, whether my wishes for the future development of German-British relations can be realized.

Adolf Hitler

At 12:30 p.m. on August 31, Hitler issued definite orders for the attack on Poland, placing his signature beneath the following directive for wartime operations:⁸⁷³

Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of the War

1. Now that every political possibility has been exhausted for ending by peaceful means the intolerable situation on Germany's eastern frontier I have determined on a solution by force.

2. The attack on Poland is to be carried out in accordance with the preparations made of "Case White" (*Fall Weiss*), with the alterations, in respect of the Army, resulting from the fact that strategic deployment has by now been almost completed.

Assignment of tasks and the operational objective remain unchanged.

Day of attack . . . September 1, 1939.

Time of attack . . . 4:45 a.m.⁸⁷⁴

This timing also applies for the Gdynia-Gulf of Danzig, and Dirschau Bridge operations.

3. In the West, it is important that the responsibility for the opening of hostilities should be made to rest squarely on Britain and France. Insignificant frontier violations should, for the time being, be opposed by purely local action. The neutrality about which we have given assurances to Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland must be scrupulously respected.

On land, the German western frontier is not to be crossed at any point without my express permission.

At sea, the same applies for all warlike actions or actions which could be regarded as such.

The defensive measures of the Luftwaffe are, for the time being, to be restricted to those necessary to counter enemy air attacks at the Reich frontier, whereby the frontiers of neutral States are to be respected as long as possible in countering single aircraft and smaller units. Only if large French and British formations are employed over the neutral States in attacks against German territory and the air defense in the West is no longer assured, are counter measures to be allowed even over these neutral territories.

The speediest reporting to OKW of any violation of the neutrality of third States by our western opponents is particularly important.

4. If Britain and France open hostilities against Germany, it is the task of the Wehrmacht formations operating in the West to conserve their forces as much as possible and thus maintain the conditions for a victorious conclusion of the operations against Poland. Within these limits enemy forces and their military economic resources are to be injured as much as possible. Orders to go over to the attack are reserved to me in every case.

The Army will hold the West Wall and make preparations to prevent its being outflanked in the north through violation of Belgian or Netherlands territory by the Western Powers. If French forces enter Luxembourg, the demolition of frontier bridges is authorized.

The Navy will carry on warfare against merchant shipping, directed mainly at Britain. To intensify the effects a declaration of danger zones may be expected. OKM will report in which sea areas, and to what extent, danger zones are considered expedient. The wording of a public announcement is to be prepared in consultation with the Foreign Ministry and submitted to me through OKW for approval. The Baltic Sea is to be protected from enemy raids. The Commander in Chief of the Navy will decide whether the approaches to the Baltic Sea should be blocked by mines for this purpose.

The Luftwaffe is, in the first place, to prevent the French and British Air Forces from attacking the German Army and German Lebensraum. In

conducting the war against Britain, preparations are to be made for the use of the Luftwaffe in disrupting British supplies by sea, the armaments industry, and the transport of troops to France. A favorable opportunity is to be taken for an effective attack on massed British naval units, especially against battleships and aircraft carriers. Attacks against London are reserved for my decision.

Preparations are to be made for attacks against the British mainland, bearing in mind that partial success with insufficient forces is in all circumstances to be avoided.

Adolf Hitler

In retrospect, this decision to schedule the opening of hostilities against Poland for Friday, September 1, was the last one Hitler was to make of his own free will. All other ventures he was yet to embark on, until his dying day, were mere reactions to events and developments connected to the fateful decision of August 31, 1939.

As Churchill had aptly put it in a radio broadcast, the decision to begin the war had been Hitler's, but the decision to end the war would not be his.⁸⁷⁵ Hitler had thrown the first stone. The resulting avalanche, which would ultimately crush him, could no longer be stopped.

It was Hitler alone who took this fateful, final step towards the opening of hostilities against Poland. Neither Goebbels nor Himmler, Göring nor Ribbentrop, Keitel nor Brauchitsch, Raeder nor Halder, civil servant nor Party leader, military commander nor admiral, had assisted him in making this decision or influenced him in any manner.

The decision to go to war was fully in keeping with the ideas Hitler had conceived in 1919: the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, with the "sacrifice" that "blood is shed,"⁸⁷⁶ and the British and Italians would provide friendly help. No well-meant advice, resolute warning, or extraneous development could induce Hitler to veer from his "preconceived" path.⁸⁷⁷ And it was hence that Germany's "train of Government"⁸⁷⁸ with Hitler at the helm set out on its journey towards destruction.

In retrospect, was the attack on Poland Hitler's only recourse at this point in the negotiations? Could he no longer restrain his generals, these "blood-hounds" who were supposedly "waiting to be unleashed"?⁸⁷⁹ Was it they who forced him to fire the first shot of this world war? Would rescinding the order to attack Poland have placed in question his authority within the Third Reich? Could he not have declared the military preparations simply a bluff? Would his Party comrades perhaps have staged a mutiny, or would the State apparatus have denied him its following by resorting to a vote of no confidence?

Nothing of the sort. The entire German Volk—Party members, politicians, leaders of the economy—they all would have greatly rejoiced had this bitter cup passed them by once more.⁸⁸⁰

What weighed so heavily on Hitler in autumn, 1939 was the force of his ego compelling him onward at all costs. He had rationalized his actions in the following manner in the 1936 campaign: “Because I am living *now*, that’s why it has to be now!”⁸⁸¹ There had to be war because he was alive on this day in 1939. As he had explained his idiosyncratic stance to Henderson on August 23, “he was now 50, and therefore if war had to come, it was better that it should come now than when he was 55 or even 60 years old.”⁸⁸² On July 4, 1944, Hitler maintained in speaking before the German leaders of the military and the economy: “I am of the conviction that no other man could have done what I have done. Another would not have had the nerves.”⁸⁸³

Chamberlain hit the nail on the head when, in a speech before the House of Commons on September 1, 1939, he blamed “one man, the German Chancellor,” for the outbreak of the Second World War.⁸⁸⁴

On the other hand, Hitler’s decision to go to war was made long before August 31, 1939. It represented the culmination of a long process of decision-making. The story of his life led up to this one development, though he had undoubtedly envisioned the outcome of the war differently. The chain of reasoning which brought it about was evident already, also to experts abroad, in *Mein Kampf*. This edifice of ideas had remained unchanged.

Admittedly, it would be an over-simplification to place the fault for the war exclusively with Hitler and the Third Reich. However, it was undeniably Hitler who exploited the weaknesses of Germany’s politicians and military, of other prominent members of society at the time, of the “stab-in-the-back” legend, of the Versailles Treaty, only to unleash a war on a scale hitherto unknown. He summoned those evil spirits which had inflicted so much woe and suffering on the German people on so many previous occasions.

One man who knew Hitler extraordinarily well, and whom the Führer mistakenly held to be a sympathizer of the National Socialist cause, was the British journalist Ward Price. Already in October 1937, he had observed the on-going preparations in Germany with great concern and had pointed out the strategic consequences to be drawn by Britain.⁸⁸⁵

Like any other compulsive gambler, Hitler soon found it impossible to stop even once he realized he might have gone too far. His early

successes clouded his view of the seriousness of the setbacks he later suffered. Neither reason nor common sense were at hand to restrain him. He was incapable of reviewing past actions or rescinding orders once he had given them. By 1939, he had become the prisoner of his own ideas.

To the British, Hitler seemed nothing other than a new Napoleon, or a new William II, who strove to subjugate Europe, behind each a country which had become mighty enough to disturb the balance of power on the Continent and hereby to threaten Britain's hegemony. Their behavior towards Hitler reflected this assessment, which the further course of events proved to have been correct.

British statesmen stood determined to declare war on the German dictator the minute he breached international peace and law. Hitler, whose knowledge of history was insufficient at best and of Britain was "nil,"⁸⁸⁶ was also ignorant of the limitations on his freedom of action. This ignorance doomed his efforts.

Matters of little consequence preoccupied Hitler in those few hours left between the issuing of orders and the actual marching of German soldiers in the morning hours of September 1, 1939. The Reich Chancellor composed a number of last-minute directives, proclamations, ordinances, and memorandums. Peripheral incidents still took place at the Chancellery, none of which was significant, however.

In the afternoon of August 31, the Polish Ambassador Lipski asked State Secretary von Weizsäcker to be received by either the Reich Chancellor or the Foreign Minister. Acting on a British request, the Government in Warsaw sought to alleviate the situation by sending its Ambassador to Berlin to satisfy the required presence of a Polish negotiator in that city.⁸⁸⁷ Hitler refused to see him.⁸⁸⁸

Instead, Ribbentrop inquired whether Lipski had arrived with the requisite powers. The latter responded that he was in Berlin in his capacity as Ambassador to the German Reich. He had instructions to deliver a message to the Reich Government.⁸⁸⁹ Ribbentrop bade him wait.

At 4:00 p.m., the Foreign Ministry noted the receipt of a Papal "appeal in the service of peace" to both the German and Polish Governments.⁸⁹⁰ Hitler chose not to respond to this, just as he had neglected to answer similar appeals by Roosevelt on August 24 and August 25.

At 4:50 p.m., a last effort at attaining an Anglo-German understanding was launched at Göring's apartment in the Leipziger Strasse. Hitler

granted his explicit consent to these peculiar last-minute talks. Göring asked Dahlerus to tea, the latter having initiated the conference, to consult with Henderson, Dahlerus, and the British Legation Counselor Sir Ogilvie-Forbes.⁸⁹¹

After initial small talk, these four men set out to discuss the situation at hand. A particular subject of interest was the possibility of establishing contacts between Poland and Germany belatedly. Göring presented an intercepted telegram, according to which the Polish Ambassador was not in the possession of full powers to negotiate with the German Government. Hence Göring urged a renewed round of Anglo-German talks. He also remarked that, should a war involving Germany and Britain indeed come about, he would be forced to bomb British cities, much to his regret. The means Göring employed to obtain British acquiescence to his proposals were nearly the same he had used to dissuade Hácha in March of that year, when he had threatened to rain bombs upon the city of Prague.⁸⁹² Needless to add, Göring's tea-time conference ended without any results.

At 5:00 p.m., Attolico called on Ribbentrop and conveyed Mussolini's "urgent desire that the Führer should receive the Polish Ambassador, Lipski, to establish in this way at least the minimum contact necessary for the avoidance of a final breach."⁸⁹³ Hitler did not reply to this appeal either.

At 6:30 p.m., Ribbentrop finally consented to see Lipski. The Polish Ambassador read the following note of the Polish Government to the German Foreign Minister:⁸⁹⁴

During the past night the Polish Government were informed by the Government of Great Britain of the exchange of views with the German Government regarding the possibility of direct conversations between the Reich Government and the Polish Government. The Polish Government are favorably considering the suggestions of the Government of Great Britain and will make them a formal reply on the subject within the next few hours.

Given the persistent cross-examination by Ribbentrop, the Polish Ambassador was finally forced to admit that he was not in possession of the vested powers of his Government. Thereupon Ribbentrop briefly summarized the exchange with the British Government and Germany's insistence that a Polish negotiator should have come to Berlin on August 30. The Führer had waited the entire day, Ribbentrop lamented. It was not until evening that the British Government had been prepared to provide a rather meaningless response. The meeting between Ribbentrop and Lipski took only a few minutes.

At 7:00 p.m., Hitler received Attolico, whom he engaged in a discussion reproduced in the German notes in the following terms:⁸⁹⁵

The Führer handed the Italian Ambassador a copy of the German proposals and a press notice, observing that, owing to the attitude of the Polish Government, the proposals no longer held good. The British attempt at mediation must thus be regarded as having failed. Ambassador Attolico then mentioned that, on the occasion of an offer to mediate made by Mussolini⁸⁹⁶ some days previously, the Führer had stated that Britain had just made a proposal and that it was desired first to wait and see its effect. Now that the Führer had himself stated that the British proposal must be looked upon as having failed, the question arose whether the Duce could not for his part undertake mediation. He therefore asked the Führer whether he would agree to the Duce now acting as mediator.

The Führer answered that we must first await the course of events. He had no desire to expose himself to repeated slaps in the face from the Poles, and did not want to place the Duce in an awkward position by accepting his mediation. He was convinced that in their present frame of mind the Poles would pay no attention to the Duce either. To Attolico's question as to whether everything was now at an end, the Führer replied in the affirmative.

At 7:20 p.m., the German Ambassador to Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg, reported to Berlin that the Supreme Soviet had indeed ratified the Soviet-German treaty.⁸⁹⁷

At 8:00 p.m., Hitler ordered the staging of a Polish attack on the German radio station at Gleiwitz along the German-Polish border.⁸⁹⁸ This served Hitler's aim to "give a propagandist reason for starting the war, never mind whether it is plausible or not."⁸⁹⁹ The entire mission was as superfluous at this time as Hitler's other theatrics were. It neither provided a rationale for the assault on Poland, nor a justification for it. Hitler was deceived as to the role his words and allegations played in the assessment of Germany abroad. What counted were his deeds, since he had long ago discredited his rhetoric. Furthermore, Hitler would have had no need to resort to the Gleiwitz incident in attempting to promote the aggression against Poland. For example, German propaganda could have made use of a series of actual border transgressions which had occurred in the course of the last few days. The campaign against Poland in the press and the tension of the last weeks greatly contributed to these occurrences.

In front of both Henderson and Mussolini, Hitler himself had maintained that in the previous night twenty-one new border incidents had been recorded.⁹⁰⁰ Why then stage so dubious an attack as that upon the Gleiwitz station? This incident reflected nothing else than

Hitler's mania to reinsure himself by back-up operations which tended to be unnecessary under the circumstances.⁹⁰¹

At 9:00 p.m., Hitler had the following "official statement of the Reich Government" aired throughout Germany:⁹⁰²

His Britannic Majesty's Government informed the German Government, in a Note dated August 28, 1939, of their readiness to offer their mediation towards direct negotiations between Germany and Poland over the problems in dispute. In so doing they made it abundantly clear that they, too, were aware of the urgency of the matter in view of the continuous incidents and the general European tension. In a reply dated August 29, 1939, the German Government, in spite of being skeptical as to the desire of the Polish Government to come to an understanding, declared themselves ready in the interests of peace to accept the British mediation or suggestion. After considering all the circumstances prevailing at the time, they thought it necessary in their Note to point out that, if the danger of a catastrophe was to be avoided, then action must be taken promptly and without delay. In this sense they declared themselves ready to receive a personage appointed by the Polish Government up to the evening of August 30, with the proviso that he was, in fact, empowered not only to discuss but to conduct and conclude negotiations. Further, the German Government pointed out that they felt they could make the basic points regarding the offer of an understanding available to the British Government by the time the Polish negotiator arrived in Berlin.

Instead of a statement regarding the arrival of an authorized Polish personage, the first answer the Government of the Reich received to their readiness for an understanding was the news of the Polish mobilization, and only towards 12 o'clock on the night of August 30, 1939, did they receive a somewhat general assurance of British readiness to help towards the commencement of negotiations.

Although the non-arrival of the Polish negotiator expected by the Government of the Reich removed the necessary condition for informing His Majesty's Government of the views of the German Government as regards possible bases for negotiation, since His Majesty's Government themselves had pleaded for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, gave the British Ambassador, on the occasion of the presentation of the last British Note, precise information as to the text of the German proposals which would be regarded as a basis for negotiations in the event of the arrival of the Polish plenipotentiary.

The German Reich Government considered themselves entitled to claim that in these circumstances a Polish personage should, at least belatedly, be nominated forthwith. For the Reich Government cannot be expected for their part not only to emphasize continually their willingness to start negotiations, but actually to be ready to do so, while being, from the Polish side, merely put off with empty subterfuges and meaningless declarations.

It has once more been made clear, as a result of a *démarche* which has meanwhile been made by the Polish Ambassador, that the latter himself has

no plenary powers either to enter into any discussion, or even to negotiate. The Führer and the German Government have thus waited two days in vain for the arrival of a Polish negotiator with plenary powers. In these circumstances the German Government regard their proposals as having, this time too, been to all intents and purposes rejected, although they consider that these proposals, in the form in which they were made known to the British Government also, were more than loyal, fair and practicable.

The Reich Government consider it advisable to inform the public of the bases for negotiation which were communicated to the British Ambassador by the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr von Ribbentrop.

Hitler's "sixteen points"⁹⁰³ were read after this statement. At 9:15 p.m., State Secretary von Weizsäcker officially presented the communication of the Reich Government, along with Hitler's long-awaited written proposal, to the British Ambassador. When Henderson inquired why he had been handed this important material at so late an hour and not until the radio broadcast, Weizsäcker could only state that he was acting on explicit instructions.⁹⁰⁴ In compliance with these directions, Weizsäcker disseminated the same materials to the French and Japanese Embassies, and to the Chargés d'Affaires representing the United States and the Soviet Union.⁹⁰⁵

A hot and humid summer night brought the last day of peace the Third Reich was destined to experience to a fitting close . . .

On September 1, the German cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein*, which anchored at the Danzig harbor, opened fire on the heavily-fortified Polish Westerplatte at 4:45 a.m.⁹⁰⁶ Startled from their sleep by the thunder of the cannons and the lightning on the horizon, the citizens of Danzig at first thought the pressing summer heat had finally been relieved by a thunderstorm. Yet the Polish military was not so easily deceived. The damage caused on the Westerplatte left no doubt what type of storm lay ahead. Major Sucharski, the commander of the fleet at Gdynia, issued the following brief at 4:50 a.m.:⁹⁰⁷

Westerplatte, September 1, 1939, 4:50 a.m.

At 4:45 a.m., the armored cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* opened fire from all cannons on the Westerplatte. Shots continue to be exchanged.

Polish guards thereupon blew up the Dirschau bridge across the Vistula which led from Danzig into the Corridor region. The shots fired from the armored cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* not only began Hitler's war against Poland, but also the Second World War. It would not be until five years and eight months later that the cannons thundering across Europe fell silent again.

September 1, 1939

The war against Poland had begun without any declaration of war, and this heralded a return to a darker age.⁹⁰⁸ In the morning of September 1, 1939, the entire length of the German-Polish border and of the Slovak-Polish frontier resounded with machinegun, rifle, and artillery fire. Luftwaffe squadrons penetrated Polish airspace to carry out their mission of destruction inside Poland.

Hitler accompanied this blood-drenched prelude to one of the greatest tragedies ever to engulf mankind with the following proclamation:⁹⁰⁹

To the Wehrmacht!

The Polish State has rejected the peaceful regulation of neighborly relations I have striven for and has appealed to arms.

The Germans in Poland are being persecuted by bloody terror and are being driven from their homesteads. A series of frontier violations, of a nature not tolerable for a great power, proves that the Poles are no longer willing to respect the German Reich's frontiers. To put an end to this lunacy, there remains no other recourse for me but to meet force with force.

The German Wehrmacht will conduct this struggle in the defense of the honor and the vital rights of the resurrected German Volk with adamant determination.

I expect that every soldier, in acknowledgment of the great and eternal German military tradition, will do his duty to the last.

Be aware, in each and every circumstance, that you are in fact the representatives of the National Socialist Greater Germany.

Long live our Volk and our Reich!

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Adolf Hitler

At 5:40 a.m., radio stations broadcast this appeal to Germany's soldiers throughout the Reich. The Bay of Danzig was declared a closed zone. Civilian aviation was banned from the skies above Germany as of that hour.

That much information reached Germany's representatives abroad. They were to draw their conclusions from this. Not a word was said to the effect that the war against Poland had become a reality. In a telegram disseminated on the evening of September 1, Germany's diplomatic missions received the following explicit instructions: "This action is for the present not to be described as war, but merely as engagements which have been brought about by Polish attacks."⁹¹⁰

Meanwhile, in Danzig, Gauleiter Albert Forster, Hitler's henchman, took center stage. For eight days he had acted as "head of state" of the Free City, in violation of its constitution.⁹¹¹ In this capacity, he sent Hitler the following telegram:⁹¹²

September 1, 1939

Mein Führer!

I have this minute signed the basic state law effecting the reunion of Danzig with the German Reich. It shall enter into force hereby.

Article I

The Constitution of the Free City of Danzig shall be suspended forthwith.

Article II

The head of state shall have uncontested exercise of all legislative and executive powers.

Article III

The Free City of Danzig, its region, and inhabitants, shall forthwith form a constituent part of the German Reich.

Article IV

Until final determination by the Führer regarding the introduction of German law, the statutes in force as of the decreeing of this basic state law, with the exception of the Constitution, shall remain in force.

In the name of Danzig and its citizens, I ask you, mein Führer, to assent to this basic state law and to effect Danzig's integration into the German Reich through Reich law.

In devotion, I pledge to you, mein Führer, Danzig's undying gratitude and eternal loyalty.

Heil to you, mein Führer!

Albert Forster

Forster had arbitrarily effected this "basic state law" in complete defiance of the Constitution and without consulting the Senate. In the Austrian case, the authors of the Anschluss had at least maintained a semblance of legality. On March 13, 1938, a puppet government in Vienna had passed a "Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich."⁹¹³ Apparently such machinations were no longer judged necessary.

Hitler expressed his gratitude to Forster for work well done in the following telegram:⁹¹⁴

To Gauleiter Forster of Danzig!

I acknowledge the proclamation of the Free City of Danzig regarding its return to the German Reich. I thank you, Gauleiter Forster, and all of Danzig's men and women, for the steadfast loyalty they have shown throughout the years. Greater Germany greets them with a heart brimming with joy.

The law on the reunion will be executed immediately. I appoint you Chief of the Civil Administration for the Danzig area.

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Adolf Hitler

It was indeed interesting to note how Hitler apparently felt on this September 1, 1939—now that things had finally "gone off" and the first "bloodshed" for the great goal, the conquest of new Lebensraum, had occurred. For the previous day, August 31, Halder had noted: "Führer

calm; has slept well.”⁹¹⁵ His diary contained no similar entry for September 1, 1939. This was just as well, as Hitler was quite out of sorts that day. Yet the general tension by itself did not suffice to explain his miserable state, both of mind and of body.⁹¹⁶

This was certainly not the Hitler of the early days of September 1938, the self-confident politician who had been so secure in the pursuit of his ambitions. At the time he had been convinced he could, without difficulty, launch the invasion of Czechoslovakia “at 8:00 in the morning of October 2.” Not a doubt had entered his mind that he might not be able to grasp the laurels of an astounding military victory and enter Prague triumphant. Indeed, only the year before, everything had gone according to plan for Hitler. On September 26, 1938, he had given a speech full of confidence and enthusiasm before a crowd assembled at Berlin’s Sportpalast, and they hysterically applauded his every word.⁹¹⁷ It was not until he had attempted to speak to the German Volk from the balcony of the Reich Chancellery on September 27—as the Kaiser had done in 1914 when he appealed to his enthusiastic followers from a balcony at the Charlottenburg Castle—that Hitler sobered up considerably; the German people had failed to show up for the occasion.⁹¹⁸

Times had changed during the past twelve months. Hitler was only too aware of this. From the beginning of the tension with Poland, he had been reluctant to speak before his people. No popular rallies of consequence took place any more. And Hitler carefully avoided addressing the man in the street from the heights of the Reich Chancellery’s balcony.

This entire war had set out on a wrong foot, Hitler felt. Really, he had not wanted to wage war against the Poles at all, but against the Russians. The Poles should only have had to hand over Danzig and some other territories, which he would have incorporated into the Reich as a “Generalgouvernement.” Next they would have marched together against Russia, and perhaps he would generously have bestowed some territorial gains on the Poles, just as he had meant to do with the pliant Slovaks. And now he had to waste his time knocking out the Poles first! Furthermore, he had tarried far too long in his dealings with the English. And all had been for naught as he could not induce them to abandon their intransigent stance. Now, without the kind of security in the West which he had so successfully obtained in the East through the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union, this campaign entailed great risks.

September 1, 1939

Initially, he had planned to crown the launching of aggression against Poland with a historic, highly publicized speech before the Reichstag. He would have declared that Germany was carrying out a “castigation of the violator of the peace,”⁹¹⁹ a permissible “police mission” in concert with West and East.

But matters had developed differently. The latest events forced him to subdue celebrations, to step forth more cautiously. There was one thing, however, no one could prevent him from doing: he would take his field-gray tunic out of the wardrobe, as he had planned already in 1938,⁹²⁰ and wear it! This would show everyone, both at home and abroad, that he was set on playing his role as a warlord. And the sovereign symbol on the tunic’s left sleeve—as the *Waffen SS* was wearing it—would eradicate any lingering doubts among the generals whether the Führer would listen to their advice or not.

There was yet another precaution Hitler took on this September 1, 1939. This may have served to alleviate a guilty conscience. For, once the first shot in this war was fired, not only inferior peoples were bound to die. Members of the “master race,” too, were destined to perish in the ensuing carnage. To lower the cost of blood, Hitler sought to alleviate the situation by killing “worthless” elements within the German population itself. Hence, it was not as surprising as it may appear at first glance that Hitler signed a decree allowing the murder of thousands of retarded, deranged, or incurable Germans on this first day of war. The decree, which was not made public, read:⁹²¹

Berlin, September 1, 1939

I hold Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt responsible for expanding the competence of certain physicians, yet to be indicated by name, so that they may grant, in accordance with their best judgment, a merciful death to certain incurably ill patients, whose status must be regarded as terminal.

Adolf Hitler

Before taking the car to the Reichstag building, Hitler swiftly dictated the following message to be wired to Mussolini:⁹²²

Duce!

I thank you most cordially for the diplomatic and political support which you have been giving recently to Germany and her just cause. I am convinced that we can carry out the task imposed upon us with the military forces of Germany. I do not therefore expect to need Italy’s military support in these circumstances. I also thank you, Duce, for everything which you will do in the future for the common cause of Fascism and National Socialism.

Adolf Hitler

This was the first time in a long while that Hitler referred to the two terms “Fascism” and “National Socialism.” Undoubtedly, he sought to induce Mussolini to side with Germany on the basis of the alleged common Weltanschauung both countries shared, as all attempts at entering into a military or political wartime alliance with Italy had failed.

Shortly before 10 a.m., Hitler left the Chancellery to speak at a session of the Reichstag especially convened for this historic occasion. That morning’s newspapers had already informed the German public that Danzig had supposedly “returned home.” The man on the street also knew that the Führer expected “the German Wehrmacht to conduct this struggle in the defense of the honor and the vital rights of the resurrected German Volk with grim determination.” In view of these “grim” prospects, Germans felt even less desire than in September 1938 to applaud Hitler as his car headed for the Reichstag and passed through Berlin’s busiest streets. SA guards of honor formed lines on either side of the route leading from the Wilhelmstrasse to the Kroll Opera. Behind them stood only a few individuals. Cheering and jubilation were nowhere to be heard. Dahlerus, who witnessed the depressing scene, wrote of it in the following terms:⁹²³

The streets seemed rather deserted and as far as we could see from the windows of the Embassy the people in the streets with few exceptions stared in silence as Hitler passed on his way to the Reichstag.

Another eyewitness, the Berlin correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, wired the following report to Switzerland:⁹²⁴

From 8:00 a.m. on, columns of SA and SS men lined up at Unter den Linden and Wilhelmstrasse to form a cordon stretching, without interruption, to the Kroll Opera. There the Reichstag session was to be held. The Unter den Linden avenue appeared nearly entirely deserted. Automobiles were not allowed to circulate. Only a few pedestrians were in view. Where the Reich Chancellor’s vehicle was to pass near the Brandenburg Gate, a thin row of onlookers had assembled, perhaps because news of the Reichstag session had been made public belatedly. Applause was to be heard sporadically as Hitler’s car bore him, wearing his field-gray tunic for the first time since 1933,⁹²⁵ on to the Reichstag.

Because of the mobilization and their inability to arrive in time for the session, the seats of nearly 100 Reichstag deputies were vacant. A number of deputies undoubtedly chose consciously not to be present on this occasion. Foreseeing this lack of enthusiasm, however, Göring had taken care to close the ranks. He had simply assigned the empty

seats in the audience to Party functionaries! And he was unabashed in explaining his procedure. He openly proclaimed how he had gone about filling the ranks and had resolved to allow the “substitutes” to share in the vote on Danzig’s “basic state law”:⁹²⁶

My Deputies!

I have allowed bearers of political offices and their deputies to occupy the seats vacated by those deputies not among us today. With the powers accorded me in my capacity as the president of the Reichstag, I grant them participation in the vote.

Through this “presidential” trick, Göring was able to declare the assembly complete. Mainly for fear that empty seats might create the impression, on photographs, that deputies had purposely left their seats empty to protest Hitler’s war policy, Göring had gone to great length to obtain the desired effect. And indeed, this fear was not unfounded, as Thyssen’s disappearance the next day proved.⁹²⁷ Moreover, it might have increased Hitler’s insecurity to speak before a thinning crowd. Hitler truly was in bad shape that day. He made mistakes repeatedly, appeared confused and nervous. Just how ill-at-ease he felt was underlined by the fact that he refrained from launching another one of his tiring “party narratives.” He immediately embarked on a “verbal” assault against Poland. Despite the forceful tirade, he uttered not a word belittling the Western Powers as he had in April of that year. Instead, his speech before the Reichstag was replete with frequent references to the friendly sentiments he espoused for Great Britain. Nor were any threats made against the Jews in the speech that day. Later, Hitler would mistakenly claim to have threatened the destruction of Jewry in the event of a war⁹²⁸ in this talk, but this simply was not true. Rather, he had made such statements in his speech of January 30, 1939.⁹²⁹

While Hitler sought to boast of the ninety billion Reichsmarks he had spent on armament, he appeared decidedly insecure. This was evident when he spoke of “that tunic which has always been the most holy and dear to me,” and declared, “I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day!”

Hitler’s Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939 went as follows:⁹³⁰

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

For months a problem has tormented all of us. Long ago the Diktat of Versailles bestowed this problem on us. In its depravity and degeneracy it has now become insufferable. Danzig was a German city and is a German city! The Corridor was German and is German!

These regions owe their cultural development exclusively to the German Volk. Without this Volk, these eastern regions would still be plunged in the depths of barbarism.

Danzig was torn from us! Poland annexed the Corridor! The German minorities living there are being persecuted in the vilest manner imaginable. In the years 1919 and 1920 over one million men of German blood were forced to leave their homeland.

As always, I sought to bring about a change by peaceful means, by offering proposals to remedy this situation which meanwhile had become unbearable. It is a lie when others in the world claim that we sought to carry out our revisions by the use of force exclusively. Fifteen years before National Socialism's rise to power, there was ample opportunity to carry out these revisions by peaceful means. Nothing of the sort was done. In any event, I made proposals for a revision not once, but many times.

You know that all these proposals were rejected. There is no need for me to enumerate them: my proposals on the limitation of arms; if necessary, even for the complete elimination of weaponry; my proposals for limited warfare, for the abolition of methods employed in modern warfare which, in my eyes, are hardly reconcilable with international law. You know of my proposals on the necessity of restoring German sovereignty to the territory of the German Reich. You know of the endless attempts I made for a peaceful resolution of the problem of Austria, and later of the problem of the Sudetenland, of Bohemia and Moravia. It was all for naught.

There is one thing that is simply not possible: to demand that an impossible situation be resolved by means of peaceful revision—and then to consistently deny resolution by peaceful means.

It is likewise not possible to claim that the one who, under the circumstances, resorts to resolving this situation by himself, who undertakes the revisions on his own, is in breach of the law. For the Diktat of Versailles does not constitute law for us Germans.

You simply cannot uphold and proclaim a signature to represent sanctified law when it was extorted by holding a pistol to the signatory's head and threatening to starve millions of human beings if he failed to comply!

Thus I attempted, also in the case of Danzig and the Corridor, to obtain a resolution by means of proposals and their peaceful discussion. That these problems had to be resolved was entirely clear. That the western states were unconcerned with the time table is understandable. Yet it is of concern to us. It was—and had to be—of concern especially to those suffering.

In my talks with Polish statesmen I once more expounded those thoughts which you already heard in my last speech before the Reichstag.⁹³¹ No man can accuse me of employing inappropriate methods or of applying inappropriate pressure in an uncalled-for manner. It was I who had the German proposals formulated in the end, and I must repeat here that there is nothing more modest or loyal than these proposals. I should like to say this to the world: I alone was in the position to make such proposals! I know very well that in doing so I brought myself into opposition to millions of Germans. These proposals have been rejected. And not only this! They were answered by

September 1, 1939

mobilization, augmented terror, increasing pressure on ethnic Germans in these regions. The previously slow and exclusively economic and political throttling of the Free City of Danzig within the last few weeks has spilled over into an outright war against it, a choking off of traffic there and military isolation.

Poland has unleashed this war against the Free City of Danzig! It was not willing to settle the question of the Corridor in one manner or another, in a manner both reasonable and rendering justice to the interests of both states. And ultimately this meant that it was not willing to uphold its obligations toward minorities.

And here I must establish the fact that Germany has fulfilled its obligations! The minorities living within the Reich are not subject to persecution. There is not one Frenchman who can stand up to claim that the French in the Saar territory are being oppressed, tortured, or robbed of their rights. Not one can claim as much!

I have been silently standing by and observing the situation for four months now. Yet I have issued warnings repeatedly. And I have intensified these warnings of late.

As long as three weeks ago, I already had the Polish Ambassador informed that if Poland should send further notes to Danzig, in the nature of an ultimatum; if it should implement further discriminatory measures against the Germans there; or if it should attempt to destroy Danzig economically by imposing high customs on it; then Germany could simply no longer be expected to stand by without taking action.

I left no doubt that it would be a grave mistake in this context to compare the Germany of today to the Germany of days past.

There were attempts to justify recriminations against ethnic Germans by claiming that these constituted a response to prior "provocations." I know not what type of "provocations" those women and children had allegedly perpetrated who were abused and abducted. Nor can I imagine what provocations had been perpetrated by those who were sadistically and bestially tortured only to be murdered in the end.

Yet there is one thing I do know: no honorable great power could calmly tolerate such a state of affairs in the long run!

Nevertheless, I made one last effort. And this even though, in my heart, I was convinced that the Polish Government—especially given its dependence on the rabble of soldiers now freed of inhibitions—was not serious about attaining a true understanding. Nevertheless, I accepted the proposal at mediation of the British Government. The British suggested that while they were not willing to negotiate themselves, they would open a direct line of communication between Poland and Germany to initiate talks once more.

And now I am forced to state the following: I accepted this proposal! It was for this new round of negotiations that I drafted the proposals known to you. For two whole days I sat with my Government⁹³² and waited to see whether it was convenient for the Polish Government to send a plenipotentiary or not. Up to last night, it has not commissioned any such plenipotentiary. Rather it has informed us, through the offices of its Ambassador, that it is

presently contemplating whether or not it is in a position to consider the English proposals. It would impart as much to England later.

My Deputies! Should someone have the impertinence to expect the German Reich and its head of state to accept this, and should the German Reich and its head of state tolerate this, then truly the German nation would deserve no better than to take leave of the political stage! For I am wrongly judged if my love for peace and my patience are mistaken for weakness or even cowardice! Last night I informed the British Government that, under the circumstances, I no longer see any willingness by the Polish Government to enter into serious negotiations with us. And thus all attempts at mediation must be considered to have failed. For we had indeed received a response to our proposals which consisted of:

1. general mobilization in Poland and
2. renewed, heinous atrocities.

Similar events repeated themselves in the course of last night. And this after the recent perpetration of twenty-one border transgressions in the span of one single night. Yesterday fourteen additional violations of the border were recorded, among them three of a most serious nature. I have therefore resolved to speak to Poland in the same language that Poland has employed towards us in the months past.

Now that statesmen in the West go about declaring that this infringes on their interests, I can only regret this position. This cannot and will not, however, make me waver for a minute in the fulfillment of my duty. I have solemnly assured the Western states, and I repeat this here, that we desire nothing of them. We shall never demand anything of them. I have assured them that the border separating France and Germany is a final one. Time and time again I have offered friendship, and if necessary close cooperation, to England. But love cannot remain a one-sided affair. It must be met by the other side.

Germany is not pursuing any interests in the West. The West Wall delineates the Reich's border for all time. Our ambitions for the future are no different. And nothing shall ever change the Reich's standpoint in this matter.

The other European states, in part, comprehend our stance. Here I wish, above all, to thank Italy, which lent us support during this entire time. You will understand that we do not wish to appeal to a foreign power for assistance in this struggle. This is our task, and we shall carry it out ourselves.

The neutral states have already assured us of their neutrality. We earlier guaranteed this neutrality. We are deadly serious (*es ist uns heiliger Ernst*) in making this assertion.⁹³³ As long as other powers do not violate this neutrality, we shall likewise respect it scrupulously. For how could we wish to, or desire to, conduct ourselves differently towards these states?

I am happy to be able to inform you of a special development at this point. You know that two different doctrines govern Russia and Germany. There remained but one question to be resolved: as Germany has no intent of exporting its doctrine, and at the moment that Soviet Russia no longer contemplates exporting its doctrine to Germany, I no longer see any compelling reason why we should continue to take opposing stances. Both

of us are aware that any struggle between our two peoples would merely benefit third parties. Hence we have determined to enter into a pact which shall preclude the application of force between us for all time.⁹³⁴ It also obliges us to seek mutual consultation in certain European questions. Moreover, it shall render possible economic cooperation and, above all, ensure that the strength of the two great states is not squandered in rivalry with each other. Any attempt by the West to change this is doomed to failure! And of one thing I would like to assure all of you here today: this decision signals a fundamental change for the future and is a final one!

I believe the entire German Volk welcomes this political resolve. Russia and Germany fought each other in the World War only to suffer its consequences equally in the end. This shall not happen a second time!

Yesterday in Moscow and Berlin, the Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance Pact—which had originally entered into force upon signature—was accorded final ratification. In Moscow this pact was as warmly welcomed as you welcomed it here. I second every word of the Russian Foreign Commissar Molotov's speech.

Our goals: I am determined to resolve

1. the question of Danzig and
2. the question of the Corridor, and to see to it that
3. a change of tone comes about in German-Polish relations, so as to warrant peaceful coexistence.

Meanwhile I am equally determined to wage this war until the present Polish Government judges it opportune to assent to these changes, or another Polish Government shall be willing to do so.

I will cleanse Germany's borders of this element of insecurity, this civil-war-like circumstance. I will take care that our border in the East enjoys the same peace as along any other of our borders.

I will take the measures necessary in a fashion that does not contradict what I have pronounced to be my proposals to the world before you, my Deputies.

This means I do not wish to lead this war against women and children. I have instructed my Luftwaffe to limit its attacks to military objectives. Should, however, the enemy regard this as giving him license to employ reverse measures against us, then he shall receive so powerful a response that stars dance before his eyes!

This night for the first time Polish regular soldiers fired on our own territory. We have now been returning the fire since 5:45 a.m.⁹³⁵ (*Seit 5.45 Uhr wird jetzt zurückgeschossen!*) Henceforth, bomb will be met with bomb.

He who fights with poison shall be fought with poison gas. He who distances himself from the rules for a humane conduct of warfare can only expect us to take like steps. I will lead this struggle, whoever may be the adversary, until the security of the Reich and its rights have been assured.

For over six years I worked on the rearmament of the German Wehrmacht. I have spent over 90 billion⁹³⁶ on the rearmament of the Wehrmacht. Today it is among the best-equipped in the entire world. It completely defies comparison to that of 1914!

My confidence in it is unshakeable! When I call on this Wehrmacht, and when I now demand sacrifice from the German Volk, even the ultimate sacrifice should there be need, then it is because I have a right to do this, because today I am as willing as I was before to make any personal sacrifice. I am asking of no German man more than I myself was ready to do through four years!

Germans should not be asked to make any sacrifices I myself would not make without an instant's hesitation!⁹³⁷

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.⁹³⁸ I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day!

Should something happen to me in this struggle, then my immediate successor shall be Party comrade Göring.

Should anything happen to Party comrade Göring, then his successor shall be Party comrade Hess. You shall owe this man—as your Führer—the same loyalty and blind obedience you owe to my person!

Should anything happen to Party comrade Hess, then through the offices of law I shall call upon the Senate, which is to determine the most worthy, i.e. the most valiant from its midst.⁹³⁹

As a National Socialist and a German soldier I enter into this struggle with a strong heart! My life was but one struggle for the German Volk, for its resurrection, for Germany. This struggle was governed by only one creed: faith in this Volk!

There is one word which I have never known and this word is: capitulation!⁹⁴⁰ If some now believe that we are facing hard times, then I would like to ask them to bear in mind that once a Prussian king with a ludicrously small state faced off a far more powerful coalition. And three battles later he stood victorious in the end, for he possessed that strong, believing heart, the kind which we need in these times as well.⁹⁴¹ I would like to assure the world around us of one thing: there shall never ever be another November 1918 in German history!

Since I myself stand ever ready to lay down my life for my Volk and Germany,⁹⁴² I demand the same of everyone else! Whoever believes he can oppose this national commandment shall fall! We will have nothing to do with traitors!

And all of us pledge ourselves to the one ancient principle: it is of no importance if we ourselves live—as long as our Volk lives, as long as Germany lives! This is essential.

I expect of all of you as the Reich's emissaries henceforth that you shall do your duty wherever you may be assigned! You must carry the banner of resistance forth regardless of the cost.

May no one approach me to report one day that morale is low in his Gau, in his Kreis, or in his group or cell. The one responsible for morale is you—the responsibility is yours!⁹⁴³ I am the one responsible for the morale of the German Volk. You are responsible for morale in your Gaus, in your Kreise! No one has the right to cast off this responsibility. The sacrifices demanded

of us today are no greater than those made by countless earlier generations. All men who have set out on this most bitter and strenuous of paths for Germany have accomplished nothing else than what we must also accomplish. Their sacrifice was not made without cost or suffering. It was no easier to make than the one demanded of us.

I expect every German woman to integrate herself into the great community-in-struggle in an exemplary fashion and with iron discipline!

It goes without saying that the German youth will fulfill, with a radiant heart, the tasks the nation, the National Socialist state, expects and demands of it.⁹⁴⁴

Provided all of us form part of this community, sworn together, determined never to capitulate, then our will shall master all need.

I conclude with the avowal I once pronounced as I began my struggle for power in the Reich. Back then I said: When our will is strong enough that need can no longer vanquish it, then our will and our German state will vanquish and conquer need.

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!

On this occasion as well, applause came “on proper cues, but thin,” as Halder had already observed after Hitler’s “private” encounter with this particular audience on August 27.⁹⁴⁵

Afterwards, the law on Danzig was put up for vote. In it, Forster had decreed the reunification of the Free City with the German Reich. Hitler himself would have been well-equipped to decide this issue himself, as he had done in the case of Austria where he had effected the Anschluss in a single decree of March 13, 1938.⁹⁴⁶ This time, however, Hitler had resolved to leave this apparently harmless affair to the Reichstag. Should, in the future, anyone rise to question the legitimacy of his wartime policy, Hitler could always point to this law and the Reichstag resolution as sanctioning his decision on either war or peace.

As Hitler had requested in his speech, Göring rose to pledge “loyalty and blind obedience.”

Mein Führer!

The German Reichstag as representative of the German Volk stands united behind its Führer in this historic hour. It represents the will of the German Volk to make all the necessary sacrifices for the honor and future of the nation and the Reich. Standing before the entire nation at this moment, it pledges loyalty and blind obedience to the Führer, in the face of despair and danger. The individual members of the Reichstag will all fulfill their duty to the utmost as soldiers at whatever location they may be assigned. Their trust in the Wehrmacht is unlimited, their belief in the final victory is unshakeable in this war forced on us while defending ourselves against unbearable attacks and seeking reparation for the wrong done to us in the Versailles Treaty.



XXXVII September 1, 1939—The first day of the war

Hitler has just finished his Reichstag speech against Poland and returned to the government bench. For the first time, he is wearing the field-gray SS tunic with the sovereign symbol on its left sleeve. Ribbentrop has added a garrison belt to his uniform for this historic occasion. From left to right: Ribbentrop, Hess, and Hitler.

Photo: Domarus archives



XXXVIII September 3, 1939

The day England declared war. Reception of a Soviet delegation at the Reich Chancellory, its members professing great friendship for Germany. The Führer is wearing a golden sash over his field-gray uniform. From left to right: Ambassador Shkvartsev, Interpreter Pavlov, Chief of the Military Mission Purkayev, Chief of Protocol Freiherr von Dörnberg, and Hitler.

Photo: Domarus archives

September 1, 1939

The Reichstag promises, through its inner unity, to serve as an example to the nation. Deputies! Long live the Führer! *Sieg Heil!*

The meeting is adjourned.

Even though Hitler managed to have his way once more with the deputies, the impression the broadcast of the speech made on the man in the street was not the one desired. This was a fine “Führer” who pledged on the very first day of war, that should things go wrong, he had already determined not to “live to see the day!” Whoever had closed his eyes to reality up to this point now had a rude awakening. This speech revealed Hitler as an opportunist and gambler of the worst sort, devoid of any feeling of responsibility. He perceived himself as the center of life. If Germany took a turn for the worse, then he would just have to end it all by shooting himself. He would not suffer the consequences of his actions. He was indifferent to the fate of the German people.

One could only pity this Volk. This represented the net result of the faith vested in Adolf Hitler before his rise to power, of the idealism, of the patriotism, of the trust placed in his person. Millions of Germans had believed in him still in the first years of his reign. Millions had hoped for nothing more than bread and work, happiness at home, and the opportunity of making a career. Hundreds of thousands of simple SA men had served him willingly and without recompense. They had desired to be patriots, just like millions of German youth who had made Hitler their idol.

The youngsters strove to become as noble, selfless, patriarchal, peace-loving, and courageous as their “Führer.” The war revealed Hitler’s true nature. He claimed to offer these young idealists military glory, rule over foreign peoples, war medals—and a heroic death. In reality he offered them only tears, bloodshed, despair—and a highly unromantic death.

Around 11:00 a.m. on September 1, just after the Reichstag session, Hitler returned to the Chancellery. Once at his desk, he dictated yet another telegram to Mussolini, in which he attempted to rationalize the use of force against Poland:⁹⁴⁷

Berlin, September 1, 1939—12:45 p.m

To the Italian Minister President, Benito Mussolini

The latest attempt by Britain at mediation has also failed. I had once more declared myself ready to solve the problem between Germany and Poland by way of negotiations. For two whole days I have waited in vain for a Polish negotiator. Instead:

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1. Polish general mobilization has been declared, and

2. a series of further intolerable acts of terrorism have been committed. Last night alone there were fourteen more cases of frontier violation, three of which were very serious. In these circumstances, having repeatedly warned Poland against continuing such acts, I have now decided to answer force with force. Come what may, I will carry through this struggle with all the fanaticism of which I and the German people are capable. I thank you, Duce, for all your efforts. I thank you in particular also for your offers of mediation.

But from the start I was skeptical about these attempts, because the Polish Government, if they had had even the slightest intention of solving the matter amicably, could have done so at any time. But they refused even to embark on any true understanding which, as things stood, would have involved concessions on their part. For, after all, it was not Germany who took away something from Poland,⁹⁴⁸ but Poland from Germany; and, conversely, it was not the Poles in Germany who were maltreated, but the Germans in Poland. For this reason, Duce, I did not want to expose you to the danger of assuming the role of mediator which, in view of the Polish Government's intransigent attitude, would in all probability have been in vain.

Come what may, National Socialist Germany will ensure, in one way or another, that that state of peace and calm shall also come to her Eastern frontier which we happily enjoy on all our other frontiers.

Adolf Hitler

That "state of peace and calm . . . which we happily enjoy on all our other frontiers" would not last long. Dark clouds were gathering in the West. There was the declaration of war by the Western Powers looming on the horizon, a fact which Hitler persistently declined to accept. To the contrary, he felt the time had come for a renewed advance toward England. Once more he set out to bring the British around by a combination of threats and entreaties. Persistence was the name of the game, Hitler reasoned. One more theatrical scene in front of the gullible Dahlerus and he would have things his way. All he needed to do was to utter wild threats to impress on Dahlerus that he was determined to destroy England, and capable of doing so, should it once again reject his hand extended in friendship. Dahlerus would report to London on the gravity of the situation for Great Britain, and all would be well in the end.

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., Hitler instructed Göring to telephone Dahlerus and to ask him to the Chancellery at once. Dahlerus, who came immediately, rendered the following account of the ensuing conversation:⁹⁴⁹

[Göring] asked me to go with him into a smaller reception room. Here we found Hitler, alone. His calm was skin-deep, but I could see that he was

nervous and upset inside. He received me graciously enough but from the very beginning his bearing struck me as abnormal. He came close up to me and with fixed, staring gaze began to speak. His breath was so foul that it was all I could do not to step back. He was obviously determined to snatch at every argument, however far-fetched, that would serve to absolve him personally for the decisions he had made.

He began by explaining that he had always been quite aware of the fact that England did not want peace, that her every move was inspired by her own selfish interests. He thanked me for all my efforts to promote understanding between the two nations and said that it was undoubtedly England's fault that they had been in vain. There was no longer, he said, any hope of coming to an agreement.

Göring, who so far had not entered into the conversation, chimed in at this point to say that it was essential that the German army advance to certain specific points but he in turn was interrupted by Hitler who declared that he was now determined to crush the Polish resistance and annihilate the Polish nation.

If England desired further discussions he would be willing to meet her half-way. "But," he said, "if the British don't understand that it is in their own interests to keep out of a fight with me, they will live to repent their folly." He grew more and more excited and began to wave his arms as he shouted in my face, "If England wants to fight for a year, I shall fight for a year, if England wants to fight two years, I shall fight two years . . ."

He paused and then yelled, his voice rising to a shrill scream and his arms milling wildly: "If England wants to fight for three years, I shall fight for three years . . ." The movements of his body now began to follow those of his arms and when he finally bellowed, "*Und wenn es erforderlich ist, will ich zehn Jahre kämpfen*" [and if it is necessary, I shall fight for ten years], he brandished his fist and bent down so that it nearly touched the floor.

On this occasion, the Führer's theatrics were a bit much even for Göring. He turned his back on both Dahlerus and Hitler.

There was much left to be done at the Chancellery once the conversation had finally ended and Dahlerus had departed. Hitler set himself the task of proving to the German Volk and to the world what a monumental, historical time had indeed begun.

9

The first war bulletin, edited by Hitler and published by the Wehrmacht on September 1, 1939, read:⁹⁵⁰

Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt

(The High Command of the Wehrmacht announces):

On the orders of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the Wehrmacht has assumed the active defense of the Reich. Friday morning, in compliance with their mission to halt the Polish aggression, troops of the German Army passed all German-Polish border checkpoints to launch a counter-offensive. At this time, Luftwaffe squadrons started to put military objectives inside Poland out of action. The Navy has assumed the defense of the Baltic Sea.

While Hitler had embarked on what he considered to be a simple campaign against Poland at this time, he did re-establish the “Iron Cross,” the old Prussian war medal, on this September 1, 1939.⁹⁵¹

This was the moment he had waited for. He had longed to imitate, and even to outdo, the Prussian kings of old (Frederick William III, William I, and William II), who had so generously distributed this award. Everything that Prussian Kings or German Emperors had done before him, he could do better and in an even more grandiose manner. He would bring their undertakings to a conclusion, to a successful one at that. He would bestow on this award, which he proudly bore himself, honors untold and transform it, and its various ever-increasing classes and variants, into the embodiment of a wartime service medal.⁹⁵²

Hitler allowed himself to get so carried away in drafting the ordinance effecting the re-establishment of the Iron Cross that he completely lost sight of reality. He spoke of “former great wars,” while he himself had always insisted that the campaign against Poland was to be limited in nature. Apparently, he had also forgotten that the Iron

Cross had historically served to distinguish those who had partaken in wars against France and, since 1914, against Great Britain, too. After all, it was precisely this type of confrontation that he was trying to avoid at all costs, and it was he who likewise denied that such a confrontation was even possible. The ordinance read as follows:⁹⁵³

Ordinance on the Renewal of the Iron Cross

Now that I have determined to call the German Volk to arms in defense against pending attacks, I renew the Iron Cross medal in commemoration of the heroic battles in which Germany's sons prevailed in former great wars in the defense of the homeland.

Article I

The Iron Cross shall be awarded in the following categories and sequence: Iron Cross Second Class, Iron Cross First Class, Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross,⁹⁵⁴ Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.⁹⁵⁵

Article II

(1) The Iron Cross shall be awarded exclusively for special valor in the face of the enemy and for excellent service in the leadership of the troops.

(2) Award of a higher category presupposes possession of an award in the preceding category.

Article III

I reserve to myself the awarding of the Grand Cross in recognition of outstanding deeds of decisive influence on the course of events in the war.⁹⁵⁶

Article IV

(1) The Second Class and First Class of the Iron Cross shall correspond in size and design to the established ones with the provision that a swastika and the year 1939 shall be affixed to the face of the medal.⁹⁵⁷

(2) The Second Class shall be worn on a black-white-red ribbon⁹⁵⁸ either in the buttonhole or on the buckle. The First Class shall be worn on the left breast without a ribbon.

(3) The Knight's Cross shall be bigger in size than the Iron Cross First Class. Its rim shall be gold instead of silver, and it shall be worn around the neck on a broad black-white-red ribbon.

Article V

In the event that the recipient already is in possession of one or two classes awarded in the World War [1914–1918], he shall receive, instead of a second cross, a silver clasp with the emblem and the year 1939 in addition to the Iron Cross of the World War; it shall be worn on the ribbon of the Iron Cross Second Class, whereas it shall be pinned on above the cross of the Iron Cross First Class.⁹⁵⁹

Article VI

The recipient shall receive a title deed.

Article VII

In the event of the death of the recipient, the Iron Cross shall remain in the hands of the bereaved as a keepsake.

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Article VIII

Provisions for implementation shall be decreed by the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht in agreement with the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery.

Berlin, September 1, 1939

The Führer Adolf Hitler

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Meissner

Afterwards, Hitler signed an ordinance on the establishment of a badge for soldiers wounded in combat.⁹⁶⁰ Its provisions were similar to those of the badge accorded to the men who had sustained injuries in the Spanish Civil War.⁹⁶¹ The categories were the same. It differed from the badge awarded to the wounded of the First World War only in that the swastika was affixed to the steel helmet.

At noon on September 1, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Alexander Kirk, called at the Foreign Ministry to deliver a message from his President.⁹⁶² Roosevelt had this note transmitted to all parties involved in the conflict. He urged bombardment to be restricted to purely military objectives:

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities which have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenseless men, women and children has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity. If resort is had to this form of inhuman barbarism during the period of the tragic conflagration with which the world is now confronted hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings who have no responsibility for and who are not even remotely participating in the hostilities which have now broken out will lose their lives. I am therefore addressing this urgent appeal to every government which may be engaged in hostilities publicly to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event and under no circumstances undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities upon the understanding that these same rules of warfare will be scrupulously observed by all of their opponents. I request an immediate reply.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

While Hitler had ignored Roosevelt's two messages of August 24 and August 25, he now decided to answer in the following manner:

The opinion expressed in President Roosevelt's message, that it is a law of humanity to refrain in all circumstances during military operations from dropping bombs on non-military objectives, entirely coincides with my own

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view, which I have always held. I therefore agree without reservation to the proposal that the Governments taking part in the present hostilities make a public declaration to that effect. For my part, I have already stated publicly in my speech in the Reichstag today that the German air forces have received the order to confine their operations to military objectives. It is of course a condition for the maintenance of this order that the air forces of the enemy observe the same rule.

Adolf Hitler

In the late afternoon hours of September 1, it had still not become clear how England and France would react to Germany's invasion of Poland. Would they declare war at once, as they had threatened to do earlier? Or would they limit themselves, for the time being, to diplomatic steps?

At 6:00 p.m., Chamberlain gave a speech before the House of Commons in which he stated:⁹⁶³

Eighteen months ago in this House I prayed that the responsibility might not fall upon me to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear that I may not be able to avoid that responsibility. But, at any rate, I cannot wish for conditions in which such a burden should fall upon me, in which I should feel clearer than I do today as to where my duty lies. No man can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open the way for an honourable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland. Nor have we neglected any means of making it crystal clear to the German Government that if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they had used it in the past we were resolved to oppose them by force. Now that all the relevant documents are being made public we shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions. [—]

His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and the French Ambassador have been instructed to hand the German Government the following document.

Chamberlain read out the verbatim content of the note⁹⁶⁴ and continued:

If a reply to this last warning is unfavorable, and I do not suggest that it is likely to be otherwise, His Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for his passports. In that case we are ready. Yesterday we took further steps towards the completion of our defensive preparations. This morning we ordered complete mobilisation of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. [—]

The thoughts of many of us must at this moment inevitably be turning back to 1914, and to a comparison of our position now with that which existed then.⁹⁶⁵ It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavored to avoid, with determination

to see it through to the end. We shall enter it with a clear conscience, with the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral support of the greater part of the world. We have no quarrel with the German people, except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government. As long as that government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years, there will be no peace in Europe. We shall merely pass from one crisis to another, and see one country after another attacked by methods which have now become familiar to us in their sickening technique.

We are resolved that these methods must come to an end. If out of the struggle we again re-establish in the world the rules of good faith and the renunciation of force, why, then even the sacrifices that will be entailed upon us will find their fullest justification.

Chamberlain spoke the truth. In Germany, one man bore the entire responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War: Adolf Hitler, the Chancellor of the Greater German Reich. Neither the German people, leaders of the Party, civil servants, nor the leaders of the economy, not even the generals wanted this war. They all hoped that Hitler was bluffing and all would be well in the end. They were closing their eyes to reality. From the beginning, Hitler had been set on war. He had consistently pursued this goal. And now he had seen it through in spite of all opposition.

Inside Germany, regrettably, no real opposition to Hitler existed. No one mounted a determined resistance to Hitler; not the members of the Reichstag; the leaders of the Party and the economy; civil servants; generals; not the members of the so-called resistance movement. There was no man in any of these groups who could stand up to Hitler. They failed to make the most of peace in their opposition to the German Head of State. Once the war began, effective resistance was virtually impossible. With military law securely in place—and this was true of the democratic states as well—the rights of the individual were severely curtailed. The laws of war were imparted from above and unquestioning obedience was expected from below.

Many Germans cast uneasy glances at the future on this day. But what could they do? One Reichstag deputy was in a position to draw the proper consequences from the situation as it applied to his own person. His name was Fritz Thyssen—the same industrialist who, along with foreign members of the high finance, had already supported the NSDAP in the twenties and who, from 1932 onward, had done his utmost to secure the chancellorship for Hitler. Having realized just how precarious the situation had become, Thyssen fled to Switzerland.

Thereby he resolved the situation, at least for himself, albeit only temporarily.⁹⁶⁶

For the German people as a whole, the situation was far from resolved. Chamberlain's charge that the German Volk had allowed itself to be governed by a Nationalist Socialist regime was truly inappropriate. For this "Volk" consisted mainly of those who had little say in state affairs. The German Volk had not carried Hitler to power in the year 1932. While millions of Germans had cast their vote for Hitler, driven by despair and destitution, their numbers had never exceeded thirty-seven percent of the voters.⁹⁶⁷ This would not have sufficed to allow Hitler to take office the next year. It had been the reputable members of society back then whose support had secured the chancellorship for Hitler: the German Nationalists, the reactionary Junker class, the leaders of the economy, the members of international high finance and the aristocracy, the Reichswehr generals, Hindenburg's advisers, and Hindenburg himself. These men had made Hitler Reich Chancellor, thinking to serve their cause by according "the drummer" decisive influence over German politics. All of them—at least those within Germany—had fallen under Hitler's spell, the spell of the self-proclaimed savior of Germany.

The easing of the economic situation had brought relief to many Germans who therefore welcomed Hitler's reign in the early days. Even if a substantial part of the population had opposed Hitler early on, it would have made little difference in the end. Once in power, as Hitler himself openly stated, he was not about to let go the reigns again.⁹⁶⁸ The longer Hitler remained in power, the more the majority of the German people felt ill-at-ease under his rule. Never would they have sanctioned his ambitions for war. However, by the time the true nature of Hitler's motives became apparent, it was too late for any legal measures against him.

Given the behavior of Germany's "high society"—the prominent figures in the economy, in Party, State, Wehrmacht, and among the clergy, who all lacked the courage to stand up against Hitler—what could one truly expect of the man in the street? It was easy for Chamberlain to fault the German people with a development over which they had little to no control. The German Volk, too, had to bear the cross of Hitler's reign just like so many other unfortunate peoples. It was not spared the bitter cup. Only foreign governments had the power to deliver it from the tyrant. To demand this of the German people at that moment meant ignoring the actual situation. And has it

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not always been England where greater respect is accorded to a man who remains a loyal patriot even under an evil regime than to someone who collaborates with the enemy in wartime?

While, before history, the people of Germany can no more be faulted with active participation in Hitler's assumption of power, in the preparation for and unleashing of the war, than the French people under Napoleon, this does not imply a wholesale pardon of all Germans of the age. Plenty of prominent figures in the Germany of the time—along with their fawning and blindly obedient subordinates—committed crimes against humanity in World War II. Their crime was not their service as soldiers, who simply carried out orders, or their employment in the armament industry. Their crime was to defy recognized international rules on the conduct of humane warfare, for example, the shooting of defenseless prisoners of war without fair trial. And this they did merely because Hitler ordered them to do so.

These apparent extremist acts were not surprising given the understanding of law fostered during Hitler's reign. In 1934, on the subject of the execution of prisoners without prior court hearing, the then Reich Minister of Justice, Gürtner, declared this did not violate the legal code, but instead constituted, as he put it, "a statesman-like duty."⁹⁶ And it must be borne in mind here that Gürtner was a bourgeois jurist and not a National Socialist.

The practical implication of Chamberlain's proclamation became evident at 7:15 on the evening of September 1. At this hour, the Second Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin, Harrison, phoned the Foreign Ministry to request an immediate audience for Ambassadors Henderson and Coulondre, who wished to consult with the German Foreign Minister "on a matter of urgency."⁹⁷ The Foreign Ministry informed Harrison that it was not his place to communicate such a request by the French Ambassador. Thereupon the French Legation Counselor, Tarbé de St. Hardouin, phoned and relayed Coulondre's desire to be received that evening, in the presence of the British Ambassador. Ribbentrop declined. He agreed, for the time being, to receive the British Ambassador at 9:00 p.m.

On instruction by his Government, Henderson presented the following note to the Foreign Minister:⁹⁷

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Your Excellency!

On the instruction of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs I have the honour to make the following communication.

Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German Army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks on Polish towns are proceeding.

In these circumstances it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and France that by their action the German Government have created conditions (viz. an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland) which call for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance.

I am accordingly to inform Your Excellency that, unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfill their obligations to Poland.

As Henderson later reported, Ribbentrop was quite polite and most obliging that evening.⁹⁷² According to the records, this conversation ensued:

The Foreign Minister replied that there was no question of German aggression, but that Poland had been committing acts of provocation against Germany for months. [—]

He would transmit to the Führer the communication just handed over by the British Ambassador and would then give an immediate answer. The Foreign Minister added that if the British Government had displayed the same activity towards Poland as they apparently now intended to display towards Germany, a settlement with Poland would have been found long ago.

Sir Nevile Henderson replied that he would communicate these observations to his Government and asked that the contents of the communication be passed on to the Führer. He requested an answer as soon as possible.

The Foreign Minister replied that there had actually been no occasion to bring the German proposals to the notice of the British Government, as the non-appearance of a Polish negotiator had rendered these proposals invalid. Nevertheless he (the Foreign Minister) had read out these proposals to Henderson in the secret hope that Britain would after all bring Poland to see reason.

The Führer had waited another whole day in vain. Nothing had come from the Polish side but further acts of serious provocation.

Sir Nevile Henderson replied that he deeply regretted that, at his last conversation, the Foreign Minister had refused to give him [Henderson] the text of the proposals. [—]

The Foreign Minister pointed out that he had read the document slowly and clearly. [—] He had not been authorized to hand him the document.

It is more than noteworthy that the note transmitted by Henderson that night bore a striking resemblance to the British note of August 4, 1914—exactly one quarter of a century before when the preceding World War was imminent.⁹⁷³

At 10:00 p.m., the Reich Foreign Minister consented to see the French Ambassador, who handed him a note to the same effect as the one earlier presented by Henderson.⁹⁷⁴ The contents of both notes unequivocally stated the British and French positions. And, in view of the 1914 precedent, it was inexcusable not to take them seriously. In Hitler's mind, however, they were nothing other than empty protests against a *fait accompli* with which England and France would simply have to come to terms.

On September 2, the Italian Ambassador in turn called on the Foreign Ministry to relay a message from Mussolini to the German Government:⁹⁷⁵

For purposes of information, Italy wishes to make known, naturally leaving any decision to the Führer, that she still has the possibility of getting France, Britain, and Poland to agree to a conference on the following bases:

1. An armistice, which leaves the armies *where* they now are.
2. Convening of the conference within two or three days.
3. Settlement of the Polish-German dispute which, as matters stand today, would certainly be favorable to Germany.

The idea, which originally emanated from the Duce, is now supported particularly by France.

Danzig is already German, and Germany has already in her hands pledges which guarantee her the greater part of her claims. Moreover, Germany has already had her "moral satisfaction." If she accepted the proposal for a conference she would achieve all her aims and at the same time avoid a war, which even now looks like becoming general and of extremely long duration.

The Duce does not wish to insist, but it is of the greatest moment to him that the above should be immediately brought to the attention of Herr von Ribbentrop and the Führer.

These initiatives were doomed from the start in view of the notes presented by the French and British Governments the night before. Apparently, Mussolini had not yet gained intelligence of them when he penned his note to Hitler. In theory and in practice, Mussolini's suggestions might well have been workable. After all, the troops could conceivably have been halted along the lines they had reached.⁹⁷⁶ However, the only country favorable to such a settlement was France. Daladier was desperately searching for some kind of solution to forestall the impending catastrophe. In the course of September 2, he

had an intermediary inquire in Berlin whether at least a symbolic retreat of the German troops was not possible. Because a retreat of the German troops to their starting point was what London categorically demanded. Only then would Great Britain be prepared to enter into negotiations once more.

Of course, this was out of the question for Adolf Hitler. He could not well consider such proposals in view of his role as the author of numerous public statements to the contrary. Too often he had already made such unequivocal, albeit hasty pronouncements as:

What we once possess we will never again surrender!⁹⁷⁷

Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain!⁹⁷⁸

Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!⁹⁷⁹

Every parcel of German earth, wherever the flag of the German Reich has been planted, shall remain German for all eternity!⁹⁸⁰

Moreover, as was well-known, Hitler loathed international conferences. Recollections of the Munich Agreement pained him like a thorn in his side. At the time, he had allowed an international forum to determine the fate of lands he had initially thought to take by force alone. Circumstances had forced his acquiescence. Now Hitler stood all the more determined never to let this happen again. On August 22, Hitler had explained the following to the generals at a gathering of the military's leaders on the eve of the war against Poland: "I am only afraid that at the last moment some cur or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation."⁹⁸¹ Another day later, on September 3, Hitler stated as much in a letter to Mussolini and revealed the true motivation which had led him to decline the Duce's offer at mediation:⁹⁸²

For the German troops have been engaged for two days in an, in parts, extraordinarily rapid advance into Poland. It would have been impossible to allow blood which was there sacrificed to be squandered through diplomatic intrigue.

This statement was true to character for the compulsive gambler Hitler. When "rapid advances" were being made, he felt it was impossible to halt operations for fear of "squandering" earlier successes. The blood shed to date might otherwise lose its significance. The same held true later, when the German armies were forced to retreat. It was simply inconceivable for Hitler to reverse directions and to ask for an armistice, for example.

He felt compelled to see matters through, until Providence would smile on him once again and he could dictate the terms of peace to others. William II and the German military leadership had operated

under the same assumptions during the years 1914 through 1918, as had Napoleon.

On September 2, 1939, however, Hitler pursued but one goal: to shift the responsibility for the failure of Mussolini's effort at mediation onto the shoulders of the English and the French. When the Italian Ambassador called at the Foreign Ministry at 12:30 p.m., Ribbentrop informed him that, before the Duce's correspondence could be considered, the question of whether or not the British and French notes of the night before constituted ultimatums required clarification.⁹⁸³ Attolico rushed out of the building to inquire with Henderson and Coulondre as to the nature of the notes.

By 12:50 p.m. Attolico was back at Ribbentrop's office to relay the message that the notes represented no ultimatums but constituted mere warnings.⁹⁸⁴ Ribbentrop asked Attolico if he could perhaps once more ascertain from Rome the character of the declaration and at the same time inform Rome that a German reply to the Anglo-French declaration could only be negative. Moreover, the Führer was presently reviewing the Duce's suggestions. Upon Italian confirmation that the joint Anglo-French declaration was not to be regarded as an ultimatum, he was intending to draft a response within the next one to two days. Attolico urged an earlier reply. Ribbentrop finally assented to procuring the Führer's answer by noon the next day (Sunday, September 3).

Hitler's vague assurances of penning a reply within one or two days were not coincidental. In all likelihood, Great Britain would not be able to restrain itself much longer, and within this period, the English were certain to issue some form of statement to relieve him of the drudgery of contriving excuses for not heeding Mussolini's call for a negotiated settlement. Hitler's speculations proved correct this time. At 8:50 p.m. on the evening of September 2, Attolico arrived at Ribbentrop's office to relay the following message:⁹⁸⁵

... the British were not prepared to enter into negotiations on the basis of the Italian proposal of mediation. The British demanded, before starting negotiations, the immediate withdrawal of all German troops from the occupied Polish areas and from Danzig.

This was welcome news for Hitler. After all, this meant he need no longer fear the potential convening of an international conference to arbitrate the conflict. Nevertheless, not all went his way on this September 2, 1939. In the afternoon, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Halifax, declared in the House of Lords:⁹⁸⁶

Up to the present no reply has been received to the warning message delivered to Germany last night. [—] The British Government would not find it possible to take part in a conference when Poland was being subjected to invasion and her towns were under bombardment and Danzig has been made the subject of unilateral settlement by force. [—]

At 7:30 p.m., the British Prime Minister rose to speak in a similar fashion before the House of Commons.⁹⁸⁷ He stressed with the same words as Lord Halifax that the presence of German troops on sovereign Polish territory kept Great Britain from participating in a potential conference and added:

His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such a withdrawal.

Chamberlain warned that one should not mistake this statement for a sign of weakness. He asserted that a full clarification of the British stance would be forthcoming by the next day.⁹⁸⁸

Dahlerus' various missions of September 1 had evidently not borne fruit. The high hopes Hitler had stacked on this peculiar intermediary proved unjustified. While Dahlerus conferred with Göring repeatedly in the course of the first three days of September 1939, the Swede no longer ventured to London by plane. Rather he largely spent his days in seclusion at the British Embassy in Berlin.⁹⁸⁹

In his recollections, Dahlerus later remarked that Göring and his subordinates were changing by the day once the war had been launched for good. The initial successes of the Wehrmacht sent them into a frenzy. In the whirl of excitement, they were transported by the military glory the war allowed them to reap.

On September 2, according to the German records recovered, Hitler launched yet another effort at bringing the British around. He instructed Dr. Fritz Hesse, who served as press attaché at the German Embassy in London, to inquire with the British State Secretary Sir Horace Wilson whether he would perhaps be willing to initiate renewed talks. This last-minute intervention was as fruitless as its predecessors had been. On the night of September 2, Hesse wired the following account, "for the Führer and the Foreign Minister personally," to Berlin.⁹⁹⁰

I saw Wilson at 10 p.m. this evening. He received the proposal in a friendly but negative manner. He said that as long as German aggression in Poland

continued, it was impossible for the British Government to enter into a conference. It followed, therefore, that conversations of any kind were also impossible for him, Wilson. The status quo must first of all be fully restored by the withdrawal of German troops from Polish territory. After this, the British Government would be prepared to let bygones be bygones and to start negotiations immediately on the basis of the state of the conversations before the German aggression commenced. But for Mussolini's intervention, Henderson would this evening have presented in Berlin the British declaration of war, which the Cabinet had drafted this morning. By his statement today in the House of Commons on the reasons for Great Britain's delay in taking action, Chamberlain had excited the most violent indignation in the House of Commons and in the Cabinet, and the latter had threatened to resign in a body this evening unless Chamberlain tomorrow finally gave Germany a declaration with a brief time limit. Chamberlain had just telephoned to Daladier, in order to obtain his final assent. Thereafter a Cabinet meeting would decide this very night on the final statement to be made in the House of Commons tomorrow at 12 noon. In view of these facts, it appeared to him impossible to agree to the suggestion. Nevertheless he was at my disposal at any time should I have a further communication to make. I got the impression that Daladier was putting the brake on heavily, whereas public opinion here, owing to the German victories in Poland, was getting more and more excited at the inaction of the British Government.

Washington, too, left the Government in no doubt as to the reaction of the Western world to the German aggression against Poland. At 7:30 p.m., the German Chargé d'Affaires in the United States' capital, Thommsen, wired the following report to Berlin:⁹⁹¹

Based on Chamberlain's speech and the widely publicized British White Paper, the view continues to predominate here that the German Government never regarded the sixteen points as a serious basis for negotiations, but deliberately produced them only when the invasion had already been set in motion. Poland's scornful rejection of these sixteen points is suppressed. The German standpoint that our military actions were first and foremost precipitated by Polish general mobilization is not accepted by public opinion. Responsibility is placed exclusively on the German leadership which has cleverly understood how to exploit for its own purposes the always aggressive and warlike nature of the German people. Interventionist circles are attempting to silence the supporters of American isolation by accusing them of a lack of patriotism on the one hand, and, on the other, by appealing through their press to the American people to stand together in this critical hour for the defence of American ideals and for the vindication of American claims to exercise a decisive influence in world politics.

The first demand of the hour is said to be the establishment of a workable relationship between President and Congress. Congress must shelve domestic considerations and, instead of hampering the President, support his foreign policy.

Characteristic of the feelings in official circles here are the following remarks made by the deputy of the Press Chief in the State Department to the DNB representative: "The position is no longer as in 1914, not even 1917—there is no division of opinion; no for and against. We only pity your people, your Government already stand convicted; they are condemned from one end of the earth to the other; for this bloodbath, if it now comes to war between Britain, France and Germany, will have been absolutely unnecessary. The whole manner of conducting negotiations was as stupid as it could possibly be."

There was little to be added to such an unequivocal statement. Throughout the Western world, these sentiments were echoed by Germany's diplomatic representatives abroad. For Hitler, however, this could be but another sign of the diplomats' "lacking sense of reality."⁹⁹²

Ribbentrop's assessment of the English revealed far greater insight into their national character and the true state of affairs in the world. He had spent sufficient time in both England and the United States to recognize the might and significance of the Anglo-Saxon Powers. From beginning to end, he knew deep down that the National Socialist policy of territorial expansion would ultimately lead to a clash with England. However, every time Hitler so confidently proclaimed the contrary, Ribbentrop eagerly agreed with his Führer. After all, who was he, Ribbentrop, to contradict this genius of a man, Adolf Hitler? Even as late as his trial before the Military Court of Justice in 1946, Ribbentrop proudly maintained:⁹⁹³

I was always loyal to Hitler. I carried out his orders although 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*.

In the early hours of September 3, as Ribbentrop sat waiting together with Schmidt at the Foreign Ministry, the British Embassy phoned that Henderson had just received instructions from London to present Ribbentrop with a note from the British Government at 9:00 a.m. Henderson requested an audience at the Ministry at this time.⁹⁹⁴ To Ribbentrop it was clear that this could only mean a British declaration of war or a final, short-term British ultimatum. However, he was not about to relay such bad news to Hitler and, after all, in his speech before the Reichstag on September 1, the Führer had explicitly forbidden that negative reports be given to him. Thus, Ribbentrop

decided not to be available at the time requested and turned to Schmidt to remark: "Actually you could receive the Ambassador in my stead. Why don't you have somebody inquire with the English if they would agree to this as the Foreign Minister will be unable to attend."

The British agreed. Hence it was Schmidt to whom the sordid fate fell to be present at Ribbentrop's office at 9:00 a.m. on September 3. It was this career diplomat and expert translator—a man of great integrity, who in no way was responsible for the conduct of Hitler's foreign policy—who had to accept the document which meant nothing other than the demise of Hitler and his Third Reich. On arrival, declining the seat offered, Henderson remained solemnly standing in the center of the room. In an agitated voice, he stated:⁹⁹⁵ "I regret to have to present to you, in the name of my Government, the following ultimatum to the German Government." He then proceeded to read the note of His Majesty's Government:⁹⁹⁶

Your Excellency!

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on September 1 I informed you, on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations to Poland.

Although this communication was made more than 24 hours ago, no reply has been received but German attacks upon Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m., British Summer Time,⁹⁹⁷ today September 3, satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.

Having read the document, Henderson turned to Schmidt: "I sincerely regret that it should be you of all people to whom I must present such a document as you were always most obliging." Schmidt, too, expressed his regret at this unfortunate development before the two diplomats took leave from each other. Both were well aware that this note signaled the rupture of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Weapons would speak hereafter as there was no doubt Hitler would refuse to furnish the requested reply by 11:00 a.m.

It was questionable, however, if any other German Head of State would have had the strength of character to yield to this ultimatum,

given the exigencies of the hour. In 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had not been capable of jumping over his own shadow, so to speak, and had conducted himself no differently than Hitler. The only German Chancellor ever with the integrity and self-discipline required for this excruciating task may well have been Otto von Bismarck, a man who recognized and respected Britain's position in the world. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Bismarck had attentively listened to voices of warning from England and had been careful not to carry things too far.

Once Henderson was gone, Schmidt left the Foreign Ministry for the Chancellery to inform Hitler of the contents of the British note. In his recollections, Schmidt described the ensuing scene in the following manner:⁹⁹⁸

When I entered the room, Hitler was sitting at his desk and Ribbentrop stood to his right at the window. As I came in, both looked up expectantly. I stopped at some distance from Hitler's desk and then slowly translated the British ultimatum. There was complete silence when I finished.

Hitler sat there as though petrified, staring before him. He did not lose his composure, as certain sources have since claimed. Neither did he fly into a fit of fury. After some time, which to me appeared an eternity, he turned to Ribbentrop who, completely paralyzed, had remained standing by the window. "*Was nun?*" asked Hitler.

"What now?" Indeed a good question. But how was a man such as Ribbentrop, who aspired to be nothing but the obliging servant of his master, to find an answer to this? He was an accomplice who immediately retracted his own opinions the minute these were no longer compatible with Hitler's latest utterances. And this Führer now demanded to know of him why the British had declared war on Germany, after having maintained throughout that this was an impossibility? The only response Ribbentrop could muster was: "I assume that the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour."

"What now?" What a question to ask by a head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces in a situation which might well determine whether his people would live or die! And yet it was all Adolf Hitler could say at the moment, he, the man who had always claimed to have "provided for every eventuality from the start." His performance in this instance was just as pitiful as that of Bethmann-Hollweg, who had not known of a response to the British declaration of war, dated August 4, 1914, either. Up to the last minute, Bethmann-Hollweg had likewise claimed that the British, albeit not siding with Germany,

would assuredly remain neutral in the impending confrontation.⁹⁹⁹ In this context, it appears more than remarkable that the British ultimatum of September 3, 1939, and that of August 4, 1914, were nearly identical in content.¹⁰⁰⁰

It could well be considered the German tragedy that the same course of events was allowed to repeat itself twice in a twenty-year period. Neither in 1914 nor in 1939 did this absolve any of the leading German and Austrian statesmen of guilt for having failed to heed the demands of the age: not William II, Franz Josef I, Bethmann-Hollweg, Berchtold, nor Hitler. For they could and should have known of the reactions their deeds were bound to elicit abroad.

For a long time before the opening of hostilities, England had warned of the use of force, and this in both cases. None of the statesmen responsible had heeded these timely warnings. While in 1914 there was no precedent by which to judge whether the British threats needed to be taken seriously or not, in 1939 this could no longer be used as an excuse. The multitude of warnings issued by London from March through September 1939 left no doubt of Britain's intention and of its determination to oppose Germany as the aggressor state.

When Schmidt left Hitler's room, he found nearly all members of the cabinet and prominent figures of the NSDAP assembled in the antechamber. He informed them that, within two hours, a state of war would exist between Germany and Great Britain. Dead silence reigned after this announcement. Göring turned to Schmidt and said: "If we lose this war, then heaven have mercy on us!" This, however, was the last time in this war, at least until April 23, 1945, that Göring dared to say anything that might not entirely correspond with Hitler's wishes.

Goebbels stood in a corner by himself, silent, looking shamefaced, as Schmidt remarks. What else could he do, what could the "shield bearer" say—now that his leader had been terribly wrong . . .¹⁰⁰¹

Had Halder been present at this hour, he would have had to write in his diary, not as he had written on August 25: "Führer somewhat gone to pieces," but this time: "Führer totally gone to pieces!"

It was on this September 3, 1939, that the ambitious designs pursued by Hitler ever since 1919 led to the complete collapse of Germany's foreign policy. Already in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had claimed that, for the conquest of new Lebensraum which he envisioned in the East, "there is but one ally in Europe: England."¹⁰⁰² Over the years, Hitler had naively believed that England, not in public but deep inside, had feelings of friendship and admiration for Germany, that an alliance

between the two “Germanic peoples” against the peoples of the East was logical and feasible. Further, he had striven to instill in his subordinates the conviction that England lacked the resolve to stand up against him, just as the German Nationalists had lacked it at home. During the Italian Foreign Minister’s visit to the Obersalzberg on August 13, 1939, Hitler had recapitulated this stance repeatedly in his talks with Ciano: “I am firmly convinced that neither England nor France will enter into a general war.”¹⁰⁰³ He had built his entire conception of foreign policy on these mistaken notions. However, after the British declaration of war had proven his strategy wrong, Hitler was not able to draw the proper conclusions. This was all the more tragic in light of an early position statement made in *Mein Kampf*:¹⁰⁰⁴

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

September 3, 1939, proved beyond doubt that Hitler was “mistaken in his basic beliefs” regarding a forcible expansion of the Reich in the East. He had erred to an inexcusable extent, spelling out ruin for both the German Reich and the German people. Still he could persuade himself neither to “act decently,” nor to refrain from involvement in “further political activities.” And, of course, he was far from resigning or committing suicide. Rather the German Volk and Reich should be crushed beneath the weight of the war before he could persuade himself to “draw the final consequence.”

Until then he would stick his head in the sand much like an ostrich and pretend not to notice what was going on. Having once maintained the British were his friends, he was convinced that they were to become his friends in the end, if only he persisted in his efforts. And on this September 3, Hitler may well have asked himself if the British were indeed serious in claiming that “a state of war” would exist as of 11:00 a.m. that morning. After all, was it not entirely possible that they had merely referred to a rupturing of diplomatic relations or perhaps to economic sanctions?¹⁰⁰⁵

Having recovered a bit from that morning’s fright, Hitler set out to pen half a dozen memorandums, notes, and proclamations. This he

was able to do in his sleep by now. The first of these documents was a rejection of the British ultimatum. In it, Hitler once more maintained that England had incited the Poles by handing them what amounted to a “general power of attorney” in their dealings with Germany.¹⁰⁰⁶ Therefore, England was responsible for the outbreak of the war.

At 11:30 a.m., Ribbentrop was instructed to hand the German memorandum to the British Ambassador who had been summoned earlier. It read:¹⁰⁰⁷

The German Government have received the British Government’s ultimatum of 3rd September 1939. They have the honor to reply as follows:

1. The German Government and the German people refuse to receive, accept, let alone fulfill demands in the nature of ultimata made by the British Government.

2. On our Eastern frontier there has for many months reigned a condition of war. Since the time when the Versailles Treaty first tore Germany to pieces, all and every peaceful settlement was refused to all German Governments. The National Socialist Government also has since the year 1933 tried again and again to remove by peaceful negotiations the worst rapes and breaches of justice of this Treaty. The British Government has been among those who by their intransigent attitude took the chief part in frustrating every practical revision. Without the intervention of the British Government—of this the German Government and the German people are fully conscious—a reasonable solution doing justice to both sides would certainly have been found between Germany and Poland. For Germany did not have the intention nor had she raised the demands of annihilating Poland. The Reich demanded only the revision of those articles of the Versailles Treaty which already at the time of the formulation of that Dictate had been described by understanding statesmen of all nations as being in the long run unbearable and therefore impossible for a great nation and also for the entire political and economic interests of Eastern Europe. British statesmen, too, declared the solution in the East which was then forced upon Germany as containing the germ of future wars. To remove this danger was the desire of all German Governments and especially the intention of the new National Socialist People’s Government. The blame for having prevented this peaceful revision lies with the British Cabinet policy.

3. The British Government have—an occurrence unique in history—given the Polish State full powers for all actions against Germany which that State might conceivably intend to undertake. The British Government assured the Polish Government of their military support in all circumstances, should Germany defend herself against any provocation or attack. Thereupon the Polish terror against the Germans living in the territories which had been torn from Germany immediately assumed unbearable proportions. The Free City of Danzig was, in violation of all legal provisions, first threatened with destruction economically and by measures of customs policy, and was finally subjected to a military blockade and its communications strangled. All these

violations of the Danzig Statute, which were well known to the British Government, were approved and covered by the blank cheque given to Poland. The German Government, though moved by the sufferings of the German population which was being tortured and treated in an inhuman manner, nevertheless remained a patient onlooker for five months, without undertaking even on one single occasion any similar aggressive action against Poland. They only warned Poland that these happenings would in the long run be unbearable and that they were determined, in the event of no other kind of assistance being given to this population, to help them themselves. All these happenings were known in every detail to the British Government. It would have been easy for them to use their great influence in Warsaw in order to exhort those in power there to exercise justice and humaneness and to keep to the existing obligations. The British Government did not do this. On the contrary, in emphasizing continually their obligation to assist Poland under all circumstances, they actually encouraged the Polish Government to continue in their criminal attitude which was threatening the peace of Europe. In this spirit, the British Government rejected the proposal of Signor Mussolini which might still have been able to save the peace of Europe, in spite of the fact that the German Government had declared their willingness to agree to it.¹⁰⁰⁸ The British Government therefore bear the responsibility for all the unhappiness and misery which have now overtaken and are about to overtake many peoples.

4. After all efforts at finding and concluding a peaceful solution had been rendered impossible by the intransigence of the Polish Government covered as they were by England, after the conditions resembling civil war which had existed already for months at the Eastern frontier of the Reich had gradually developed into open attacks on German territory, without the British Government raising any objections, the German Government determined to put an end to this continual threat, unbearable for a great Power, to the external and finally also to the internal peace of the German people, and to end it by those means which, since the Democratic Governments had in effect sabotaged all other possibilities of revision, alone remained at their disposal for the defense the peace, security and honor of the Germans. The last attacks of the Poles threatening Reich territory they answered with similar measures. The German Government do not intend, on account of any sort of British intentions or obligations in the East, to tolerate conditions which are identical with those conditions which we observe in Palestine which is under British protection. The German people, however, above all do not intend to allow themselves to be ill-treated by Poles.

5. The German Government therefore reject the attempts to force Germany, by means of a demand having the character of an ultimatum, to recall its forces which are lined up for the defense of the Reich, and thereby to accept the old unrest and the old injustice. The threat that, failing this, they will fight Germany in the war, corresponds to the intention proclaimed for years past by numerous British politicians. The German Government and the German people have assured the English people countless times how much they desire an understanding, indeed close friendship, with them. If the

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British Government hitherto always refused these offers and now answer them with an open threat of war, it is not the fault of the German people and of its Government but exclusively the fault of the British Cabinet or of those men who for years have been preaching the destruction and extermination of the German people. The German people and its Government do not, like Great Britain, intend to dominate the world, but they are determined to defend their own liberty, their independence and above all their life. The intention, communicated to us by order of the British Government by Mr. King-Hall,¹⁰⁰⁹ of carrying the destruction of the German people even further than was done through the Versailles Treaty is taken note of by us, and we shall therefore answer any aggressive action of England with the same weapons and in the same form.

At noon, the arrival of the Soviet Ambassador, Shkvtartsev, and of the new head of the Russian military mission, Purkayev, forced Hitler to delay drafting further proclamations.

This September 3 had turned out to be a confusing day for Hitler. His friends, the English, sent him a declaration of war, while his proclaimed enemies, the Russians, were sending “delegations of friendship” to Berlin. What choice had Hitler? He pulled on the field-gray tunic, over it the gold-embroidered sword-belt, and went out to greet the Soviet delegation in the presence of Ribbentrop. No record of the exchange of greetings has survived, though assuredly Hitler lavished praise and attention upon his new-found friends.

The following communiqué was published on the unusual event:¹⁰¹⁰

Berlin, September 3, 1939

On Sunday afternoon, the Führer received, in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the newly appointed Ambassador of the U.S.S.R., Aleksander Shkvtartsev, at the new Reich Chancellery. The Ambassador was accompanied by the military attaché and military plenipotentiary Maxim Purkayev. A Wehrmacht guard of honor paid tribute to the guests and saluted them upon arrival and departure. A lengthy exchange followed the presentation of the credentials.

At 12:20 p.m., Ribbentrop was on hand to receive the French Ambassador. Coulondre presented him with a French ultimatum which detailed a state of war to exist as of 5:00 p.m. in case a satisfactory response from Germany was not received.

A number of states allied with England declared war on Germany on this September 3, 1939: Australia, Burma, India, Jordan, Cambodia, Laos, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Vietnam. South Africa followed suit on September 6. Canada waited until September 10 to declare war. The United States was still hesitant officially—because public opinion was

not yet prepared—but unquestionably it was determined to side with Britain.¹⁰¹¹ For the time being, in a radio address on September 3, 1939, the American President expressed his hope that “the United States will keep out of this war” and concluded: “As long as it remains within my power to prevent, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States.” Roosevelt stated:

Tonight my single duty is to speak to the whole of America. Until 4:30 this morning I had hoped against hope that some miracle would prevent a devastating war in Europe and bring to an end the invasion of Poland by Germany. For four long years a succession of actual wars and constant crises have shaken the entire world and have threatened in each case to bring on the gigantic conflict which is today unhappily a fact.

It is right that I should recall to your minds the consistent and at times successful efforts of your Government in these crises to throw the full power of the United States into the cause of peace. In spite of spreading wars I think that we have every right and every reason to maintain as a national policy the fundamental moralities, the teachings of religion, and the continuation of efforts to restore peace—for some day, though the time may be distant, we can be of even greater help to a crippled humanity.

It is right, too, to point out that the unfortunate events of these recent years have been based on the use of force or the threat of force. And it seems to me clear, even at the outbreak of this great war, that the influence of America should be consistent in seeking for humanity a final peace which will eliminate, as far as it is possible to do so, the continued use of force between nations. [—]

When peace has been broken anywhere, peace of all countries everywhere is in danger.

It is easy for you and me to shrug our shoulders and say that conflicts taking place thousands of miles from the continental United States, and, indeed, the whole American hemisphere, do not seriously affect the Americas—and that all the United States has to do is to ignore them and go about our own business. Passionately though we may desire detachment, we are forced to realize that every word that comes through the air, every ship that sails the sea, every battle that is fought does affect the American future. [—]

Roosevelt’s address left no doubt about the country’s moral and political stance. Should England’s position be seriously threatened, it was clear that America would enter the war on its behalf.

At 2:30 p.m. on September 3, four proclamations by the Führer were read to the German people over the airwaves.¹⁰¹²

The first was addressed to the German people at large. Its contents greatly resembled the appeal of William II “to the German Volk” on August 6, 1914.¹⁰¹³ This was true especially of terms such as “love for peace” and the references to “the Lord God,” who would surely

intercede on Germany's behalf. However, Hitler's appeal to the "German Volk" was three times as long as that of the Kaiser.

Appeal to the German Volk!

For centuries England has pursued the goal of rendering the peoples of Europe defenseless against the British idea of world conquest by proclaiming a balance of power. This accords England the right, on the most threadbare of pretexts, to attack and destroy whichever European state appears to be the most threatening. Once this was true of the Spanish Empire, then of the Dutch, then of the French, and, ever since 1871, this has been true of the German Reich. We ourselves have borne witness to the policy of encirclement which Great Britain has sought to implement against Germany since before the war. The moment the German Reich, under National Socialist leadership, began to recover from the dreadful consequences of the Diktat of Versailles and threatened to overcome the crisis, the British policy of encirclement immediately set in once more.

The British warmongers known to us from the days of the World War do not want the German Volk to live. Before the World War, they lied to us, claiming their struggle was directed only against the House of Hohenzollern or against German militarism. They declared they had no designs on German colonies; they were not even as much as thinking about taking our merchant marine. Then, they forced the German Volk beneath the yoke of the Treaty of Versailles. Sooner or later, the obliging compliance with this new Diktat would have meant the eradication of twenty million Germans.¹⁰¹⁴

I then undertook to mobilize the resistance of the German nation against this, and, in a unique, peaceful effort, to secure bread and labor for the German Volk. To the extent that a peaceful revision of the outrage of the Diktat of Versailles appeared to proceed successfully and the German Volk once more began to live, a new policy of encirclement by England set in. The warmongers of 1914 made their appearance again.

Time and time again, I offered England and the English people an understanding and the friendship of the German Volk. My entire policy was built on this idea of an understanding. I was rejected time and time again. Instead, there was an ongoing search for ever new, hypocritical pretexts for limiting the German Lebensraum, even in areas where we never threatened British interests. Ever new attempts were made to render our lives more difficult and to cut us off.

It was England which urged on Poland the stance that rendered a peaceful understanding impossible. Its declaration of a guarantee opened for the Polish Government the prospects of provoking Germany without running into any danger, and even of being allowed to attack Germany.

The British Government has been mistaken on one account, however: the Germany of 1939 is not the Germany of 1914! And the name of its present chancellor is not Bethmann-Hollweg!¹⁰¹⁵

Moreover, in my speeches at Saarbrücken¹⁰¹⁶ and at Wilhelmshaven,¹⁰¹⁷ I declared that we shall defend ourselves in view of this British policy of encirclement. I left no doubt that, despite patience and endurance, the Polish

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attacks against Germans as well as against the Free City of Danzig had to come to an end. Strengthened by the British guarantee and the assurances of British warmongers, Poland believed it could simply disregard these warnings. For two days now the German Wehrmacht has been fighting in the East to restore security to Reich territory. Our soldiers are breaking the Polish resistance.

May England realize: today's German Reich unites ninety million human beings!¹⁰¹⁸ And they are determined not to allow themselves to be strangled by England. Unlike England, they have not waged war to conquer forty million square kilometers of this earth. Yet they do have the will to live on the earth belonging to them. And they will not let England take this life from them.

We know that the English people in their entirety cannot be held responsible for all this. Rather it is the aforesaid Jewish-plutocratic and democratic upper class who would like to conceive of the rest of the world as obedient slaves; who hate our new Reich because it sees it as a pioneer of social work which it fears might infect their countries as well.

We shall now take up this struggle against this new attempt to destroy Germany. We shall lead it with National Socialist determination. The British money- and power-politicians shall find out what it means to wage war against National Socialist Germany without any cause whatsoever.

For months I have known that the goal pursued by these warmongers was a long-term one. The determination to attack Germany, at an opportune occasion, was arrived at long ago. My decision, however, to lead this war and to strike back at them is marked by even greater determination.

Germany will not capitulate ever again. Peace, under the conditions of a second Diktat of Versailles or worse, has no meaning.

We have never been a Volk of slaves! And we shall never be one in the future either! And the sacrifices so many Germans have made in the past shall be no greater than those which we are determined to take upon ourselves today. This decision is a relentless one. (*Dieser Entschluss ist ein unerbittlicher.*)¹⁰¹⁹

And this forces us to take decisive measures, above all, to take one: no one shall make a profit in this war while our soldiers are fighting at the front. No one shall try to escape fulfillment of his duties while our soldiers are fighting at the front. Whoever attempts to resist these measures cannot expect the Volksgemeinschaft to show consideration to him.

Beyond this, we all know: as long as the German Volk has stood united in its history, it has never yet been vanquished!¹⁰²⁰ Only the dissent of the year 1918 led to collapse. Thus, whoever now believes he can sin against this unity cannot expect anything other than his destruction as an enemy of the nation. If our Volk fulfills its highest duty in this respect, then the Lord Almighty will stand by. He has always bestowed His blessings on him who was determined to help himself!

The laws necessary for the defense and security of the Reich are being decreed, the men responsible for their implementation and compliance with them are being appointed. I myself go to the front on this day.

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

September 3, 1939

A second appeal was addressed to the soldiers fighting in the East:

Soldiers of the Army in the East!

For months England once more has engaged in that policy of encirclement directed against Germany which is known to us from before the World War. To this end, it has sought to take advantage of all states and peoples of Europe. Poland was chosen to play an ever more important role in this policy once the Soviet Union refused to subordinate its own interests to those of the English.

First and foremost, the persistent persecution of Germans in Poland, the all-out war against the Free City of Danzig, forced me to take steps along our Eastern Front for the Reich's security. The Non-Aggression and Mutual Consultation Pact with the Soviet Union has united these two biggest and strongest of European states in their determination never again to allow their peoples to fight one another. Poland must and will be forced to peace as the most important element in the chain of the British policy of encirclement and destruction.

Soldiers of the Army in the East! Within barely two days you have secured accomplishments upon which all of Germany reflects with pride. I know that you are aware of the magnitude of the task lying before you, and that you are doing your utmost to speedily throw down the adversary as a first step. The West Wall built with immense resources shall in the meantime shield Germany against France and England and thereby shall protect it.

As an old soldier of the World War and as your Supreme Commander, I go to the front to join you on this day.

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

A third appeal was aimed at the soldiers serving in the West:

Soldiers of the Army in the West!

Just as it did before the war, England has continued after the war to pursue the policy of encirclement against Germany. In spite of Germany's not making demands on any state located west of the Reich, in spite of Germany's not demanding territorial revisions in these areas, and in spite of Germany's extending its hand repeatedly to England and France, offering an understanding—yes, even friendship—in spite of all this, the British Government, urged on by the warmongers known to us from the World War, has determined to drop its mask and, on a threadbare pretext, to proclaim that a state of war exists between us. For months it has covered for the Polish attacks on the life and security of ethnic Germans and the rape of the Free City of Danzig with the promise to come to the rescue of the Poles should Germany dare to defend itself against this.

Now that Poland, given this feeling of protection, has undertaken acts of aggression against Reich territory, I have determined to break open this ring placed around Germany. The Non-Aggression and Mutual Consultation Pact with the Soviet Union affords us the security of a policy of peaceful understanding with this greatest of empires in the East. In response to Polish acts

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of aggression, parts of the German Wehrmacht are fighting in the East to restore peace, a peace which is to secure life and liberty for the German Volk.

The Wehrmacht's advances have been crowned by success in only forty-eight hours. Although only a small portion of the German aerial fleet is being deployed in the East, it already reigns supreme in Polish air space. The German Volk and your comrades in the East now expect you, soldiers of the Western Front, to stand fast, as unshakeable as a wall of steel and iron which defends the borders of the Reich against any attack, as a system of fortification which is one hundred times stronger than the never-vanquished Western Front of the Great War. If you do your duty, then the struggle in the East will be brought to a successful conclusion within a few weeks. And then the undivided force of a state of ninety million will stand behind you.

As an old soldier of the World War and as your Supreme Commander, I go to the front to join the Army in the East on this day, suffused by my faith in you. Our plutocratic opponents will soon learn that another Germany faces them today than in the year 1914!

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

This series of proclamations culminated in an appeal to the NSDAP:

Our Jewish-democratic world-enemy has succeeded in bringing into existence a state of war between the English people and Germany. The reasons given for this are just as libelous and threadbare as those of 1914 were. Nothing has changed.

What has changed, however, are the forces and the will of the Reich to lead this struggle with the determination necessary to frustrate this intended crime against humanity. The year 1918 will not repeat itself. The German Wehrmacht will shatter the ring created by the English policy of encirclement in the East within a few weeks' time. In the West, by means of the greatest fortification system of all time, it will defend German soil. The German Volk will make this sacrifice in the realization that it need not fear this confrontation, given its numbers and its great historical past. History has only witnessed us beaten when we stood divided.

Let all of us pledge ourselves to the German Reich's entering this struggle and emerging from it in indestructible unity! In this lies the highest mission of the National Socialist Movement. Whoever resists the demands placed on him by the community, whoever seeks to distance himself from this community, or whoever believes he can even sabotage it, will be eradicated without mercy this time. The brave soldier at the front shall know that we value his life more highly than that of traitors.

And he shall likewise know that in this struggle, for the first time in history, one shall not profit while others bleed to death! Whoever believes he can enrich himself in these fateful months or years, shall not reap wealth in return but shall meet the grim reaper instead.

I hold all National Socialist functionaries responsible for taking upon themselves all sacrifices to be borne by the community in an exemplary fashion in their private lives.

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What we possess today is of no import. What is important is that Germany wins!

What we lose today is of no import. What is important is that our Volk overcomes the aggressor and hence wins a future for itself. In a few weeks, the National Socialist combat readiness must have transformed itself into a unity sworn unto life and death. And then the capitalist war agitators in England and its satellite states shall shortly realize what it means to have attacked Europe's greatest Volk state without proper cause.

The path on which we stride forth today is no more difficult than that leading from Versailles up to 1939. We have nothing to lose, but everything to win!

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

This last statement in particular once more betrayed Hitler as the reckless opportunist he in fact was. Once again it revealed his mistaken belief that domestic policy could be reproduced internationally. He held the way "from Versailles up to 1939" to be a precedent for the upcoming struggle, and in the end, he was certain, he would triumph once again.

Less certain of this, and exceedingly doubtful whether Germany indeed had "nothing to lose and everything to win," were not only the German people, but also Germany's economists and generals. Even Hitler's most faithful *Untert Führer*s in the Party knew only too well how right Göring's remark, upon learning of the British declaration of war, had been: "If we lose this war, then God have mercy on us!" Indeed, Germany had "everything to lose" in this war.

While Hitler had not the courage to face the German public on this September 3, 1939, Chamberlain spoke before the British people in a radio broadcast shortly past 11:00 a.m. He personally instructed them of the state of war existing as of that hour and stated:¹⁰²¹

You can imagine what a bitter blow it is to me that all my long struggle to win peace has failed. [—]

We have a clear conscience, we have done all that any country could do to establish peace, but a situation in which no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted, and no people or country could feel themselves safe, had become intolerable. [—]

Now may God bless you all and may He defend the right. For it is evil things that we shall be fighting against, brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution. And against them I am certain that the right will prevail.

By noontime, Chamberlain was standing before the House of Commons, and declared:¹⁰²²

September 3, 1939

The statement which I have to make this morning will show that there were no grounds for doubt. We were in consultation all day yesterday with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were taking against Poland allowed no delay in making our own position clear.

In reference to the reading of the British ultimatum of 9:00 a.m., the Prime Minister concluded:

That was the final Note. No such undertaking was received by the time stipulated, and, consequently, this country is at war with Germany. I am in a position to inform the House that, according to arrangements made between the British and French Governments, the French Ambassador in Berlin is at this moment making a similar *démarche*, accompanied also by a definite time limit. The House has already been made aware of our plans. As I said the other day, we are ready.

This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do; that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself; I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

Chamberlain likened the renewed conflict to the Second Punic War between the aggressor Hannibal and the world power Rome, and maintained that England would win this war just as it had won the "First Punic War."¹⁰²³ This kind of reference to the previous World War naturally infuriated Hitler, and in a speech two months later, he replied:¹⁰²⁴

If now the English declare this battle to be the Second Punic War, history has not yet determined who shall play Rome and who shall play Carthage in this case. In the first [war] England assuredly did not play Rome, as Rome emerged victorious from the First Punic War. In the First World War England was not the victor, but rather others won that war. And in the second—I can assure you of as much—England will even less be the victor!¹⁰²⁵

At the same session in the House of Commons on September 3, 1939, Winston Churchill also spoke. In the course of the Second World War, Churchill would emerge as the main adversary of Hitler, gaining victory upon victory over him and ultimately vanquishing him. On this day in 1939, Churchill had joined Chamberlain's War Cabinet in the capacity of First Lord of the Admiralty, a post he had already occupied in the First World War. Speaking before the House of Commons, Churchill declared:¹⁰²⁶

We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal, to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments, and many unpleasant surprises, but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and strength of the British Empire and the French Republic. The Prime Minister said it was a sad day, and that is indeed true, but at the present time there is another note which may be present, and that is a feeling of thankfulness that, if these great trials were to come upon our Island, there is a generation of Britons here now ready to prove itself not unworthy of the days of yore and not unworthy of those great men, the fathers of our land, who laid the foundations of our laws and shaped the greatness of this country.

This is not a question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for Poland. We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defense of all that is most sacred to man. This is no war of domination or imperial aggrandizement or material gain; no war to shut any country out of its sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man.

Another illustrious speaker before the House of Commons that day was David Lloyd George. He had helped to secure the defeat of William II for Britain in the First World War. As mentioned earlier, Hitler had always mistakenly held Lloyd George to be his friend and a proponent of his policies. The former Prime Minister underlined that the British nation had justly claimed the victory in 1918 and stressed his conviction that this would again be the case in the present engagement.¹⁰²⁷

Hitler spent the afternoon hours of September 3 in various consultations, drafting political and military guidelines. Most prominent among these was the second "Directive for the Conduct of the War." It sought to bring action in Poland to a swift conclusion and ordered the exercise of great restraint in the West. Only the Navy was allowed to take measures against England in response to a corresponding British proclamation. With regard to France, French aggression was to precede any German steps against France. In both the case of England and France, the Luftwaffe was to keep in the background. Along the border to France, the Army was to remain in waiting positions. The directive, dated September 3, 1939 read:¹⁰²⁸

Directive No. 2 for the Conduct of the War

1. After the declaration of a state of war by the British Government, the British Admiralty on September 3, 1939, at 11:17 a.m. gave orders for the opening of hostilities.

France has declared that from 5:00 p.m. on September 3, 1939, she will be in a state of war with Germany.

2. The German war objective remains for the time being the speedy and victorious conclusion of operations against Poland. Any decision to transfer sizeable forces from the East to the West rests with me.

3. The principles for the conduct of the war in the West, in accordance with Directive No. 1,¹⁰²⁹ remain in force.

After the opening of hostilities by Britain, now announced, and the declaration of a state of war by France, the following conclusions have been reached.

(a) Against Britain

Navy

Offensive operations permitted.¹⁰³⁰ The warfare against merchant shipping is for the time being to be conducted according to the prize regulations, also by submarines. Preparations are to be made for intensification [of the war] pending the declaration of danger zones. The decision to put intensification measures into force rests with me.

The approaches to the Baltic Sea are to be blocked by mines without infringing on neutral territorial waters.

Barrage measures in the North Sea intended for our own defense and for the attack against Britain are to be carried out.

Luftwaffe

Offensive operations against British naval forces in naval ports and on the open sea (including the Channel), as well as against troop transports definitely identified as such, are only to be permitted if British attacks from the air on similar targets have taken place and if prospects of success are particularly favorable. The same applies to operations by naval air formations.

The decision on attacks against the British mainland and merchant shipping rests with me.

(b) Against France

Army

In the West the opening of hostilities is to be left to the enemy. The Commander in Chief of the Army will decide on reinforcements for the Western Army from the forces still available.

Navy

Offensive operations against France are only to be permitted if she opens hostilities. If she does so, then the orders given against Britain apply also against France in the same way.

Luftwaffe

Offensive operations against France are only to be permitted after French attacks have been made against German territory. The principle to be followed is that the beginning of the war in the air should not be caused by German measures.

Generally, in the use of the Luftwaffe in the West, it is to be borne in mind that its fighting power must be conserved for the decision against the Western Powers after the defeat of Poland.

4. The X Order issued with OKW No. 2100/39 g.K. WFA/L.II.c on August 25, 1939, will be extended to the whole of the Wehrmacht with effect from September 3, 1939.

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The conversion of the whole of industry to war economy is ordered. Further mobilization measures in the civil sphere will be taken, on application of the Supreme Reich Authorities, by the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On the subject of Germany's representatives in neutral states, Hitler issued the following decree:¹⁰³¹

Berlin, September 3, 1939

1. As from today, for the duration of the war, all representatives abroad of the civil authorities or the Party offices and officials sent by them to uphold the policy of the Reich are to come under the authority of the Head of the German Mission in the country in question. The sending of new representatives or officials of the civil authorities or Party offices requires the sanction of the Foreign Ministry.

2. The above-mentioned representatives and officials are to send their reports to the Foreign Ministry through the Head of the Mission.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler could not well let this eventful day pass without a telegram to the Duce. It was relayed by wire to Rome at 8:51 p.m. and read:¹⁰³²

Duce!

I must first thank you for your last attempt at mediation. I would have been ready to accept, but only on condition that some possibility could have been found to give me certain guarantees that the conference would be successful. For the German troops have been engaged for two days in an, in parts, extraordinarily rapid advance into Poland. It would have been impossible to allow blood which was there sacrificed to be squandered through diplomatic intrigue. Nevertheless I believe that a way could have been found if England had not been determined from the outset to let it come to war in any case. I did not yield to England's threats because, Duce, I no longer believe that peace could have been maintained for more than six months or, shall we say, a year.¹⁰³³ In these circumstances I considered that the present moment was, in spite of everything, more suitable for making a stand.

At present the German Wehrmacht in Poland is so vastly superior in all technical fields that the Polish Army will collapse in a very short time. Whether it would have been possible to achieve this quick success in another year or two is, I must say, very doubtful in my opinion. England and France would have gone on arming their allies to such an extent that the decisive technical superiority of the German Wehrmacht could not have been in evidence in the same way. I am aware, Duce, that the struggle in which I am engaging is a struggle of life and death. In it my own fate is of absolutely no importance. But I am also aware that such a struggle cannot in the end be avoided, and that the moment for resistance must be chosen with icy deliberation so that the likelihood of success is assured; and in this success, Duce, my faith is as firm as a rock.

September 3, 1939

You kindly assured me recently that you believe you can help in some fields. I accept this in advance with sincere thanks. But I also believe that, even if we now march down separate paths, Destiny will yet bind us one to the other. If National Socialist Germany were to be destroyed by the Western Democracies, Fascist Italy would face a hard future. I personally was always aware that the futures of our two regimes were bound up, and I know that you, Duce, are of exactly the same opinion.

Concerning the situation in Poland I would only briefly remark that naturally we are leaving aside everything which is not important and are not wasting a single man on inessential tasks, but that all our actions are being directed by considerations of grand strategy. The Polish Northern Army, which is in the Corridor, has already been completely surrounded by this action of ours. Either it will be wiped out or it will surrender. For the rest, all operations are proceeding according to plan.¹⁰³⁴ The daily achievements of our troops have greatly exceeded all expectations. The mastery of our Luftwaffe is complete, although scarcely a third of it is in Poland.

In the West I shall remain on the defensive. France can shed her blood there first.¹⁰³⁵ The moment will come when we can pit ourselves there also against the enemy with the whole strength of the nation.

Please accept once more my thanks, Duce, for all the support you have given me in the past, and which I ask you not to refuse me in the future either.

Adolf Hitler

Finally Hitler was prepared to join the troops at the front as he had thrice announced in his various proclamations of that day. He left at 9:00 p.m., a special train bearing him to the front. Had the British declaration of war not reached Berlin that day, he might not have been all that eager. But as matters stood on this September 3, the day he suffered the greatest setback in his career and life to date, all Hitler desired was to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the Reich capital. He sought to avoid the questioning looks of his subordinates, of the foreign diplomats and, above all, of the German public. He no longer felt compelled to speak before his assistants or before the German Volk on which he had showered speech upon speech in the preceding years. In their hour of greatest need, he could not muster even one word of consolation or encouragement. Instead he disappeared somewhere in the distance, in a nebulous Führer headquarters. As was to become his habit increasingly during the war, he left it up to Göring¹⁰³⁶ to find the appropriate words to calm the public.¹⁰³⁷

Should there be war, Hitler had assured the Reichstag deputies on August 27, then he himself would “be in the front line.” However, in those locations where the bullets were actually whistling overhead, Hitler was not to be found. His conception of the “front line” included

his comfortable special train and plane as well as the Casino Hotel of Zoppot. At a respectful distance from the actual fighting, which he eyed from time to time through a telescope to admire the effectiveness of the Wehrmacht's heavy artillery, war was indeed a pleasant affair for Hitler. This should not be the place for a polemic against the naturally more comfortable life of a military commander, but Hitler's assertions about his stay at "the front" must be seen in the right light.

On the night of September 3 to September 4, British squadrons flew reconnaissance missions over northern Germany. In the course of these ventures, they dropped six million leaflets over German cities.¹⁰³⁸

On September 4, in order that Germans not fall prey to the illusion that the confrontation was a "phony war" on the part of England, British aircraft attacked Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven at 6:00 p.m. The battleship *Tirpitz* also came under fire. According to the German News Bureau report, German flak artillery downed five of the twelve British planes involved in the assault.¹⁰³⁹

In the morning hours of September 4, Hitler left the comforts of his special train behind to venture into the terrain of the Polish Corridor. His car passed the checkpoints Crone and Prust. At noon, he watched the crossing of the Vistula south of Kulm (Chelmno) by German troops.¹⁰⁴⁰

On September 5, Hitler reviewed a transport of wounded returning from the front which had stopped over at a small train station in the vicinity of his special train. On this occasion he spoke briefly with the injured servicemen. The German News Bureau published the following report on the encounter:¹⁰⁴¹

The Führer expressed his gratitude to the wounded soldiers for their courageous comportment. Their eyes gleamed with exuberant joy at the unexpected visitor who repeatedly recalled his own period of convalescence during the World War.

On September 6, Hitler journeyed to the Tuchel Heath, located within the Polish Corridor in the area between Tuchel and Graudenz. Along the Vistula river in front of Graudenz, he arranged for a handful of ethnic German peasants to pay tribute to his person.¹⁰⁴² Perceptibly touched, he shook hands with the women and children present. For the rest, he appeared martial, wearing a leather belt and shoulder straps, and even carrying a 7.65 mm pistol in a leather holster.

On September 7, Hitler conferred first with Raeder and then with Halder and Brauchitsch in his special train. The object of the discussion

in both instances was the conduct of the war in the West. The relative calm along the Western Front¹⁰⁴³ reinforced Hitler in his belief that neither the English nor the French were serious about their threats of war against Germany. He felt certain that both states merely awaited an opportune moment to withdraw from this unpleasant and premature engagement. While the further course of events proved this assessment to be justified as far as the morale of the French was concerned, Hitler considerably underestimated the British resolve. For the moment, he labored not to provoke the English needlessly in order to leave open venues for a later understanding. Therefore, in their meeting on September 7, he explicitly instructed Raeder to “exercise restraint until the political situation in the West has been clarified, which should take approximately one more week. ‘Case Athenia’ is to be clarified only after the return of the submarines.”¹⁰⁴⁴ The U-boats were to spare passenger liners in general, especially if these were of French origin, because the French had shown “restraint politically and militarily,” and the British were equally “hesitant.”

The general tone of the talk with Halder and Brauchitsch differed little from this, as that day’s entry in Halder’s diary proves:¹⁰⁴⁵

Case in the West not yet clear. Becoming apparent that no war is desired. [—] French Cabinet has no heroic attributes. From England also first, vague voices of realization to be heard [as to how senseless a war would be].

On the next day, Hitler signed a decree on propaganda which once more demonstrated his overestimation of psychological warfare and his mistaken method of applying domestically successful tactics to foreign policy. The main passages of the command read:¹⁰⁴⁶

Berlin, September 8, 1939

1. Propaganda is an important instrument of the leadership for forwarding and strengthening the will to victory and for destroying the enemies’ morale and will to victory. In a war there are no jurisdictional problems. What counts is the effective use of the propaganda instrument. Compared with this, all other issues are inconsequential.

2. The propaganda apparatus of the Propaganda Ministry, which has been built up over a period of years, is the central agency for the practical application of propaganda. Breaking it up during the war would be comparable to breaking up certain components of the Wehrmacht.

3. In the cases where practical developments have caused analogous bodies with like purposes to grow up, such agencies shall be coordinated and shall carry out their tasks, however much alike, in genuine collaboration.

4. The conduct of the propaganda at home, i.e. its psychological orientation, is the responsibility of the authorities entrusted with the

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administration of internal policies, except in cases where I reserve the right to give personal directives. The coordination of these directives in their practical application to propaganda is the responsibility of the Propaganda Minister.

5. In the domain of foreign policy propaganda, i.e. that propaganda which is aimed directly or indirectly at foreign countries, the general policy and the directives are issued by the Foreign Minister, unless I see occasion for personal directions. The entire propaganda apparatus of the Propaganda Ministry is available for the practical application of these directives. In so far as similar facilities already exist in the Foreign Ministry, their continued functioning shall not be impaired. Their further expansion, however, is undesirable; rather, the tendency should be to recognize in all circumstances the value of the central propaganda machinery which is now in existence and to utilize it for the given propaganda tasks.

6. To insure full coordination of the foreign propaganda effort through pamphlets, films, radio, press, etc., the Foreign Minister shall—in person, if possible—communicate his wishes and his directives to the Propaganda Minister. [—]

Hitler's assessment of the hesitating English and French stance, which he had explained two days before, was also echoed in the war directive of September 9:¹⁰⁴⁷

Directive No. 3 for the Conduct of the War

1. Operations in strength against the Polish Army and air force are to be continued until it is safe to assume that the Poles can no longer succeed in establishing a continuous front which would tie down the German forces.

2. When it becomes apparent that parts of the Eastern Army and the Luftwaffe are no longer required for this mission and for crushing resistance in the occupied territories, arrangements are to be made for their transfer to the West. Additional air defense units may be assigned for operation against our enemy in the West as the Polish air force loses more and more of its effectiveness.

3. Even after the irresolute opening of hostilities by Great Britain at sea and in the air, and by France on land and in the air, my express consent must be obtained in each of the following areas:

a. Every time our ground forces cross the western borders of Germany.

b. Every time one of our planes crosses the western borders of Germany, unless it is required to repulse enemy air attacks in force.

c. For every air attack on Britain.

The Luftwaffe may, however, be employed in the Bay of Heligoland¹⁰⁴⁸ over the declared mine area in the West, and in direct support of naval operations.

d. For the Navy the regulations laid down in Directive No. 2, paragraphs 3a and 3b,¹⁰⁴⁹ remain in force. No offensive actions at sea are to be undertaken against France.

Adolf Hitler

On September 9 also, Göring spoke before workers at the Rheinmetall-Borsig works located in Berlin-Tegel. In the broadcast of the speech, Göring labored to instill confidence in the German public and to alleviate its apprehension. Göring endeavored to be the worthy representative of his Führer who was “unavailable” to speak himself. Among other things, Göring stated:¹⁰⁵⁰

In the most moving tones, Chamberlain has declared he would like to live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed.¹⁰⁵¹ Well, I do not know about that—I have heard of Methuselah growing quite old, but I believe that Chamberlain would have to grow quite a bit older yet if he wants to live to see that day. England has declared war on us. So it says it has not declared war on the German Volk but on Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime. Yet when the English shoot, then they are shooting at the German Volk and not at the Nazi regime. This is truly an old story. [—] And one thing I can tell you today, and no one can disprove this: Germany is the best armed state there is in the world.

Perhaps the English believe they can go unpunished, attacking our harbors in the Northwest while we are fighting in Poland.¹⁰⁵²

England has done so only once. It has learned its lesson, namely, that German anti-aircraft defenses are on guard there, too. The loss of half its squadron should have taught it as much.

And when people say today that German battleships sustained heavy hits also, then I can assure you, Comrades, upon my word and upon my honor, that it was not a British bomb which fell onto the ship but a downed fighter.

If a British pilot wishes to fly about nightly at high altitudes and, on top of that, in German air space, to drop off those ludicrous leaflets, then really I am not opposed to this as a matter of principle. However, woe to them if they should mistake a bomb for a propaganda leaflet. They shall not have to wait long for retribution!¹⁰⁵³ Now, where is that great English blockade? All they can do today is to try and stop the import of goods we procure overseas.

As has been said, we only have one front now. And this is what is decisive, my German Volksgenossen, and this you must always bear in mind especially when thinking back upon the World War. I do understand if one or another of you feels oppressed at times and says: “Good Lord, now we are once more fighting a war against all other peoples, a war that might again last many years, bringing with it horrendous destitution and shortages, etc.” But then, please, take a minute to reflect on the situation soberly, think of how it was then and how it is today. And surely you will realize: it is not the same!

The drama staged for you by the English is the same, but the actual situation is not the same. England has once more incited the world to go against Germany. And yet, we do not have a war to fight on three, four, or five fronts like back then. Then we had to defend 3,800 kilometers, today we have only 250 to defend. And these 250 kilometers are not a line of trenches and shell craters, but an iron wall of hurdles, bunkers, and fortifications, which defy penetration.

September 9, 1939

Moreover—and I will return to this later—we do not want anything of the French. We do not want to take anything away from them! What is there for us to want of the French? We have guaranteed the border once and for all. And if France thinks it has to fight for England down to the last Frenchman, then that is solely its affair and not ours! We shall defend ourselves, rest assured. But attack? Why should we? We have absolutely nothing to do there.

These grandiose proclamations by Göring rang in the ears of many a German in later years. Then Germany would not only be fighting along one front of 250 kilometers in length, but along many fronts of thousands and thousands of kilometers. And further, Germany would not only have attacked in the West, but also in the East and North. Soon Germany would be fighting in North Africa, in the Balkans, and at many other locations.

On this September 9, Hitler undoubtedly was well satisfied with the speech of his “best man.” Göring’s address absolved him from the necessity of stepping before the public himself after the unexpected and highly embarrassing British declaration of war.

10

Still on September 9, Hitler signed into law a general amnesty for Germany's civilian population.¹⁰⁵⁴

After the conclusion of operations in the Polish Corridor, Hitler joined the Silesian Army Group. It was advancing to the Northeast, passing cities such as Tschenstochau (Czestochowa), Kielce, Konskie, and Radom. On September 10, Hitler made an excursion into the Kielce-Radom countryside. This was officially termed a flight along the front. Actually, he went sightseeing in Kielce where he admired the historic Voivode Society House.¹⁰⁵⁵

Hitler could not overcome his fear of assassination attempts. Haunted by this anxiety, he ordered his staff to publish the following ordinance:¹⁰⁵⁶

For the duration of the war, the Führer will not accept any flowers handed to him in the course of his travels. He requests that the flowers intended for his person be presented to the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht instead.

On September 11, Hitler boarded his plane to view from the air the area between Lodz and Warsaw. The aircraft carried him to an airport located at the front, whence a car took him to the divisional staff headquarters at Rava. In the afternoon, he again scanned the region by plane.¹⁰⁵⁷

On September 12, Göring arrived at the Führer Headquarters. Meeting with Hitler in the special train, Göring rendered a two-hour report on the deployment of the Luftwaffe.¹⁰⁵⁸ Then, for the first time, Hitler signed a decree into law which bore the heading "Führer Headquarters." The issue at stake was an expansion of the "Decree on Prizes" necessitated by recent British actions.¹⁰⁵⁹

On September 13, Hitler set out on yet another aerial review of the front lines in the region north of Lodz, where he visited a number of

divisional headquarters. At 3:00 p.m., Hitler triumphantly entered Lodz by car. The city had been in German hands for four days already and had largely been spared the destruction of war.¹⁰⁶⁰

The next day, Göring called once more at the Führer Headquarters to report on his own travels along the front.¹⁰⁶¹

On September 15, Hitler visited troops engaged in Galicia. He further attended the crossing of the San river in the vicinity of Jaroslav and Ubieszyn. Having traversed the river on wooden bridges, the soldiers marched by Hitler with arms outstretched in greeting.¹⁰⁶²

On September 16, the Führer entertained the acting president of the German Red Cross, SS Brigade Führer Grawitz, in his special train. Grawitz accounted for the Red Cross's activities. Hitler subsequently spoke with various Red Cross nurses and volunteers, expressing his appreciation for their work. He stressed his respect for the principles on which the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention were founded.¹⁰⁶³

Later that day, Hitler ordered German planes to drop leaflets on besieged Warsaw at 3:10 p.m. which read:¹⁰⁶⁴

To the population of Warsaw!

Your Government has made the city a battleground and has divorced it of its character as an open city. Your military leadership has not only allowed heavy artillery to fire into the city, it has also called on you to erect barricades in every street and to offer resistance to the German troops.

Your Government has violated international law in its request that the civilian population take up weapons to resist the German troops and thereby engage in guerrilla warfare. Because parts of the population of Warsaw have heeded this call, Warsaw has become a battleground. In spite of this, on the orders of the Führer, only those sections of the city which are of military significance, such as train stations, airports, barracks, and transit routes, have hitherto been subjected to bombing.

Hereby the following appeal is being addressed to the military commander of Warsaw:

1. Within twelve hours, all sections of the city are to be handed over to the German troops, which have surrounded it, for the purpose of occupation without a fight.

2. Within the same period, the Polish troops in Warsaw are to surrender to the German military commanders.

3. If these demands are fulfilled, the nearest German military commander is to be informed of the intent to surrender.

4. If these demands are not fulfilled, the civilian population has twelve hours to evacuate the city area along the routes leading to Sieldce and Garwolin. In this case, after the twelve hours have expired, the entire city of Warsaw will be regarded as a combat zone with all the consequences this entails. The twelve hours commence with the dropping of this leaflet.

September 17, 1939

On September 17, Russian troops invaded Poland, allegedly to protect the Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities living there. Hitler was not pleased with this turn of events, as he himself also eyed these territories. Adding to his frustration was Warsaw's persistent refusal to capitulate. Hitler feared that a Soviet intervention at this point might well spoil the picture of a Polish collapse due solely to Germany. This would rob the Wehrmacht of its glory.

On the other hand, he speculated that the appearance of Russia might well serve to point out to the British the danger of engaging in a war against Germany. After all, as a logical consequence, they would now be forced to declare war on Russia as well.¹⁰⁶⁵ After this healthy fright, London might be more inclined finally to accept Hitler's hand in order to protect itself from the evils of Bolshevism.

Hitler was mistaken on this point. The British were not about to do the Führer the favor of confronting the Soviet Union as long as the Russian advances remained restricted to areas east of the so-called Curzon Line.¹⁰⁶⁶ The Belorussian and Ukrainian regions had belonged to the Russian Empire at one point, and Britain was not going to oppose the Russian occupation of this terrain.

On September 19, the Führer Headquarters moved to the Casino Hotel in the Danzig seaside resort town of Zoppot. Reaching the former checkpoint Renneberg on the border of the former Free City of Danzig at 1:30 p.m., Hitler received a warm welcome by Gauleiter Forster.

In his reply, Hitler expressed his appreciation "for the loyalty, the combat readiness and determination, and for the brave endurance of the German city of Danzig." With church bells ringing in the back-ground, Hitler's motorcar passed through Oliva and took him to Zoppot.¹⁰⁶⁷

The Führer relished posing as the victorious warlord. Hence, he felt it exceedingly appropriate to celebrate his triumphant entry into Danzig by extending to Field Marshal von Mackensen, who had served as Commanding General of the city from 1908 through 1914, a "comradely remembrance." He composed the following telegram on September 19:¹⁰⁶⁸

Herr Generalfeldmarschall!

On the battlefield of your historic successes, my thoughts turn to you. I express these thoughts at the site of your service as Commanding General of Danzig, which has now returned home.

I extend to you comradely greetings,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's motorcar left his quarters at the Zoppot Casino Hotel at 4:10 p.m. From there, the Führer slowly drove through the city to reach the Artus Courtyard along the Langer Markt in the center of Danzig. Gauleiter Forster and other prominent Party figures in the city, as well as the new military commander of West Prussia and Danzig, Artillery General Heitz,¹⁰⁶⁹ had already assembled there. Keitel, Ribbentrop, Lammers, Himmler, Dietrich, Bormann, and Hitler's various adjutants were also awaiting his arrival. After a welcoming speech by Forster, Hitler rose to address the crowd.

This was the first time he spoke directly to the German people, via radio broadcast, since his speech of September 1. In general, however, Hitler was still reluctant to address the public and preferred to speak before a carefully selected audience. This was characteristic of his behavior throughout the Second World War. A general tendency to avoid direct contact with the German people had already been prevalent on previous occasions when Hitler had cause to feel uneasy, pressured by a guilty conscience. Examples of this had been his hasty appropriation of the office of Reich President and the Röhm Purge.¹⁰⁷⁰

Hitler's speech in Danzig represented an attempt to rationalize the German aggression against Poland, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to claim that the campaign in Poland had already been concluded in only "eighteen days." In reality, Poland had not yet surrendered. Warsaw was still under siege, and resistance on the Hel Peninsula was still active.¹⁰⁷¹ Nevertheless, Hitler insisted on his eighteen-day version. He would not abandon it in later years either, in spite of evidence to the contrary.

It was not really important whether the Germans, who outnumbered the Poles three to one, brought the country to its knees within a number of weeks or only after several months. However, Hitler had a good reason for insisting that the conquest had taken only "eighteen days," as the Soviet Union had launched its invasion on September 17. Under no circumstances was Hitler prepared to allow for doubts concerning the solely German character of Poland's defeat. He acted as though the Russian intervention was of no consequence to the fall of Poland, because Poland had been conquered already.

Hitler displayed the same anxious jealousy here, as he would in the case of the 1940 campaign in the West. In the latter instance, he also held off the eager Mussolini until the German armies had practically overrun France and victory was assured. Italy's intervention was treated as a question of flaying the dead.

Hitler's speech, however, also represented an appeal to Britain to agree to what he regarded as a reasonable settlement of the Polish question, namely, the speedy conclusion of peace with Germany. After all, he claimed, Germany pursued no objectives in this war as far as England and France were concerned. The speech given at Danzig was the opening act in a new "campaign for peace" on the part of Hitler. This initiative was to climax in his speech before the Reichstag on October 6, 1939.

In Danzig on September 19, 1939, Hitler declared:¹⁰⁷²

My Gauleiters! My dear Volksgenossen of Danzig!

This moment deeply moves not only you, but the entire German Volk is struck with profound emotion. I myself am aware of the greatness of the hour.

It is for the first time¹⁰⁷³ that I step on this soil, of which German settlers took possession half a millennium before the first white men began settling in what is today the State of New York. Half a millennium longer this earth has been German and has remained German. And—of this you may rest assured—it will always remain German.

The fate which beset this city and this beautiful countryside was the fate of all of Germany. The World War, this perhaps most senseless struggle of all time, has victimized this land and this city. This same World War which, in its wake, left no winners, only losers, also left a conviction in the minds of many, namely, that a similar fate would never again be repeated. Apparently, the main warmongers and war profiteers have forgotten the lessons of this slaughter of peoples (*Völkergemetzel*). As this bloody struggle, into which Germany had entered without any war objective, drew to an end, there was the desire to bestow upon mankind a peace which would lead to the restoration of law and hence to the final elimination of all despair. This peace was, however, not placed before our Volk at Versailles for discussion. Rather this peace was forced upon us by means of a brutal Diktat.

The fathers of this peace saw in it the end of the German Volk. Perhaps many men believed that this peace signaled the end of all destitution. Yet it meant only the beginning of new tribulations. For the warmongers and those who ended the war deceived themselves on one particular issue: this Diktat not only failed to resolve a single problem, it created a multitude of new problems. It was only a matter of time before the trampled-down German nation would rise up once more to resolve the problems forced upon it.

The essential problem was completely overlooked at the time. This was the fact that peoples exist whether or not this pleases one or another British warmonger. Eighty-two million Germans¹⁰⁷⁴ are united within this one Lebensraum. These eighty-two million Germans wish to live and they shall live whether or not this pleases these warmongers!

Germany was grievously wronged by the injustice of Versailles. When today a statesman of another people believes he is entitled to say that he has lost faith in the word of German statesmen or of the German Volk, then to

the contrary it is we Germans who are entitled to say that we have lost faith completely in the assurances of those who back then so pitifully broke the solemn promises once extended.

It is not the injustice of Versailles that I wish to speak of here. The worst thing in the life of the peoples was perhaps not even the injustice perpetrated, but above all the nonsense, the utter lunacy and stupidity, with which the men back then sought to impose upon the world a peace which simply ignored all historical, economic, ethnic, and political facts. At the time, measures were taken which in retrospect lead us to doubt the sanity of those who perpetrated this crime. Devoid of any understanding of the historical developments in the European Lebensraum, devoid also of a comprehension of the economic situation there, these men ravaged Europe, tore asunder states and geographical units, suppressed their peoples, and destroyed ancient cultures.

The land of Danzig also fell victim to the insanity of the time. The Polish State as such arose as a product of this insanity. Perhaps the world is not sufficiently aware of the sacrifices Germany was forced to make for this Polish State. For there is one thing I must say: all those territories incorporated into Poland owe their cultural development exclusively to German vigor, to German diligence, and to German creative work. Motives for the tearing of more than one province from the German Reich and for incorporating them into the new Polish State were supposed ethnic necessities. And this in view of the fact that later, as a result of plebiscites in these areas, it became clear that no one in these provinces longed to become part of this Polish State. The Poland which grew on the fertile lands drenched by the blood sacrificed by countless German regiments expanded at the expense of ancient lands settled by Germans, and, above all, at the expense of reason and economic opportunity.

The last twenty years have proven beyond doubt: the Poles, who had not founded this culture, were not even capable of sustaining it. Once more it was proven a self-evident truth that only he who himself is creatively endowed in the cultural sphere is also able to secure true cultural achievement in the long run. Fifty additional years of Polish mastery would have sufficed to restore these lands to that barbarism out of which Germans had brought them with arduous industry and diligence. Everywhere the first traces of regression and decline are already evident today.

Poland itself was a state of nationalities, a trait for which the old Austrian state was so faulted.¹⁰⁷⁵ Poland never was a democracy. A thin, consumptive upper class dictatorially ruled not only foreign nationalities, but also their own people, so-called. This state was founded upon violence. The rule of the policeman's baton governed this state, to be supplanted at last by the military. The fate of the Germans in this state was frightful. And we must differentiate here: it is one thing if a people of inferior cultural significance has the misfortune to be governed by one of greater import, and another if a people of high cultural standing has to experience the tragedy of being violated by one culturally less developed. For this culturally inferior people will take the opportunity to gratify all sorts of imaginable feelings of inferiority against the carrier of the higher culture. This superior people will be gruesomely and

barbarously mistreated. Germans have been subject to such a fate for nearly twenty years. There is no need for me to give a detailed account of the fate of these Germans here. All in all, it was an exceedingly tragic and painful one. Nevertheless, as always, in this instance, too, I sought to obtain an understanding which could have led to a reasonable settlement.

Once I endeavored to draw final borders for the Reich in the West and the South. Thereby I sought to relieve region after region from political insecurity and to secure the peace there for the future. I endeavored to attain the same here in the East.

At the time, a man of undeniable, realistic insight and great energy governed Poland. I managed to conclude an agreement with Marshal Pilsudski which would smooth the path toward peaceful understanding between both nations; an agreement which strove to secure at least a base, by completely ignoring the Versailles Treaty, for a reasoned, bearable cohabitation.

As long as the Marshal lived, it seemed as though this attempt could perhaps contribute to a relaxation of the tense situation. Immediately after his death, the fighting against Germans started anew. This struggle—which found a manifold expression—increasingly embittered and poisoned the relations between the two peoples. It is hardly possible in the long run to stand by patiently while the German minorities living in this state, whose existence means a great injustice to Germany, are being persecuted in an almost barbaric fashion.

The world which otherwise sheds many a tear if a Polish Jew who emigrated to the Reich only a few decades ago is expelled, this same world is blind and mute to the plight of the millions who were driven from their homes by the implementation of the Versailles Treaty. For after all, these are only Germans! And what so oppresses and outrages us is the fact that we had to bear this from a state which stood far beneath us.

In the final count, Germany is a great power, even if a few crazed men believe they can erase the right to life of a great nation by means of a senseless treaty or Diktat. For how could a great power such as Germany in the long run stand by to observe how a people far beneath it and a state far beneath it maltreated Germans!

Two special circumstances made all this even more unbearable:

1. A city, the German character of which no one could deny, was not only prevented from finding its way back to the Reich, but it also was subjected to purposeful attempts to Polonize it, albeit in a roundabout manner.

2. The traffic of a province severed from the German Reich was made dependent upon the mercy of the Polish State in between and was subject to manifold harassment.

No power on earth would have borne up under the circumstances as long as Germany did! And I know not what England would have said if a similar peaceful resolution had been applied at its expense, or how France would have taken it, not to mention America.

And I still sought to find ways to a bearable solution of even this problem. I brought these attempts orally to the attention of those in power in Poland

at the time. You, my Volksgenossen, know of these proposals: they can only be termed reasonable.

I strove to attain a balance between our desire to connect East Prussia with the Reich once more, and the desire of the Poles to have access to the sea. I strove to obtain a synthesis between the German character of the city of Danzig and its desire to return to the German Reich, and the economic demands of the Poles.

I believe I am justified in claiming that I was more than modest back then. There was many a moment in which I questioned myself, brooding, whether I could indeed answer to my own Volk for submitting such proposals to the Polish Government.¹⁰⁷⁶ I did it nonetheless because I wished to spare the German Volk and also the Polish people the suffering engendered by an armed confrontation.

The proposals then conceived I once more reiterated, in a most concrete manner, in the spring of this year:

Danzig was to return to the German Reich. An extraterritorial route was to be built to East Prussia—at our expense, naturally. In exchange, Poland was to enjoy full rights to the harbor at Danzig and be accorded extraterritorial access thereto. I was even willing, in turn, to guarantee the barely tolerable situation along our borders and moreover to allow Poland to share in the securing of Slovakia.

Truly I know not what strange state of mind inspired the Polish Government to reject my proposal. But I do know this was a great relief to millions of Germans who held that I had already ventured too far with this offer. Poland's only reply was an immediate mobilization of its troops, accompanied by a wild campaign of terror. My request to speak with the Polish Foreign Minister in Berlin, to once more discuss these questions, was declined. Instead of going to Berlin, he went to London!

Every week, every month, threats increased: threats of a nature barely tolerable for a small state. In the long run, this was simply insufferable for a great power. Polish newspapers informed us that Danzig was not the bone of contention; instead it was East Prussia which was to be annexed by Poland within a short time. The like continued day after day. Other Polish papers declared that East Prussia represented no solution to the underlying problem. Instead, it was absolutely necessary, under all circumstances, to integrate Pomerania into Poland also. Then the Oder river was questioned as Poland's frontier and many asked if the Elbe river did not in fact constitute the natural boundary of the Polish State.

Many racked their brains to determine whether it would be better to hack to pieces our army in front of Berlin or rather behind it. A Polish Marshal, who today has pitifully abandoned his army,¹⁰⁷⁷ declared at the time that he would hack Germany and the German Army to pieces.

Simultaneously, the martyrdom of our Volksgenossen began. Tens of thousands were abducted, abused, and murdered in a most gruesome manner. Sadistic beasts let themselves go and allowed their perverted instincts to run free. And the pious democratic world stood by without batting an eyelid.

I then asked myself: who could have so deceived Poland? Did the Poles truly believe that, in the long run, the German nation would stand for all this from so ludicrous a state? Apparently someone must have believed it, as this belief was reinforced elsewhere. This elsewhere has been the site where, not only in the last decades but in fact throughout the last centuries, the main warmongers have taken up residence—where they reside still as of this day!

There they declared that Germany need not be considered a power. There they convinced the Poles they could, at any point, mount a sufficiently strong resistance to Germany without great difficulty. There they went yet a step further, reassuring the Poles that, should their own resistance falter, others would instantly come to their rescue, i.e. relieve them of this burden. It was there they received this infamous guarantee effectively placing the decision whether or not to go to war in the hands of an insignificant, megalomaniac state.¹⁰⁷⁸ For these warmongers Poland was but a means to an end. Today they calmly proclaim that what is at stake in this war is not Poland at all, but the elimination of the regime in Germany!

I have always warned of these men. You will recall, my German Volksgenossen, my speeches in Saarbrücken and Wilhelmshaven. In both these speeches I pointed to the danger here: that in one country some men simply get up and, without restraint, preach that war is a necessity, as the gentlemen Churchill, Eden, Duff Cooper, and the like, have repeatedly done. I have pointed out how dangerous this is, especially in a country where no one knows if these men shall not be at the helm of government shortly.

Thereupon I was afforded the explanation that this surely would never occur. To the best of my knowledge, however, precisely these men govern today! And so precisely what I then predicted has occurred.

At the time I warned the German nation of these men. But I also left no doubt that Germany would not capitulate before their threats and their use of force. This answer of mine suffered the most shabby of attacks. A type of practice has become established in these democracies: there agitation for war is permissible; there foreign governments and heads of state may be subjected to slander, defamation, and insults, for there a liberal and free press reigns. In authoritarian states, one may not rise to protest this—for there discipline reigns! Accordingly, it is only permissible to agitate for war in undisciplined states, while in disciplined states no appropriate answer may be given.

In practice this would lead to the undisciplined states agitating for war and their peoples succumbing to it, whereas in disciplined states the people would not have a clue as to what was going on around them. Back then I decided to awaken the German Volk to these goings-on, to put it in a defensive posture. I judged this necessary so as not to be taken by surprise one day.

As September came, this situation had indeed become insufferable. You know the course of events in August; in spite of this, I hold that—without a British guarantee and the agitation of these apostles of war—it might well have been possible to reach an agreement in these last days.

At one particular point, England itself attempted to bring about direct talks between us and Poland. I was willing. The Poles, however, failed to

show up, naturally. I sat with my Government in Berlin for two days, and waited, and waited. In the meantime, I had worked out the new proposal. You are aware of it. On the evening of the first day [August 30], I had the British Ambassador informed of it. It was read to him sentence for sentence. Moreover, my Foreign Minister gave supplemental explanations. The next day dawned. Nothing happened—not a thing! Then came the general mobilization in Poland, renewed acts of terror, and endless assaults on Reich territory.

In international relations, one ought not to mistake patience for weakness. For years, I have stood these persistent provocations with sheer boundless patience. What I myself suffered in these days few can truly appreciate. For barely one month passed, barely a week went by, in which a delegation from these territories did not come to me to describe the unbearable nature of the situation, and to implore me to finally intervene.

Time and time again I bade them to exercise patience just a little longer. The years passed by in this manner. Lately, however, I have taken to issuing warnings that things had to come to an end finally. And after months of waiting, making ever new proposals, I finally determined, as I have already declared in my speech to the Reichstag, to speak with Poland in the language Poland itself believes it is uniquely entitled to employ. Evidently this is the only language Poland understands.

And still, at this minute, the peace could have been saved yet one more time. Befriended Italy, the Duce, intervened to make yet one more proposal for mediation. France agreed to this, and I also pronounced my agreement.¹⁰⁷⁹ But England believed it was in a position to reject this proposal and to place a two-hour ultimatum before the German Reich, an ultimatum which contained provisions impossible to comply with.

However, the English were mistaken on one account. Once, in November 1918, they faced a government they themselves helped to prop up. And, apparently, the English now mistook the present regime for this puppet-regime of old and the present German nation for the German Volk then blinded and misled. Germany can no longer be handed ultimatums—of this London ought to take note.

Within the last six years, we have suffered great outrages from states such as Poland. Nevertheless, I never sent any of them an ultimatum. Now that Poland has chosen war, it has chosen it because others incited it to enter into this war. Those who incited it believed that this war would allow them to attain their great ambitions in world and financial politics. In doing this, however, they will not obtain the greatest profits, but the greatest disappointments.

Poland chose the struggle—and it got it! It chose the struggle with a light heart because certain statesmen in the West assured it that they had detailed documentation on: the worthlessness of the German army; the inferiority of its equipment; the deficient morale among its troops; the defeatist sentiment throughout the interior of the Reich; the gulf supposedly separating the German Volk from its Führer. The Poles were persuaded that it would be exceedingly easy not only to resist our armies, but to throw them back as well.

And it was thanks to this advice by the western chiefs of staff that Poland apparently conceived its entire military strategy.

Since then eighteen days have passed. Scarcely ever before in history was this saying more appropriate: "Man and steed and wagon, the Lord struck all of them down."¹⁰⁸⁰

And, as I am speaking to you now, our troops are arrayed along a long line stretching from Lemberg [Lvov] to Brest and northwards. Since yesterday afternoon, endless columns of the badly beaten Polish Army have been marching from the Kutno area as prisoners of war. Yesterday morning, they numbered 20,000; there were 50,000 last night; 70,000 this morning. I do not know how great their numbers are at present, but there is one thing I do know: whatever remains of this Polish Army west of this line will capitulate within a few days and lay down its arms, or it will be smashed!

It is at this moment that our grateful hearts fly to our soldiers! The German Wehrmacht has accorded those ingenious statesmen, who were so well informed on the state of affairs in the German Reich, the necessary practical instruction. Marshal Smigly-Rydz has a poor sense of direction. Instead of in Berlin, it has landed him in Czernowitz. And with him went his entire government and all those seducers who have so deceived the Polish people as to drive them into this insanity.

On land, at sea, and in the air, the German soldier, however, has done his duty and fulfilled his obligations in an exemplary fashion!

Once more the German infantry has proven its unparalleled mastery. Time and again, others have sought to attain its level of valor, courage, and expertise. All have failed. The new weaponry of our motorized units has proven itself worthy to the utmost. The soldiers of our Navy have fulfilled their duty in an astounding manner.

And above all this, it is the German Luftwaffe which keeps watch and secures the air space. All those who dreamed of crushing Germany, of reducing German cities to ashes, all are far less outspoken now because they know only too well that for every bomb on a German city five or ten will be dropped in return!¹⁰⁸¹ They should not act as though they exercised such restraint because of humanitarian considerations. They are less concerned about humanity than retribution.

Let us take this occasion to render justice to the Polish soldier. He fought courageously at many sites. The lower ranks of the military made desperate efforts; the middle-rank leadership lacked intelligence; its upper-echelon leadership was bad beyond criticism. Its organization was Polish!

At this moment, around 300,000 Polish soldiers are German prisoners of war. Nearly 2,000 officers and many generals share their fate.

I must also mention, however, that this admitted valor of many Polish units stands in contrast to the dirtiest deeds perhaps committed throughout the past centuries. As a soldier in the World War who fought only in the West, I never had the opportunity to witness such deeds: the thousands of slaughtered Volksgenossen; the brutishly butchered women, girls, and children; the countless German soldiers and officers who fell, wounded, into the hands of the enemy and who were massacred, bestially mutilated with

their eyes gouged out. And worse yet—the Polish Government has openly admitted this in a radio broadcast—the Luftwaffe soldiers forced to parachute were killed in a cowardly fashion. There were moments when one had to ask oneself: under these circumstances, should one exercise restraint oneself? I have not heard whether any of the democratic statesmen found it worth their while to protest against these acts of barbarity.

I have instructed the German Luftwaffe to lead this war in a humane manner, i.e. only against fighting units. The Polish Government and the head of the armed forces have instructed the civilian population to lie in ambush, to fight this war as snipers.

It is most difficult to exercise restraint oneself here, and I would like to stress on this occasion: the democratic states ought not to be so vain as to believe this state of affairs can continue forever! If they would prefer things to go differently, well then they can have them differently. Here, too, I may lose my patience.¹⁰⁸²

In spite of this perfidious method of warfare which has not been paralleled throughout the past decades, our armies have dealt with the enemy at lightning speed (*in Blitzesschnelle*). A few days ago, an English paper wrote I had relieved a colonel general of his duties because I had counted on a Blitzkrieg for this operation and had been deeply disappointed by the slow pace of the mission. Authors of this article may well have been those strategists who advised the Poles on how to array their troops.

Hence, we have beaten the Poles in scarcely eighteen days. Thereby we brought about a situation which may well enable us to speak with the representatives of these people calmly and in reasoned terms. In the meantime, Russia has felt it necessary, to safeguard the interests of its Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities, to march into Poland as well. And now we witness how England and France are outraged at this cooperation of Germany and Russia. It is termed a heinous crime—yes, one Englishman even writes that it is perfidious. Here the English are experts!

I believe the English conceive of this perfidy as the failure of cooperation between democratic England and Bolshevist Russia in view of the success of the attempt of National Socialist Germany and Bolshevist Russia at cooperation.

I would like to make a declaration here: Russia remains precisely what it is, and Germany will also remain what it is. On one point there is total agreement between both regimes: neither the Russian nor the German regime wishes to sacrifice even one man to the interests of the Western democracies.

The lessons of four years of war are sufficient for both states and both peoples. Ever since then we have known only too well that either one or the other would have the honor to come to the rescue of the ideals of the Western democracies. Both states and both peoples say no thank you to such a mission. We intend to attend to our interests ourselves from now on. And we have found that we are best able to realize these interests when both great peoples and states come to an understanding.

And this is all the easier as the British claims concerning the unrestrained nature of German foreign policy objectives are lies. I rejoice in being able to contradict these assertions of the British statesmen in reality now. Persistently

they claimed that Germany intended to rule Europe up to the Ural Mountains. Accordingly they should be happy to learn of the limited nature of Germany's ambitions. I believe I am robbing them of yet another rationale for going to war when I proclaim this—as they declare they must fight the present regime because it pursues “unlimited war aims.”

Well, my dear gentlemen of the Great Britannic World Empire, Germany's objectives are very limited in fact. We have discussed this in great detail with Russia, as the Russians are our next-door neighbors and, in the end, those most immediately affected. Accordingly, England ought to welcome the understanding arrived at by Germany and Soviet Russia. For the arrival at this understanding should remove once and for all the haunting images of the present German regime being out to conquer the world, an image which robbed the British statesmen of their sleep so many nights. It ought to be reassuring to know that it is not true that Germany wishes to conquer the Ukraine, or wished to do so in the past.

Our interests are of a very limited nature.¹⁰⁸³ However, these interests we are determined to pursue, no matter what the danger or who opposes us. The last eighteen days should have amply proven that we are not joking in this respect.

What state formations shall populate this vast terrain in the end depends foremost upon the two countries which possess vested, vital interests in this area. Germany strides forth in pursuit of limited, but unyielding demands. Germany will realize these demands in one way or another. Germany and Russia will create a situation which some day one will only be able to call a relaxation of tensions, here on the site of a storm-center of Europe.

I would like to make a few statements in reply to the West, where many, especially in England, have announced their determination not to allow, under any circumstances, anything of the kind and, if need be, to do battle to this end in a war of three years' duration, of even five or eight years in length.

1. With difficult sacrifices, Germany has accepted a redrawing of the Reich's frontiers in the West and in the South in order to obtain a final pacification of these borders. At the time, we truly believed this could indeed be attained. And I still believe we would have been successful had not certain warmongers had a vested interest in the disruption of the peace in Europe.

I do not pursue any war aim against either England or France. Ever since I came into office, I have sought to slowly restore close relations and trust with the former enemies in the World War. I endeavored to remove all tensions which once existed between Italy and Germany. And it is with a feeling of great contentment that I say that I was extraordinarily successful in this. Close and heartfelt relations have been established between both countries and have found a firm foundation in the close human and personal relationship between the Duce and myself.

I went further yet. I endeavored to accomplish the same thing with regard to France. Immediately after the resolution of the Saar question, I solemnly, for all time, renounced the further pursuit of revision of the borders in the West. I did this not only in theory but in practice as well. I have placed the

entire German propaganda apparatus in the service of this, my idea. I eliminated every trace of what might have furnished occasion for doubt or apprehension in Paris.

You know of my proposals to England. All my ambitions were to enter into a sincere and friendly relationship with England. Now that all of them have been rejected and today the English believe they must wage war against Germany, I must say the following: never again will the Poland of the Versailles Treaty arise! Not only Germany guarantees this, the Russians do so as well!

And now that England has chosen to refocus its war aims, i.e. now that it has finally betrayed its true objectives in this war, I would like to comment on this.

In England they say that this war is about Poland, although this is only of secondary importance. What is of greater import is the present regime in Germany. In this context, I am accorded the honor of a special mention as the representative of this regime.

Since, apparently, this is the primary objective pursued, I would like to reply as follows to the gentlemen in London:

It is an honor for me to be judged in such a manner. As a matter of principle, I have educated, taught the German Volk to regard as contaminated any regime our enemies praise. Hence the German Volk will reject it. Should the gentlemen Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden, etc., choose to accord their approval to a German regime, this would be interpreted to mean that this regime is being propped up and paid for by these gentlemen. Hence it would not represent a viable option for Germany.

This cannot be said of us, naturally. Condemnation by these gentlemen constitutes praise in our eyes. For my person, I can assure you of one thing: should these men praise me, I would be greatly upset. I am proud to furnish a target for their attack.

Should they truly believe they can divorce the German Volk from me in this fashion, then they hold the German Volk to be as weak in character or as stupid as they themselves are!

They are mistaken on both counts! National Socialism has not re-educated the German man for naught these past twenty years. All my men have known only attacks from our opponents throughout their lives. This has merely served to reinforce the love of our followers for them and has created inseparable bonds between them.

And just as the National Socialist Party took up the challenge throughout the years to emerge victorious in the end, so the National Socialist German Reich and the German Volk rise to the challenge today!¹⁰⁸⁴

May the gentlemen rest assured: their ludicrous propaganda campaign no longer has the ability to divide the German Volk. These propaganda amateurs would do well to serve an apprenticeship with us here for an extended time.

Should peoples indeed perish, then this shall not hold true for the German Volk which is fighting for its right. The German Volk does not want war, yet it was attacked. No, other peoples shall perish, those who are slowly learning who their seducers are; they are slowly realizing what little cause

they had for entering into this war. Yes, a small clique of profiteers actually is the only party with a viable political interest in this war.

And now that the English further declare that this war shall last three years, I can only express my compassion for the French *Poilu*.¹⁰⁸⁵ It does not know what it will be fighting for, but it does know, at least for starters, that it will have the dubious honor of fighting for three years at a minimum. Whether this war will truly last three years depends a bit on us, too, however. Should it indeed last three years, the chapter will no more close with the word “capitulation” than it would at the end of a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, or a seventh year.

May the gentlemen please note: the generation now leading Germany is not the generation of Bethmann-Hollweg. Today they once more face a “Frederician” Germany!

The German Volk will not be divided by this struggle. It will stand ever the more firmly united. If anything shall be divided thereby it will be those states whose substance is as inhomogeneous as that of these plutocratic world democracies, these so-called world empires, whose might rests on the suppression and rule of foreign peoples.

We fight for our national existence! And we will let no one among these narrow-minded propagandists (*beschränkte Propagandafatzken*) tell us that what is at stake is our regime—that is a lie!

Imagine the people who say: “Oh, in this country, there is someone in power who is not to our liking. Therefore, we will just have to engage in war for the next three years. Naturally, we will not wage this war ourselves. No, we will search the world for someone who will wage it in our stead. We will provide the cannons and grenades to him and he will provide the grenadiers, the soldiers, and the men.”

What recklessness! What would they have said of us had we, at some point, stood up to declare: “We do not like this regime which presently rules—let us say for instance—France or England. Therefore we will engage it in war now.”

What utter recklessness! To drive men to their deaths for that?! Let there be no doubt as to one thing: We shall pick up the gauntlet! We shall fight in the manner of the enemy! The English have already once more, under the cover of deceit and dishonesty, begun conducting war against women and children.

England possesses one weapon under the umbrella of which it believes it cannot be attacked, namely, its naval forces. And now the English say: because we ourselves cannot be attacked with this weapon, this entitles us to use this weapon not only against the women and children of our enemies, but also against the neutral states, if this should be necessary.

One ought to be careful not to let oneself be deceived here either! Soon there could come a time in which we would use a weapon with which we ourselves cannot be attacked.¹⁰⁸⁶

I hope it will not be then that others begin to suddenly recall the term “humanity” and the “impossibility” of conducting war against women and children. We Germans do not want this! In this campaign also I have issued

orders to spare the cities, if possible. Should however, a column choose to march across the market square and is attacked by fighter planes, then it cannot be excluded that someone else might become a victim as well.

As a matter of principle, we have consistently exercised mercy. In towns where no crazed or criminal elements have put up resistance, not a window pane was smashed. In a city such as Cracow, for example, not one bomb fell on the city itself. Only the airport and the train station, purely military objectives, were subject to bombardment. If, however, in a city such as Warsaw the war involves the civilian population, if it spreads to all street corners and houses, then, of course, we must involve the entire city in the war. We have abided by this general rule in the past and wish to do so in the future as well.

It is up to England either to conduct this blockade in compliance with international law, or in violation of international law. We shall follow suit. However, let no one be deluded as to one fact: the English objective in this war is not the elimination of a regime—it is the elimination of the German Volk, of German women and children, and, therefore, we shall act accordingly. And, in the end, one thing is certain: this Germany will never capitulate!

We know only too well what the fate of such a Germany would be. Mr. King-Hall has kindly informed us on behalf of his masters: a second Versailles Treaty, worse yet. For we have in the interim been afforded precise illustration of what they have in mind for us: how Germany is to be torn to pieces, how large sections of its southern lands are to be severed from it; what lands are to be restored to Poland; what type of new states are to be erected, and which princes are to be crowned as their heads of state. The German Volk acknowledges this information and will fight accordingly!

I would like, above all, to express my gratitude to the German Volk on this occasion. It has not only rendered evidence of its inner unity within these past weeks. It has also given us ample proof of its truly valiant character.

And here, too, National Socialism has wrought a change: "The German Volk is not as enthusiastic as in 1914!" Oh no, it is all the more enthusiastic! Only the enthusiasm of today is a flame burning inside which steels people. It is not a superficial "hurrah" patriotism. Rather it is a fanatical determination. It is the serene enthusiasm of men who know war. They have lived through one war already. They have not entered into this one light-heartedly. Once forced into another war, however, they will wage it in the manner the old German front once waged it.

As I saw numerous regiments and divisions in the course of my visits to the front—the young, the old, all with one state of mind—I saw before me the entire German Volk. We need no "hurrah" patriotism. All of us know how terrible war is. Yet we still are determined to bring these developments to a victorious conclusion, come what may. Not one of us is worth any more than the men and women who lived in the past. All the sacrifices they had to make back then were no easier than the sacrifices we must make today.

Every sacrifice demanded of us is no more difficult than the sacrifices borne in the past. We are determined, in one way or another, to see this struggle through and to survive it.

We have but one desire: that the God Almighty who has now bestowed His blessings on our weapons might enlighten the other peoples, that He might impart to them insight into how senseless this war, this struggle of the peoples, will be. May He induce them to contemplate the blessings of a peace they abandoned merely because a handful of infernal warmongers and war profiteers sought to drive the peoples into a war.¹⁰⁸⁷

It is for the first time that I am in this city of Danzig today.¹⁰⁸⁸ It shared the fateful path of the German Volk throughout many a century. It shared in the fighting of the Great War through its sons. After the war, its fate was one of particular suffering, a bitter one. Now, after twenty years, it returns to the great German Volksgemeinschaft. Much has changed in the Reich since. The former state of classes and castes has become the German Volk State. This state which was once defined and ruled by the interests of a few groups has now become a Reich, which is the possession of the German Volk. The ideas reigning supreme in this state were preached in this city for many, many years. Yes, you have helped to raise the spirit which made it possible to retain the German character of this city and to suffuse it with faith, and to persist until the hour of deliverance and liberation had finally come. This hour has now come! Imagine my own feeling of joy to be called upon by Providence to realize that goal which the best of Germans have always longed for. Imagine how deeply I was touched when, in these hallowed halls, I stood up to speak to you and the people of this city and of this land. Once I resolved not to journey to Danzig before this city belonged again to the German Reich. I wished to make my entry into this city as its liberator. And it is today that this proud happiness has been imparted to me!

I regard and receive this happiness as ample recompense for numerous hours, days, weeks, and months of great inquietude. Please, my dear men and women of Danzig, see in me also an emissary of the German Reich and of the German Volk which, through me, embraces and admits you into our eternal community, and which never again shall release you.

Whatever suffering shall be imparted to individual Germans within the next months or years, it shall be easier to bear in the acknowledgment of the inseparable community encompassing and forming our great German Volk.

We accept you into this community with the firm resolve never again to permit you to withdraw from it. This decision also forms a commandment for the entire Movement and for the entire German Volk. Danzig was German, Danzig has remained German, and Danzig shall be German from now on as long as there exists a German Volk and a German Reich!

Generations will come and generations will pass. They will reflect on the twenty years of absence of this city from the annals of German history as a sad epoch. And they will not only think the same of the year 1918, but they will also think with pride of the period of Germany's resurrection. And they will remember the German Reich, that Reich which has now brought together all German tribes to form one unity for which we shall stand up until we draw our last breath.

To this Germany, to this German Volksgemeinschaft of all German tribes, to this Greater German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

On September 20, a delegation of Japanese officers called at the Zoppot Casino Hotel at 6:30 p.m. General Count Terauchi and Admiral Osumi headed the delegation which had originally been en route to attend the Reich Party Congress of Peace. At Naples, news of Hitler's war had caught them by surprise. Half an hour before their meeting with Hitler, Ribbentrop had received the Japanese and instructed them about Hitler's latest assessment of German-Japanese relations. Hitler gave the Japanese a lengthy explanation of the motives for his aggression against Poland. He emphasized the successes of the German Wehrmacht, and thereupon set out to discuss relations with Tokyo. According to the records of the meeting, Hitler stressed the following points:¹⁰⁸⁹

1. Germany and Japan were the only two Great Powers between which there were no conflicts of political interest.
2. In addition, the two states and also Italy were young, aspiring nations of whose rise England was envious. The Foreign Minister added that he was firmly convinced that Japan would be very deeply affected by the fate of Germany. If Germany fared well in Europe Japan would also fare well in East Asia; but if things went wrong for Germany, they would go wrong for Japan, too. On the other hand, Germany was in like manner interested in the success of Japan in East Asia. He was convinced of this now and had been for a long time.
3. Both were martial peoples and the bond of the soldierly spirit made understanding easier.

These compliments apparently rang false in the ears of the Japanese who undoubtedly recalled how Hitler had deceived them the month before, regarding his new relations with Russia. The German protocol merely remarked that Terauchi "confined himself mainly to listening and to remarking that this was also his opinion."

The itinerary of the Japanese delegation for the next day was occupied nearly entirely by viewing the fortifications in the West, while Hitler sought to impress Germany's incomparable military might upon his guests from the Far East.

In the morning of September 21, Hitler visited the Westerplatte and boarded the *Schleswig-Holstein*, which had fired the first shots in the war against Poland. The crew lined up in parade formation and the Führer, relishing his new role as victorious military commander, solemnly stepped up to review them. Afterwards, Hitler proceeded to Gdingen (now called Gotenhafen) and reviewed the troops lined up in parade formation here, too. Göring joined Hitler at this point. Together they toured the combat area in the proximity of Oxhoeft.¹⁰⁹⁰

On September 22, Hitler flew to join the Army Group North stationed in the area between Warsaw and Minsk. On this occasion, he also visited with the staff of the army surrounding Warsaw. With the help of a telescope, Hitler viewed one of the city's suburbs called Praga.¹⁰⁹¹

At nearly the same time, Colonel General von Fritsch was allegedly killed in combat, fighting on the streets in one of Warsaw's other suburbs.¹⁰⁹² Hitler barely took note when the news reached him.¹⁰⁹³ Fritsch had been one of the few prominent figures in the Army to outspokenly oppose Hitler's war policy. Had his death not been so timely, Hitler undoubtedly would have seen to his removal by force in much the same manner as with his predecessor Schleicher.

Returning to Zoppot, General Jodl, Wehrmacht Chief of Operations, briefed those present on the situation and, in this context, stated: "Today one of the best soldiers ever to serve with the German Army fell: Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch."¹⁰⁹⁴ In reply to Jodl's remark, Hitler hypocritically declared: "Oh, if only I had not permitted his deployment!"

In commemoration of Fritsch, Hitler issued the following order of the day which, while published in the Army Law Gazette, was not made available to the general public:¹⁰⁹⁵

On September 22, the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, was killed in action before Warsaw. With a burning desire to join the ranks of the Army, in this struggle for the vital rights of the Volk to whom his life belonged, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, as chief of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment, accompanied his regiment in the Polish campaign. With his regiment he shared all battles the East Prussian Army engaged in.

The morning of September 22 sees him in the front line before Warsaw. Here the Colonel General falls prey to enemy machine gun fire, amidst young soldiers. The German Wehrmacht lowers its flags in deference to this great model and example of German soldierly spirit. At the barracks of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment flags shall fly at half-mast until the funeral as an external symbol of commemoration.

Führer Headquarters, September 22, 1939

The Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler

The German public was informed of Fritsch's death with laconic brevity:¹⁰⁹⁶

Berlin, September 23

Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch was killed in action in the battles before Warsaw on September 22. The Führer and Supreme Commander of the

Wehrmacht paid homage to General von Fritsch in an order of the day. The Führer has ordered a state funeral.¹⁰⁹⁷

On September 25, Hitler wired his congratulations to Christian X, King of Denmark, who was to celebrate his sixty-ninth birthday the following day.¹⁰⁹⁸ Later, Hitler again viewed the front lines from the air in the Bzura area.¹⁰⁹⁹

On that same day, he signed "Directive No. 4 for the Conduct of the War."¹¹⁰⁰

Führer Headquarters, September 25, 1939
CHEFSACHE (TOP SECRET MILITARY)

1. No final decision has yet been made regarding the political future of the erstwhile Polish territory between the line of demarcation and the German frontier.

After the conclusion of the battles around Warsaw and Modlin, the line of demarcation is to be safeguarded adequately by less heavily equipped units.

Sufficient Army and Luftwaffe units are to be left in the East to put a quick end to Polish resistance continuing behind the line of demarcation (San-Vistula-Narew-Pissa). I request a report regarding the strength of forces earmarked for both of these tasks.

2. I shall decide later, in accordance with the results of local attacks and attrition warfare, on whether Modlin and the part of Warsaw west of the Vistula are to be taken by a general attack before October 3. However, this attack is to be prepared.

3. The flow of refugees from the east to the west across the line of demarcation is to be stopped immediately, with the exception of *Volksdeutsch* elements and Ukrainian activists.

4. The decision regarding the future strategy of the war will be made shortly.

Up to that time the measures of the Wehrmacht with regard to organization and armament are to be such as will not conflict with any possible decision. The possibility must be kept open for an offensive in the West at any time.

In East Prussia sufficient forces must be kept in readiness to occupy Lithuania quickly, even in the case of armed resistance.

5. (a) On land the directives already given for the war in the West will, for the time being, remain in effect.

(b) At sea the former limitations are cancelled, and warfare on merchant shipping is to be conducted against France as well as Britain in accordance with prize law.

In addition the following operations may be carried out: Attacks upon French naval and air forces, French merchant vessels in convoy, and all troop transports; mining operations off the North African coast (embarkation points); war on merchant shipping by naval air units, in accordance with prize law.

September 25, 1939

As heretofore, no attacks are to be made on liners or large steamers which are evidently carrying passengers in large numbers in addition to goods.

(c) In the air, in the West, the limitations hitherto prevailing remain in force. Flights beyond the German border are permitted only for short-range or combat reconnaissance and for attacks upon artillery fire-control planes and captive balloons. The Luftwaffe may also carry out operations in the Bay of Heligoland, in the western declared mine areas, and in direct support of naval operations against British or French naval units.

Permission for long-range reconnaissance will be given at a later date.

6. With regard to submarine warfare, from now on only the following designations are to be used:

For submarine warfare in compliance with prize law: Warfare against merchant shipping (*Handelskrieg*).

For unrestricted submarine warfare: Naval siege of the British Isles (*Belagerung Englands zur See*).

7. British merchant vessels which are armed beyond any doubt may be attacked by submarines without warning.

Adolf Hitler

On September 25 also, Hitler sent a telegram to Tiso to thank him for the military assistance Slovakia had rendered in the war against Poland. The wire read:¹¹⁰¹

Dear Minister-President!

I feel compelled, after conclusion of the Polish campaign, to thank you, dear Minister President, the Slovak Armed Forces, and the Slovak people for the determined stand and the demonstrated comradeship in arms. You may rest assured that the German Volk and its Government greatly appreciate this attitude and fully reciprocate the proven conviction.

Adolf Hitler

At this time, Hitler awarded the Iron Cross to the Slovak Minister of Defense, General Catlos, and to two additional Slovak generals. Moreover, he granted Slovakia a strip of land in Poland.¹¹⁰²

Indeed, he was most "generous" in his dealings with obedient vassal states. He would have been as liberal in his recognition of Polish assistance had Warsaw shown greater tolerance for his desires and helped Germany in its planned aggression against Russia. However, the Poles had refused him and now, alas, they were left to bear the consequences.

On September 26, the Führer Headquarters were relocated to Berlin in a timely fashion, i.e. just after the state funeral for Fritsch had ended. Major General Erwin Rommel¹¹⁰³ had headed military operations on this first outing. A special Kommando unit had been delegated to accompany the Führer Headquarters wherever it went, and a party

from the Foreign Ministry joined it. Simultaneously, the so-called *Begleitbataillon des Führers* (“Escort Battalion of the Führer”), guard units dispatched to do duty at the Führer Headquarters and to assure his safety on the various journeys undertaken, set up temporary quarters at the barracks of the “General Göring Regiment” located in Berlin-Reinickendorf. Hitler awarded the guard units their own banner adorned with the “Führer emblem and the sovereign symbol of the Reich.”

Ribbentrop meanwhile was preparing for his visit to Moscow, whither he was to fly aboard the *Grenzmark*, to discuss further the “border and friendship treaty.” In the interim, Hitler received Birger Dahlerus once again, in the presence of Göring.¹¹⁰⁴ The Swede had spent the preceding days largely in Oslo, where a section of the British Embassy staff previously located in Berlin had retreated. Dahlerus labored to convince Hitler that it might still be possible at this point, even after the conquest of Poland, to reach an understanding with England. Apparently, Dahlerus was acting not on official instructions by the British Government since, after all, it had publicly stated that it stood determined to see this confrontation through to the end. On the other hand, the English experts—who had long had intelligence of Hitler’s absurd fancies of obtaining England’s friendship— might have deliberately set up Dahlerus to win time by dissuading Hitler from taking military steps against the Empire. Whatever may have been the case, Dahlerus’ words on the British intentions for peace were, naturally, all grist for Hitler’s mill.

By way of introduction, Dahlerus pointed out:

... that the British were such great egoists that they were now deliberating, in view of the present situation, how they could extricate themselves from the whole affair. [—] Poland was considered lost, so they took the position that it was now a matter of at least saving their own skins.

Hitler apparently felt he had to play the skeptic and retorted:

... that the worst of it was that the British had always considered everything pure bluff and immediately interpreted all restraint and patience on his part as weakness. Because he (the Führer) had for years put up with certain things from the Poles, because there was not always immediate resort to shooting, England had come to the false conclusion of mistaking for weakness the considerateness and forbearance of the Führer. The British were now trying something similar with their declaration of a three-year war. If Germany declared that this threat was a matter of indifference to her, that, too, would be considered bluffing. But they should not let themselves be

deceived about the Führer; he would soon wage war toward the West, also, in such a way as to stun the British. He had destroyed Poland in three weeks. The British should stop and think what could happen to them in three months.

The Führer then stressed the fact that he had always come out for friendship with England, but that today an abysmal hatred for England was gradually spreading among the German people. The British were now foolishly also dropping leaflets which bore witness to their absolute ignorance of the German frame of mind. Particularly when they attacked a person like the Führer, to whom Germany looked with gratitude, this produced a state of mind in the German people which made agreement with England more and more difficult. The British would by this method finally drive things so far that a rapprochement with England would be impossible because the people would not want it. If the British, instead of a three-year war, contemplated a seven-year war, or one even longer, Germany would survive it, too, and in the end turn England completely into a heap of ruins. [—]

Germany had won a victory in Poland which was without precedent in history.

In 14 days he had completely destroyed a country of 36 million inhabitants which had an army of 45 divisions, in part well equipped, and whose soldiers had fought bravely. In these circumstances, the Führer had no intention of allowing anyone to interfere in the solution of the Polish question. Moreover, the Russians also had a weighty word to say in the matter. They, too, had occupied large portions of Poland.

The Führer pointed out in this connection that in view of the campaign of lies directed against him and Germany because of an alleged German lust for conquest, he was now completely disinterested himself in all regions that did not affect Germany's interests. It was a matter of complete indifference to him whether another country appropriated territory anywhere outside the German sphere of interest.¹¹⁰⁵ [—]

Then Hitler advised the English how to proceed so that he could "join in guaranteeing the status quo in Europe:"

If the British still wanted to salvage something of Poland he could only advise them to hasten the peace discussions. Beyond this he was entirely prepared to join in guaranteeing the status quo of the rest of Europe. [—]

If the British desired peace in Europe they should make it clearly understood. Germany would in any case be prepared for it, for she needed peace in order to cultivate the newly acquired areas in the East that had formerly belonged to the German cultural sphere. This would require at least fifty years. [—]

If the British actually wanted peace, the Führer continued, they could have it in two weeks without losing face. A prerequisite for this, to be sure, was that they reconcile themselves to the fact that Poland could not again arise. Russia, too, had something to say about the matter and was not inclined to give up again the areas she occupied. [—]

The question arose as to what the British wanted in Europe. He, the Führer, was prepared to guarantee them security for their own country, as he had previously done when he had concluded the Naval Agreement with England, which he had not terminated until the British took a hostile attitude. For France he was prepared to give a guarantee forthwith. The West Wall was the unalterable western border of Germany. He had repeatedly offered guarantees for Belgium and Holland. He was prepared to incorporate all these things in a European treaty. He could only repeat once more that Germany did not wish any conquests in the west or in the Balkans; in the Balkans she had only commercial interests.

Thereupon followed an avid discussion amongst Hitler, Dahlerus, and Göring, on which person would be the best suited to approach the British Government with suggestions for renewed talks: the Duce, the Queen of the Netherlands, or perhaps the British General Ironside. Finally it was agreed to try to arrange for a meeting of intermediaries in the Netherlands. At the conclusion of the conversation, Hitler evidently felt it necessary to impart to Dahlerus threats to be communicated to London:

. . . the British could have peace if they wanted it, but they would have to hurry, for not for long would leaflets alone be dropped. [—]

The world would be amazed when once it perceived what Germany was producing in the way of airplanes, arms, ammunition, submarines, and E-boats (*Schnellboote*). So if peace was wanted, one would have to hurry somewhat. A way could then perhaps be found. At the same time, of course, the honor of a victorious army would by all means have to be respected.

After the talk, Hitler once more thought a decisive step towards a definite Anglo-German peace settlement had been made. The pending new agreement with the Soviet Union would further propel matters in this direction. Should the English again ignore his beckoning, his well-meant call for peace, then Hitler was determined to launch an attack in the West. This would give the West a healthy fright, undoubtedly. First, he would march into Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg. Then, he would deal summarily with France, the British outpost on the mainland. Nonetheless, he would be careful to spare the English themselves as far as possible, since he still wanted them to become Germany's allies in the quest for new Lebensraum in the East. Therefore, he resolved to merely drive them "back to the Thames."¹¹⁰⁶

According to Brauchitsch's testimony before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, Hitler informed the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht of his intentions to this effect in a briefing of September 27, where he scheduled the initial attack for November 12.¹¹⁰⁷

On September 27 also, Hitler received the newly appointed Turkish Ambassador R. Hüsrev Gerede, who called at the Reich Chancellery to present his credentials. Nothing was published on the contents of his conversation with the German Head of State.¹¹⁰⁸ This notwithstanding, surviving notes taken by State Secretary von Weizsäcker reported the following:¹¹⁰⁹

At today's reception of the new Turkish Ambassador, the Führer spoke at length and in a friendly manner about German-Turkish relations. To be sure, he twice brought up certain unfriendly tendencies in the Turkish press, but explained to the new Ambassador, by referring to historic events¹¹¹⁰ and certain ideological parallels, that good political and especially economic relations were advisable and rich in prospects.

On September 28, Hitler "unexpectedly" stopped over in Wilhelmshaven. The German News Bureau reported the following on the visit:¹¹¹¹

Wilhelmshaven, September 28

In Wilhelmshaven today, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, in the company of the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, unexpectedly visited the crews of German U-boats which have returned from successful operational cruises to their home ports. He thanked the officers and men, many of whom already wore the Iron Cross on their chests, for their admirable and brave service. In this context, he expressed his appreciation of their great successes. During a comradely get-together afterwards, the men of the German U-boat fleet related their voyages and successes for their Führer and Supreme Commander.

Signature of the "German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty" was scheduled for September 28 in Moscow. Negotiations had not gone as well as anticipated. This was due largely to Stalin's demand that the spheres of interest, as delineated in late August, be revised: the Soviet Union desired possession of Lithuania. In return, while previously the Vistula and San rivers had constituted the border of Germany's sphere stretching into Poland, the Reich was to be accorded all lands up to the Bug river. The Russians valued the Baltic States as a buffer in the event of a German aggression against their sovereign territory. For reasons of both foreign and domestic policy, the Soviet Government apparently thought it opportune to restrict themselves to the Belorussian and Ukrainian strips of land in Poland. Ribbentrop would have liked to see the German side claim the oil-rich territories of Drohobycz and Boryslav. Yet the only additional terrain yielded was Suwalki, between East Prussia and Lithuania.

September 28, 1939

Having obtained Hitler's consent by phone, Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterparts proceeded with the signature of the treaty.¹¹¹² It read:¹¹¹³

German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty
Moscow, September 28, 1939

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR consider it as exclusively their task, after the disintegration of the former Polish state, to re-establish peace and order in these territories and to assure to the peoples living there a peaceful life in keeping with their national character. To this end, they have agreed upon the following:

Article I

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR determine as the boundary of their respective national interests in the territory of the former Polish state the line marked on the attached map¹¹¹⁴ which shall be described in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

Article II

Both parties recognize the boundary of the respective national interests established in article I as definitive and shall reject any interference of third powers in this settlement.

Article III

The necessary reorganization of public administration will be effected in the areas west of the line specified in article I by the Government of the German Reich, in the areas east of this line by the Government of the USSR.

Article IV

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR regard this settlement as a firm foundation for a progressive development of the friendly relations between their peoples.

Article V

This treaty shall be ratified and the ratification shall be exchanged in Berlin as soon as possible. The treaty becomes effective upon signature.

Done in duplicate, in the German and Russian languages.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop

By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

In addition to the treaty, three secret protocols were also signed in Moscow that day, none of which was published.¹¹¹⁵

Confidential Protocol

The Government of the USSR shall place no obstacles in the way of Reich nationals and other persons of German descent residing in its sphere of influence if they desire to migrate to Germany or to the German sphere of influence. It agrees that such removals shall be carried out by agents of the Government of the Reich in cooperation with the competent local authorities and that the property rights of the emigrants shall be protected.¹¹¹⁶

A corresponding obligation is assumed by the Government of the German Reich in respect to the persons of Ukrainian or White Russian descent residing in its sphere of influence.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

Secret Additional Protocol

The undersigned plenipotentiaries declare the agreement of the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR upon the following:¹¹¹⁷

The Secret Additional Protocol signed on August 23, 1939,¹¹¹⁸ shall be amended in item 1 to the effect that the territory of the Lithuanian state falls to the sphere of influence of the USSR, while, on the other hand, the province of Lublin and parts of the province of Warsaw fall to the sphere of influence of Germany (cf. the map attached to the Boundary and Friendship Treaty signed today). As soon as the Government of the USSR shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory to protect its interests, the present German-Lithuanian border, for the purpose of a natural and simple boundary delineation, shall be rectified in such a way that the Lithuanian territory situation to the southwest of the line marked on the attached map falls to Germany.¹¹¹⁹

Further it is declared that the economic agreements now in force between Germany and Lithuania shall not be affected by the measures of the Soviet Union referred to above.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

Secret Additional Protocol

The undersigned plenipotentiaries, on concluding the German-Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty, have declared their agreement upon the following:

Both parties will tolerate in their territories no Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

The talks in Moscow also opened prospects for the conclusion of a large-scale economic agreement. The German press carried an exchange of correspondence by Ribbentrop and Molotov on this subject.¹¹²⁰ A joint statement of the Reich Government and the Soviet Government received explicit mention in the German press as Hitler accorded it paramount importance. He hoped this statement would greatly impress peace activists in England.

Bold-faced headlines announced the publication of this declaration, which read:¹¹²¹

After the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR have, by means of the treaty signed today, definitely settled the problems arising from the disintegration of the Polish state and have thereby created a firm foundation for a lasting peace in Eastern Europe, they mutually express their conviction that it would serve the true interest of all peoples to put an end to the state of war existing at present between Germany on the one side and England and France on the other. Both Governments will therefore direct their common efforts, jointly with other friendly powers if occasion arises, toward attaining this goal as soon as possible.

Should, however, the efforts of the two Governments remain fruitless, this would demonstrate the fact that England and France are responsible for the continuation of the war, whereupon, in case of the continuation of the war, the Governments of Germany and of the USSR shall engage in mutual consultations with regard to necessary measures.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

The author of this “joint declaration” undoubtedly was Hitler. It singularly served his aims, namely, to exert pressure on the British to conclude an early peace.

Should they prove recalcitrant once again, they would have to face joint German-Soviet action “with regard to necessary measures.” This in particular was to create the impression that the Russians would declare war on England should it fail to comply with Hitler’s persistent demands.

The further course of events clearly demonstrated how naive this notion was on the part of Hitler. The English were better able to judge the situation, and to foresee future developments, than to fall for so obvious a ploy.

On September 29, Ribbentrop returned from his trip to Moscow. Only half an hour after his arrival at Berlin-Tempelhof, Hitler called him to the Reich Chancellery for a report on his undertakings.¹¹²² Later the same day, Hitler penned a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the anniversary of the Spanish dictator’s taking office.¹¹²³

The next day, Hitler summoned the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht to the Reich Chancellery. He also received the commanders of the units deployed in the Polish campaign, upon whom he bestowed the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.¹¹²⁴

On September 30 also, Hitler signed another directive for the conduct of the war. It concerned mainly the ramifications of the

conclusion of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty regarding the situation inside Poland and read:¹¹²⁵

Directive No. 5 for the Conduct of the War

1. After concluding the Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, with Russia, it is intended to regulate the political organization of the former Polish territories within the German sphere of interest according to the following guiding principles:

a. The new political frontier of the Reich in the East will, in general, include the former German-colonized area and, in addition, those territories which are especially valuable for reasons of military expediency, war economy, or communications. The final demarcation line has not yet been settled in detail. I request that suggestions on this subject be submitted to me through the OKW.

b. The present line of demarcation (Prissa-Narew-Vistula-San) will be constantly strengthened as a military security belt towards the East. The required garrisons are also to be permanently located beyond the German political frontier. I likewise request suggestions regarding location of this security line in detail, to be submitted to me through the OKW.

c. The line laid down according to the Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty, the details of which are expected to be settled by a supplementary protocol, is to be considered the limit of the German sphere of interest as far as Russia is concerned.

d. I myself shall set up the political organization of the territory between this line and the new political boundary of the German Reich.

2. First of all, the entire territory of the former Polish state, up to the line established in the Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty and including the Suwalki triangle, will be organized under a Military Government controlled by the Commander in Chief, Army. I request the Commander in Chief, Army to submit to me at an early date the measures required for bringing about the following:

a. The pacification of the territories to be occupied. The time will be settled after the conclusion of the Moscow agreements.

b. The occupation of the security line along the former line of demarcation.

c. The occupation of the entire territory by occupation troops. This mission is to be accomplished east of the military security line with minimum forces after pacification has been completed. The Commander in Chief, Air will leave in the East the forces required by the Command in Chief, Army for this mission.

d. The subdivision of the military government territory into districts or else the extension of existing military government districts to include the newly acquired territories.

3. On the basis of the latest political developments, the troops intended for East Prussia in accordance with Directive No. 4, paragraph 4, last sentence, do not need to be held in readiness.

4. The restrictions hitherto prevailing for naval warfare against France are cancelled. The war at sea is to be fought against France just as against Britain.

The war against merchant shipping is, on the whole, to be fought according to prize law, with the following exceptions: Merchantmen and troopships recognized beyond doubt as hostile may be attacked without warning. The same applies to ships sailing without lights in the waters around the British Isles.

Armed force is to be employed against merchantmen which use their radio transmitters when stopped.

As before, no attacks are to be made upon passenger vessels or large steamships that appear to be carrying passengers in large numbers as well as goods.

5. For air warfare in the West the restrictions in force until now will remain in effect. Flights across the Reich border are permitted for short-range and combat reconnaissance, for attacks upon artillery fire-control planes and captive balloons, and, to a limited degree, for long-range reconnaissance for the Commander in Chief, Air. The Army's requests for long-range reconnaissance are to be handled through direct cooperation between Army and Luftwaffe.

Furthermore, the Luftwaffe is authorized to carry out offensive actions in the North Sea against British and French naval forces at sea, and to carry on the war against merchant shipping according to prize law.

6. The orders under paragraphs 4 and 5 will replace paragraphs 5b, 5c, and 7 of Directive No. 4 for the Conduct of the War.

Adolf Hitler

On September 30 also, Hitler received Chvalkovsky, now serving as the envoy of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, for talks at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹²⁶ Furthermore, Hitler appointed Lieutenant Commander Captain von Puttkammer Adjutant with the War Navy, effective as of October 1, 1939.¹¹²⁷

On October 1, Hitler once more found occasion to stage an evening gala reception at the Reich Chancellery, since Ciano had arrived in the Reich capital earlier that afternoon. The Italian Foreign Minister had departed from Berlin on August 13, "completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things."¹¹²⁸ Apparently, his disgust had faded by the time Ribbentrop informed him on September 30 that Hitler requested to see either Mussolini or him. At once, Ciano rushed to heed Hitler's summons.

Barely one hour after his train had pulled into the capital, Ciano found himself at the Chancellery. The meeting which began at 6:45 p.m. lasted nearly two-and-a-half hours, according to the German protocol.¹¹²⁹ As Ciano recorded, Hitler's customary monologue occupied the better part of the first two hours.¹¹³⁰ Although he said "nothing new"—as Schmidt, who was present in his capacity as interpreter, later recalled¹¹³¹—Hitler displayed his command of figures in order to



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Hitler developing fantastic notions of a glorious future for Germany while speaking before an audience gathered at the new Reich Chancellery. From left to right: Reich Press Chief Dietrich, Hitler, General Bodenschatz, Goebbels, Lammers, Hess, and Hanke.

Photo: Domarus archives



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Hitler—dashingly clad in a gray leather coat at the victory parade of the Eighth Army along the Ujazdowski Alley in downtown Warsaw.

Photo: Domarus archives

impress Ciano. In an endless sequence he produced the precise numbers of prisoners of war taken; of plunder obtained; of dead and wounded in the Polish campaign; of enemy planes downed; of Polish ships sunk. Hitler did not fail to make an impression on Ciano, who recapitulated this particular encounter with the Führer in the following manner:

I found Hitler very serene. At Salzburg the inner struggle of this man, decided upon action but not yet sure of his means and of his calculations, was apparent. Now, on the other hand, he seems absolutely sure of himself. The test he has met has given him confidence for future tests. He was wearing a green-gray jacket with his usual black trousers. His face bore traces of recent fatigue, but this was not reflected in the alertness of his mind.

Hitler spoke for almost two hours and cited figure after figure without referring to a single note. With respect to Italy, his attitude was the same as before. What is past is past. From now on he looks to the future and wants to have us with him. But I must say that all our suggestions as to military collaboration have been discussed quite openly. What most impressed me is his confidence in ultimate victory. Either he is under hallucinations, or he really is a genius. He outlines plans of action and cites dates with an assurance that does not admit contradiction.

Ciano left Berlin at noon on October 2. Hitler sent Keitel to bid Ciano farewell at the train.¹¹³²

German troops occupied Warsaw on October 1 and October 2. In celebration Hitler ordered church bells to ring throughout the Reich from noon to 1:00 p.m. daily for the next seven days.¹¹³³

On October 5, Hitler himself journeyed to Warsaw to attend the victory parade there. It was the first and last such celebration which Hitler ordered in the capital city of a conquered country in the course of the Second World War. At 11:30 a.m., Hitler landed at the Kielce airport. There a delegation greeted him consisting of Colonel General von Rundstedt and the generals Blaskowitz and von Reichenau. The Eighth Army troop parade filed through the Ujazdowski Avenue, in Warsaw's diplomats' quarter, for two hours. Arms extended in greeting, they passed by in front of their Supreme Commander, who sported a dark leather coat on this occasion.

In the afternoon, Hitler toured the Belvedere Castle where Marshal Pilsudski had lived until his death. The official report detailed:¹¹³⁴

A German Wehrmacht guard of honor stands at the entrance to the Castle. The Führer spends a few minutes in the office of the great deceased who had wrought for his people a peace which the men who seized power upon his demise so shamefully betrayed.

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Immediately after touring the Castle, Hitler returned to Berlin. On arrival, he penned the following proclamation:¹¹³⁵

Berlin, October 5, 1939

Soldiers of the Wehrmacht in the East!

On September 1, on my orders, you set out to defend the Reich against the Polish attack. In exemplary comradeship in arms between the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Navy, you have fulfilled your mission. You have fought courageously and bravely.

Today, I was able to greet the troops engaged against a fortified Warsaw. This day brings to an end a battle which is testimony to the best of German soldiery.

The German Volk proudly joins me in thanking you. Thanks to you, the nation looks once more to its Wehrmacht and leadership with unshakeable faith.

We honor our fallen who gave their lives, as did the two million dead of the World War, so that Germany might live. Beneath the banners flying high and proudly throughout the German lands, we stand closer together than ever before and tie the straps of our helmets tighter.

I know that you are prepared for anything in your belief in Germany.

Adolf Hitler

On October 6, the Reichstag, which Hitler had summoned in celebration of the military victory in Poland, convened. Now that the Wehrmacht had gloriously concluded the campaign, Hitler felt confident he could step before the Reichstag deputies without fear of their reaction to the opening of the war and, above all, of their questions regarding the British declaration of war.

Moreover, Hitler intended to take advantage of the occasion to announce his new "generous offer of peace" publicly before the Reichstag. After all, he reasoned, why had England declared war on Germany? Solely because of Poland, was it not so? Well, Poland no longer existed. Germany and Russia had shared in the spoils. There was no longer a reason for this ludicrous state of war to exist between the Reich and England. He was willing and ready to forget.

These and similar thoughts apparently compelled Hitler forward at this time, as the further course of events clearly demonstrated. His ideas of the English and his knowledge of their sense of honor and determination to fight were so restricted that he actually believed they would contemplate such dishonorable conduct. The war between Germany and Britain had barely started, the English had not yet been beaten in even one encounter, and already Hitler thought they were so desperate as to abandon their obligations to Poland and to grasp

eagerly his hand extended in friendship. Hitler did not stand alone in self-deception. Even in 1941, one of the leading members of the German resistance movement, Carl Goerdeler, the former Mayor of Leipzig, who sought to succeed Hitler after his death, was to submit similar proposals for British consideration. Goerdeler even demanded a return of Germany's colonies in his advances to London.¹¹³⁶

Hitler might well have been less confident in his speech of October 6 had he taken seriously the reaction his proposals, relayed to London by Dahlerus, had elicited in Great Britain. As early as October 1, in a radio broadcast, Churchill had put it in no uncertain terms:¹¹³⁷

Directions have been given by the Government to prepare for a war of at least three years. That does not mean that victory may not be gained in a shorter time. How soon it will be gained depends upon how long Herr Hitler and his group of wicked men, whose hands are stained with blood and soiled with corruption, can keep their grip upon the docile, unhappy German people.

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough. [—]

Our desire to see an unarmed world was proclaimed as the proof of our decay. Now we have begun. Now we are going on. Now, with the help of God, and with the conviction that we are the defenders of civilization and freedom, we are going to persevere to the end.

After all, Great Britain and France together are eighty-five millions, even in their homelands alone. They are united in their cause; they are convinced of their duty. Nazidom, with all its tyrannical power, controls no more than that. They, too, have eighty-five millions; but of these at least sixteen millions are newly conquered Czechs, Slovakians and Austrians, who are writhing under their cruel yoke and have to be held down by main force.

We have other resources. We have the oceans, and with the oceans the assurance that we can bring the vast latent power of the British and French Empires to bear upon the decisive points. We have the freely given ardent support of the twenty millions of British citizens in the self-governing Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. We have, I believe, the heart and the moral conviction of India on our side. We believe we are entitled to the respect and good will of the world, and particularly of the United States.

These statements were only empty phrases in the eyes of Hitler. They constituted nothing other than "the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers."¹¹³⁸

Hitler began his speech before the Reichstag on October 6 in the following manner:¹¹³⁹

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Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In a most fateful hour, my Deputies, you met here on September 1 of this year as the representatives of the German Volk. At the time, I had to inform you of the difficult decisions forced on me by the intransigent, provocative attitude of a certain state.

Five weeks have passed since. When I asked you to come here once more today, I did so in order to render account of the past and to afford you the necessary insight into the present situation and the future, insofar as this is possible.

For two days now, the flags and symbols of our new Reich have decorated our cities, markets, and villages. With bells ringing, the German Volk celebrates this great victory, which, in its own way, is unique in history. After all, a state of thirty-six million inhabitants stood up against us, with an army of fifty infantry and cavalry divisions. Its goals were far-reaching ones, its confidence in the destruction of the German Reich was seen as a matter of course.

Only eight days after the beginning of this war, the dice fell. Wherever Polish troops clashed with German units, they were either repelled or beaten. The daring structure of Poland's offensive strategy against German Reich territory pitifully collapsed after the first forty-eight hours of the campaign. After death-defying attacks and unrivaled marches, the German divisions—the Luftwaffe, Panzer force, and units of the Navy—took the initiative. Not for one moment could it be wrestled from them again. After only fourteen days, the majority of the Polish Army had either dispersed, had been taken prisoner, or had been encircled. In this period, the German armies had covered distances and occupied territories whose mastering, twenty-five years ago, had necessitated more than fourteen months.

After these introductory comments, Hitler turned his attention to the resistance mounted in the cities of Warsaw, Modlin, and Hela. The opposition to the German occupation had lasted well into the month of October, in spite of Hitler's assurances that operations had been brought to a "successful conclusion" by September 18. Understandably, this greatly irritated him. He began to claim that this resistance had been possible due solely to his "sense of responsibility" toward the civilian population in Poland and toward the German soldier. Had he so desired, Warsaw could have been in German hands as early as September 10. Hitler argued:

While a number of particularly spirited newspaper strategists elsewhere in the world have sought to portray the speed of this campaign as a disappointment for Germany, we all nonetheless know that, to date, there has hardly been a greater achievement testifying to such high soldiery recorded in the history of war. That remnants of the Polish armies were able to hold on until October 1 in Warsaw, Modlin, and Hela, was not a result of their capabilities, but of our cool prudence and our sense of responsibility.

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I forbid the sacrifice of more men than absolutely necessary. This means: I consciously freed the German leadership in the war of the view, which was still prevalent in the World War, that, for reasons of prestige, certain tasks have to be solved within a certain time at all costs. What absolutely needs to be done will be done, irrespective of sacrifice. What can be done without, will remain undone.

It would not have been a problem for us to break the resistance in Warsaw by September 10 or September 12, as we did break it from September 25 to September 27. For one thing, I sought to spare the lives of Germans. Second, I still cherished the hope, though it was a deceptive one, that, for once, a sense of responsibility and reason would prevail over this irresponsible madness on the Polish side.

On a small scale, the same drama repeated itself here, which we had already been forced to witness before to a larger extent. The attempt to convince the person responsible for the leadership of the Polish troops—insofar as he even existed—of the senselessness, the craziness, of resistance in a city of millions, failed. A Generalissimo, who himself took to flight in a less-than-glorious fashion, forced on the capital of his country a resistance which could only lead to its destruction.

When it had been realized that the fortifications would not withstand a German assault, the entire city was transformed into a fortress, with barricades crisscrossing it. Batteries took up position in all squares, all streets, and all courtyards. Thousands of machinegun hideouts were mounted and the citizens were called on to take part in the fighting. Out of pity for the women and children, I offered the ruling powers in Warsaw to permit at least the civilian population to evacuate the city. I had hostilities suspended and the necessary exit routes secured. And we all waited in vain for a parliamentarian to appear, as we had waited in vain for a Polish negotiator at the end of August. The proud Polish commandant of the city did not even honor us with a reply.

I had the deadlines extended just in case. I instructed bombers and heavy artillery to attack only purely military objects. I repeated my request. It again was futile. I then offered not to shell one part of the city, Praga, and instead to reserve it for the civilian population, so that it might have the opportunity to withdraw there. The Poles again showed their contempt for this suggestion. Twice I made an effort to remove the international colony from the city. Only after encountering numerous difficulties, this attempt finally succeeded, although, in the case of the Russians, only at the last minute.

I then ordered the attack begun on September 25. The same defenders, who had first felt it was beneath their dignity to even consider these humanitarian proposals, then swiftly shifted their ground. On September 25, the German attack began, and on September 27, they capitulated.

With over 120,000 men, they did not have the courage—as our German General Litzmann once had lying before Brzeziny with much inferior forces—to make a daring sortie. Instead, they chose to lay down their arms. One should not make a comparison between this and Alcázar.¹¹⁴⁰ There, for weeks, the Spanish heroes heroically braved heavy attacks and rightly gained

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immortality thereby. Here, however, a great city was unscrupulously left to destruction only to capitulate after forty-eight hours. While the individual Polish soldier fought bravely in some locations, his leadership can only be described, from top to bottom, as irresponsible, unscrupulous, and incompetent. Outside of Hela, I ordered the sacrifice of not a single man without thorough preparation. There, too, the city surrendered only after the German attack had finally been announced and had actually begun.

I am making these statements, my Deputies, to preclude the creation of historic myths. For, if this campaign should ever generate such a myth, then this myth should only tell the story of the German musketeer who, both in the offensive and on the march, has added yet another page to his own eternal, glorious history. This myth should form around the heavy weaponry which, after exertions beyond words, came to the rescue of this infantry. Worthy of this myth also are the black-clad men (*schwarze Männer*) of our Panzer forces whose bold determination, without regard to the superior strength and resistance [of the enemy], brought the attack up to the front time and time again. Finally, this myth should glorify our airmen who, undaunted by death, knew that every downing which did not kill them in the air would lead to a terrible massacre on the ground. Nevertheless, they persevered steadfastly and persistently, attacking with bombs and machine guns when ordered to do so and when a target came into view. The same holds true for our U-boat heroes.

When, within four weeks, a state of thirty-six million inhabitants and of such military force is completely destroyed, and when, during this period, the victor does not experience a single setback, then this is evidence not of fortune's favor, but of the most excellent training, the best leadership, and the most death-defying valor.

German soldiery has once more firmly clasped the laurel wreath, which had been craftily snatched from the German soldier in 1918 and presses it onto its head. In profound gratitude and deeply moved, we all stand before the many unknown and indescribably brave men of our German Volk. For the first time, they have taken their place, coming from all of the Gaus of Greater Germany. The blood shed together will bind them even more closely together than any construction of constitutional law ever could.

The consciousness of the strength of our Wehrmacht fills all of us with self-assured calm since it has proven its power not only in the attack, but also in the retaining of what has been acquired. The excellent training of the individual officer and man has stood the test to the utmost. The exceedingly low casualty figures are to be ascribed to this. While individually painful, the losses in sum are far below what we believed we had to expect. And yet the casualty total does not draw an accurate picture of the toughness of the individual battle. After all, there are regiments and divisions whose blood sacrifice was heavy because either superior Polish units attacked them or they encountered them in the course of their own attack.

From the rapid succession of battles and struggles, I will cite only two episodes as examples for many: Just as the divisions of the Army of General von Blaskowitz were moving in echelon against Warsaw along the left flank

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of the Army of General von Reichenau, who was charging in the direction of the Weichsel river, with the mission of repulsing the attack of the Central Polish Army on his flank, its full thrust suddenly hit the marching armies of General von Blaskowitz at a moment when the Polish armies were assumed to be retreating to the Weichsel river. This was a desperate attempt by the Poles to break out of the ring surrounding them. Four Polish divisions and several cavalry units threw themselves against the German lines formed by one active German division spread out along a front of nearly thirty kilometers. In spite of the enemy outnumbering it five to one, even six to one, and in spite of the great weariness of the troops, who had been fighting and marching for days, this division countered the attack. At several points, it repulsed the enemy in bloody hand-to-hand fighting. It neither yielded nor retreated until the necessary reinforcements had been brought up. And while enemy radio was already triumphantly disseminating news of a breakthrough at Lodz, the division's general, with his shot-apart arm in splints, reported to me on the course of the attack, on the prevention of the breakthrough, and on the brave conduct of his soldiers. Of course, the losses here were great.

Together with small additional units, a German Landwehr division had the task of forcing the Poles into the northern section of the Corridor, to take Gdingen and to advance in the direction of the Hela peninsula. Facing this Landwehr division were Polish elite forces, shore-based naval troops, schools of officer cadets and non-commissioned officers, sailors, artillery, and cavalry.

With calm resolve, this German Landwehr division approached the fulfillment of its mission, even though this meant facing a numerically far superior opponent. Within the next few days, the Poles were forced to retreat from one position to the next: 12,600 prisoners were taken, Gdingen was liberated, Oxhoeft was taken by storm, another 4,700 men were pushed back to the Hela peninsula and surrounded. The scene which met one's eyes as the prisoners marched off was truly touching: there stood the victors, mostly elderly men with medals of the Great War on their chests, and past them marched the columns of prisoners of war, many of them young men between twenty and twenty-eight years of age.

I ask you to rise, as I now proceed to announce the number of our dead and wounded. While their numbers are but one-twentieth of the figure which we believed we had to anticipate at the beginning of this campaign—thanks to the training of the troops, thanks to the effectiveness of our weaponry, and thanks to the leadership of our units—we should not forget that every single one of those who gave their lives here has sacrificed the greatest good for his Volk and our Reich which a man can give his people.

According to the figures of September 30, 1939, which cannot be expected to be greatly altered subsequently, casualties in the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, officers included, amount to: 10,572 fallen on the battlefield; 30,322 wounded; 3,409 men missing. Of those missing in action, regrettably, we must consider a part as having been massacred or killed.

We owe gratitude to those who sacrificed themselves during the campaign in Poland, care to the wounded, sympathy and assistance to their families.

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The campaign in Poland has come to an end with the fall of the fortresses of Warsaw and Modlin, and the surrender of Hela. The protection of the country against stray marauders, bands of robbers, and single terrorists, is being pursued with determination. The outcome of the battle was the destruction of all Polish armies. This led to the dissolution of the state. 694,000 prisoners have set out on the march to Berlin.¹¹⁴¹ The amount of the captured material cannot yet be ascertained.

Ever since the outbreak of the war, the German Wehrmacht has been standing in calm readiness in the West also, awaiting the enemy. The Reich Navy has done its duty in the battle for the Westerplatte, Gdingen, Oxhoeft, and Hela; in the securing of the Baltic Sea and of the Bay of Heligoland. Our U-boats meanwhile are fighting in a manner worthy of the unforgotten heroes of yesterday.

In view of the historically unique collapse of this so-called body politic, the question no doubt arises for everyone how such a development could come about. The cradle for the Polish state stood at Versailles. Not Poles, but Germans and Russians, made the immeasurable blood sacrifice from which this entity was born. What had proven unfit for life centuries before was now artificially inseminated by a German state leadership, equally unfit for life, in the year 1916, and, no less artificially, was born in 1920.

After this jab at the "German state leadership" of 1916, so infinitely inferior to his own, Hitler turned his attention to the Polish economy in order to vent his anger at the demonstrated inability and arrogance of the Poles. This subject led him to a discussion of the guarantee England had extended to Poland.

No, to extend a guarantee to this state and this state leadership in the manner this was done, could only lead to the greatest of misfortunes. Neither the Polish government, the clique propping it up, nor the people of this Polish state, were capable of assessing the extent of the obligation half of Europe undertook on their behalf. The conduct of the Polish government in the period from April to August of last year was based, on the one hand, on this passion that had been incited, and, on the other hand, on the sense of the security that had been guaranteed the Poles under all circumstances. The reaction to my proposals for pacification also was caused by this.

The government rejected these proposals because it felt that public opinion backed it, perhaps even urged it on. And public opinion backed it and urged it on in this direction because the government did not set the public right and, above all, because it felt sufficiently secure externally at every stage. All this had to lead to an increase in frightful acts of terror against ethnic Germans, to the rejection of all settlement proposals, and, finally, to ever greater incursions into Reich territory.

Given such a mentality, it was understandable that German forbearance was seen as weakness, i.e. that every time Germany yielded this was seen as proof of the opportunity of further forays. The warnings issued to the Polish Government to refrain from harassing Danzig with further ultimatums and,

above all, from strangling the city economically in the long run, did not lead to an easing of the situation. To the contrary, it led to the city being cut off from traffic. The warning to finally stop, that is to counter, the eternal shootings, abuse, and torment of ethnic Germans, led only to an increase in gruesome acts, and to an aggravation of the appeals and inflammatory speeches by the Polish voivodes¹¹⁴² and military rulers. A general mobilization was the answer to the German proposals for arriving, at the last minute, at an acceptable and reasonable settlement. The German request to send a negotiator—in accordance with a suggestion made by England—was not complied with. On the second day, a response arrived in the form of a most injurious declaration.

Under the circumstances, it was clear that, in the event of further attacks on Reich territory, Germany's patience was bound to end. What the Poles mistakenly interpreted as weakness was in reality our sense of responsibility and my will to arrive at an understanding, if this was still possible. However, since they believed that this patience and forbearance, this weakness, allowed them everything, there was no choice but to instruct them of this error and to strike back at them with the same weaponry they employed themselves over the last years. Under the impact of these strikes, this state disintegrated within a few weeks, and was swept away. One of the most nonsensical deeds of Versailles was thus disposed of.

That a community of interests with Russia ensued from this German action was due not only to the similarity of the problems regarding both states, but also to the similarity of the conclusions both states arrived at in the course of reworking their relations with one another.

In my speech at Danzig, I already declared that organizational principles different from our German ones govern Russia. However, since Herr Stalin no longer views these Soviet-Russian principles as an impediment to entering into friendly relations with states of different convictions, National Socialist Germany can no longer see any reason for employing a different means of assessment. Soviet-Russia is Soviet-Russia, National Socialist Germany is National Socialist Germany. One thing is certain: the minute both states agree to respect their different regimes and their respective principles, then there is no longer any cause for animosity to exist between them.

In long periods of history, it has been proven that the peoples of these two greatest states within Europe were the happiest when they lived in friendship with one another. The Great War in which Germany and Russia once struggled against one another has become the misfortune of both countries. It is understandable when the capitalist states of the West today have a vested interest in pitting these two states and their principles against each other, if possible. To this end, they would be willing to regard Soviet Russia as sufficiently presentable, of course, to enter into advantageous military alliances with it. And yet they regard it as perfidious if their most honorable advances are rejected, and if instead those two powers, which have all the more cause to be interested in peaceful cooperation, approach one another to expand their economic relations and thereby to pursue the happiness of their peoples.

Speaking before the Reichstag one month ago, I already declared that concluding the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact represented a decisive change for German foreign policy in general. The new Boundary and Friendship Treaty concluded between Germany and Russia will secure not only peace for both states, but also render possible a happy, lasting cooperation.¹¹⁴³

Germany and Russia will jointly divorce one of the most dangerous spots of Europe of its threatening character. In this area, they will contribute to the welfare of the human beings living there, and thereby make a contribution to European peace. If certain circles today see in this cause to hope for the ready defeat of Russia or Germany, then allow me to respond: for many years, German foreign policy goals have been credited with characteristics which could only spring from the mentality of a high school student. At a moment when Germany is struggling to consolidate a Lebensraum which encompasses little more than 100,000 square kilometers, saucy newspaper journalists in other states, which rule forty million square kilometers, claim that Germany strives for world supremacy in this struggle. The German-Russian agreements should necessarily have an enormously calming effect on these disquieted advocates of world freedom. For these agreements present authentic proof that allegations of Germany's drive towards the Ural Mountains, the Ukraine, Rumania, and so on, are but the outgrowth of an overwrought Martian fantasy (*Marsphantasie*). In one respect the resolution of Germany remains unchangeable, namely: to bring about peaceful, stable, and hence tolerable conditions also in the East of our Reich. And here especially German and Soviet Russian interests and wishes are completely compatible.

Both states have resolved not to allow problematic situations to arise between them which might bear within them the seeds of internal unrest and, therefore, of external disruptions, or which might detrimentally effect the relationship between these two great powers. Germany and Soviet Russia have clearly delineated their respective spheres of interests. Each has resolved to see to peace and order in its part of the world and to prevent everything which might possibly be to the detriment of its partner.

The goals and tasks resulting from the disintegration of the Polish state are approximately the following, insofar as the German sphere of interest is concerned:

1. The establishment of a Reich frontier which renders justice to the historic, ethnographic, and economic conditions.

2. The pacification of the entire area in the service of the establishment of a tolerable form of law and order.

3. The absolute guarantee of security not only for Reich territory, but for its entire sphere of interest.

4. A new order, a new structuring of economic life and traffic there, and hence of cultural and civilized development.

5. As the most important task, however: a new ordering of ethnographic relations, which means a resettlement of the nationalities so that, after the conclusion of this development, better lines of demarcation are given than is the case today.

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In this sense, this is not a problem restricted solely to this area. It is a task going far beyond this. For all of Eastern Europe and its southeastern part are filled with intolerable splinters of German ethnic groups. In this we see a reason and a cause of persistent international friction. In the age of the principle of nationalities and of racial thought (*Rassegedanken*), it is utopian to believe that these members of a superior people could be assimilated without further ado.

And hence it is one of the missions of a farseeing new order of European life to see to these resettlements in order to diffuse at least part of the potential for conflict in Europe. Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have agreed to assist each other in this. The German Reich Government will therefore not allow the developing Polish remnant-state (*Reststaat*) to irritate the Reich or to become an irritant in the relations between the German Reich and Soviet Russia.

As Germany and Soviet Russia undertake this redevelopment project, both states can rightly point out that the attempt to resolve this problem with the methods of Versailles has completely failed. And it had to fail since these tasks cannot be resolved at a green table or through simple directives. Most of the statesmen who gave their opinion on this most complicated matter at Versailles did not have any training in history; indeed, often they did not even have the faintest idea of the essence of the task that had been posed.

These statements brought Hitler to his favorite topic: the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations.

They bore no responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Recognition that their work was not correct was of no significance, as there was no way of obtaining an actual revision in practice. While the Versailles Treaty provided for the possibility of such revisions, all efforts to obtain revisions failed in reality. They had to fail all the more since the League of Nations, as the highest authority in this instance, ceased to have the right to carry through such a procedure. Once America declined to sanction the Peace Treaty of Versailles or to so much as join the League of Nations, and other peoples soon followed suit, as they no longer regarded their presence in this group as compatible with the interests of their countries, this association deteriorated more and more, to become a circle for those with an interest in the Diktat of Versailles.

The fact remains that none of the revisions deemed necessary from the outset was ever carried through by the League of Nations. Now it is becoming a custom to consider a government on the run still existent, even if it has but three members, so long as these three have brought enough money not to become a financial burden for the democratic host countries. It is to be assumed that the League of Nations will bravely continue to exist even if the nations united therein number only two. Perhaps even one alone would suffice! In accordance with the statutes of this union, any revision of the provisions of Versailles would be left to the judgment of this illustrious association, or in other words, would be impossible for all practical purposes.

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Now, the League of Nations does not live, but is something dead, while the concerned peoples are not dead, but live. And they will continue to pursue their vital interests even if the League of Nations is incapable of seeing, comprehending, or considering them.

Hence National Socialism is not a phenomenon whose growth in Germany can be attributed to its mischievous plan to hinder the League of Nations in its attempts at revision, but a Movement which came into being because for fifteen years there has been no revision of the suppression of the most natural human and ethnic rights of a great nation. And, for my part, I won't stand for foreign statesmen stepping up to declare I went back on my word because I saw to this revision!¹¹⁴⁴ To the contrary, I gave the German Volk my word to eliminate the Treaty of Versailles and to restore to a great nation its natural right to life.

The extent to which I secured this right to life is a modest one. When forty-six million Englishmen on the Isles appropriate for themselves the right to reign over forty million square kilometers of this earth, then it is not an injustice when eighty-two million Germans demand the right to live on 800,000 square kilometers, to tend the land and to ply a trade. Further it is not wrong for them to demand restitution of colonial possessions which were once their own and which they did not take from others by theft and war, but which they legally purchased, bartered in, or obtained through entering into contracts.

And, moreover, in all the demands I make I try to obtain the desired revisions by negotiation. I have always declined, however, to submit Germany's vital interests as a most obliging plea to the jurisdiction of some form of inappropriate international consortium.¹¹⁴⁵ As little as I presume Great Britain must plead for respect to be accorded its vital interests, one should not expect this of National Socialist Germany.

I feel compelled to note here and to pronounce in the most solemn manner that I have always limited Germany's demands. In every instance where I felt the vital rights of my Volk threatened, I counseled the Volk to exercise restraint and to relinquish.

These eighty million must live somewhere, however. The Treaty of Versailles has not been able to eradicate this fact of life: while it dissolved states in the most senseless of manners, tore apart economic units, severed traffic lanes, etc., the peoples, the living substance of flesh and blood, still exist and will continue to exist in the future.

There is no denying that since the German Volk has received and realized its resurrection through National Socialism, a clarification of German relations to the surrounding world has taken place to a high degree.

The insecurity burdening the coexistence of peoples is not the result of German demands, but rather has resulted from the widely publicized accusations in the so-called democracies. The German demands presented were concrete and precise in nature. They were fulfilled, thanks not to the League of Nations in Geneva, but to the dynamics of natural evolution. At no time did the Reich's foreign policy which I conducted aim at anything but the securing of existence and hence life for the German Volk, to eliminate the

injustice and insanity of this Treaty which not only destroyed Germany economically, but which equally brought ruin to the victorious nations.

And, besides this, the entire work aimed at the rebuilding of the Reich was inwardly oriented. Yearning for peace was greater in no other country of the world, was no more vibrant than within the German Volk. Mankind should rejoice, not despair, that I succeeded in eliminating in a peaceful manner the most insane impossibilities of the Treaty of Versailles, and cast off the burdens foreign statesmen had imposed on Germany. That this process of elimination may have been a painful one for certain interest lobbies is understandable. And all the greater yet is the merit earned in peacefully arriving at this new order in all instances, with the sole exception of the latest, and without bloodshed. The latest revision could well have been equally bloodless had not the two circumstances I mentioned earlier come to pass and had they not brought about the contrary.

To blame for this are primarily those who knew not how to rejoice in the earlier peaceful revisions, but to the contrary lamented having to witness the peaceful rebuilding of a new Central Europe, a Central Europe which increasingly could give its inhabitants work and bread once more.

I mentioned the intent of the Reich Government to lend clarity to its relations with our neighbors earlier. And here I may cite a few facts which cannot be erased by the lies spread throughout the world by international press scribblers.

In an effort to underline his unparalleled love for peace, Hitler now embarked on a “brief” enumeration of those states which he had, for the time being, graciously allowed to continue to exist:

1. Germany has entered into non-aggression pacts with the Baltic States. German interests there are of an exclusively economic nature.

2. Germany has never had conflicts of interests with the Nordic States, not even in the past. There have never been any bones of contention and the same holds true today. Germany offered to enter into non-aggression pacts with Sweden and Norway; they refused simply because they felt no need to in the absence of any real threat.¹¹⁴⁶

3. In its relations to Denmark, Germany has not drawn any consequences from the cession of territory dictated in the Treaty of Versailles. Instead, it has established loyal and friendly relations with Denmark. We have not demanded a revision, but instead have entered into a non-aggression pact with Denmark. Relations with this state are unalterably based on loyal and friendly cooperation.

4. The new Reich has endeavored to continue friendship with Holland. It has neither taken up any differences from the past nor created new differences.

5. Immediately after taking over the affairs of the state, I labored to fashion relations with Belgium in a friendly manner. I abstained from revision and from expressing as much as a desire for revision. The Reich has not made any demands that might be construed by Belgium as a threat of any kind.

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6. Germany assumes the same stance toward Switzerland. The Reich Government has not allowed any doubts as to its desire for a loyal form of relations between the two states. And it has never complained about any aspect of relations between the two countries.

7. Immediately after concluding the Anschluss, I informed Yugoslavia that hereafter Germany regarded the border with this state as unchangeable. We wished only to live in peace and friendship with this state.

8. For many years traditional bonds of close and heartfelt friendship have tied us to Hungary. Here also the borders are unchangeable.

9. Slovakia itself addressed Germany with its desire for assistance after the foundation of its state. The Reich respects Slovakia's independence and shall not infringe upon it. Yet it was not only with these states that Germany sought to clarify and regulate relations, which had partially suffered great strain due to the imposition of the Treaty of Versailles, but also with the great powers.

In concert with the Duce, I have brought about a change in the relations between the Reich and Italy. Both have solemnly recognized the borders separating the two empires as unchangeable. The potential for conflicts of interest of a territorial nature was eliminated. Between the two foes of the World War a heartfelt friendship has developed in the meantime. A normalization of relations was supplemented by the subsequent conclusion of a pact, based on *weltanschaulich* and political principles, which has evolved into a strong influence on cooperation in Europe.

Above all, I undertook to make clear our relationship with France, to render it bearable for both nations. As much as possible, I clarified and specified the German demands. I have not distanced myself from this clarification. The return of the Saar territory was the only demand which I saw as essential for the creation of prerequisites for a German-French understanding. After France itself undertook to solve this problem in a loyal manner, all other demands were rendered obsolete. No further demands exist and no additional demands shall ever be made.

In other words: I have declined even to bring up the question of Alsace-Lorraine, not because I was forced to do so, but because this affair is not a problem which should trouble German-French relations. I accepted the 1919 settlement. I declined to let a problem drive us into a bloody war, a question which stands in no relation to Germany's vital interests. The only thing it is fit for is to plunge every other generation into a renewed fruitless war. France is aware of this. It is simply impossible for a French statesman to rise up now and to declare that, at one point or another, I made any demands on France which could not be reconciled with France's honor and its interests.

Instead of placing demands on France, I have addressed to it the one wish to let us forget about the animosity of the past once and for all. I wished our two nations with their great, historic past to find the way to one another once more. I have labored to bring about a change in the German Volk, to eradicate even the thought of an inevitable archenemy. Instead, I sought to instill in the German Volk respect for the great attainments of the French people, for their history, and for the attainments of the French armed forces, which every German soldier highly respects.

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No less were my endeavors to obtain a German-English understanding, yes, going further yet, to strive for friendship between Germany and England. Never, and in no instance, have I ever really stood in the way of British interests. Only too often, regrettably, I was forced to ward off British intervention in German interests, even in instances where England's interests were not concerned in the least.

I have come to almost regard it as the mission of my life to bring both peoples closer together, not only in terms of reason, but in terms of sentiment above all. The German Volk willingly followed my lead in this. That I did not succeed in this is to be attributed to a hostility, one I personally was greatly shaken by, of some of the British statesmen and journalists. They had few qualms about openly proclaiming their sole ambition to engage Germany in another war at the first opportune occasion. The reasons for this we fail to understand.

The less these men have factual reasons for this undertaking, the more they resort to empty phrases to improvise a motivation supposedly justifying their actions. Yet, on this day still, it is my conviction that a true pacification of Europe and of the world can be attained solely if Germany and England arrive at an understanding. This conviction repeatedly compelled me to take steps towards such an understanding. It is truly not my fault if the desired result eluded us.

And finally, I have attempted to obtain a normalization of relations with Russia and to lend these a basis in friendship. Thanks to a similar line of thought in Stalin, I succeeded in this. And we now enjoy durable, friendly relations with this state, the consequences of which will entail blessings for both peoples.

In summary, the revisions of the Treaty of Versailles that I implemented have not created chaos in Europe. To the contrary, they constituted prerequisites for the creation of clear, stable and, above all, tolerable conditions here. Only he who hates this putting into order of Europe, and who desires disorder instead, only he can oppose these steps.

And to whoever believes that he, acting ever so innocent, must reject the methods employed to secure a tolerable order in the lands of Central Europe, I can only reply that, in the last instance, what is decisive is not so much the methods used but the beneficial results obtained.¹¹⁴⁷

Before I took office, Central Europe had succumbed to the misery of sheer endless unemployment lines. This affected not only Germany, but the surrounding states as well. Production fell, and this led forcibly to a decline in consumption. The standard of living declined; misery and destitution were the consequences. Not one of these criticizing foreign statesmen can deny that we have succeeded in eradicating these signs of decay not only within the Old Reich, but also in the areas now united with it. And we did so under the most difficult of circumstances.

This has proven that the lands of Central Europe make up a viable structure only if they are united. Those who saw to their division committed a crime against humanity. To have expunged this crime does not constitute a promise broken by me; rather it is a great honor for me which I take pride

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in, an accomplishment of truly historic proportions. Neither the German Volk nor I have been sworn to the Treaty of Versailles. I am sworn solely to defend the welfare of my Volk whose representative I am, and the welfare of those whom Fate has placed within our Lebensraum and has thereby inextricably bound up with our own welfare.¹¹⁴⁸

To secure existence and hence life for all of you, this is my only care. Attempts to criticize, judge, or reject my actions from the lecturer's desk of international dilettante righteousness are both unhistorical and leave me, personally, cold as ice. The German Volk has called upon me through its vested trust in me. This has strengthened me against the attempts at foreign critique or intervention.

For the rest, I have prefaced every single one of my revisions with proposals. I have attempted, by negotiation, to secure and obtain only what was absolutely necessary. In this I have succeeded in several cases. In other cases, regrettably, my willingness to negotiate and the limited nature of my demands, the modesty displayed in my proposals, have been interpreted as signs of weakness. And it has been thus that my proposals have been rejected.

I myself have regretted this more than anyone else. Alas, there are necessities in the lives of peoples which cannot be realized by peaceful means, but here strength (*Kraft*)¹¹⁴⁹ must find its application.

Though this may be regrettable, it applies to the life of the community as it applies to the life of the individual citizen. Undeniably, there is some truth to the maxim that the stubbornness of the individual or the ill-will of individuals or communities must not, by necessity, contradict the greater common good. I have put forth reasonable proposals to the Poles. They met not only with rejection; they were met with a general mobilization order in this state. The rationale for this mobilization revealed how the modesty of my proposals was held to reaffirm my weakness—yes, even my fear.

After these reflections, Hitler thought it opportune once more to discuss his latest “reasoned” proposal to England at great length. Just as Napoleon had once done,¹¹⁵⁰ Hitler strove to render the English a graphic and wordy account of the horrors of war and the advantages of a peaceful settlement, hoping to frighten them into acquiescence in his demands.

Actually these past experiences should make one shy away from bringing forth any more reasoned and weighed proposals. Still, these days I read in certain papers that any attempt at the peaceful settlement of the relations between Germany on the one hand, and England and France on the other, was doomed to failure from the beginning. Any step in this general direction merely proved that I feared an imminent collapse of Germany. Cowardice or a guilty conscience was supposedly driving me to make such an offer.

And so, as I continue to render account of my thoughts on the subject, I risk being seen as either a coward or a desperado. This I take upon myself. I can do this because these miserable little scribblers will not be the ones to write history, thank God; instead my life's work will speak for itself. And I am

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able to do this also because I am indifferent to the judgment passed upon me by these folks at this moment.

My prestige is great enough to permit me something of this kind. The further course of events shall prove whether or not the thoughts I will promptly enumerate owe their conception to fear and despair.

Today all there remains for me to do is to express my regret that these folks who cannot get enough of war cannot squelch their thirst for blood by actually being at the site where the war is being fought. In the past, too, they were never on location for the shooting. I understand quite well that certain people have a vested interest in war as they earn more in wartime than in times of peace. I further understand that there exist deviants among international journalists who find it far more interesting to report on a war than to describe events in peacetime, much less to discuss peacetime's cultural attainments, which defy their understanding. And finally it is clear to me that a certain Jewish-international capitalism and journalism cannot feel with the peoples whose interests they purport to represent. Rather these glory-seeking vandals (*Herostraten*) of human society¹¹⁵¹ conceive of arson as the greatest attainment of their lives.

There is yet another reason I feel I must raise my voice on this occasion. When I read certain organs of the international media today or listen to the speeches of various, hot-blooded glorifiers of war, then I feel called upon to speak and answer in the name of those who are forced to constitute the living substance of the mental occupation of these authors of war aims; this living substance of which I formed part for over four years as an unknown soldier in the World War. It truly sounds grandiose when a statesman or journalist steps up to proclaim, in glowing terms, the necessity of eliminating a regime in another country for the sake of democracy or something of that kind. The implementation of these glorious phrases looks decidedly different, however. Today newspaper articles are written which are certain to inspire enthusiastic acclaim in a well-to-do readership. The realization of the demands contained therein is far less inspiring, however.

I will not discuss the power of judgment or the mental capacities of these people here. Whatever they may write, the essence of what comes to pass in reality is left untouched. Before the Polish campaign, these scribblers declared the German infantry to be "not bad." The Panzer force, especially the motorized units, were inferior and would undoubtedly fail us miserably in actual battle. Now—after the defeat of Poland—the same people callously write that the Polish armies broke down only because of the German Panzer force and the remaining motorized units owned by the Reich. Further they write that the German infantry has declined in a truly remarkable manner and, in every encounter with the Poles, it lost out. "In this," so one of these writers recently remarked verbatim, "we can rightly see a comforting sign for the conduct of the war in the West, and the French soldier shall take note." I believe this also, insofar as he actually gets to see as much and is able to recall it later. In all likelihood, he will then want to pull this military prophet up by the ears. Regrettably, he will probably not be able to do this for these folks never actually venture out on the battlefield to test their theory on the

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superiority or inferiority of the German infantry. They just describe it in their editorial offices.

Six weeks—oh no, fourteen days of drumfire would suffice for these war propagandist gentlemen to quickly arrive at different conclusions. They always speak of the necessary occurrences in global politics, but they know nothing of the military course of things. Alas, I know it much better. And hence I hold it to be my duty to speak here even with the danger that these warmongers will once more interpret my speech as an expression of my fear and the extent of my desperation.

Why should there be war in the West? To restore Poland? The Poland of the Treaty of Versailles shall never rise again! This two of the world's greatest states guarantee.

The final structure of this area, the question of the restoration of a Polish state, are problems which cannot be resolved through war in the West, but rather solely by Russia on the one side and Germany on the other. Besides, exclusion of these two powers from the areas in question would not lead to the formation of a new state, but to complete chaos. The problems which need to be solved there will not be solved at the conference table or in editorial offices, but only through the work of decades.

For it does not suffice that a few statesmen, uninterested in the fate of those immediately concerned, come together at the conference table and arrive at resolutions. Instead, it is necessary that someone, who shares in the life of these areas himself, works to restore an enduring situation there. The Western democracies have done nothing, at least in recent times, to prove their capacity to work for the establishment of such orderly situations. The example of Palestine amply proves that it is better to attend to current tasks and to solve these in a reasonable fashion, than to preoccupy oneself with problems which lie within the vital interests and spheres of interest of other peoples who are better equipped to deal with them.

In any event, Germany has not only seen to restoring law and order in its Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, but, most important, has laid the basis for a renewed blossoming of the economy and for an ever closer relationship between the two nations. England has yet much to do until it can point to similar successes in its Palestinian Protectorate. Moreover, it is common knowledge how senseless it is to destroy millions of human lives and hundreds of billions in terms of material value only to once more prop up a structure which, already at the time of its inception, was termed a miscarriage by all non-Poles.

What is the reason then? Has Germany placed demands on England which might threaten the British world empire or might have placed into question its existence? No. To the contrary, Germany has not addressed any such demands to either England or France.

Should this war really be waged only to institute a new regime in Ger-many, then this would mean the destruction of the present Reich; the creation of a new Versailles; the senseless sacrifice of millions of human beings. Neither will the German Reich fall apart nor will a new Versailles rise up.

And even if this should be attained after a war of three, four, or eight years, a second Versailles would only bear within it the seeds of renewed conflict for subsequent years. In any case, a settlement of the problems of the world in disregard of the vital interests of its strongest peoples will not end a whit differently in, say, five or ten years from now than this attempt of twenty years ago ended today. No, this war in the West will not settle any problems, with the possible exception of the ruined finances of a few armament industrialists and newspaper owners, or other international war profiteers.

Two problems are up for discussion today:

1. The settlement of the questions arising from the disintegration of Poland, and

2. the problem of the removal of those international concerns which burden the political and economic lives of all peoples.

What are the goals entertained by the Reich Government with regard to a settlement of the situation in the lands west of the German and Soviet-Russian line of demarcation, recognized as the German sphere of influence?

1. The establishment of a Reich border which, as stressed already, renders justice to the historic, ethnographic, and economic conditions;

2. the ordering of this entire Lebensraum by the criteria of nationalities, i.e. the resolution of the minorities questions which not only concern this area, but all southern and southeastern European states;

3. in this context: the attempt at putting into order and regulating the Jewish problem;

4. the rebuilding of the infrastructure and the economy to the benefit of all peoples living in this area;

5. the guarantee of the security of this entire area, and

6. the establishment of a Polish state, the structure and leadership of which affords us a guarantee that it shall not become yet another source of fire against the German Reich, nor a central office for intrigues spun against Germany and Russia.

Beyond this, we must immediately undertake to eliminate or at least assuage the direct effects of the war, i.e. to attempt through practical help to alleviate the existing, overwhelming suffering. These tasks can well be discussed at the conference table—as stated earlier—but they can never be resolved there. Should Europe truly value law and peace, then the European states should be grateful that Germany and Russia are ready to restore peaceful development to this zone of unrest, and that these two countries are taking upon themselves responsibility for this, and the sacrifices necessary. For the German Reich this mission, which cannot be regarded as an imperialist one, means an occupation for fifty to a hundred years. The justification for this German mission lies in the political ordering of these areas as well as in their economic development. In the end, all this benefits Europe.

The second task, which in my eyes is the far more important of the two, is the creation not only of a feeling, but of a knowledge of European security.

To this end it is necessary:

1. to clarify the foreign policy goals of all European states. Insofar as this regards Germany, the Reich Government stands ready to provide complete

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and final clarity on its foreign policy ambitions. It prefaces this declaration with the statement that the Versailles Treaty has been rendered obsolete in its eyes. The German Reich Government and with it the entire German Volk see neither cause nor occasion for further revisions of any nature, with the exception of a demand for appropriate colonial possessions for the Reich, i.e. first and foremost the restoration of Germany's colonies. The claim to these colonies is founded not only on a historically argued legal right, but above all on an elementary right to partake in the earth's raw material resources. This claim is not made in the form of an ultimatum. Force does not stand behind this claim, but political justice and economic common sense.

2. Demands for a true blossoming of the international economy, in connection with an increase in trade and traffic, require the establishment of order in the various domestic economies and within the production process in individual states. A new order of markets must be established to facilitate the exchange of products. Equally necessary is a final regulation of the currency system in an effort to slowly dismantle the barriers now encumbering free trade.

3. The most important prerequisite for a true blossoming of the European economy, and the economies outside of Europe, is the establishment of an absolutely guaranteed peace. The individual peoples must enjoy a feeling of security. This is only possible in the context of a final sanctioning of the European state, and, above all, through a reduction of armament to a reasonable and economically viable level. A clarification of the range of application and use of certain modern weapons will also have to contribute to this feeling of security. For their effectiveness allows one people to strike at the heart of another, at any time. This is largely responsible for the feeling of insecurity prevalent today. In previous speeches before the Reichstag I already made several advances in this direction. They were rejected largely because I initiated them.

I believe, however, that the feeling of national security in Europe will not set in until we have obtained, in this sphere, clear international and final regulations and a definition of the terms of permissible and impermissible resort to arms.

Next, Hitler set forth a series of suggestions for international agreements which he declared himself willing to sign out of love for peace. He spoke of an agreement detailing deployment of the Luftwaffe, and ended with the condemnation of war against women and children. He even consented to the elimination of "weaponry that has become superfluous." Hitler had already made similar proposals after the occupation of the Rhineland on April 1, 1936. However, neither then nor now were the topics raised by Hitler truly up for discussion. The issue at stake in both instances was an act of aggression already perpetrated by Germany. Hitler's attempt to act innocent failed all the more to make the desired impression abroad.

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As the Geneva Convention once managed, in relations among civilized states, to prohibit the killing of the injured, the maltreatment of the ill, and fighting against non-belligerents; and as it gained in respect over time; so it must equally be possible to define the deployment of the Luftwaffe, of poison gas, etc., of submarines, as well as the term "contraband of war," in such a manner as to divorce war of the horrid character of a fight against women and children, and against non-belligerents. The condemnation (*Perhorreszierung*) of certain methods will render obsolete, in and of itself, certain weaponry that has become superfluous. In this war against Poland, I have endeavored to restrict the application of the Luftwaffe to so-called strategically important objects or, as the case may be, when active resistance was mounted in one specific location. It must nevertheless be possible to attain a universally accepted international regulation of these issues, in the fashion of the Red Cross perhaps.

Only given these prerequisite steps can our densely populated continent enjoy a peace freed of distrust and fear. Only then are the prerequisites for a blossoming of our economic life satisfied. I believe there is no truly responsible European statesman who does not wish, in the depth of his heart, for the economic welfare of his people.

Realization of this wish is possible only within the framework of general cooperation between the nations of this continent. To secure this cooperation alone must be the supreme goal of every man sincerely involved in the struggle for the future of his own people. And in order to attain this great goal, the great nations of this continent shall have to come together once again to provide for a comprehensive regulation, to draw up a statute, to accept and to guarantee it. Only this can afford them a feeling of security and quietude and thereby peace.

It is impossible that such a conference should convene without extensive preparation, i.e. without clarification of individual points and without thorough preparatory work. It is equally impossible that such a conference, to determine the fate of this continent for decades to come, should set to work against a background of roaring cannons and under pressure from mobilized armies. Should this problem sooner or later demand clarification, then it would surely be best to approach this resolution before millions of men senselessly bleed to death and billions in assets are destroyed.

Maintaining of the present situation in the West is unthinkable. Every day will demand ever increasing sacrifices. Perhaps, one day, France will aim at Saarbrücken for the first time and demolish it. The German artillery then, for its part, will take revenge and shatter Mulhouse. France will then point its cannons at Karlsruhe in retribution. Germany will then take on Strasbourg. Then the French artillery will target Freiburg, and the German Colmar or Schlettstadt. Then guns with greater range will be drawn up, and on both sides the destruction will reach ever farther into the countryside. What cannot be reached by long-range projectiles will be destroyed by aircraft. And all this will be of great interest to certain international journalists, and beneficial for producers of aircraft, weaponry, ammunition, etc. But it will be a gruesome affair for the victims.

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And this struggle unto destruction will not remain restricted to the Continent. No, it will reach across the Sea. There are no more islands today.¹¹⁵²

The wealth of Europe's peoples will burst beneath a rain of grenades. The strength of these peoples will drain onto the battlefield. A frontier shall separate Germany and France once again some day, but fields of ruins and endless cemeteries will populate the stretch once home to blossoming cities. Let Mr. Churchill and his cohorts interpret these convictions of mine as weakness or cowardice. I am not concerned with their opinions. I am making this declaration because, as is only natural, I wish to spare my Volk suffering.

Should, however, the attitudes of Mr. Churchill and his entourage prevail, then today's declaration will have been my last one.¹¹⁵³ We will have to fight then. Neither the force of weapons nor time will bring Germany to its knees. A November 1918 will not repeat itself in German history. Hopes staked on a division of our Volk are childish.

Mr. Churchill may be convinced that Great Britain shall be the victor. I doubt not for a minute that Germany will be the victor. Providence shall determine who is right. One thing is sure, however; in world history, there have never been two victors, while far too often there have been only losers. To me, this seems to have been the case in the last war already.

May those people and their leaders rise up to speak who share this conviction. And may those push my hand back who believe themselves forced to regard war as the preferable option.

At this moment, as Führer of the German Volk and as Chancellor of the Reich, I can only thank the Lord for so miraculously bestowing His blessings on us in this our first, difficult struggle for our rights. I implore Him to allow us and all others to find the proper path so that not only the German Volk, but all of Europe, may rejoice in the new happiness of peace.

11

On October 7, Hitler signed a “Decree for the Consolidation (*Festigung*) of German *Volkstum*.”¹¹⁵⁴ This empowered Himmler to carry through the resettlement of Germans abroad and the “elimination” of minorities in Germany.

On October 9, Hitler lost patience since he had still not received word from the British. If they did not promptly make it “apparent” that they were prepared to refrain from war, he would be exceedingly sorry to drive them “back to the Thames.” In his anger, Hitler swiftly wrote his sixth war directive:¹¹⁵⁵

Directive No. 6 for the Conduct of the War

1. If it should become apparent in the near future that England, and, under England’s leadership, also France, are not willing to make an end of the war, I am determined to act vigorously and aggressively without great delay.

2. If we wait much longer, not only will Belgian and perhaps also Dutch neutrality be lost, to the advantage of the Western Powers, but the military strength of our enemies will grow on an increasing scale, the neutrals’ confidence in a final German victory will dwindle, and Italy will not be encouraged to join us as a military ally.

3. Therefore I give the following orders for further military operations:

a. Preparations are to be made for an attacking operation on the northern wing of the Western Front through the areas of Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland. This attack must be carried out with as much strength and at as early a date as possible.

b. The purpose of this attacking operation will be to defeat as strong a part of the French operational army as possible, as well as the allies fighting by its side, and at the same time to gain as large an area as possible in Holland, Belgium, and Northern France as a base for conducting a promising air and sea war¹¹⁵⁶ against England and as a protective zone for the vital Ruhr area.

c. The timing of the attack depends on the readiness of tanks and motorized units for use—this must be speeded up by every possible effort, also on the weather conditions then prevailing and the weather prospects ahead.

October 9, 1939

4. The Luftwaffe is to prevent the Anglo-French air force from attacking our own Army, and, if necessary, to give direct support to the Army's advance. In this connection, it will also be essential to prevent the establishment of the Anglo-French air force in Belgium and Holland, as well as British troop landings there.

5. The Naval Command must concentrate for the duration of this attack entirely in giving direct and indirect support to the operations of the Army and Luftwaffe.

6. Apart from these preparations for starting the attack in the West according to plan, Army and Luftwaffe must be ready at any time and with increasing strength, to meet an Anglo-French invasion of Belgium as far forward on Belgian territory as possible, and to occupy as much of Holland as possible in the direction of the West Coast.

7. The camouflage used for these preparations must be that they are merely precautionary measures in view of the threatening concentration of French and English forces on the Franco-Luxembourg and Franco-Belgian borders.

8. I request the Commanders in Chief to give me, as soon as possible, detailed reports of their plans on the basis of this directive and to keep me currently informed, via the OKW, of the state of the preparations.

Adolf Hitler

In addition to this directive, Hitler also drafted a lengthy memorandum on this October 9. He sought to justify the offensive in the West by referring to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia.¹¹⁵⁷ Ever since then, a confrontation had been certain and had merely been postponed. Developments had come to a head in 1939, and any further delay would doubtless be to Germany's detriment. Hence, the upcoming conflict had to be viewed as a matter of course.

The German objective in this war must include the final military destruction of the West, i.e. the destruction of the power and capability of the West to oppose yet again the consolidation of German statehood and the further development of the German Volk within Europe. [—]

No treaty and no agreement can permanently assure the continued neutrality of Soviet Russia. At this time, indications are against an abandonment of this neutrality. Things might well look different eight months, or one or more years hence.

On October 10 at 11:00 a.m., Hitler read this memorandum to Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Halder. Thereafter, he handed them the information and insisted on the immediate start of the offensive in the West, i.e. before the beginning of winter. The generals were shocked at Hitler's proposals, not only because a winter campaign went contrary to all previous military tradition, not to

mention common sense. They were also haunted by memories of a similar, and ill-fated, move in the First World War and greatly feared a second Verdun.¹¹⁵⁸ The experts' misgivings failed to dissuade Hitler. He had other things on his mind than arguing with disgruntled generals.

For the afternoon hours of October 10, Goebbels had scheduled a rally to take place at the Berlin Sportpalast for the opening of the fund-raising drive for the wartime Winterhilfswerk. This presented Hitler with the opportunity to address the German public and to use this forum to exhort the English "one last time" to accept his proposals for peace. He intended to threaten the British with ultimate destruction and portray himself as a man of firm resolve whom nothing could shake, stun, or bring to despair. "On the contrary! Whatever the outside world shall choose, let it have its choice."

Hitler opened his speech at the Sportpalast with the following deliberations:¹¹⁵⁹

German Volksgenossen!

The Winterhilfswerk belongs to those National Socialist institutions which today we have almost begun to regard as a matter of course. This relief campaign eases the worries of public relief organizations and the load of work of many public institutions of the State, the Länder, and local governments. And the individual Volksgenosse has gotten used, over the years, to making a contribution to this institution. The masses do so willingly; only a minute percentage of them do so propelled by the fear of looking bad otherwise. But, in the end, it makes no difference why the individual contributes; the main thing is that he does make a contribution!

The idea of this institution was to call on the Volk to help itself. We could have done things differently. Instead of appealing to the Volk's willingness to sacrifice, we could have directed our appeal to the taxpayer. We consciously and deliberately did not do so because we wanted to educate the German Volk to come together in this common sacrifice, and therein to begin to understand the nature of the community; to comprehend the duties this community demands of us and to satisfy these of our own free accord without relying on the taxpayer.

Finally, our appeal was to afford the individual a lasting impression of the real poverty afflicting so many Volksgenossen. The persistent attracting of attention through the collection of donations served one goal: the individual realization that happiness and a life of luxury have not been lavished on all Volksgenossen, that perhaps this is not possible. Much help is still needed and infinitely much remains to be done and must be done!

And finally this organization has afforded the individual member of its gigantic army of helpers not only an insight into the poverty of large circles of our Volk but, more important, also an insight into the possibility of

remedying this situation. There has been poverty at all times. Perhaps poverty is actually a relative term. Only a few days ago, I saw areas where the average standard of living is far below what would be considered the depth of poverty here with us in Germany. Just how fortunate our Volk is, thanks to the efforts of the community, they seem to realize the least who do not have the opportunity to see beyond it.

One thing is certain: poverty has always existed. There is poverty even now and there will always be poverty. At all times, people have had the obligation to control this poverty, to counter it, and to alleviate it.

The voluntary nature of this sacrifice allows the individual to better assess himself and correspondingly his obligations than any governmental measures possibly could. In the context of this great social institution, we have created many things with the intent of wiping away all class differences in the German Volk and to awaken in it a pronounced consciousness of solidarity. If we look at the results of this social education within the last years, no one can deny that the course taken was the right one and a successful one. Our successes were so great that, perhaps, we can see in them reasons for a certain displeasure in the outside world. It is frightened at the thought that the national-socialist principles of our Reich could prove attractive beyond our borders and could perhaps rouse [the social] conscientiousness in this context in other countries. If at times the work of our collectors appears to be a little bit disagreeable to some Volksgenossen, may they not forget how much more disagreeable the work is to the collector. How much easier is it to be approached two or three times with the request to give than to suffer perhaps thousands of refusals of your request to receive. In the first instance, we have a momentarily disagreeable experience; in the second one, we have the repeated sacrifice of free time in the service of the Volksgemeinschaft.

Now destiny has forced us to take up arms in the defense of the Reich. Within a few weeks, the most insolent of states, which thought it could freely threaten the interests of the Reich, was thrown to the ground.

And this thanks to a military feat unique in our history! Thanks to the brave heroism of our soldiers! Thanks to our brilliant leadership!

Here Hitler issued yet another appeal to the Western Powers not to foolishly reject his efforts for a peaceful settlement. In vivid terms, he stressed the might of Germany's military as proven in the recent campaigns.

We do not know what the future will bring. But one thing we know for certain: no power in this world shall ever overpower Germany again! No one shall vanquish us militarily, destroy us economically, or trample on our souls! And no one shall see us capitulate—under any circumstances.

I have expressed our willingness for peace. Germany has no reason to wage war against the Western Powers. They have started this war on a threadbare pretext. In the event this willingness meets with rejection, Germany stands determined to take up the struggle and to fight it out—one way or another!

October 10, 1939

Neither a momentary fright nor any proclamation regarding the length of the war shall weary us or make us despair. Before us we see the eternal life of our Volk. However long it may take to assist in the birth of this life, nothing shall shake us, stun us, or bring us to despair. On the contrary! Whatever the outside world shall choose, let it have its choice.

Once I set out on a most difficult path to uplift Germany from the destruction imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles. Since then, twenty years have passed. The Reich stands mightier today than ever before. The path lying before us can be no more difficult than the path lying behind us. If we did not lose heart striding forth on the path leading from then to now, then we shall no more lose heart striding out on the path leading from now to the future.

As we set out on this path, the community of the German Volk which we have now achieved gives us heart. The period now perhaps lying before us will reinforce and lend depth to the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. It will only speed up the social process of becoming this Volk. The wartime winter now facing us will find us ever the more prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to ease the struggle for existence for our Volk.

The wartime Winterhilfswerk (*Kriegswinterhilfswerk*) thereby becomes a relief organization for the Red Cross. The Red Cross itself will not be collecting this time. Instead, as an integral part of the wartime Winterhilfswerk, the Red Cross will receive allowances from this organization.

When I point to the Red Cross, all of us immediately realize how minuscule the sacrifices demanded of the individual are in comparison to the sacrifices many of our Volksgenossen are making at the front, and, if it so pleases the ill-will of our adversaries, the sacrifices they will have to continue to make.

May no one think any longer of the greatness of his own sacrifice. May he instead think of the greatness of the common sacrifice and of the unsurpassable sacrifice of those who have already given themselves for their Volk or who may still have to give themselves. Compared to these sacrifices, the sacrifices made at home are nothing. Nevertheless, they can help to underline in the consciousness of our Volk the bonds of our inseparable community.

Thus this wartime Winterhilfswerk must surpass everything which has previously been attained in this realm. Perhaps, this will best provide an answer to the stupidity of the world in thinking it can divide the German Volk internally.

We will show them the results of their stupid experiments! We will show them how they are just making the German Volk stand closer together, how they make it stick together all the more.

Perhaps it is in this manner that we can best rid them of the delusion that they can simply have their say on the state of mind of us Germans, just as it may happen to please one of them out there. We shall teach them the necessary respect for the state of mind of other peoples.

May the world rest assured: what we have to suffer as a community, we shall endure! I hope the others shall likewise be able to do this! The time will

come when National Socialism can develop all the more its powers to shape, educate, and uphold the Volk.

War once carried us National Socialists forth. The experiences of war fashioned our intellectual world. And in time of war, if need be, we shall once more prove our worth!

The final decision on this is no longer in our hands, but in those of the outside world. With us rests only the grim determination to take this decision upon ourselves. Then, however, we shall fight things out to their logical conclusion. And thus the wartime Winterhilfswerk must contribute to making this German Volksgemeinschaft stronger than ever before! A community in struggle, a community in victory, and, in the end, in peace! After all, the more determined and the more steeled we now are as we take upon our shoulders the sacrifices which war can entail, the more certain we will be to win this peace our Volk so longs for. At one point, this is also my conviction, this time of insecurity must have an end.

It must be possible for the German Volk to fashion its life according to its own wish and will, within the limits of its own Lebensraum, and without persistent harassment from others. It must be possible for the German Volk to partake in the goods of this world to the extent it can rightfully claim because of its numbers and value.

Hereby I open the Winterhilfswerk campaign for 1939–40. I ask the helpers to dedicate themselves to this work as I ask the German Volk to now prove itself worthy of its heroes, to atone for the sins which the homeland committed against the German Volk and its soldiers in the years 1914 through 1918.

This rhetoric once more failed to make the desired impression abroad, although the Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw was among the few who did lobby for the conclusion of a peace with Hitler.¹¹⁶⁰ A speech by the French Premier later the same evening clearly demonstrated that this “very last” of Hitler’s appeals was destined to bear no more fruit than its predecessors. Daladier insisted that France was prepared “to defend a just cause to the end.”

The British also realized the gravity of the situation, as evidenced in an address by Chamberlain before the House of Commons on October 12.¹¹⁶¹ It included an unequivocal rejection of Hitler’s “peace proposals.” Chamberlain faulted these German advances for being too “vague and uncertain” in nature, i.e. too imprecise to constitute a viable alternative. He stressed that they “contain no suggestions for righting the wrongs done to Czechoslovakia and Poland.” Past experiences had proven that no reliance could be put on “promises” given by the Reich Government. If Germany truly desired peace, Chamberlain argued, then “acts—not words alone—must be forthcoming.” Hitler would have to give “convincing proof” of his peaceful intentions.

In Hitler's eyes, this represented a most impudent response to his "extraordinarily concrete" proposals. On October 13, Hitler was still so enraged by Chamberlain's statements that he abandoned all caution and disclosed Chamberlain's arguments to the public in the form of an official declaration of the Reich Government in response to the British Prime Minister's address:¹¹⁶²

While, in his appeal for peace, the Führer showed the way, by extraordinarily concrete proposals, to the viable attainment of a security guarantee for Europe's peoples which may well have led to action following word, given the goodwill of England and France, the same man whose behavior previously precluded said action declared hypocritically: "Acts—not words alone—must be forthcoming," before the British people and France, their valiant and trusted ally, would be justified in abandoning this struggle to the utmost of their strength.

One sentence was the extent of what Chamberlain could muster with regard to the great satisfaction with which Germany's neutral neighbors welcomed the Führer's guarantee of their national security, of respect for their vital interests. He declared he would omit those passages of the Führer's speech which aim to give renewed assurances to the Führer's neighbors for they well know the worth of these.

This is convincing evidence that Chamberlain and his governing clique of warmongers have no intention of concerning themselves with the Führer's proposals for peace or questions of the neutral states. All they desire is to wage war against the German Volk.

At the end of the legal maneuvering with which he seeks to deceive the world, which is yearning for peace, and by means of which he hopes to drive his own people as well as the unfortunate French into a senseless war, Chamberlain had the temerity to give the following outrageous ultimatum, namely, that the German Government shall either have to produce "convincing proof" of the sincerity of their desire for peace by definite acts and through the creation of effective guarantees of their intent to fulfil their obligations, or Britain will be forced to persevere in her attitude to the end.

The British Prime Minister has rejected, through this speech void of any sense of responsibility and replete with lies and hypocrisies, the hand extended in peace by the Führer in his exposition of October 6.

Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to forward a telegram to the German Chargé d'Affaires in Helsinki on October 15. This particular correspondence clearly betrayed Hitler's continued outrage at Chamberlain's words:¹¹⁶³

Please tell the Finnish Foreign Minister in reply to his question that Chamberlain rejected the Führer's magnanimous peace offer in the most insolent manner and that this closes the subject for us. You will please make no further explanations about the matter.

Ribbentrop

Since Finland had rejected Hitler's recent offer of a non-aggression pact, Hitler was not inclined to lift a finger in its defense. His disposition towards the other small states which had also spurned his overtures was no more favorable. As he had already explained to Dahlerus earlier, he was "completely disinteresting himself in all regions that did not affect Germany's interests."¹¹⁶⁴ He now declared these countries free to turn to England for protection, if they so desired.

Hitler ordered the text of the telegram to Finland to be relayed to Germany's diplomatic representatives in all neutral states on October 18. In addition, he issued instructions for the launching of a discrete propaganda campaign. German diplomats were to "confidentially" point out to their counterparts abroad the terrible revenge in store for England now that it had declined Hitler's last offer for peace.

One month later, partially in response to this campaign, Churchill announced to the English people in a radio broadcast:¹¹⁶⁵

Nowadays we are assailed by a chorus of horrid threats. The Nazi Government exudes through every neutral State inside information of the frightful vengeance they are going to wreak upon us, and they also bawl it around the world by their leather-lunged propaganda machine. If words could kill, we should be dead already. But we are not disturbed by these blood-curdling threats. Indeed, we take them as a sign of weakness of our foes. We do not make threats in time of war. If at any time we should have some ideas of an offensive character, we should not talk about them; we should try to see how they worked out in action.

We do not at all underrate the power and the maliciousness of our enemies. We are prepared to endure tribulation.

On October 12, 1939, Hitler promulgated the following decree on the administration of the occupied territory in Poland:¹¹⁶⁶

To restore and to maintain law and order and public life in the occupied Polish territories, I order:

§ 1

The territories occupied by German troops, insofar as they are not incorporated into the German Reich, are to be placed under the Governor General for the occupied Polish territories.

§ 2

(1) I appoint Reich Minister Dr. Frank as Governor General for the occupied Polish territories.

(2) I appoint Reich Minister Dr. Seyss-Inquart as Deputy of the Governor General.

§ 3

(1) The Governor General is directly subordinate to me.

(2) All branches of the administration are assigned to the Governor General.

In creating the “Governor-Generalship” in Poland, Hitler followed Ludendorff’s lead. In the course of the First World War, Ludendorff had set up a similarly short-lived structure by the same name. Hitler, however, in the campaign aiming at the eradication of the Polish intelligentsia, of the Polish Catholic clergy, and of the Polish Jews, went far beyond the measures implemented by his predecessor. This move surpassed anything the world had previously seen.

It was on Hitler’s orders that his cohorts in the SS indulged in an unprecedented murder spree among a small people left virtually defenseless. Despite his obvious involvement, Hitler nevertheless refused to “bear all responsibility” in this case. He had equally shied away from assuming responsibility for the events of the 1938 Crystal Night, and he would do so again later in the wholesale extermination of Jews. As in November 1938, Hitler played the innocent before the German public, acting as though he had no connections to the gruesome murders perpetrated in Poland and elsewhere.

The man most closely tied to the liquidation of the Polish upper class, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, Hitler’s most diligent and conscientious servant, repeatedly and unequivocally implied while speaking with the German generals that Hitler had personally issued orders for this campaign. In Koblenz, in March 1940, Himmler declared in this context: “I do nothing of which the Führer is not aware.” On a different occasion, Himmler stated: “The person of the Führer must not be mentioned in this context under any circumstances. I will assume all responsibility.”

For the record, Reinhard Heydrich, the Chief of the Reich Central Security Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA), noted on July 2, 1940, that he was acting on “special orders of the Führer.” As to the contents of the instructions received, Heydrich remarked: “Order for the liquidation of numerous Poles in leading circles, amounting to thousands.”

The Governor General of Poland, Dr. Hans Frank, recorded the following in his diary on May 30, 1940, after attending a gathering of police officers: “The Führer told me: ‘What we have now determined as the leadership of Poland is to be liquidated; what grows back needs to be secured by us and, after an appropriate period, it is to be removed also.’” On October 2, 1940, Hitler himself stated in a briefing that “all members of the Polish intelligentsia” were to be killed off. Though he admitted this might sound harsh, he claimed it was nothing other than the “law of life.”¹¹⁶⁷

On October 16, 1939, Hitler received the Swedish Asia explorer, Sven Hedin,¹¹⁶⁸ at the Reich Chancellery at noon. On this occasion, Hitler expressed his frustration with the intransigence of the British and their determination to go to war.

In considering the German notes on this one-hour-and-fifteen-minute encounter,¹¹⁶⁹ the reader has great difficulty in warding off the impression that the two men conversing either lived utterly divorced from reality, or were completely insane.

Both Hitler and Hedin sought to outdo one another with references to England's weakness and the pending collapse of the British Empire. Hedin stressed his belief "that the British Empire was finished." Against the new German aircraft factories "those in England were a joke." He described the British measures as *dilettantisch*. And Hitler stated that he did not want the Poles, that "riff-raff" (*Geschmeiss*) within his own borders.

Soon, however, it became apparent why Hedin had come to Berlin. The Swede wished to feel out the Reich Government on its stance regarding a potential Russo-Finnish War. He expressed fears that Sweden, by helping Finland, would thereby "place herself in opposition to Germany." Nettled by Finland's earlier behavior, Hitler declared that he would not "attack Sweden from the rear." He added that:

. . . he had written off the South and likewise the North where he had experienced only ingratitude and antipathy,¹¹⁷⁰ although he had never done them any harm. He could say that these countries had acted abominably (*niederträchtig*) in public statements and in their press.

Hedin wondered what the French, "England's slaves who face ruin," were fighting for. Hitler's answer was that "France will sacrifice her national strength." The Swede further asked whether the war would be over quickly. To this, the official note remarked the following:

The Führer replied that he did not know. His first war plan was for four years, but he could go on fighting even eight or ten years. In a final showdown, he would triumph and England would be a field of ruins. The British were stupid enough to believe that they were safe from the German submarines, but they were thinking of submarines used in the World War, which had long since been improved upon. There were no weapons against our present submarines.

If England wanted peace, she could have it. She was playing a role in Europe that no longer convinced anyone. In the Far East, the British were waning already. He could not say this publicly, but the only man in England

that he would care to call a genius was Lloyd George. Eden was a foppish nonentity (*pomadasierte Null*) and Churchill incompetent (*unfähig*). Of all the British to whom he had spoken to date, Lloyd George had made the greatest impression upon him.

Hitler's summation was that "England was to blame for everything that was happening today," and that "there was only one chance for England, and that was to recognize Germany's interests."

On October 17, Hitler promoted the Commander of the Submarine Fleet, Lieutenant Commander and Commodore Dönitz, to the rank of Rear Admiral in recognition of his services to the German U-boat force.¹¹⁷¹

On October 18, in the presence of Raeder, Hitler received Lieutenant Commander Günter Prien at the Reich Chancellery. On October 14, Prien had steered his submarine 'U 49' into Scapa Flow, where the British battleship *Royal Oak* lay anchored, and sunk the 29,000-ton vessel. The following official report was published on the reception for Prien and his men:¹¹⁷²

Lieutenant Commander Prien reported the lined-up crew of the U-boat present to the Führer. The Führer shook the hand of each individual officer and member of the crew. In an address, the Führer then expressed his personal gratitude and that of the entire German nation for their deed. He reminded the men who stood before him today that they had accomplished this unique feat precisely in the same location where a weak government had once abandoned the German fleet in the deceptive hope of perhaps getting it back.

There one German Admiral¹¹⁷³ had kept the fleet from this ultimate disgrace and rescued it. The great and daring feat of the men, whom he was happy to be able to personally welcome, had only reinforced the German Volk in its unshakeable belief in victory.

In moving words, the Führer then expressed how proud he and the entire German Volk were of the men of the German U-boat force. What these men had achieved was the proudest exploit a German submarine could undertake and accomplish. Not only had this feat profoundly moved Germany, it had carried its glory forth into the world.

Thereupon he presented the captain, Lieutenant Commander Prien, with the highest distinction possible for a German soldier: the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. This decoration likewise honors the entire crew. Lieutenant Commander Prien then proceeded to report to the Führer on his adventures in the bay of Scapa Flow. Thereafter, the commander and the crew of the U-boat were the Führer's guests for lunch at his apartment.

On October 18, Hitler issued "Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War." It allowed the Army to penetrate French territory for

“reconnaissance” purposes, providing for the Luftwaffe to “send fighter escorts into French territory,” and permitting the Navy to “attack enemy passenger ships which are in a convoy or are sailing without lights.” Truly remarkable was the following passage: “In case a Franco-British invasion into Belgium must be repulsed, the Army will be permitted to enter Luxembourg territory.” The entire text read:¹¹⁷⁴

Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War

Until the planned attack against the western enemy is begun, the previous directives for warfare in the West are supplemented herewith.

1. Permission is granted effective immediately as follows:

The Army may cross the French border with patrols but only as far as this is necessary for reconnaissance and for keeping in touch with an enemy avoiding contact.

The Luftwaffe may send fighter escorts into French territory as far as this is necessary for protecting our reconnaissance; may raid British naval forces in naval harbors (oral advance notification).

The Navy may attack enemy passenger ships which are in a convoy or are sailing without lights.

The Führer will decide on all other measures suggested for the purpose of intensifying the war against British shipping, as soon as these measures have been checked by the OKW as to their political and economic effect.

The attacks against British naval vessels at sea and in naval harbors are to be continued at every favorable opportunity, the Navy and the Luftwaffe cooperating closely.

2. In case a Franco-British invasion into Belgium must be repulsed (Directive No. 6, paragraph 6), the Army will be permitted to enter Luxembourg territory.

If that occurs, the Luftwaffe will support the Army directly and will protect it from raids by British and French air forces. Our Luftwaffe will also interfere with the approach and transport of enemy forces. A further objective is to prevent British troop landings in Belgium and Holland and to prevent British and French air forces from gaining a foothold there. For this purpose flights will be allowed over the entire western frontier of Germany. Raids on industrial targets and such raids as might endanger the civilian population to a high degree are not permitted in Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg.

For the Navy, the principles stated in Directive No. 6, paragraph 5, apply in this case, also.

3. Besides the measures taken by the commanders of the individual branches of the Wehrmacht, the offices directly subordinate to the OKW (particularly the Inspector of the Wehrmacht Signal Communications and the Intelligence and Propaganda Division) should work together to conceal our preparations for an attack.

Pertinent suggestions and requests are to be submitted as soon as possible to the OKW, Operations Planning.

By order: Keitel

As the directive revealed, Hitler was already actively in search of pretexts to justify an intervention in the neutral states in the West.

On October 18 also, Hitler established a War Service Cross. Its statutes opened with the following words:¹¹⁷⁵

I establish the War Service Cross (*Kriegsverdienstkreuz*) award as a sign of appreciation for services in the war forced upon us, which could not find proper recognition through the Iron Cross.

On October 19, ratification of the “German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty” was effected in Berlin.¹¹⁷⁶ German protocol officials had hoped in vain that Molotov might travel to Berlin to attend the official ceremonies.¹¹⁷⁷ Later that day, Hitler promoted the Inspector General for Railroad Construction, Todt, to the rank of Major General.¹¹⁷⁸

Relations to Slovakia were growing warmer by the day, since this state obligingly performed in accordance with Hitler’s wishes. Evidently, Hitler thought the Slovaks less senile than the British. On October 21, he received the Slovak Envoy Cernak at the Chancellery. The following official communiqué was published:¹¹⁷⁹

At the conference, the Führer explained to the Envoy that Germany will satisfy the Slovak Government’s requests, based on historic and ethnic considerations, for a reunion with the territories taken possession of by the former Polish State in the years 1920, 1924, and 1938.¹¹⁸⁰ A treaty on the state level between Germany and Slovakia shall effect the restitution of these territories.¹¹⁸¹

Hitler proved most considerate toward Slovakia in October 1939. He awarded Minister-President Tiso the Great Cross of the Order of the German Eagle and commissioned Göring to travel to Pressburg to personally present Tiso with this distinction on October 25.¹¹⁸²

On October 24, Hitler received the Japanese Ambassador General Oshima, who bade the Chancellor farewell as he had just been recalled to Tokyo. The parting Ambassador took advantage of the occasion to hand Hitler four works of modern Japanese art, gifts of the Japanese industrialist Fujiwara who, according to the DNB report, sought to thereby express his deference to Hitler.¹¹⁸³

Two days later, the Slovak Parliament unanimously elected Tiso as the President of the Slovak Republic. Previously, Tiso had served as Slovakia’s Minister-President. Naturally, Hitler immediately wired his “heartfelt congratulations” to Tiso.¹¹⁸⁴

On October 27, Hitler awarded the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross to eleven generals and three other officers.

October 27, 1939

The German News Bureau reported the following on the reception at the Reich Chancellery:¹¹⁸⁵

In a short address, the Führer expressed, in the name of the entire German Volk, his gratitude and appreciation for their outstanding achievements to the officers assembled. He requested the commanders to relay this appreciation to their troops. Thereafter, the officers were the Führer's guests for lunch at his apartment.

At this reception, a remark slipped Brauchitsch's lips to the effect that the Army would not be ready for action in the West before November 26. Hitler immediately retorted that this was far too late. He insisted that the offensive to the West be launched on November 12. Upon hearing this, the generals began to feel increasingly uncomfortable. Apparently, Hitler was set on launching the Western offensive while it was still November. And this although snowfall had already been recorded in the Palatinate Forest in October. The upcoming winter was threatening to be anything but mild.

Hitler insisted on marching through Belgium with all his might, despite Germany's repeated assurances of Belgian neutrality. That he intended "not to justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914"¹¹⁸⁶ was of little comfort to the generals. After all, this did not change the fact of the violation of neutrality in the least.

The generals pondered the situation. Some already thought of themselves as "conspirators"¹¹⁸⁷ as they contemplated a purge before the launch of the offensive in the West. The only question was: how?

On November 5, Brauchitsch set out to dissuade Hitler from his plans by pointing out the disadvantages of beginning a campaign in the West. He wrote a memorandum and, with this in hand, approached Hitler at his office in the Chancellery. Initially, Hitler remained relatively calm as he listened to Brauchitsch reading the memorandum.¹¹⁸⁸ Gradually, however, Brauchitsch's exposition took on a tone of urgency. Deliberately exaggerating, the general claimed that the morale of the German infantry was worse than in the First World War. Hitler could no longer contain himself. As Halder recorded in his diary, the Führer then burst out "raging, wants documentation: In what units lack of discipline? What happened? Wants to fly there tomorrow. What to be done? Death sentences. West or East? Army did not want to fight."

Brauchitsch could not get a word in edgewise. This ended his report and the attempt at rebellion against the Führer. No longer did any of the generals dare to oppose Hitler's strategic plans for fear of

sharing the fate of a Blomberg or a Fritsch who had expressed their misgivings to Hitler only two years earlier and whom Hitler had dealt with most severely. Neither Brauchitsch nor Halder were keen on following in their footsteps.

On November 6, Hitler wired a congratulatory telegram to Arthur Greiser. He had appointed him Gauleiter of the newly formed Gau Wartheland-Posen on October 23.¹¹⁸⁹ Greiser had forwarded Hitler a wire earlier and had pledged his loyalty to the Führer at no less than thirty-two rallies in his Gau. Hitler replied to Greiser:

I thank you and the Germans of the new Gau Wartheland for the greetings related to me by telegram from yesterday's rallies. I reciprocate in a heartfelt manner and in the secure conviction that, after years of oppression and decline, the Warthegau shall stride forth on a path to new development and a happy future.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, German troops had concentrated along the borders of Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The Wehrmacht's moves in these areas understandably caused grave concerns in the neighboring states. The troop movements were so obvious in fact they must have struck even the most innocent of passers-by. The Belgian King and the Dutch Queen hoped to intercede at the last moment by directing a joint declaration to Hitler. In their telegram, they offered their services as mediators in the peaceful settlement of the dispute "before the war in Western Europe begins in full violence."¹¹⁹⁰

On November 7, Hitler ordered Keitel to postpone the initial date for the attack (scheduled for November 12) for another three days. The telegram from the Dutch Queen and the Belgian King figured little in his considerations. Adverse weather conditions made a further postponement of the attack appear opportune.¹¹⁹¹

As was well-known, Hitler had never been too terribly fond of attempts at mediation. He was not inclined to accept the royal offers, especially not now that Chamberlain had so outspokenly refused his peace proposal in public. Hitler had had enough of "neutral forces," such self-appointed intermediaries as Dahlerus, who attempted to meddle in the Reich's affairs, and—via Göring and Ribbentrop—he let Dahlerus and the Legation in Sweden know that "the German Government is no longer interested in his sounding out England, because the official attitude of the British Government has already indicated unequivocal rejection of the German position."¹¹⁹²

November 7, 1939

The representatives of the Netherlands and Belgium would be summoned to the Foreign Ministry on November 15, because of the efforts at mediation by their respective Royal Families.¹¹⁹³

In the name of the Führer, Ribbentrop informed the representatives of Belgium and the Netherlands that the German Government regarded the advance towards peace initiated by the Belgian King and the Queen of the Netherlands as obsolete due to the English and French Governments' brusque rejection of it.

And it was due to this recalcitrant British stance, so Hitler further made clear to other non-belligerents, that he was now forced to allow the Soviets a free hand anywhere they chose outside of the German sphere of influence. Therefore, he demonstratively commissioned Göring and Ribbentrop to attend a festive reception at the Soviet Embassy in Berlin on November 7, on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

On the next day, Hitler held the customary address in commemoration of the November 1923 Putsch. As usual, the festivities took place in the Bürgerbräukeller at Munich. This particular speech has entered the history books due to the mysterious attempt made on Hitler's life: the detonation of a bomb shortly after he had left the premises.

A number of curious circumstances accompanied the whole event of November 8. At first, official announcements had informed the public that Hess was scheduled to speak on November 8. A corrected version of this statement then indicated that Hess would deliver a radio address a day later, at 7:30 p.m. Finally the public was informed that Hess would not speak at all.

Another official pronouncement informed the public that, "in view of the state of war in existence," the program for the festivities on November 8 and November 9 had been cut short. The annual "Convention of the Old Fighters" was scheduled earlier than normal, for 7:00 in the evening of November 8. For the next day, the National Socialist Party Press informed the public that the placing of wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and at the other memorials was the only official act provided for. No commemorative march was to take place.¹¹⁹⁴

In all likelihood, "blackout" (*Verdunkelung*) played a role in the planning for an early start of the 1939 commemoration. Hitler's speech was not significantly shorter than on previous occasions of this nature. Allegations that he spoke more hurriedly and excitedly than customary

could not be verified by the radio audience. These speculations were in all likelihood due to later reconstructions of the event in light of the bomb explosion and the alleged “sixth sense” of the Führer.

What was indeed remarkable in this speech was that Hitler abbreviated the customarily lengthy “party narrative” to a few sentences. The Bürgerbräukeller address of 1939 presented nothing but a vicious tirade directed against England. He was less than convincing in his attempt to play the devil’s advocate. Particularly ludicrous were a number of derogatory statements such as:

Germany already had a culture when *die Halifax* had no inkling of the term yet. [—] Within the last six years more has been done for culture in Germany than in England within the last 100 years. [—]

I believe that a single German, let us say, Beethoven, achieved more in the realm of music than all Englishmen of the past and present together!

Moreover, Hitler concentrated on the parallels Chamberlain had drawn with the Second Punic War. He threatened the British by saying that he would make them “scurry back to the Thames.”

Hitler’s speech of November 8 read as follows:¹¹⁹⁵

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen!

I have come to join you for a few hours to relive in your midst the memory of a day which has become of supreme significance to us, to the Movement, and hence to the entire German Volk.

It was a most difficult decision which I had to make and see through at the time. The apparent failure led to the birth of the great National Socialist Liberation Movement. It was as a result of this failure that the big trial came about, which allowed us, for the first time, to step before the public in defense of our views, our goals; it allowed this decision of ours to bear the responsibility in order to acquaint the broad mass of our Volk with our ideas.

That it was possible for the National Socialist Movement to grow so much in the span of the four years leading from 1919 to 1923, for it to succeed in mobilizing the entire nation, for the first time, by this eye-opening event, must largely be ascribed to the general situation in Germany at the time. A terrible catastrophe had come over our Volk and our land. After a peace of nearly forty-five years, Germany had been driven into a war. The question of guilt in this war has been much debated.

We know today—and we already knew it back then—that, up to the year 1914, the Reich Government was guilty of only one thing, namely, of not having done everything which could have been done and should have been done, in the service of the nation’s recovery. Moreover, it could be blamed for allowing Germany to enter the war only at the most inopportune moment. Undoubtedly, had Germany truly wanted war, there would have been many better opportunities earlier.

The forces which opposed us at the time have also engineered the present war against Germany—with the same empty phrases and the same lies. All of us, insofar as we were soldiers back then, know that neither the English nor the French conquered us on the battlefield. A monumental lie was needed to rob this Volk of its weapons.

Today there may be one or the other man abroad who is surprised at my great self-confidence. I can only say to him: I won this self-confidence on the battlefield! In those four years, I never for a moment had the conviction or the oppressive knowledge that any of our enemies was superior to us. Neither the French nor the English displayed greater courage, greater valor, or greater defiance of death than did the German soldier.

What brought Germany to the ground back then were the lies of our enemies. It was the same men who lied then who lie today once more, since they are the same old warmongers who already opposed Germany in the Great War. At the time, Mr. Churchill agitated for war. At the time, there was a weak government in Germany. And it is the same Mr. Churchill who is agitating for war today. But in Germany, there is another government! It was the government of today which fought the British back then. It has no more respect for them than for any other party. And it does not feel inferior in the least. To the contrary, it is convinced of its superiority.

The lies back then were the same ones as today.

Why did England go to war back then? In 1914, the English claimed: Great Britain is fighting for the freedom of the small nations. Later we all saw how Great Britain dealt summarily with the freedom of these small nations, how little its so-called statesmen cared for the freedom of these small nations, how they repressed the minorities there, abused the peoples. And this is precisely what they are doing today and what they do whenever it suits their ends and programs.

They claimed at the time: England is fighting for justice! Well, England has been fighting for justice for three hundred years now and, as recompense, the dear Lord has given it about forty million square kilometers of soil on this earth and, in addition, the “right” to rule over 480 million human beings. Such is the Lord’s recompense for “people who fight only for justice.” Especially for people who fight only for the “right of others to self-determination,” as, in 1914, England supposedly fought for this “right to self-determination.” It declared: “The British soldier is not fighting for his own interests, but for the right of all peoples to self-determination.” Now, England could well have proclaimed this right to self-determination for the peoples of the British Empire at the time. Apparently, it was saving this for the next war!

And then England was fighting for “civilization,” which can be found only in the British Isles. Civilization reigns supreme only in the English miners’ districts, in the English slums, in Whitechapel, and the other quarters of mass destitution and social debasement.

Moreover—as usual—England set out to do battle for the cause of “humanity.” Humanity was stuffed into shells as gunpowder. After all, you can employ whatever weapons, as long as you are fighting for a noble, lofty goal. And this is something England has always done!

They went a step further yet to declare: We English are not fighting against the German Volk; to the contrary, we love the German Volk. We—Churchill, Chamberlain, and the others—are only fighting the regime which oppresses the German Volk. For we English have only one mission: to deliver Germany from this regime and to thereby make the German Volk happy. And to this end, the English are fighting primarily to relieve the German Volk of the burden of militarism. Yes, the day will come when it will not need to carry any more weapons. We English will make it totally free of weapons.

Moreover, they declared it was a shabby thing to write that German trade was a thorn in their side. “On the contrary, we want free trade. We have nothing against the German merchant marine!” That is what Herr Churchill said at the time. They declared it was disgraceful slander to claim that England had its eyes on Germany’s colonies—even to think as much was disgraceful. They declared this in 1914, 1916, 1917, and in 1918 still.

They went a step further to say they were fighting not for victory, but for a peace of understanding, a peace of reconciliation, and, above all, a peace of equality of rights. And this peace would make it possible to renounce armament in the future.

Hence, in all truth, they were fighting against war. England fought against war, to eliminate war, to wage war against those fighting wars, to fight the resistance of those invaded. Thus, they declared there could be no talk of reparation payments as a goal in British war policy. On the contrary, they were seeking a peace devoid of reparations. This peace was to be attained through a general disarmament. This peace was to be crowned by the creation of an institution uniting all peoples.

And England’s great second, Wilson, summed all this up in Fourteen Points, supplemented by three further ones. They assured us that we had nothing to fear, that we would be treated fairly. All we needed to do was to lay down our arms and to trust England. Then we would be welcomed with open arms into a true community of man, ruled by law. There, the colonies would be redistributed fairly in a manner in which all justified claims to colonies would be heard. This would be done in all solemnity in the League of Nations. War would be abolished for good, and eternal peace would reign.

From the English point of view, it was understandable that a power, which ruled over forty million square kilometers and 480 million human beings with only forty-six million Englishmen, should desire peace after nearly three hundred years of world conquest by England. “For three hundred years, we have subjugated country after country, thrown down people after people. We now rule the world and we would like to have some peace and quiet for this, please!” This was clear, and it was comprehensible that the League of Nations was set up in an effort to warrant stabilization¹¹⁹⁶ of the state of affairs which thus had come about.

Things developed differently, however.

And today, an English minister steps up, tears in his eyes, and says: “Oh, how we would love to come to an understanding with Germany. If we could only trust the word of the German leadership!”¹¹⁹⁷ The same is on the tip of my tongue! How we would love to come to an understanding with England.

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If we could only trust the word of its leadership! When has there ever been a people more vilely lied to and tricked than the German Volk by English statesmen in the past two decades?

What happened to the promised freedom of the peoples? What happened to justice? What happened to the peace without victors and vanquished? What happened to the right of all peoples to self-determination? What happened to the renunciation of reparations? What happened to the fair settlement of the colonial question? What happened to the solemn declaration not to take its colonies from Germany? What happened to the sacrosanct assurance not to burden us unnecessarily? What finally happened to the assurances that we would be welcomed as equals into the open arms of the so-called League of Nations? What happened to the assurances of a general disarmament?

All lies. Broken promises.

Our colonies were taken from us. Our trade was ruined. Our merchant marine was robbed. Millions of Germans were torn from us and abused. Reparation payments were demanded of our Volk which it could not possibly have paid in a hundred years. We were all thrust into deep poverty.

The National Socialist Movement came into being because of this poverty.

Let no one act as though today, if only Germany were not National Socialist, a golden British heart would open up to it.

God knows the Germany we once knew was completely different from the National Socialist one. That Germany was democratic, it was cosmopolitan, it blindly believed in the assurances of British statesmen. That Germany still knew trust, it disarmed itself, and it dishonored itself. And it was lied to and tricked all the more! Our Movement came into being because of the misery this brought on. From the greatest breach of faith of all time came the events at Spa¹¹⁹⁸ and then the shameful Diktat of Versailles.

You know, my old Comrades in Arms, how I expounded this treaty before you time and time again from this very spot. Point for point. Over 440 articles, each of which represented an insult and a violation of a great nation. Destitution and despair took hold of the Volk. Then followed the years of inflation, robbing the Volk of all means of sustenance, the times of rampant unemployment, of enormous numbers of suicides¹¹⁹⁹ in Germany. In two years, we had more suicides in Germany than Americans were killed in the course of the war in the West. The National Socialist Movement came into being because of this great poverty; and from its beginnings it had to make the most difficult decisions.

One of these decisions was the decision to revolt on November 8, 1923. It ended in failure, or so it appeared at the time. Still, its sacrifices brought the delivery of Germany. Sixteen dead! Millions of living were revived through their deaths. National Socialism then set out on its triumphant march.

In the days since then, Germany has become a world power—thanks to our Movement! Of course, it was understandable that the enemy of old began to agitate once more the minute we overcame the aftereffects of the defeat.

Undoubtedly, there are two kinds of Englishmen.¹²⁰⁰ We do not wish to be unjst here. There are many men in England, too, who dislike all these hypocritical airs, and who wish to have nothing to do with this. Either they

have been silenced or they are helpless. What is decisive for us is that, despite searching for years, we have not found this type of Englishman.

My Party Comrades, you know how I worked for an understanding with England for nearly two decades. How we limited ourselves in the conduct of German politics to bring about this understanding! This was the case with France also. The things we wrote off, the things we renounced!

One thing was obvious: no German Government can renounce Germany's right to life! And, above all, a National Socialist Government has no intention of renouncing such a right to life! On the contrary, our protest was spurred by the renunciation of this right to life once made by our democratic politicians. Therefore, I shall carry through the life and the security of the German Volk and Reich under all circumstances!

I have never presumed to interfere in British or French affairs. If an Englishman stands up today to say, "We feel responsible for the fate of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe," then I can only reply to this gentleman: Then we are just as responsible for the fate of the peoples of Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and, for all I care, of India as well.

Should a fourth Englishman say, "For us the frontier runs along the Rhine," and the next comes up to say, "For us the frontier runs along the Vistula river," then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we will have to help matters along!

In any event, today's Germany stands determined to secure its borders and to preserve its Lebensraum. It is an area not cultivated by the English. We did not go anywhere the English brought culture before us. Since, in his speech yesterday, Lord Halifax declared himself to be a champion of the arts and culture, and because of this Germany had to be destroyed, then all we can say is: Germany already had a culture when *die Halifaxe*¹²⁰¹ had no inkling of the term yet.

Within the last six years more has been done for culture in Germany than in England within the last 100 years. And in those locations which we have reached to date, we have not found any monuments of British apostles of culture, but only cultural monuments of great Germans. In vain I searched for British monuments of culture in Prague and Posen [Poznań], Graudenz and Thorn, Danzig and Vienna. Perhaps they can be found only in Egypt or India.

In any event, we uplifted the German nation year by year, beginning in the year 1933 and throughout the years 1934, 1935, and 1936. One stage at a time, step by step we liberated Germany and made it strong! And in this instance, I do understand the plight of the international warmongers. To their great regret, they were forced to realize that the new Germany is by no means the old Germany.

And I strove not only to develop the cultural aspects of our life, but also to revise our position in power politics, and this thoroughly. We have built up a Wehrmacht—and I can well permit myself to say so today: there is not a better one to be found in the world! And behind this Wehrmacht stands the Volk with its ranks closed as never before in German history! And above this Wehrmacht, above this Volk, there stands a government of zealotry willpower, the like of which has not been seen in Germany in the past centuries!

And, as you know, this new German Reich possesses no war aims in this struggle against England and France. In my last speech, in which I held out my hand to England and France one last time,¹²⁰² I already made clear where I stand in this matter. When we are attacked now, this cannot have anything to do with the questions of Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Poland, because they are brought up as the occasion demands only to be promptly forgotten.

The case of Poland proves that England is not interested in the existence of such states; otherwise it would have had to declare war on the Soviet Union as well, since Poland was divided approximately in half.¹²⁰³ But now the English say that this is not really decisive any longer; we have a different war aim. First, it was the independence of Poland, then the elimination of Nazism, then again guarantees for the future. It will always be something else. They will wage war as long as they find someone willing to wage the war in their stead, someone willing to sacrifice himself for them. The reasons are the same old empty phrases. If it declared it wished to stand up for liberty in general and in particular, Great Britain could set a wonderful example for the world by granting full liberties to its own peoples.¹²⁰⁴

How noble might this new British crusade look, had it been preceded by the granting of liberty to 350 million Indians or a proclamation of independence and the right of free elections for the remaining British colonies! How gladly would we bow to such an England! Instead, we see England oppressing these millions, just as it stood by and watched the oppression of several million Germans.

Hence it cannot move us in the least when today an unctuous British minister proclaims England has an eye only to ideals and not to any selfish goals. Of course—I have mentioned this before—the British have never yet fought for selfish goals. And, as recompense for this selfless struggle, the dear Lord presented them with so many lands and so many peoples.

And when, on this day, they declare they are not fighting for any selfish goals, then this is simply ridiculous! The German Volk cannot help but be astounded at the simplicity of those who believe, after twenty years of this incredible deception of the world, they can approach us once more with the same swindle.

Or when they say that they stand up for culture: England as the creator of culture is a chapter in its own right. The English cannot tell us Germans anything about culture: our music, our poetry, our architecture, our paintings, our sculptures, can more than stand a comparison to the English arts. I believe that a single German, let us say, Beethoven, achieved more in the realm of music than all Englishmen of the past and present together! And we take care of this culture better than the English are capable of doing.

Now that they say their only aim in this war is to finally end all wars—well, why did they begin this war in the first place? This war began solely because England so desired! And we stand convinced that there shall be war as long as the goods of this earth are not fairly distributed, and as long as this distribution is not a voluntary and a just one. This could have been done long ago! And today they say: “Yes, we simply cannot return the colonies to National Socialist Germany, as much as we regret this. We would truly like

to redistribute the raw materials of this earth, but we would need to be able to give them to someone we could trust." Well, gentlemen, there were other governments in power in Germany before ours. And these were governments greatly to England's liking, in part even propped up by England. You should have been able to vest your trust in them! Why did you not let them have some of the goods, these governments which you trusted? After all, there would have been no reason to redistribute them, had our belongings not been stolen from us in the first place.

And we, too, are of the opinion that this war must come to an end. War cannot, should not, and will not come to haunt us every few years. We hence think it necessary for nations to limit themselves to their spheres of influence. In other words, there must be an end to this situation where one people takes upon itself to play the world's policeman and interferes in everybody else's affairs. The British Government will come to realize that, at least as far as Germany is concerned, the attempt to erect a police dictatorship over us will fail, and must fail.

Neither in the past nor in the present have we encountered members of the British Government in their role as self-proclaimed apostles of culture—and in the role of policemen we simply cannot bear to see them.

The true reason for their actions is a different one. They hate social Germany (*das soziale Deutschland*)!

What have we done to them? Nothing at all. Have we threatened them? Not in a single instance. Were we not ready to conclude an agreement with them? Yes, we were. And we even did so. Did we not restrict ourselves in our armaments?¹²⁰⁵ Alas, all this was of no interest to them.

What they hate is the Germany which sets a dangerous example for them, this social Germany. It is the Germany of a social labor legislation which they already hated before the World War and which they still hate today. It is the Germany of social welfare, of social equality, of the elimination of class differences—this is what they hate! They hate this Germany which in the course of seven years has labored to afford its Volksgenossen a decent life. They hate this Germany which has eliminated unemployment, which, in spite of all their wealth, they have not been able to eliminate. This Germany which grants its laborers decent housing—this is what they hate because they have a feeling their own peoples could be "infected" thereby. They hate this Germany of social legislation, this Germany which celebrates the first of May as the day of honest labor.

They hate this Germany which has taken up this struggle for improved living conditions. This Germany they hate! They hate this Germany, this ethnically healthy (*volksgesund*) Germany, where children are washed and are not full of lice, and which does not allow conditions to take hold, such as their own press now freely admits to.

It is their big money men, their Jewish and non-Jewish international banking barons, who hate us because they see in Germany a bad example potentially rousing other peoples, especially their own people. They hate this Germany with its young, healthy, blossoming new generation, the Germany which takes such care of the well-being of this generation.

And, of course, they hate the strong Germany, the Germany on the march, which takes upon itself sacrifices voluntarily.

We have just seen how much they hate us. We drew up a Four-Year Plan to help ourselves. We have not taken anything from anyone through this Four-Year Plan. When we turn coal into gasoline or rubber, or when we see to other forms of substitution, what are we thereby taking from others? Nothing, nothing at all. To the contrary, they should have been happy and said: "Then they do not burden our markets. If they make their own gasoline, they do not need to export to be able to import.—All the better for us!" No, they fought this Four-Year Plan because it made Germany healthy! That was the only reason.

It is a fight against a free, an independent, a viable Germany! That is their fight.

And this we oppose in our fight. This struggle is our eternally unchanging National Socialist fight for the erection of a healthy, strong Volksgemeinschaft; for an overcoming and repairing of the damage done to this community and for the security of this community against the outside world. And this is the goal: we fight for the security of our Volk, for our Lebensraum. We shall allow no one to interfere in this!

And now that the English declare this battle to be the Second Punic War, history has not yet determined who shall play Rome and who shall play Carthage in this case. In the first war England assuredly did not play Rome, as Rome emerged victorious from the First Punic War. In the First World War England was not the victor, but rather others won that war for it. And in the second—I can assure you of this much—England will even less be the victor!

This time a different Germany faces the England of the World War; this it will be able to appreciate in the foreseeable future! It is a Germany suffused by a tremendous will and it can only laugh at the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers. And now if an Englishman comes and says, "We fight for the freedom of the world; we fight for democracy; we fight for culture; we fight for civilization; we fight for justice; and so on," then this will be met with resounding laughter in Germany.

And, moreover, a generation is still alive today which personally can appreciate the "uprightness" of such British versions of the war. And even if we have not learned anything since then, we have not forgotten anything either. And not only have we not forgotten anything, we have learned something.

And every British balloon which the wind blows over our lines and which drops off more or less spirited leaflets here proves to us that time stood still in this outside world during the past twenty years.

And every echo elicited in Germany should prove to them that a Movement has taken place here, a Movement of enormous proportions, of enormous force and effectiveness. England does not want peace! We heard this again yesterday.

In my speech before the Reichstag, I already declared that, for my person, I have nothing to add. The rest we shall discuss with the English in the only language which they seem capable of understanding. I regret that France has

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entered the service of these British warmongers, and has allied itself with England in this manner. As concerns Germany, we have never been afraid of one front. Once we successfully defended two fronts. We have one front now, and we shall hold our own on this front with success—of this rest assured!

I regarded the success in arriving at an understanding with Russia not as a triumph of German politics, but as a triumph of reason. Once before these two peoples engaged each other in war and nearly fatal blood-letting. Neither of us profited from this and now we have resolved not to do the gentlemen in London and Paris this favor a second time.¹²⁰⁶

We are facing times of great change today. Struggle carried National Socialism forth. We all were soldiers back then. A great number of us have pulled on the gray tunic once more. The others have remained soldiers. Germany has undergone a thorough change. Just as the Prussia of 1813–14 could not be compared to the Prussia of 1806, so the Germany of 1939, 1940, 1941, or 1942, cannot be compared to the Germany of 1914, 1915, 1917, or 1918.

What happened then will never again happen in the future!

We will make sure, and the Party shall vouch for this, that the occurrences we were so unfortunate as to witness in the World War will never again happen in Germany. We squarely dealt with them, my National Socialist fighters, when we were fighting still as a ludicrously small minority within Germany. Then we had only our belief. Nevertheless, we brought down these manifestations and eliminated them. And, moreover, today we have power!

Our will shall not bend in this external struggle any more than it did in the internal struggle for power. Then I repeatedly told you: everything is conceivable with one exception: we will never capitulate. And as a National Socialist standing before the world today, I can only repeat: everything is conceivable—a German capitulation never! And if someone informs me, “Then the war will last three years,” I answer: Let it last as long as it will.¹²⁰⁷ Germany will never capitulate: not now and not in the future!

I was told that England is preparing for a three-year war. On the day of the British declaration of war, I ordered the Field Marshal to immediately gear all preparations toward a duration of five years. I did so not because I believe this war will take five years, but because we shall not capitulate at the end of five years either—for nothing in the world!

We shall show these gentlemen the force of a people eighty-million strong, united under one leadership, led by one will, forged together in one community. Commemoration of our great dead drives the Party to labor all the more in fulfillment of its great mission. It has become the bearer of the will, the unity, the integration, and hence of the German Volksgemeinschaft as such.

Whatever the individual among us must bear in terms of sacrifice will pass and is of no importance. What is and remains decisive is only the victory! Thanks to our preparations we are able to wage this war under far more favorable circumstances than in the year 1914. Then Germany blindly stumbled into the war. Today we have a nation which prepared psychologically

for many years. Above all, it is economically prepared. We have taken great pains to assure through our planning that the German planes do not run out of fuel. We have taken care that from the day the war is declared rationing sets in immediately, so that, in the first year of the war, costly goods are not squandered, wasted, or destroyed.

We have secured all prerequisites necessary for the longest time possible.¹²⁰⁸ We have furthermore developed Germany's potential to the fullest in all other areas as well. Thus, today, I can give you the assurance: they shall not overpower us either militarily or economically—not in the least. There is only one possible victor: it is we.

That Mr. Churchill cannot believe this I attribute to his great age.¹²⁰⁹ Others have not believed it either. Had the English not driven them into this war, our Polish enemies would never have gone to war. England backed them, propped them up, and incited them. The course of this war has perhaps for the first time shown precisely what mighty military instrument the German Reich has meanwhile forged for itself.

It was not, my Volksgenossen, as if the Poles were so cowardly that they ran away—this was not the case! The Poles fought with great valor at many a location. And although this state of over 36 million men had nearly fifty divisions with recruits numbering 300,000 every year as compared to the 120,000 in France presently—this state was militarily beaten in an unbelievable ten [!] days, was destroyed in eighteen days, and was forced to finally capitulate in thirty days.

In this we acknowledge as well how much Providence has helped us here. It has allowed our plans to ripen fully and has visibly blessed their fruits. Otherwise, this work could not have succeeded in such a short time. Hence, we believe that Providence willed what has come to pass. I often used to tell you that the defeat of 1918 was well-deserved, as we had never before shown ourselves worthy of great victories and have not known how to preserve them. No one shall accuse us of this in the future.

With profound gratitude, we bow before our heroes, our valiant soldiers, our dead comrades, and our injured men. Through their sacrifice they have contributed to the defeat, within only thirty days, of the first enemy who brought about this war. May every German realize that the sacrifice of these men is worth no less than the one another man may have to make in the future. No one has the right to regard his future sacrifice as a more demanding one. As National Socialists, we have gathered knowledge and made vows in veneration of the dead of November 9 in the history of our Movement. May the realization always be with us that the cause for which the first sixteen died is worthy of the similar sacrifices to which it obliges many others, if necessary.

Countless millions fell on the battlefield for this, our German Volk, in the course of the centuries, even the millenniums. Millions of others shed their blood for it. Not one of us knows if this will not be his fate also. Yet every one of us must know that he is not making a greater sacrifice than others have made before him, and others after him will have to make. The sacrifice of the woman bearing a child for this nation is equal to that of the man who defends this nation.

We National Socialists have always been fighters. This is a great time. And in it, we shall prove ourselves all the more as fighters.

In so doing, we shall best honor the memory of this first sacrifice made by our Movement. I cannot end today's evening without, as always, thanking you for your loyal following throughout those long years, or without promising you to hold up high our old ideals in the future. We shall stand up for them and we shall not shrink from putting our own lives on the line to realize the program of our Movement, that program which demands nothing but to secure our Volk's life and existence in this world.

This is the first commandment of our National Socialist profession of faith and it also is the last one which hangs over every National Socialist when, after the fulfillment of his duties, he departs this life.

Sieg Heil—to our Party Comrades of the National Socialist Movement, to our German Volk, and above all to our victorious Wehrmacht!

Once Hitler had ended, he departed for Berlin, supposedly on "urgent state business." This was not entirely true, however. There were no events requiring his presence in the Reich capital on the morning of November 9. Hitler possibly did not desire to be present in Munich for the festivities on the following day. He dreaded the public appearance connected of necessity to these. After all, his speculations on the conclusion of pending friendly accords with Great Britain had been disproved beyond doubt by England's declaration of war on September 3. Moreover, the British rejection of the peace proposals of October 6 had further embarrassed Hitler and his misconceived policy. In a 1934 precedent—the aftermath of the Röhm Purge—Hitler had also canceled his participation in the march to the Munich Feldherrnhalle to escape inconvenient exposure to the public and its scrutiny.

Yet it was peculiar that Hitler wanted to use the scheduled train for Berlin that day absolutely.¹²¹⁰ He had arrived in Munich by plane. In the afternoon, however, he had discussed the weather forecast with Baur, as his pilot later recorded,¹²¹¹ and had determined to take the train. Thus, his special train compartment was to be connected to the ordinary train leaving for Berlin in the evening.

In all likelihood, the circumstances and motives behind the explosion at the Bürgerbräukeller and Hitler's mysterious escape will never be completely resolved. A scenario was much discussed in the aftermath: that Hitler knew of the bomb attack, which was a bogus assassination attempt staged with the help of the Gestapo. Thus, Hitler was eager to leave the Bürgerbräukeller earlier than scheduled. This explanation is not very convincing, however, as Hitler had a paranoiac

fear of attempts on his life. Undoubtedly, he would not have spoken that long, since technical problems could well have caused the bomb to go off prematurely. Further, Hitler immediately rejected the first report of a detonation in Munich, which Goebbels brought him at the train's stop in Nuremberg, with the statement: "This is a false report."¹²¹² Then, after thinking for some time, he stated: "I am completely calm now. That I left the Bürgerbräu earlier than usual is a confirmation that Providence wishes me to attain my goals."

The *Völkischer Beobachter* naturally appropriated Hitler's supernatural interpretation.¹²¹³ The November 9 edition bore the heading: "The miraculous delivery of the Führer." The paper published the following official account of the occurrence:¹²¹⁴

Munich, November 9

The Führer arrived in Munich on Wednesday [November 8] for a short visit on the occasion of the anniversary celebration of the Old Fighters. In the place of Party Comrade Hess, the Führer himself gave the address at the Bürgerbräukeller. State business forced the Führer to leave the Bürgerbräukeller earlier than planned and to return to Berlin that night. From the Bürgerbräukeller he proceeded to the station and boarded the train awaiting him.

An explosion took place in the Bürgerbräukeller shortly after the Führer had left. Of those present seven were killed,¹²¹⁵ and sixty-three sustained serious injuries. The names of the dead are: [here a detailed listing of those killed followed, with names, date of birth, and last place of residence]. News of the assassination attempt, which bore traces of foreign instigation, immediately brought forth a fanatical outrage among Munich's population. Reward for the apprehension of the culprit is set at 500,000 Marks, a sum raised to 600,000 Marks by the voluntary contribution of a private individual.

The devastating explosion in the Bürgerbräukeller occurred at approximately 9:20 p.m. At this time the Führer had already left the hall. Nearly all leading men of the Movement, Reichsleiters, and Gauleiters accompanied him to the station gate. There he boarded the train to return to Berlin for urgent state business, immediately after ending his speech. It can only be termed a miracle that the Führer escaped this attempt on his life which was simultaneously an attempt against the security of the Reich.

The supposed "fanatical outrage among Munich's population" was pure fabrication by the paper. Germany's general public was not greatly disconcerted by the event. Most acknowledged the news silently, as there was something decidedly odd about the entire occurrence. This suspicion on the part of the public was not allayed either by a DNB article which appeared November 21, 1939 and which contained the Police Chief's official position on the matter as well as a description of the alleged perpetrator. According to the statement by

the police, “a thirty-six year old mechanic by the name of Johann Georg Elser had already penetrated the building 144 hours before the explosion.” The police claimed that this one man had devised a time bomb and had mounted it on one of the pillars in the cellar. On the night of November 7 to November 8, the assailant had entered the building once more in order to make sure that the alarm clock inside the time bomb still ticked properly. The police apprehended him the following night as he attempted to escape across the border into Switzerland.¹²¹⁶

The feeling of skepticism about the background of the event was echoed abroad. Ciano noted the following in his diary: “The attempt on Hitler’s life at Munich leaves everybody quite skeptical, and Mussolini is more skeptical than anyone else. In reality many aspects of the affair do not altogether convince us of the accuracy of the account given in the papers.”¹²¹⁷

On that November 9, yet another mysterious incident occurred at the Dutch border. From Dutch sovereign territory, a German special Kommando abducted two British Secret Service agents and brought them to Germany where they were subsequently arrested. The two men had come to a local café in the Dutch frontier city of Venlo, where the young SS Gruppenführer Walter Schellenberg had lured them to a secret meeting, using the alias “Captain Schemmel of the German opposition.”¹²¹⁸

This event was obviously intended to furnish the “propagandistic pretext” for German aggression against the Benelux States. The method employed reflected the Polish precedent, especially since Alfred Naujocks headed the operation once more. Naujocks had staged the alleged Polish assault on the Gleiwitz radio station of August 31.¹²¹⁹ And indeed—on May 10, 1940—Hitler recalled the “Venlo incident” in his exposition of motivations behind the German invasion of the Netherlands.¹²²⁰

On the morning of November 9, Hitler’s train arrived on schedule at the Anhalt station. There Göring and Lammers were on hand to welcome him back to the capital.¹²²¹ In Munich, Hess conducted the remaining official ceremonies, placing wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and at the Königlicher Platz in commemoration of the 1923 Putsch.

Meanwhile, telegram upon telegram reached the Reich Chancellery to congratulate Hitler on his “miraculous escape.” From Italy King Victor Emmanuel wired his felicitations, as did Mussolini, the Italian Marshals Balbo and Graziani; Ciano and Dino Porrone, a minister in

November 9, 1939

Mussolini's Cabinet; King Leopold of Belgium; King Boris of Bulgaria; Queen Wilhelmine of the Netherlands; King Carol of Rumania; Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia; the Hungarian Regent Horthy; the Slovak State President Tiso. Pope Pius XII likewise wired his congratulations to Hitler.¹²²²

Hitler's telegraphic reply to the Italian King read:¹²²³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my profound gratitude for the friendly words relayed to me by telegraph. Adolf Hitler

Mussolini received the following wire:¹²²⁴

For the sympathies expressed to me, in the name of Fascist Italy, on the death of my old comrades in arms and for your friendly words for my person, I thank you with all my heart. I accept them, with grateful contentment, as renewed evidence of the comradely sentiments existing between us. With my best greetings and my sincere best wishes for you and Fascist Italy, I remain your devoted friend,

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, back in Munich again, Hitler attended the memorial ceremony in front of the Feldherrnhalle at 11:00 a.m., dedicated to those killed in the explosion.¹²²⁵ Rudolf Hess delivered the commemorative address on the occasion. Wearing a black crape ribbon attached to the left sleeve of his coat, Hitler then stepped forth to place a wreath before the numerous coffins. Thereupon he shook the hands of the surviving family members. Another brief "moment of silence" in front of the coffins followed before Hitler left the "site of the state act" and returned to the Munich Residence. From there he went to the surgical division of the city hospital and to the hospital on the right bank of the Isar, where the wounded were being cared for. Later, he toured the site of the bomb's detonation.

On this day also, Hitler forwarded a telegram to Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, expressing his "gratitude and appreciation for the self-sacrificing service in the rescue mission after the bombing and assassination attempt." Later in the day, further congratulatory telegrams reached the Reich Chancellery from the following: the Japanese Emperor; the Shah of Iran; the King of Greece; the Spanish Head of State, Franco; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the State President of Finland; the State President of Lithuania; and the Prince of Liechtenstein.¹²²⁶

On November 11, Hitler ordered the publishing of a general statement of gratitude to the German Volk which read:¹²²⁷

In the wake of the wicked assassination attempt in Munich, the Führer received countless telegrams and letters from all Gaus of the German Reich and from many Germans beyond its borders, expressing heartfelt sympathy and sincere rejoicing at his delivery from this crime. As it is not possible for the Führer to reply individually to all these expressions of loyalty and of compassion for the victims of the assassination attempt, he wishes, in this manner, to convey his deeply felt gratitude to all Volksgenossen, who in the past days thought of his person, and of the dead and injured comrades and women.

On November 11 also, Hitler wired his congratulations to King Victor Emmanuel, who had turned seventy years old on this day.¹²²⁸

November 15 was the day the offensive in the West, in violation of the neutrality of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, was to have been launched according to the most recent schedule. Hitler judged it opportune to once more postpone this drive towards France.¹²²⁹ The upcoming winter played no crucial role in this since the weather was "equally bad" for both sides, as Hitler had already expounded in his October 27 speech before the generals. Far more decisive was the consideration that an element of surprise was no longer assured; troop movements along the border had been all too apparent and had put the neighboring states on the alert. Media attention paid to the Venlo incident and the explosion at Munich had further reinforced public concern with Hitler's latest moves, and Churchill had already expressed fear of a pending invasion and of its consequences in a radio broadcast of November 12, in which he stated:¹²³⁰

I shall not attempt to prophesy whether the frenzy of a cornered maniac will drive Herr Hitler into the worst of all his crimes; but this I will say without a doubt: that the fate of Holland and Belgium, like that of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, will be decided by the victory of the British Empire and the French Republic. If we are conquered, all will be enslaved, and the United States will be left single-handed to guard the rights of man. If we are not destroyed, all these countries will be rescued and restored to life and freedom.

In spite of the confidence Hitler displayed, Churchill's statement undoubtedly made an impression upon him. It may well have caused him to further delay action in the West for the time being. Later Hitler was to claim that, had he known of the military strength of Russia, he would have launched his offensive in the West in 1939, and would already have turned against the Soviet Union in 1940.¹²³¹ But such retrospective claims on the part of Hitler usually bore little significance.

They tended to serve the justification of some envisioned move on his art, or to account for a mistake already committed, and so were just rhetoric.

On November 18, Hitler issued the following proclamation “to the German Landvolk” (peasants):¹²³²

This year’s harvest has come to an end. In spite of the adverse weather conditions and the manpower shortages, the seeds for next year’s crop are already in the earth. The German Volk thanks its peasants for the great work which is of decisive significance in the struggle forced on us.¹²³³ With the help of the Almighty, for the coming year, we have secured nourishment for the Volk on our own soil.

Adolf Hitler

This pronouncement was truly a poor substitute for the lengthy official speeches Hitler customarily gave on the *Erntedankfest* and other occasions when he traditionally issued appeals to the German peasants. The previous year, however, festivities already had been canceled because “all means of transport” were bound up in the military occupation of the Sudetenland.¹²³⁴ And now these same “means of transport” were engaged elsewhere, and Hitler was too preoccupied with military matters to give much thought to the German peasants.

On November 18, Hitler signed into law another decree concerning the “struggle forced on us.” The subject matter was a postponement of the celebration of the Protestant Day of Prayer and Repentance. The official justification read as follows:¹²³⁵

Berlin, November 18, 1939

The struggle forced on the German Volk commands exertion of all our forces. Therefore the Day of Prayer and Repentance on Wednesday, November 22, will be postponed until Sunday, November 26.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On the next day, Hitler wired his condolences to Ecuador on the demise of State President Narváez.¹²³⁶

On November 20, Hitler issued “Directive No. 8 for the Conduct of the War.” It commanded that readiness in the West be “maintained in order to be able to continue at any time the assembly of forces which has already begun.”

To have greater freedom of action, he ordered the Wehrmacht to prepare carefully for the attack, but “in such a way that the attack can still be canceled.” The directive read:¹²³⁷

November 20, 1939

Directive No. 8 for the Conduct of the War

1. For the time being a state of readiness must be maintained in order to be able to continue at any time the assembly of forces which has already begun. Only in this way is it possible to take advantage immediately of favorable weather conditions.

The branches of the Wehrmacht will make their preparations in such a way that the attack can still be canceled, even if the order to that effect arrives at the High Commands as late as 11 p.m. on A-1 day. At that time, at the latest, the High Commands will receive either the code word "Danzig" (go through with the attack) or "Augsburg" (withhold the attack).

The Commanders in Chief, Army and Air, are requested to report to OKW, Operations Planning, immediately after the day of attack has been determined, the hour of attack agreed upon between them.

2. Contrary to the directive given previously all the proposed measures against Holland may be taken without special orders when the general attack begins. The attitude of the Dutch Armed Forces cannot be predicted. Where no resistance is met, the invasion is to be given the character of a peaceful occupation.

3. Land operations are to be executed on the basis of the directive of October 20 concerning assembly of forces.

That directive is supplemented as follows:

a. All preparations are to be made to facilitate a quick shift of the focal point of the operation from Army Group B to Army Group A, in case greater and quicker successes are scored there than at Army Group B, which seems likely with the present distribution of enemy forces.

b. Holland, including the West Frisian islands off the coast (excluding Texel for the present), is first of all to be occupied up to the Grebbe-Maas line.

4. The Navy's submarines will be allowed to take blockading measures against Belgian and, contrary to previous directives, also against Dutch harbors and shipping lanes during the night *before* the attack; its surface vessels and airplanes will be allowed to take such measures after the time the Army's attack begins. Even where the submarines are concerned, however, the space of time between the beginning of blockading operations and the time of the land attack must be kept as short as possible.

Operations against Dutch naval forces are permitted only if the latter take a hostile attitude

At the coastal areas to be occupied, the Navy will be in charge of the coastal artillery defense against attacks from the sea. Preparations are to be made for this.

5. The duties of the Luftwaffe remain unchanged. They have been supplemented by the special verbal orders issued by the Führer concerning airborne landings and the support to be given to the Army during the capture of the bridges west of Maastricht.

The 7th Airborne Division will be used for air landing operations only after the bridges across the Albert Canal are in our hands. The message to this effect is to be assured the quickest possible transmission between OKH and OKL.

Population centers, especially large open cities, and industries are not to be attacked either in the Dutch or in the Belgian-Luxembourg area without compelling military reasons.

Closing the border:

a. Traffic and communications across the Dutch, Belgian, and Luxembourg borders are to be maintained in the customary manner until the beginning of the attack, in order to preserve the element of surprise. Civil authorities are not to be involved in the preparations for closing the border until that time.

b. When the attack begins the German border with Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg is to be closed to all nonmilitary traffic and communications. Orders to that effect will be given by the Commanders in Chief, Army, to the military and civilian offices concerned. At the beginning of the attack, the OKW will inform the highest government authorities that measures to close the border are being ordered directly by the Commander in Chief, Army, even at those parts of the Dutch border which are outside of the area of operations.

c. At the other (neutral) borders of the Reich no restrictions will be made for the time being concerning traffic and communications. Further measures prepared with regard to the supervision of border-crossing by persons and communications will be put into effect if the need arises.

In the winter months of 1939–40, Hitler would take advantage of a combined strategy of both “Danzig” and “Augsburg” cases by repeatedly giving and rescinding orders to launch the offensive. This kept the troops on the alert and preserved a certain element of suspense in the operations. It also left the West in doubt as to whether the most recent order was to be taken seriously or not. This approach served its author well as the West began to succumb to laxness in responding to German moves.¹²³⁸

On November 23, Hitler first received a number of persons at the Reich Chancellery who had demonstrated merit in the construction of the West Wall, to award them the corresponding distinction.¹²³⁹ Among those who had distinguished themselves were: the Inspector General for Railroad Construction, Todt; Colonel General von Witzleben and General der Flieger Kitzinger, the Commanding Generals of the Army and Luftwaffe in the West; the Inspector of Fortresses, Lieutenant General Jacob; the Reich Leader of the Labor Service, Hierl, and the Reichsorganisationsleiter, Ley, who were jointly in charge of the Labor Service units deployed in the construction work and of those forced to do compulsory labor service there.

At noon on the same day, Hitler received the Commanders in Chief of the three Wehrmacht branches in the Reich Chancellery. The German News Bureau published the following official note on the lengthy lecture the generals were subjected to:¹²⁴⁰

Berlin, November 23

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht assembled about him the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht in the new Reich Chancellery as in the previous year.¹²⁴¹ Among other topics discussed, the Führer afforded them an evaluation of the combat experience gained in the East. These are to serve as guidelines for the future conduct of the war.

The reason for this summons of the heads of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe was not difficult to divine. Hitler sought this occasion to psychologically prepare the generals for the pending launch of the offensive in the West. The military men constantly failed to show the proper enthusiasm for offensive action. Ever since November 1937, and especially before the campaign against Poland, this greatly disconcerted Hitler. As in his addresses of May and August,¹²⁴² he was driven by the urgency of instilling in the generals the conviction that their understanding of military strategy was flawed. He, to the contrary, knew himself to be an expert on these matters. All he needed to do now was to proceed as he had in the summer when he had prefaced the invasion of Poland with a great and effective rhetorical appearance before the generals. Poland should have amply demonstrated to the generals that he was always right in the end.

He argued that, after “the hardest of all decisions,” i.e. his resolution to become a politician in 1919, he had always chosen the right path when confronted with a difficult situation. His rise to power; his decision to withdraw from the League of Nations; Germany’s rearmament; the military occupation of the Rhineland, of Austria, of Bohemia and Moravia, of Poland; all these decisions had proven right in the end. Naming Poland in this context took nerve on the part of Hitler who failed to mention that German troops there had encountered determined resistance and that this move had brought on a series of declarations of war against Germany. Hitler persuaded the generals that in the future as well everything would go just as he prophesied. If Germany won the war, not a soul would reproach him with the breach of neutrality. At any rate, going to war represented his “unalterable decision.” He stated he “did not organize the armed forces in order not to strike” and continued that “the decision to strike was always in me.”

Hitler openly showed his disdain for the military preparedness of the West in this speech. He faulted France for having allowed its army to “deteriorate” after the First World War. He accused England of having “neglected the expansion of its fleet.” The British Army, he claimed, “has only a symbolic meaning.” Moreover, he confidently

maintained that British anti-aircraft defenses possessed “only guns from the last war.” Having never thought much of the “primitive” Russians, he claimed, not surprisingly: “It is a fact that at the present time the Russian Army is of little worth.”

Exaggerated self-confidence and vanity pervaded the entire speech. Among other things, Hitler reasoned:

“As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me.”

“I am convinced of my powers of intellect and of decision.”

“The fate of the Reich depends only on me.”

“I have the greatest experience in all armament questions.”

“No one has ever achieved what I have achieved.”

Moreover, he expressed his determination in the following revealing words: “I shall shrink from nothing and shall annihilate everyone who is opposed to me.”

In summary, these were nearly the same arguments Napoleon had employed in June of 1805 to dispel the misgivings of his Arch-chancellor Cambacérès: “Trust me. Place trust in my power of action. The swiftness and power of my strikes will leave Europe astounded.”¹²⁴³

A record of the November 23, 1939 conference recovered from among the OKW documents found at Flensburg detailed the following:¹²⁴⁴

November 23, 1939—12:00 hours

Conference with the Führer, to which all principal military commanders are ordered. The Führer gives the following speech:

The propose of this conference is to give you an idea of the thinking which governs my view of impending events, and to tell you my decisions. The building up of our armed forces was only possible in connection with the ideological education of the German people by the Party.

When I started my political task in 1919, my strong belief in the final success was based on a thorough observation¹²⁴⁵ of the events of the day and the study of the reasons for their occurrence. Therefore, in the midst of the setbacks which were not spared me during my period of struggle, I never lost my belief. Providence had the last word and brought me success. On top of that, I had a clear recognition of the probable course of historical events and the firm will to make brutal decisions.

The first decision was in 1919, when after long internal conflict I became a politician and took up the struggle against my enemies. That was the hardest of all decisions. I had, moreover, the firm belief that I would arrive at my goal. First of all, I desired a new system of selection. I wanted to educate a minority which would take over the leadership. After 15 years I arrived at my goal, after strenuous struggles and many setbacks.

When I came to power in 1933, a period of the most difficult struggle lay behind me. Everything existing before that had collapsed. I had to reorganize everything beginning with the mass of the people and extending it to the armed forces. First internal reorganization, abolition of the appearances of decay and of the defeatist spirit, education to heroism.

While still engaged in internal reorganization, I undertook the second task—to release Germany from its international bonds. Two particular landmarks are to be pointed out in this connection—secession from the League of Nations and denunciation of the Disarmament Conference.

It was a hard decision. The number of prophets who predicted that it would lead to the occupation of the Rhineland was large; the number of believers was very small. I was supported by the nation which stood firmly behind me when I carried out my intentions.

After that the order for rearmament. Here again there were numerous prophets who predicted misfortunes, and only a few believers. In 1935 came the introduction of compulsory military service. After that, militarization of the Rhineland, again a step believed to be impossible at that time. The number of people who put trust in me was very small. Then the beginning of the fortification of the whole country, especially in the West.

One year later came Austria; this step also was considered doubtful. It brought about a considerable strengthening of the Reich. The next step was Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. But this step could not be accomplished in one move. First of all, in the West the West Wall had to be finished. It was not possible to reach the goal in one effort.

It was clear to me from the first moment that I could not be satisfied with the Sudeten-German territory. That was only a partial solution. The decision to march into Bohemia was made. Then followed the establishment of the Protectorate and with that the basis for the conquest of Poland was laid, but I was not quite clear at that time whether I should start first against the East and then against the West or vice-versa.

Moltke often made the same calculations in his time. By the pressure of events it came first to the fight against Poland. It will be charged against me: Fight and fight again. In fighting I see the fate of all creatures. Nobody can avoid fighting if he does not want to go under. The increasing number of people requires larger Lebensraum. My goal was to create a rational relation between the number of people and the space for them to live in.

The fight must start here. No nation can evade the solution of this problem. Otherwise it must yield and gradually go down. That is taught by history. First migration of peoples to the southeast, then adaptation of the number of people to the smaller space by emigration. In later years, adaptation of the number of people to insufficient space by reducing the numbers of births. This would lead to death of the nation, to bleeding to death. If a nation chooses this course all its weaknesses are mobilized. One yields to force from the outside and uses this force against oneself by the killing of the child. This means the greatest cowardice, decimation in numbers, and degradation. I decided on a different way—adaptation of the Lebensraum to the number of people.

It is important to recognize one thing. The state has a meaning only if it supports the maintenance of its national substance. In our case 82 million people are concerned. That means the greatest responsibility. He who does not want to assume this responsibility is not worthy of belonging to the body of the people. That gave me the strength to fight. It is an eternal problem to bring the number of Germans to a proper relationship to the available space. Security of the needed space. No calculated cleverness is of any help here, solution only with the sword. A people unable to produce the strength to fight must withdraw.

Struggles are different from those of 100 years ago. Today we can speak of a racial struggle. Today we fight for oil fields, rubber, mineral wealth, etc. After the Peace of Westphalia, Germany disintegrated. Disintegration, impotence of the German Reich was determined by treaty. This German impotence was removed by the creation of the Reich when Prussia realized her task. Then the opposition to France and England began. Since 1870, England has been against us. Bismarck and Moltke were certain that there would have to be one more action. The danger at that time was of a two-front war. Moltke was, at times, in favor of a preventive war. To take advantage of the slow progress of the Russian mobilization. German armed might was not fully employed. Insufficient hardness of the leading personalities. The basic thought of Moltke's plans was the offensive. He never thought of the defense.

Many opportunities were missed after Moltke's death. The solution was only possible by attacking a country at a favorable moment. Political and military leadership were to blame that the opportunities were lost. The military leadership always declared that it was not yet ready. In 1914, there came the war on several fronts. It did not bring the solution of the problem.

Today the second act of this drama is being written. For the first time in sixty-seven years, it must be made clear that we do not have a two-front war to wage. That which has been desired since 1870, and considered as impossible of achievement, has come to pass. For the first time in history,¹²⁴⁶ we have to fight on only one front; the other front is at present free. But no one can know how long that will remain so. I have doubted for a long time whether I should strike in the East and then in the West. Basically I did not organize the armed forces in order not to strike. The decision to strike was always in me. Earlier or later I wanted to solve the problem. Under the pressure of events, it was decided that the East was to be attacked first.

If the Polish war was won so quickly, it was due to the superiority of our armed forces. The most glorious event in our history. Unexpectedly small losses of men and material. Now the eastern front is held by only a few divisions. It is a situation which we viewed previously as impossible of achievement. Now the situation is as follows: The opponent in the West lies behind his fortifications. There is no possibility of coming to grips with him. The decisive question is—how long can we endure this situation?

Russia is at present not dangerous. It is weakened by many internal conditions. Moreover, we have the Treaty with Russia. Treaties, however, are kept as long as they serve a purpose. Russia will only keep it as long as Russia herself considers it to be to her benefit. Bismarck also thought so. One recalls

the Reinsurance Treaty.¹²⁴⁷ Now Russia still has far-reaching goals, above all the strengthening of her position in the Baltic.

We can oppose Russia only when we are free in the West. Further, Russia is seeking to increase her influence in the Balkans and is driving toward the Persian Gulf. That is also the goal of our foreign policy. Russia will do that which she considers to her benefit. At the present moment internationalism has retired to the background. In case Russia renounces it, she will go over to Pan-Slavism. It is difficult to see into the future. It is a fact that at the present time the Russian Army is of little worth. For the next one or two years, the present situation will remain.

Much depends on Italy, above all on Mussolini, whose death can alter everything. Italy has great goals for the consolidation of her empire. Fascism and the Duce personally are exclusively the proponents of this idea. The Court is opposed to it. As long as the Duce lives, so long can it be calculated that Italy will seize every opportunity to reach her imperialistic goals. However, it is too much to ask of Italy that she should join in the battle before Germany has seized the offensive in the West; similarly Russia did not attack until we had marched into Poland. Otherwise, Italy will think that France concerns herself only with Italy since Germany is sitting behind her West Wall. Italy will not attack until Germany has taken the offensive against France. Just as the death of Stalin, so the death of the Duce can bring danger to us. How easily the death of a statesman can come about I myself have experienced recently.¹²⁴⁸ Time must be used to the full; otherwise one will suddenly find himself faced with a new situation. As long as Italy maintains this position then no danger from Yugoslavia is to be feared. Similarly the neutrality of Rumania is assured by the attitude of Russia. Scandinavia is hostile to us because of Marxist influences, but is neutral now. America is still not dangerous to us because of her neutrality laws. The strengthening of our opponents by America is still not important. The position of Japan is still uncertain; it is not yet certain whether she will join against England.

Everything is determined by the fact that the moment is favorable now; in six months it might not be so any more.

As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me. Attempts at assassination may be repeated. I am convinced of my powers of intellect and of decision. Wars are always ended only by the annihilation of the opponent. Anyone who believes differently is irresponsible. Time is working for our adversaries. Now there is a relationship of forces which can never be more propitious for us. No compromises. Hardness toward ourselves. I shall strike and not capitulate.

The fate of the Reich depends only on me.

I shall act accordingly. Today we still have a superiority such as we have never had before. After 1914¹²⁴⁹ our opponents disarmed themselves of their own accord. England neglected the expansion of her fleet. The fleet is no longer sufficiently large to safeguard the shipping lanes. Only two new modern ships—*Rodney* and *Nelson*. New construction activity only in the Washington class which were, however, an unsatisfactory type.

The new measures can become effective only in 1941. In the Abyssinian war, England did not have enough forces to occupy Lake Tana. At Malta, Gibraltar, and London, little anti-aircraft protection. Since 1937, rearmament has begun again. At present, however, only a small number of divisions, which must form the nucleus of new divisions. Material for the Army being gathered together from all over the world. Not before next summer is a positive action to be expected.

The British Army has only a symbolic meaning. Rearmament in the air is proceeding. The first phase will end in the spring of 1940. Anti-aircraft has only guns from the last war. A German flyer at 6,000 meters altitude is safe from English anti-aircraft fire. The Navy will not be fully rearmed for one to two years. I have the greatest experience in all armament questions, and I know the difficulties which must be overcome therein.

After 1914,¹²⁴⁹ France reduced the length of service. After 1914,¹²⁴⁹ decrease in military might. Only in some artillery branches are we inferior. Only the French Navy was modernized. In the time after the war the French Army deteriorated. There were no changes until Germany rearmed and announced her demands.

In summary: (1) The number of active units in Germany is at the highest, (2) superiority of the Luftwaffe, (3) anti-aircraft beyond all competition, (4) the tank corps, (5) large number of anti-tank guns, five times as many machine guns as in 1914, (6) German artillery has great superiority because of the 10.5 guns, and (7) there is no French superiority in howitzers and mortars.

Numerical superiority, but also the value of the troops is greater than with the others. I was most deeply pained when I heard the opinion that the German Army was not individually as capable as it should have been. The infantry in Poland did not accomplish what one might have expected from it. Lax discipline.¹²⁵⁰ I believe that troops must be judged on their relative value in comparison with the opponent.

There is no doubt that our armed forces are the best. The individual German infantryman is better than the French. No hurrah-enthusiasm, but tough determination. I am told that the troops will advance only if the officers lead the way. In 1914, that was also the case. I am told we were better trained then. In reality we were only better trained on the drill field, but not for the war. I must pay the present leadership the compliment that it is better than it was in 1914. Mention of the collapse while storming Liège. There was nothing like this in the campaign in Poland.

Five million Germans have been called to the colors. Of what importance is it if a few of them disappoint. Daring in the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe.

I cannot bear to hear people say the Army is not in good order. Everything lies in the hands of the military leader. I can do anything with the German soldier if he is well led. We have succeeded with our small Navy in clearing the North Sea of the British. Recognition of the small Navy, especially the Commander in Chief of the Navy. We have a Luftwaffe which has succeeded in safeguarding the entire German Lebensraum. The land Army achieved outstanding things in Poland. Even in the West it has not been shown that the German soldier is inferior to the French.

Revolution from within is impossible. We are even superior to the enemy numerically in the West. Behind the Army stands the strongest armament industry of the world.

I am disturbed by the stronger and stronger appearance of the British. The Englishman is a tough opponent. Above all on the defense. There is no doubt that England will be represented in France by large forces at the latest in six to eight months.

We have an Achilles heel—the Ruhr. The conduct of the war depends on possession of the Ruhr. If England and France push through Belgium and Holland into the Ruhr, we shall be in the greatest danger. That could lead to the paralyzing of the German power of resistance. Every hope of compromise is childish. Victory or defeat! The question is not the fate of a National Socialist Germany, but who is to dominate Europe in the future. This question is worthy of the greatest efforts. Certainly England and France will assume the offensive against Germany when they are fully armed. England and France have means of pressure to bring Belgium and Holland to request English and French help. In Belgium and Holland the sympathies are all for France and England. Mention of the incident at Venlo.¹²⁵¹ The man who was shot was not an Englishman, but a Dutch general staff officer. This was kept silent in the press. The Netherlands' Government asked that the body of the Dutch officer be given up. This is one of their greatest stupidities. The Dutch press does not mention the incident any more. At a suitable time I shall exploit all that and use it to motivate my action.

If the French Army marches into Belgium in order to attack us it will be too late for us. We must anticipate them. On one more thing. U-boats, mines, and Luftwaffe (also for mines) can strike England effectively, if we have a better starting point. Now a flight to England demands so much fuel that sufficient bomb loads cannot be carried. The invention of a new type of mine is of greatest importance for the Navy.¹²⁵² Aircraft will be the chief mine layers now. We shall sow the English coast with mines which cannot be cleared. This mine warfare with the Luftwaffe demands a different starting point. England cannot live without its imports. We can feed ourselves. The continuous sowing of mines on the English coasts will bring England to her knees.¹²⁵³ However, this can only occur if we have occupied Belgium and Holland. It is a difficult decision for me. No one has ever achieved what I have achieved. My life is of no importance in all this. I have led the German people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am setting this work on a gamble. I have to choose between victory or annihilation. I choose victory. Greatest historical choice,¹²⁵⁴ to be compared with the decision of Frederick the Great before the first Silesian war. Prussia owes its rise to the heroism of one man. Even there the closest advisers were disposed to capitulation. Everything depended on Frederick the Great. Also the decisions of Bismarck in 1866 and 1870 were no less great.

My decision is unalterable. I shall attack France and England at the most favorable and earliest moment. Breach of the neutrality of Belgium and Holland is of no importance. No one will question that when we have won. We shall not justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914. If we do

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not violate neutrality, then England and France will. Without attack, the war cannot be ended victoriously. I consider it possible to end the war only by means of an attack. The question as to whether the attack will be successful no one can answer. Everything depends upon a kind Providence. The military conditions are favorable. A prerequisite, however, is that the leadership must give from above an example of fanatical unity. There would not be any failures if the leaders of the people always had the courage a rifleman must have. If, as in 1914, the commanders suffer a collapse of nerves,¹²⁵⁵ what should one demand of the simple rifleman?

The only possible conclusion: The enemy must be beaten by attack. Chances are different today than during the offensive of 1918. Numerically, we have more than 100 divisions. With respect to men, reserves can be supplied. The material situation is good. As for the rest, what does not happen today must happen tomorrow. The whole thing means the end of the World War, not just a single action. It is a matter of not just a single question but of the existence or nonexistence of the nation.

I ask you to pass on the spirit of determination to the lower echelons. (1) The decision is irrevocable. (2) There is only a prospect for success if the whole Wehrmacht is determined.

The spirit of the great men of our history must hearten us all. Fate does not demand from us any more than from the great men of German history. As long as I live, I shall think only of the victory of my people. I shall shrink from nothing and shall annihilate everyone who is opposed to me. I have decided to live my life so that I can stand unashamed when I have to die.

I want to annihilate the enemy. Behind me stands the German Volk, whose morale can only grow worse. Only he who struggles with destiny can have a kind Providence. Even in the present development I see the work of Providence.

If we come through this struggle victoriously—and we shall come through it—our time will go down in the history of our Volk. I shall stand or fall in this struggle. I shall never survive the defeat of my people. No capitulation to the outside, no revolution from within.

After this fiery speech, the generals were dismissed to return home or to their posts of assignment. Hitler felt confident he had taught them a lasting lesson. Assuredly, from now on, not one of the generals would dare to oppose him any longer.

There was one general, however, of whom Hitler was less certain: Brauchitsch. He summoned the Commander in Chief of the Army to his office at 6:00 p.m. the same day. Brauchitsch reported the following on the ensuing conversation in his statement before the Nuremberg Tribunal:¹²⁵⁶

I received orders to go to the Führer once more on the evening of November 23. In a lengthy discussion, he again reiterated all the accusations against the Army. In the course of this discussion, I offered to resign. He

declined, saying I had to fulfill my obligations and do my duty just like any other soldier.

On November 26, Hitler came to Munich one more time. He visited those injured in the Bürgerbräukeller explosion, who were confined at various hospitals in the city. Furthermore, Hitler called on the Reich Treasurer Schwarz at the latter's private apartment to congratulate him on his sixty-fourth birthday.¹²⁵⁷

On November 28, having returned to Berlin from his travels, Hitler decreed the port of Gotenhafen a Reich war harbor.¹²⁵⁸

On November 29, Hitler issued Directive No. 9 which read:¹²⁵⁹

Directive No. 9—Principles for the Conduct of the War
against the Enemy's Economy

1. In [our] war against the Western Powers, England sparks the determination to fight and is the leading power of our enemies. To throw down England is the prerequisite for final victory. The most effective means to achieve this is to paralyze England's economy by disrupting it at critical points.

2. The development of the situation and of our armament may, in the near future,¹²⁶⁰ create favorable conditions for extensive warfare against England's economic foundations. The necessary provisions must therefore be made as early as possible to strike an annihilating blow at England's economic strength by concentrating suitable arms of our Wehrmacht on the most important targets. The nonmilitary means of warfare, complementary to the measures of the Wehrmacht, will be put into effect according to special instructions.

3. As soon as the Army has succeeded in defeating the Anglo-French Field Army [*Operationsarmee*] and in occupying and holding a part of the coast facing England, the task of the Navy and the Luftwaffe of carrying out the struggle against England's economic strength will become of prime importance. Efforts for cooperation of the S- and K- Organization are to be made.

4. To the Navy and Luftwaffe will fall the following joint tasks, enumerated here in the sequence of their importance:

a. Attacks on the main English ports of transshipment by mining and blocking the approaches to the harbors and by destroying vital port installations and sea locks.

In this connection the role of the mine-laying planes will be a very important one, especially with regard to the harbors on the west coast of England, in narrow waterways, and estuaries.

b. Attacks on English merchant shipping and against the enemy fleet protecting it.

c. Destruction of English supplies, oil reserves and of food in refrigerated warehouses and grain elevators.

d. Disruption of English troop and supply transports to the French coast.

e. Destruction of industrial plants, the elimination of which is of decisive importance for the conduct of the war; above all of key-plants of aviation

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industry and the factories producing heavy ordnance, anti-aircraft guns, ammunition, and explosives.

5. The most important English transshipment ports which handle 95 percent of the foreign trade and could not be adequately replaced by others, are: London; Liverpool; Manchester for imports of food, timber, and oil, and the processing thereof. These three harbors, handling 58 percent of the peacetime imports, are of decisive importance. Newcastle; Swansea; Blyth; Cardiff; Sunderland; Barry; Hull for the export of coal.

The following may be considered alternate harbors, but to a limited extent and for certain goods only: Grangemouth; Holyhead; Leith; Bristol; Middlesbrough; Belfast; Grimsby; Newport; Southampton; Goole; Glasgow; Dundee.

It will be necessary to watch continuously for any possible shifting in the use of these harbors. Besides it will be important gradually to compress and shift English foreign trade into areas which are within easy range of our naval and air forces.

French harbors will be attacked only in so far as they play a role in the siege of England, or if they are of importance as debarkation points for troops.

6. In harbors which cannot be blocked effectively with mines, merchant shipping is to be paralysed by sinking ships in the roadsteads and by destroying vital harbor installations.

Special emphasis is to be laid upon the destruction of the great canal locks at the harbors of Leith, Sunderland, Hull, Grimsby, London, Manchester (Ship Canal), Liverpool, Cardiff, Swansea, and Bristol-Avonmouth. Particularly on the west coast these locks are very important in regulating the water level and, through it, the harbor traffic.

7. In preparing these actions it will be important to do the following:

a. Continually to check and supplement the basic data available on English harbors, their installations and capacity, as well as information about the English war industries and supply depots.

b. To rush the development of an effective method enabling planes to lay moored mines also.

c. To provide a supply of mines sufficient for the very high demands and numerous enough to meet the operational needs of the Navy and Luftwaffe.

d. To coordinate the conduct of operations of the Navy and Luftwaffe, as to time and location.

These preparations are to be made as soon as possible. I request the Commanders in Chief of the Navy and the Luftwaffe to keep me continuously informed about their plans.

I shall decide later as to when the restrictions still in effect in the naval and air war will be lifted. This probably will coincide with the start of the big offensive.

Adolf Hitler

In this directive Hitler once more played the brilliant statistician, detailing the supposed capacities of British harbors. As Napoleon had vainly sought to strangle England economically by blockading the

continent, Hitler truly believed these measures would “force England to her knees.” This did not prove realistic.

It was pure insanity, as anyone with a better knowledge of history could have assured Hitler, to attempt to “throw down England” by means of “paralyzing” England’s economy. Had it been necessary, Britain could have summoned the economic assistance of nearly half the planet, as far as the expanses of the British Empire stretched. It was Hitler’s fate to learn first hand just how strong the English were economically as well as militarily.

At 10:30 p.m. on the night of November 29, diplomatic relations between Russia and Finland ruptured. A few hours later, open hostilities broke out between the two countries. The situation in Finland resembled that of the Baltic States. Finland had also formed part of the Russian Empire before 1918. Now that Hitler had launched a forcible revision of the peace settlement of 1918-20, Moscow felt itself equally entitled to reclaim its former provinces. Russia had already carried through border revisions in the Baltic States, largely because Germany seemed to concur.

In Finland matters stood not so very differently. Its government had initially considered voluntarily ceding the military bases and strips of territory the Soviet Union demanded in the vicinity of Leningrad. Then, however, Helsinki resolved to put up resistance in the hope that the Western Powers, as well as Germany, would oppose Russian aggression. This proved a grave error. The Western Powers were already involved in a confrontation with Germany. They were not about to risk a conflict with Russia at this point for fear this might drive their potential ally against Germany too far into Hitler’s arms. And Germany was not in the least inclined to oppose any Soviet move at this time. Hitler was not willing to risk Soviet neutrality and friendship, and most certainly not for the sake of Finland.

On December 4, Hitler sent Franco a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.¹²⁶¹ On the same day, Hitler appointed the members of a special criminal division with the Reichsgericht. These were entitled to rescind an already binding and essentially non-appealable sentence passed by the Reich Court of Justice.¹²⁶² This legal forum convened for the first time on December 6. It was a well-known fact that Hitler abhorred judges—although they conformed absolutely with the NS regime—because of their theoretical right to independence from his person. Hence he would not rest until the Reichstag accorded him the privilege to arbitrarily depose any judge he wished to rid himself of.¹²⁶³

On December 6, Hitler decided to congratulate his “comrade” Mackensen personally at noon. Mackensen was celebrating his ninetieth birthday at his home in Prüssow. The German News Bureau reported on the event in the following manner:¹²⁶⁴

One of the most popular leaders of the struggle of peoples (*Völkerringen*), Field Marshal August von Mackensen, celebrated his ninetieth birthday on Wednesday [December 6] in the best of mental and physical health with his family on his estate Prüssow in the Uckermark. The Führer and Supreme Commander personally expressed his best wishes to von Mackensen. In his capacity as speaker for the entire German nation he was expressing the sentiments of all Germans towards this man today who, through his deeds and his behavior in times of war and peace, had always embodied the best of German soldiery, and who on this day still shares in the German Volk’s fateful struggle with a warm and beating heart.

Field Marshal von Mackensen thanked the Führer for his visit in touching words, especially for the Führer’s coming at this hour. He stated that it was his greatest desire on this day to be allowed to live to witness the victory of the German Volk led by the Führer.¹²⁶⁵ The Führer who had arrived around noon at the family’s estate Prüssow near Prenzlau in Uckermark spent some time with the immediate family of the Field Marshal.

Meanwhile, Finland had appealed to the League of Nations seeking redress for the Russian invasion. The Soviet Union on the other hand denied the competence of the League of Nations to arbitrate in the matter.¹²⁶⁶ There was great sympathy for Finland in many of the Western countries and the neutral states. However, Hitler felt the occasion opportune to seek revenge for Finland’s rejection of the proposed non-aggression pact with Germany in the spring of 1939.¹²⁶⁷

On December 8, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an official description of the relations between Germany and Finland at this time. Hitler himself had obviously written the article.¹²⁶⁸ It contained a complete and detailed reiteration of the arguments he had already enumerated in his talk with Sven Hedin on October 16. Characteristic was this phrase: “It is both naive and sentimental to expect that the German Volk should push aside its struggle for its future all of a sudden to rush to the side of a small state which previously could not get nough of defaming and denigrating Germany.” The article read:¹²⁶⁹

Berlin, December 7

GERMANY AND THE FINNISH QUESTION

In the context of the crisis between Soviet-Russia and Finland, which has now evolved into an open conflict, numerous parties, above all the kitchen of lies (*Lügenküche*) of British and French official and editorial cabinets, have

attempted to implicate Germany in the events to the North. They maintain that Germany is violating its apparently self-evident obligation to help Finland, a country to which it is tied by a multitude of bonds. In the face of such malicious as well as foolish and—politically speaking—childish insinuations, it appears necessary to subject to critical scrutiny the relations between Germany and the Northern countries during the past twenty years.

Beyond all doubt, the Nordic peoples have always occupied a special place in the hearts of Germans for historical and sentimental reasons. This love, however, has become increasingly one-sided in the course of the past twenty years. The German Reich in its position of power has always been a natural friend of Nordic interests. It has remained true to this principle throughout its entire history. Countless instances have evidenced this favorable predisposition to the small Nordic States. And as, at the end of the World War, the German Reich was left in a position of impotence due to the broken promises of the Allies which left it the defenseless and helpless prey of the unjust and excessive demands of the so-called victorious powers, Berlin counted less on the active assistance of the Nordic countries (they were not in a position to render it), but, at the very least, on their sympathy and moral support for the unfortunate German Volk.

The opposite, however, occurred. In these years so bitter for Germany, not one of these countries has thrown its weight on the scale to balance the dreadful injustice done to the German Volk.

Any reasonable person must have known at the time that, sooner or later, this injustice would result in retaliation. It was clear that this would cause great upheaval in the world, if it was not possible to obtain a timely revision. However, instead of moving in this direction, the Nordic states were from the beginning the most loyal adherents and defenders of the Geneva League of Nations, whose entire structure aimed at nothing but the eternal repression of Germany.

The Nordic states remained loyal to the League of Nations even at a time when its true role as the executor of Versailles and the preserver of the status quo must have been clear to even the most naive of political minds. In vain Germany awaited a sign of sympathy, some form of tangible moral support. Either one was too uninterested at the time or too involved in the endless, dry and exhausting ideological discussions within the framework of the debating club of Geneva. The Nordic states increasingly got on the political track of England.

And as National Socialism rose to power in Germany and the German Volk, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, began to shake off its shackles, the majority of the press in the North did not rejoice and welcome this event, but rather subjected to savage criticism nearly every step made toward German independence and every deed dedicated to an elimination of the Treaty of Versailles. In the name of humanity, in the name of liberalism and democracy, Germany was brought into disrepute, reviled, and boycotted economically.

Barely a day passed without one move or another in German politics being impudently and insultingly criticized by countless papers in the Nordic states. Every statement by the Third Reich was interpreted to its detriment,

which was accompanied in the papers by truly incomprehensible attacks. This systematic rejection of everything emanating from the Third Reich reached so far into the leading circles that the German side was often forced to resort to official channels in order to counter this unbearable state of affairs. The consequences of this systematic campaign against Germany in the Nordic states crystallized when, in the course of this year, Germany declared its willingness to enter into a series of non-aggression pacts with them. While pacts with Denmark and the Baltic States were concluded, Sweden, Norway, and Finland showed no interest.

Sweden and Norway declared their lack of interest as a matter of principle. Finland, however, declined conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the German Reich, although Germany would not have been the first country with which Finland had entered into such a pact. While, at the time, this Finnish stand was incomprehensible to Germany's leading political circles, the experiences since then have taught us that the notion is assuredly not mistaken that English warmongers largely influenced the Finnish decision. This speculation has been reinforced by the fact that England, through the offices of other Scandinavian politicians, has established a web of vibrant ties to Helsinki.

These countries thus revealed that, in spite of repeated assurances of neutrality, they actually placed less stock in a determined and symmetrical preservation of peace in relation to all sides, than in the hope for the political predominance of the one side with which they sympathize so greatly, though assuredly not for reasons of neutrality.

In this context, it was characteristic of this peculiar understanding of neutrality by the Nordic states that it was the Scandinavia countries which accorded the Valencia Government recognition and moral support not only until the end, but up to a point when this government had already ceased to exist. They continued to withhold long-overdue recognition from Franco even at a time when any further delay could only be interpreted as unilateral partisanship against Franco, Italy, and Germany.

And since the outbreak of the war with the Western Powers, the Nordic countries have not changed their stance. Rather Germany, which has no differences with them and which has always stood up for their interests in the course of its history, had to experience once more that it was precisely the states of the North whose press and actions demonstrated anything but a benign comportment toward German concerns. Every country is entitled to distribute its sympathies as it sees fit.

Then, however, this country should not complain that it is not receiving its due in terms of sympathy—sympathy which others have been waiting for years to receive from it.

This present war has been forced on the German Volk by the British warmongers who, last but not least, have received the support of Scandinavian journalists and politicians. It is both naive and sentimental to expect the German Volk to push aside its struggle for its future in order to immediately rush to the side of all the small states which previously could not get enough of disparaging and denigrating Germany. For years, the Reich has met with

cool indifference, with haughty disapproval, and with often ill-concealed hostility. “*Wie man in den Wald hineinruft, so schallt es auch wieder hinaus.*” (As one shouts into the forest, so it echoes back.)¹²⁷⁰

The German Reich is well aware of the obligations gratitude and loyalty entail. Still, its friendship is not to be found lying about in the streets where, if he feels like it, anyone can come back to pick it up again once he has refused it. The German Reich is loyal to those who are loyal to it. The German Reich stands by those who stand by it. The German Reich benefits those who benefit it. The German Volk has nothing against the Finnish people. On the contrary, the German Volk harbors no animosity against the peoples of the North. The hope remains that, one day, the masters of all destinies of our Northern neighbors will reflect thereupon and ask themselves whether it was truly wise to lend an ear, in the past years, to the whispering of the English warmongers and apostles of the League of Nations, or whether it would not have been better to lend visible expression to their peoples' natural interest in friendship with Germany.

On December 8, Rudolf Hess officially opened the “Adolf Hitler Channel” for traffic, construction of which had begun in 1933. He also inaugurated a new harbor at Gleiwitz. Later the same day, Hess dug the first hole to begin work in Blechhammer on the planned 320-kilometer long channel connecting Moravia to the Danube.¹²⁷¹

On December 12, Hitler received the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, at the Reich Chancellery at noon. The topic for discussion was the state of affairs in Northern Europe after the outbreak of open hostilities between Russia and Finland.¹²⁷² In attendance were: Keitel, Jodl, and Hitler's Adjutant for Naval Affairs, von Puttkammer. In the course of the conference, Raeder advocated a clear, determined stand by Germany. He was against military assistance for Finland, since he judged the route via Sweden insufficiently reliable. Further he favored advances towards Russia, such as making available oil supplies for the refueling of Soviet submarines. This might help in eliciting similar collaboration from the Russians such as materialized in the holding of alien ships in the harbor of Murmansk until three days after the departure of the *Bremen*.¹²⁷³

Hitler seconded Raeder's motions. Then the Admiral recounted a meeting with the Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling¹²⁷⁴ who had proposed, in the event of a German occupation of his country, to head the government there. While Quisling promised to render Germany good services, Raeder suggested caution in the Reich's dealings with this individual. According to a record of the conversation, Hitler “considered whether he should speak to Quisling personally, in order to form an impression of him.”

On December 16, collections for the Winterhilfswerk began anew in Berlin. Two “*Pimpfe*” (members of a pre-Hitler Youth organization, the so-called *Jungvolk*) appeared at the Reich Chancellery to request donations. Hitler took the opportunity to make a contribution in full view of the public.¹²⁷⁵

Two days before, on December 14, the High Command of the Wehrmacht had made public that, “after successful operations against British merchant ships in the Atlantic,” the “Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* had come into contact with the enemy” in South America and had then “retired” to the Plate estuary.¹²⁷⁶ This circumlocution bore no good tidings for the fate of ship and crew. After its sea battle against the British cruisers *Ajax* and *Exeter* and the New Zealand cruiser *Achilles*, the German pocket battleship was forced to take refuge in the port of Montevideo to tend to repairs. The German Envoy there requested the Uruguayan Government to permit a stay of fourteen days for the *Admiral Graf Spee* in the capital city’s harbor. British warships lay in wait beyond the three-mile zone. Tensions in Berlin ran high as the Reich Government awaited a response.

On December 16, the Uruguayan Government declined the request to allow for a prolongation of the ship’s seventy-two hour stay in Montevideo. The Captain, Hans Langsdorff,¹²⁷⁷ wired Berlin to inquire: “In the event that a break-out would lead to the certain destruction of *Spee* without the possibility of damaging the enemy, I request decision whether sinking in spite of insufficient water depths in La Plata Estuary or internment.” He received the following response: “No internment.”¹²⁷⁸ On December 17, the *Admiral Graf Spee* departed the harbor and sailed out to sea at 4:56 p.m. (local time). The crew blew up the ship just outside Uruguayan territorial waters. On the men’s return to port they were taken prisoner by Uruguayan officials. Hans Langsdorff shot himself in Montevideo two days later.

The next day, an official communiqué was published:¹²⁷⁹

Berlin, December 18

The Uruguayan Government denied the Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* permission to remain in harbor for the time necessary to restore the vessel’s seaworthiness. Under these circumstances, the Führer and Supreme Commander gave Lieutenant Commander Langsdorff orders to destroy the ship by dynamiting it. Orders were carried out beyond Uruguayan territorial waters.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht indicated December 17, 8:00 p.m., as the date and time of the ship’s sinking. It reported that

Captain Langsdorff had “followed his ship,” and thereby had “fulfilled like a fighter and hero the expectations of his Führer, the German Volk, and the Navy.”¹²⁸⁰

In the period between December 14 and December 18, Vidkun Quisling called on Hitler on three occasions.¹²⁸¹ This ambitious former minister sought, with Hitler’s help, to rise to power in Norway. In the course of the Second World War, his name became a synonym for all those petty politicians who betrayed the interests of their countries, usually small states neighboring Germany, in order to gain personal advantages.

While Hitler stood prepared to benefit from the treasonous intent of men like Quisling, he was not in the least inclined to allow the Norwegian any decisive influence over the events in his homeland. As mentioned before, his obsession with questions of power and his fear for his own position prevented Hitler from even permitting tried and true foreign National Socialists to assume posts of responsibility in former Reich territories after the annexation of these. He feared the loyalty of such men might be compromised by their heritage. Conceivably they might first and foremost consider the interests of their tribal affiliates or other forms of allegiance. Hence they might not unconditionally answer to Hitler. Based on these considerations, Hitler always preferred Reich Germans for such posts even if these possessed absolutely no qualifications for the job.

On December 19, Hitler hosted a series of diplomatic receptions at the Reich Chancellery. The following communiqué was issued on these events:¹²⁸²

Berlin, December 19

Today, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the newly appointed Japanese Imperial Ambassador Saburu Kuruusu at the new Reich Chancellery to accept his credentials. The Legation Counselor Usani, Military Attaché Major General Kawabe, and Naval Attaché Rear Admiral Yendo accompanied the Ambassador. Afterwards, the Führer hosted the new Estonian Envoy Rudolf Möllerson. A division of the SS Leibstandarte paid the guests military tribute on arrival and departure.

The mention of the reception of the Estonian Envoy in one short communiqué alongside the Japanese Ambassador was characteristic of Hitler’s gruff treatment of Japan in this period. He was decidedly more courteous towards Russia.

On December 21, Hitler congratulated Stalin on the Soviet dictator’s sixtieth birthday in the following telegram:¹²⁸³

December 19, 1939

I ask you to accept my sincere congratulations on your sixtieth birthday. With this I associate my best wishes for your personal welfare as for a prosperous future for the peoples of the friendly Soviet Union.

Adolf Hitler

The days from December 23 to December 25 Hitler spent along the Western Front, making Christmas calls on soldiers in the area of the Hunsrück and in the vicinity of Saarbrücken.¹²⁸⁴

On December 23, Hitler toured a landing strip and visited with one of the reconnaissance squadrons of the Luftwaffe. Later in the day, he made a guest appearance with the Infantry Regiment *Grossdeutschland*. In the evening, Hitler participated in yuletide festivities staged by the SS Leibstandarte, where he expounded the “meaning of the struggle.”

On December 24, an anti-aircraft battery, part of the aerial defense division West, was honored by Hitler’s presence. He joined a heavy flak battery for lunch. On this occasion, too, Hitler delivered a brief address before the men, one of whom handed him a hand-carved German eagle. Significantly, the eagle was not decorated with the swastika. In the afternoon hours, Hitler advanced to the so-called “HKL” (*Hauptkampflinie*, main front line) and visited several Panzer factories in the area of Saarbrücken. As the *Völkischer Beobachter* put it, the Führer spent “Christmas Eve between the front lines.” For the first time since 1918, he crossed over onto French terrain in the vicinity of Spichern where a French retreat had left a section of land in German hands. In the late evening, he returned to his quarters. On December 25, he called on a fighter-pilot group at its wartime station. Later he visited with the “resurrected” Infantry Regiment List.¹²⁸⁵

On December 26, Hitler sent a telegram to the Hungarian Regent Horthy to thank him for his donation of several tons of foodstuffs for the benefit of the wartime *Winterhilfswerk*.¹²⁸⁶ This constituted the only voluntary contribution Hungary was evidently prepared to make to Germany’s war effort.

The establishment of an Infantry Storm Badge was announced on December 29, and simultaneously the public received word of the creation of a *Panzerkampfwagenabzeichen* (Tank Badge) at the end of this first war year.¹²⁸⁷

The Year 1940

Major Events in Summary

Hitler entertained many ambitious designs in 1940. For one, he stood determined to defeat the Anglo-French Field Army in the West¹ and thereby to chase the English “back to the Thames.”² Second, he envisioned taking possession of the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France to establish operational bases for the Navy and the Luftwaffe; they would pursue the “economic warfare” that would overcome England.³ Third, by taking possession of Norway and Denmark, he would expand “economic warfare” from their coasts. The Government in London would undoubtedly perceive the necessity of extending its hand in friendship to Germany once England had been forced to retreat from the Continent, German submarines attacked British vessels, and the Luftwaffe’s raids penetrated the British coastal waters and the mainland.

From Hitler’s point of view, these arguments made perfect sense. From the standpoint of Britain, however, none of these considerations could induce it to give up its firm stance in opposition to Germany. The United Kingdom was not about to lower its flag at the mere sight of Hitler, no more than it had been willing to do so when Napoleon’s specter arose on the Continent.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain’s insistence that Hitler had “missed the bus”⁴ proved premature; for the time being, everything went according to plan for the Führer. The Third Reich was able to launch its surprise invasion of Denmark and Norway on April 9. Denmark was forced to surrender within hours of the attack. The strike was less successful against Norway. Norwegians mounted an unexpectedly strong opposition to the invading troops along the coastline. This inflicted heavy losses upon the German naval units in particular, a development compounded by the unanticipated intervention of the Royal Air Force and the British Navy. A relatively small Anglo-French Expeditionary Force furthermore interfered with the actions of the German troops. Nevertheless, within eight weeks, the overwhelming might of the German troops eliminated active resistance.

In Germany, the undeniably audacious move against Denmark and Norway was hailed as an unparalleled masterpiece of Hitler's military strategy. Assuredly, he had proved himself a master in conquering smaller states. Already in the Sudeten crisis of 1938, he had boasted that the conflict had pitted "75 million Germans against 7 million Czechs."⁵ He pointed to a Germany of "90 million"⁶ as having conquered 25 million⁷ Poles within little more than one month's time. In a similarly glorious military feat, the Third Reich's numerical superiority brought success in the subjugation of Denmark with its population of 3.7 million and of Norway with its 2.9 million inhabitants.

The victories attained proved deceptive ones in the end. They tied down the Wehrmacht and hence worked more to the advantage of Great Britain than to that of Germany. The German forces stationed in these areas could not actively participate in the overall war effort.⁸ The swift nature of the conquest brought no advantage, as the subsequently necessary occupation of the vanquished territories cost Germany enormous forces. Naval vessels carrying supplies could reach the areas only with difficulty and the re-supplying operations imposed a heavy toll upon the military.

Denmark and Norway were not destined to be the last entries in the roll call of countries Hitler assaulted without any declaration of war. On May 10, the 300,000 inhabitants of Luxembourg, who possessed virtually no military defenses to speak of, became the next to fall victim to his insatiable lust for power, along with the peoples of Belgium and the Netherlands. The 8.4 million strong population of the Netherlands capitulated on May 15. Resistance among the 8.3 million Belgian nationals collapsed by May 28.

In northern France, military operations also went precisely in accordance with Hitler's plans. Once more a crucial role was played by the strategically located city of Sedan, which had already gained prominence in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.⁹ At the time, Bismarck had masterminded the invasion of France, carefully avoiding any violation of Belgium's territorial integrity. Undoubtedly, a repetition of this approach would have been possible in 1940, had the German military received like instructions. As in 1870, France stood isolated and would have had to face Germany largely by itself while Germany was not yet tied down along two fronts as it had been in the First World War.

By 1940, as a final consideration, Germany claimed a population nearly twice that of France, and its soldiers were correspondingly more

numerous. Given the circumstances, France was bound to collapse if the United Kingdom and the United States failed to come to its rescue.

By May 13, German Panzer armies achieved a breakthrough at Sedan and by May 20, they reached the English Channel. The Anglo-French Field Army stood isolated. German troops turned to the North to completely cut off the enemy forces. They could easily have dealt a deadly blow to the contingent thus encircled. However, Hitler ordered the tanks to halt in order to allow the British divisions to use the gateway of Dunkirk to flee to just across the Channel. While the majority of their equipment had to be left behind, these Englishmen were extraordinarily fortunate to escape with their lives. This magnanimous behavior of Hitler's was to demonstrate that he desired no military confrontation with Great Britain and once more was extending his hand to the British in a gesture of genuine friendship. This notwithstanding, caution ought to be exercised in the assessment of this event. Even had the Wehrmacht eliminated the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk, this would have meant that His Majesty's Armed Forces would ultimately have had a few divisions less at their disposal and one to two hundred thousand English soldiers would have languished as prisoners of war in Germany. The outcome of such a scenario would have had a negligible influence upon the future military confrontation on a larger scale. The English escape was of no decisive importance to the outcome of the war. In this sense, it constituted a historic parallel to the 1914 Battle of the Marne;¹⁰ even the remarkable victory scored then by the Imperial troops failed to prevent Germany's ignominious defeat in the First World War. The 1940 campaign in the West was equivalent to a new Battle of the Marne, and its ringing successes no more determined the outcome of the Second World War than the Battle of the Marne prevented ultimate defeat in 1918.

Had the British Expeditionary Force been annihilated in 1940, had the British Isles been occupied, then, just as Churchill had foretold on November 12, 1939, the United States would have taken up the struggle.¹¹ Germany would have been laid low, perhaps somewhat later, but inevitably all the same.

The occupation of Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France signaled the end of the first phase of the war, the successful implementation of "Case Yellow." On June 5, Hitler issued a proclamation which pronounced that the "greatest battle of all time"¹² had assured Germany's victory. To his great chagrin, the English whom

he had just driven “back to the Thames” failed to realize this and refused him the well-deserved capitulation offer. Uncertain of how to proceed, he resolved to punish them indirectly by occupying all of France. Thereby, he secured for Germany France’s Atlantic coast as a base for future operations against Great Britain. Faced by German troops stationed as far south as the Spanish border, the English would assuredly acknowledge the futility of further resistance and reconcile themselves to Hitler’s undisputed reign. Then they would no longer rudely rebuke his peace proposals, but gladly accept these from the hand of the man who ruled virtually the entire Continent.

Dawn on June 5 witnessed German troop advances across the Somme and Aisne rivers in the South and the Southwest. These moves heralded the implementation of “Case Red,” the actual battle for France. It was not until five days later, on June 10, with the collapse of France imminent, that Hitler allowed the impatient Mussolini to enter the war. The German dictator was not about “to share the victory with anyone.”¹³ Had Berlin allowed Rome to declare war on the Western Powers at an earlier date, this might have created the impression, so Hitler feared, that Italy’s entry into the war had contributed substantially to the fall of France.

The German full-scale assault upon the Maginot Line began on June 14, and on this same day Paris fell into the hands of the aggressor. German troops were crossing the Rhine at Colmar by June 16. One day later, the French Government requested an armistice.

In the ceasefire agreement, Hitler “generously” granted France an unoccupied zone in the South and the Southeast. However, the Wehrmacht laid claim to the entire Atlantic coastline. German troops occupied a large terrain in northern France as well as the capital city of Paris.

In view of these recent developments, Hitler speculated that just one more effective speech by him was needed to sway the British and to induce them to seriously consider a peace settlement with Germany. Graciously he extended yet another “generous peace proposal” to England, although he had earlier designated the overture on October 6, 1939 as absolutely the Reich’s last offer.¹⁴ In fact, the renewed “peace proposal”—detailed in Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag on July 19, 1940—surpassed that of a year earlier in its grotesqueness. At the time, he had audaciously instructed the British to end their involvement in the conflict as the country at stake in the war no longer existed. By 1940, he had resolved to “appeal to England’s reason” to accept the fact

that a continuation of the war had become senseless in view of the capitulation of France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. For his part, Hitler declared: "I see no reason compelling us to pursue this fight." He thought the Axis destined to "infuse new life into Europe." Hitler was at his wits' end when Churchill, "one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals (*Herostratennaturen*) in world history,"¹⁵ failed to respond in the desired fashion to the rhetoric the Führer had so carefully employed in his speech before the Reichstag.

On July 16, three days before delivering the speech, Hitler had issued a directive for the implementation of "Operation Sea Lion," i.e. the military invasion of the British Isles. Naturally, this was merely a precautionary measure intended primarily to serve as an additional trump card in the unlikely event that Britain felt it had not yet sustained sufficient "blows" to warrant capitulation. Realistically, Hitler no more believed in the feasibility of a like undertaking than Napoleon had as he waited for the response of the English to reach him at Boulogne in 1805.¹⁶ Beyond this, the possibility of a future alliance with Great Britain was indispensable to Hitler's 1919 conceptions. Hence, it was imperative not to anger the British too readily.

Nevertheless, as the British statesmen persistently refused to toe the line, Hitler determined to frighten them into acquiescence. Relying once again upon his fabled powers of oratory, he resolved to severely admonish them at yet another "public speaking engagement" (*Volkskundgebung*). He chose his annual address to the Kriegswinterhilfswerk on September 4 as the setting for this verbal onslaught. There, he threatened Britain with heavy aerial bombardment and even his own appearance on the Isles should the English persevere further.¹⁷

Actual heavy bombardment notwithstanding, the terror that would rain from the skies upon British cities failed to produce the results desired. The "Battle of Britain" (*Luftschlacht um England*) in fact proved a fiasco for Germany's foreign policy. Instead of weakening the English public's support of His Majesty's Government, the terror strikes merely reinforced the determination of the English to persist in the struggle. To add insult to injury, the British anti-aircraft defenses and the Royal Air Force's fighters, which Hitler had mocked so often, proved more than a match for the Luftwaffe squadrons upon which they inflicted heavy losses. Even a Headquarters report by the Wehrmacht on September 16 had to concede that the British had downed forty-three German fighter planes on that day alone. The "war

in the air” was a debacle of untold proportions both militarily and politically speaking. Soon German planes no longer dared to attack London during daylight hours. As a result, German aerial attacks had to be restricted to nighttime sorties. Infuriated by the “cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London”¹⁸ in the dark of the night, Churchill announced retaliatory measures.

Faced by such determination on the part of the British, Hitler began a desperate search for allies in his struggle against England. On September 21, the conclusion of a triple alliance comprising Germany, Italy, and Japan was made public. This in turn was to demonstrate to the English that should they refuse to desist from their military engagement in Europe, the Empire’s colonial possessions in the Far East might well fall victim to Japanese expansionism. Threats like this stood in striking contrast to Hitler’s assurances, made in August of 1939, that he was ever ready to defend the United Kingdom’s colonies in this region should His Majesty so desire!

This so-called Tripartite Pact was also intended to deter the United States from contemplating intervention in the war on behalf of Great Britain. The Pact completely failed of its purpose in this respect. Neither America nor England was in the least impressed by this latest political move, while the Soviet Union cast a suspicious eye on this resurrection of the basic structures of the Anti-Comintern Pact of earlier days.¹⁹

In October, Hitler went on trips to court additional allies in Europe. Two potential candidates were Spain and France, and separate meetings were arranged, one with Franco at Hendaye and another with Marshal Pétain at Montoire. Neither bore fruits; Hitler’s oratorical gift could not sway Franco and Pétain to abandon their states’ non-belligerency.²⁰

The autumn of 1940 was replete with misfortune upon misfortune for Hitler. To compound the dilemma, his friend Mussolini resolved to strike out daringly on his own and failed to consult his master Hitler prior to Italy’s invasion of Greece. Moreover, the Duce’s timing, just before the onset of winter, was most unfortunate for both Rome and Berlin.

In the meantime, Hitler had reflected upon the cause of his persistent failure with the British. They refused his hand extended in friendship time and time again, in spite of the Wehrmacht’s driving them “back to the Thames” and Germany’s annihilation of Britain’s allies Poland, France, and a series of smaller neutral states. Hitler

simply could not comprehend why the British treated him so inconsiderately in light of the generosity he had once more displayed in magnanimously allowing for the escape of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk. No, there had to be another explanation for their insistent refusal to play the role of Germany's ally in Europe which he had assigned them in 1919.

Having arrived at this point in his contemplation, Hitler concluded that all Great Britain was indeed waiting for was the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Germany. However, so he conceived, they were to be quickly disappointed in this hope, because he was inspired to strike out at Russia before it could turn against Germany. This would allow him to conquer the Lebensraum in the East essential to Germany's future, in accordance with his thesis of 1919. And in turning against Russia instead of Great Britain, he would assure the Third Reich of the latter's everlasting gratitude.

One must concede to Hitler that the English did their utmost to reinforce this absurd idea in the German Chancellor's mind. In nearly every speaking engagement on the topic after September 1939, Churchill had interpreted Russia's comportment with regard to Poland, the Baltic States, etc. as directed against Germany's interests. Supposedly, the Soviet Union was laboring to erect a line of fortification to thwart Germany's expansionist designs in the East. For the English it was only natural to seek to deflect Hitler's fury toward the East, away from their island—a similar strategy had proved its worth already in Napoleon's day. This feat could be easily accomplished once more, as the influential circles in England were only too well aware of Hitler's distorted understanding of world politics and they had known the theses expounded in *Mein Kampf* for a long time. It is, however, more than remarkable that Hitler should start his campaign against Russia in 1941 on exactly the same day as Napoleon did in 1812: on June 22.²¹

Before directly confronting Russia, Hitler launched one last effort to induce the Soviets to share in the "spoils" of the British Empire—perhaps in the Middle East, with a drive toward the Persian Gulf or India. Should the Russians really fall for this trick, then he could graciously turn to England to offer the Third Reich's protection against the Bolshevik onslaught.

On a visit to Berlin in November of the previous year, Molotov had listened to Hitler's rambling without batting an eyelid. Once Hitler had ended, Molotov had immediately returned to the topic of the pending difficulties in the German-Soviet relationship: the question of Finland

and the Baltic States; the Balkans, where Germany apparently intended to gain a permanent foothold. Hitler was indignant. The same day Molotov returned to Moscow, Hitler attended a reception at the Japanese Embassy, as if to signal that his indulgence to the Russians had come to an abrupt end. The future in fact would find him back among his former cohorts of the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Hence the year 1940 drew to a close on a note quite different from what Hitler had anticipated. Granted, the English had been driven “back to the Thames,” and the Third Reich’s sphere of influence extended all the way from the North Cape to the Pyrenees. These outward successes were deceptive ones, however. Hitler felt he had been outmaneuvered by the British. This suspicion was a well-founded one. England had neither come to conclude peace with Germany nor was the prospect of friendship with this state any closer than it had been at the beginning of the year. As always when Hitler was disconcerted or unsure of how to proceed, he resolved to adhere all the more fervently to the ideas he had formed in 1919, as if his unshakeable willpower alone sufficed to change magically the course of events. If the dream of conquering new Lebensraum in the East came true, why should the friendship of England further elude him? In this context, for Germany, there was and would be “but one ally in Europe: England.”²²

Report and Commentary

1

On January 1, 1940, Hitler issued the customary “New Year’s Proclamation to National Socialists and Party Comrades.”

Every line showed the strangeness of the arguments by which he sought to justify the policies which had plunged Germany once more into a large-scale, armed confrontation in Europe. Callously, Hitler remarked: “These measures have not robbed the outside world of anything. They have not done it any injury.” To state as much merely added insult to injury in view of the Third Reich’s conduct in Poland ever since September 1939. He proclaimed further that the “Herren warmongers” in the West who had dared to reject his “offer of peace” would henceforth get war from him. Then he spoke of “the creation of a new Europe” and relied again on “the grace of Providence” and on the “Lord God.” Following the “party narrative,” he declared:²³

After mastering its internal divisions, National Socialist Germany has proceeded step by step to cast off its enslavement. A struggle of historically unprecedented proportions and the yearnings of a thousand years have culminated in the consolidation of the German Volk within the boundaries of the Greater German Reich. These measures have not robbed the outside world of anything. They have not done it any injury. They have but accorded the German Volk what all other peoples have long possessed.

Nevertheless, the Jewish-internationalist capitalists in connection with socially reactionary classes in the Western States have successfully roused the world democracies against Germany. Publication of documents on the events preceding the outbreak of the German-Polish conflict prove beyond doubt today that the English warmongers not only desired no peaceful settlement of the problem, they also did everything within their power to promote a conflict with Poland in order to free the way toward either a shaming of Germany or a declaration of war upon Poland. Once the first option failed them, these international warmongers resorted to the second. Poland allowed itself to be deluded into believing that it could realize its unlawful interests by the use of brute force. Within eighteen days,²⁴ its weapons fell silent. The

new National Socialist Wehrmacht outperformed even the highest of expectations placed upon it: the Poland concocted by the Diktat of Versailles exists no more!

A series of events of enormous import for the history of our Volk characterized the year 1939:

1. The pacification of Central Europe and the security of the German Lebensraum were attained by the integration of the ancient German Reich territories of Bohemia and Moravia as protectorates within the framework of the Greater German Reich. Germans and Czechs shall live and labor peacefully next to one another in the future as they have throughout many a century in the past.

2. The return of the Memel territory to the Reich.

3. The elimination of the Polish State allowed for a restoration of the ancient borders of the Reich.

In all three cases, non-viable structures of the Treaty of Versailles were eradicated.

The Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance Pact with the Soviet Union constituted the most outstanding feature of the year now past. From the outset, the attempt of the plutocratic statesmen of the West to pit Germany and Russia against each other was foiled; the desired blood-letting in both nations to the advantage of third parties was forestalled; an encirclement of Germany was prevented.

That we were able to successfully bring about this political development is a fact we owe exclusively to the inner reorientation which National Socialism wrought for the German Volk. This educational process undertaken by the National Socialist Movement has begun to bear fruit economically and politically. The military resurrection of the Wehrmacht was successfully complemented by a new economic policy not only making the Reich economically independent of the outside world, but also permitting us to overcome unemployment to a degree not even realized in today's richest countries of the West.

Domestically organized and consolidated; economically prepared; militarily armed to the teeth; thus we stride forth, entering into the most decisive year in the history of Germany.²⁵

For there is one thing we all know for certain, National Socialists: the Jewish-capitalist enemy of the world facing us knows but one goal—to destroy Germany, to destroy our German Volk!

Our foes may strive to disguise their intention beneath phraseology, but this does nothing to deter them from the pursuit of this goal!

First, they declared that they wished to help Poland. This would have been easy enough had they not unscrupulously urged Poland into this war. Once Poland had paid the price for this by being mercilessly beaten by the might of our Wehrmacht, the pursuit of a restoration of the Polish state no longer sufficed as a goal in this war. Now they aimed for the elimination of my person, i.e. the extinction of National Socialism. They barely had realized that the German Volk could not be duped by this most stupid fraud, in light of its experiences in 1918, and so it failed to react to it, when they did indeed

January 1, 1940

finally divulge the truth: namely, that they sought to eradicate the German Volk as such and to dissolve and destroy the German Reich. Cowardice led them not only to recruit so-called “neutrals” in this effort; they did not stop short of hiring paid murderers either.²⁶

The German Volk did not want this fight. Up to the very last minute, I offered my hand in friendship to England. Even after Poland was dealt with, I made suggestions regarding a long-term guaranteed pacification of Europe.²⁷ In this, I received the support of Fascist Italy’s Duce above all, who, guided by the spirit of our friendship, labored sincerely to prevent a development which bore no good tidings for anyone in Europe.

However, the reactionary Jewish warmongers in the capitalist democracies were not willing to let this opportunity to destroy Germany pass: too long had they prepared for this. For years they had waited for this hour. These Herren warmongers wanted war: they were to get it.

The first phase of this conflict has shown the following:

1. no one dared to attack the German West Wall, and
2. in those instances in which German soldiers confronted their adversaries, this once more justified the glory of the German soldier and the reputation of our weapons.

May the year 1940 bring about a decision. Whatever the future may hold for us, there is but one outcome possible: our victory! Whatever may be demanded of the individual in sacrifice until then is of no import in comparison to the dedication of the German nation, in comparison to the horrendous fate looming above should power once more fall into the hands of those criminal liars of Versailles. Hence ours is a clearly defined goal in this war: Germany, and Europe moreover, must be liberated from the violating grasp, the persistent threat posed by the England of the present and of the past. We must make a final stand to tear the weapons from the hands of these warmongers going about declaring war on everyone. We fight not only against the injustice of Versailles, but we also fight against renewed injustice poised to take its place. And in a more positive sense: we fight for the creation of a new Europe! Unlike Mr. Chamberlain, we fail to perceive why this new Europe would do well to be fashioned along the lines dictated by decaying and decrepit world powers, at the hands of so-called statesmen who are not even capable of resolving the most primitive of problems within their own countries. We are persuaded that only those peoples and powers are called upon to refashion Europe whose present comportment and previous accomplishments clearly demonstrate them to be young and virile nations. The future belongs to these young nations and systems! The Jewish-capitalist world will not outlive the twentieth century!

National Socialists! German Volksgenossen! In this past year, thanks to the workings of Providence, the Reich of the German Volk was able to accomplish such miraculous and outstanding achievements of historical proportions! At the beginning of this year 1940, let us implore the Lord God to continue to bestow upon us His blessings in this struggle for freedom, independence, and hence for the life and the future of our Volk! With this realization in mind, let us ourselves not tarry in our enterprise; let us not lack

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the courage to fulfill the task lying before us in this year. By helping ourselves, relying on our own resources, let us implore the Lord Almighty not to deny the German Volk His intervention in the year 1940. For then we must and we will succeed!

At the beginning of the new year, Hitler addressed the Wehrmacht in the following decree:²⁸

Soldiers!

The year 1939 afforded the Greater German Wehrmacht the proud opportunity to prove its worth. With the weapons entrusted to you by the German Volk, you have victoriously struggled in this war forced on us. In a mere eighteen days, through the cooperation of all, it was possible to secure the Reich in the East once more and to eradicate the injustice of Versailles.

Suffused with gratitude, we recall at the end of this historic year those of our comrades who have sealed their loyalty to Volk and Reich in blood!

For the coming year we wish to implore the Almighty, who in the past has so visibly extended His protection to us, to bestow His blessings on us once again and to strengthen us in the fulfillment of our duties! For before us lies the most difficult of struggles for the existence or non-existence of the German Volk!

Filled with pride and confidence, the German Volk and I look to you! For: with such soldiers Germany must win!

Adolf Hitler

Also on January 1, Hitler extended his “best wishes for the New Year” to the public in the following telegram:²⁹

Berlin, January 1, 1940

Through this venue, the Führer relays his best wishes for the New Year to his colleagues, his acquaintances, his friends, as well as to the whole German Volk. In this manner, he equally wishes to express his gratitude for all congratulatory wishes extended to his person.

The German press published accounts of a series of telegrams Hitler sent out on this occasion:³⁰

To the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III:

I ask Your Majesty to accept, at the beginning of the New Year, my own and the entire German Volk’s sincere best wishes for the welfare of Your Majesty yourself and for the Royal House. To this I add my best wishes for the prosperous future of the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

To the Head of Government, Mussolini:

On the advent of this New Year, I wish to express to you, Duce, my heartfelt best wishes and dedication. In the coming year as well, may complete success be granted to Fascist Italy, allied to National Socialist

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Germany and guided by your strong and proven leadership, in the solution of its national mission.

Adolf Hitler

To Generalissimo Franco:

On the advent of this New Year, I convey to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes for your personal welfare and for the good fortune and greatness of Spain. May many years of happiness succeed this year of military victory.

Adolf Hitler

To the Regent of Hungary, Horthy:

I ask Your Highness to accept my sincere best wishes on the occasion of the advent of this New Year. I add to this my and the German Volk's best wishes for the prosperous future of the friendly Hungarian nation.

Adolf Hitler

Apparently, Hitler had carefully selected these individuals for special recognition in an effort to underline Germany's friendly relations with the powers they represented. A second category was constituted by King Boris of Bulgaria, King Carol of Romania, and the Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia. The contents of Hitler's telegrams to them were not published, but the responses received were mentioned in the press. Certain persons not particularly in good graces with the Führer were referred to in one short note, forming a third category in this list:

The Führer also exchanged New Year's telegrams of friendly contents with the Kings of Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Norway, and Sweden, as well as with the former Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the Prince Regent of Italy, the State President of Slovakia, and President Háchá. Moreover, on the advent of the New Year, he received New Year's greetings from the Shah of Iran, from the Kings of Afghanistan and the Yemen, from the President of the Regent's Council of Thailand. For all these he returned thanks in the form of telegrams.

The customary New Year's reception of the diplomatic corps was canceled in 1940 because of the state of war. In past years, this event had been scheduled around January 10.

On January 2, the following official note was published on the topic:

Since, due to the special circumstances created by the war, the New Year's reception for the entire diplomatic corps had to be canceled this year, as well as the other customary, festive New Year's receptions, the Apostolic Nuncio and Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps called upon the Presidential Chancellery to relay the New Year's wishes of the Pope and the Diplomatic Corps to the Führer. He was succeeded by the ambassadors, envoys, and chargés

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d'affaires, remaining in Berlin, who entered themselves in the visitors' book lying open in the Presidential Chancellery to lend expression to the best wishes of the heads of state, governments, and peoples they represent.

It was remarkable that none of these publications contained mention of Russia and Japan, which undoubtedly had participated in this traditional exchange of greetings. After all, Russia and Japan were presently "friendly powers" of the first rank.

On January 3, Hitler received a lengthy letter from his friend Mussolini. The frequent exchange of correspondence between the two so prevalent in late August and early September 1939 had subsequently slowed down to a trickle. Nor had a meeting between the two taken place, although one had originally been planned for August. Mussolini, who had not dared to contradict the German dictator since 1937, was now so infuriated by Hitler's behavior that he mounted the courage to summarily reprimand Hitler, although only in writing. The main points in his letter were the following:³¹

1. Hitler should undertake a restoration, i.e. "creation of a Polish state." The Poles had deserved a better treatment than that "which is said to have been meted out (by the Germans)," in accordance with British reports.

2. Hitler was "in any event (to) refrain . . . from taking the initiative on the Western Front" for "the United States would not permit a total defeat of the democracies."

3. The German-Russian friendship was in fact impossible. "The solution of your Lebensraum problem is in Russia and nowhere else." Russia could not be turned from the "world enemy number one" into "friend number one."

4. Italy offered to serve as Germany's "reserves" and to afford it its "political, diplomatic, economic, and military" assistance.

Hitler naturally was outraged by the impertinence of Mussolini's message. This would-be Duce who always liked to talk big was surely not in a position to give him, the Führer, advice! For the time being, Hitler resolved to ignore the Italian. Once the occasion presented itself, he would reply to him in kind, in a letter three times as long and three times as insolent.³²

On January 7, the public corporation "Haus der Deutschen Kunst" published an appeal for contributions to the Greater German Art Exhibition of 1940. By special orders of the Führer, it was to take place in spite of the war. The appeal to "Greater Germany's creative artists," obviously edited by Hitler himself, contained the following paragraph:³³

And thus, in these sinister days of war, it is the express will of the Führer that art should not remain silent, but instead to regard it as its most beautiful

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and exalted obligation, through its creations, to uplift and fill with joy the German man in this time of the greatest and, for the existence of our Volk and its culture, most important decisions.

On January 8, Professor Richard Klein of Munich, who had designed the “Reich Party Congress” badges of earlier years, celebrated his fiftieth birthday. On this occasion, Hitler presented him with an autographed picture of himself.³⁴

On January 11, Hitler issued a “Basic Directive” regarding the treatment of “secret affairs.” No office or officer was to gain knowledge of such affairs beyond what was immediately necessary and this only at the very last minute. This concern with secrecy may well have been connected with the emergency landing of a German military plane in the vicinity of Mechelen-sur-Meuse.³⁵ On the other hand, such a move was well in keeping with Hitler’s general paranoid preoccupation with secrecy.³⁶ The order, which was to be posted above all military desks, read:³⁷

Berlin, January 11, 1940

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Basic Directive:

1. No one, no office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, unless their duty absolutely necessitates this.

2. No office and no officer may gain more knowledge of secret affairs than is absolutely necessary for the performance of their mission.

3. No office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, or the parts thereof of which they must know, at a date earlier than essential to the performance of their mission.

4. The thoughtless relaying, in accordance with some general distribution key, of orders whose secrecy is of decisive importance, is prohibited.

Adolf Hitler

On January 12, Hitler visited Göring at his Berlin flat to personally congratulate him on his forty-seventh birthday.³⁸

On January 17, on the occasion of Attolico’s sixtieth birthday, Hitler instructed Meissner to relate to the Italian Ambassador his heartfelt best wishes in a handwritten note and to present him with a bouquet of flowers.³⁹

On January 21, Hitler assigned Alfred Rosenberg, responsible for the “indoctrination of the Party” and hitherto officially called “*weltanschaulicher Schulungsleiter*” (ideological instruction leader), to a post yet more obscure in nature. The public had heard little of Rosenberg ever since 1933. It was common knowledge that Hitler thought little

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of this self-proclaimed “philosopher of the Party,” and had only ridicule for Rosenberg’s book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.⁴⁰ In order to avoid possible embarrassment to the Party, Hitler appointed the ambitious Rosenberg to head a “*Hohe Schule*” to be established only after the war. Meanwhile, he kept Rosenberg busy gathering material for a library to be founded especially for this new, although mysterious institution. Hitler’s decree read:⁴¹

Notice to Party and State administrative offices:

The “Hohe Schule” shall one day constitute a center for National Socialist research. It shall be established after the war. In order to promote the preparatory work already under way, I order Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg to continue these provisional measures—especially in the sphere of research and the foundation of a library. All administrative offices of Party and State are urged to lend him any and all support necessary thereto.

Berlin, January 21, 1940

Adolf Hitler

January 24 marked the anniversary of Frederick the Great’s birthday.⁴² On this occasion, Hitler spoke before an assembly of 7,000 officer cadets at the Berlin Sportpalast. Already in the previous year, in timely concurrence with the completion of the new Reich Chancellery, Hitler had singled out newly appointed officers and officer cadets for several addresses.⁴³ Now, in time of war, he wished to conjure up the spirit of Frederick the Great, of his “staying power,” to create the impression that he too, Adolf Hitler, would secure victory in the end.

Before the year 1943, Hitler delivered a total of eight such war appeals in front of officer cadets, almost without exception at the Berlin Sportpalast.⁴⁴ Naturally these were only a pale reflection of the early grandly staged Party or SA rallies which Hitler had held at this location in the days after his rise to power. Hitler’s style had changed as had the size of his audience: five to ten thousand officers as compared to twenty thousand Party functionaries or SA men. Hitler’s military audience was less likely, due to discipline, to break out in extended exuberant shouts of “*Heil!*” Nor were the officers likely to disrupt Hitler’s speech with thunderous applause. They restricted themselves to curt responses: “*Heil, mein Führer!*” when Hitler greeted or bade them leave in a resounding military tone, shouting, “*Heil, Offiziersanwärter!*”

These military roll calls were among the few “mass rallies” that Hitler could afford to stage during the war. He tended to be out of sorts on these occasions, however. Apparently, he no longer took care to prepare himself specially for routine appeals where he usually

repeated the same thoughts without giving any attention to current affairs. He evidently thought these repetitions a matter of no import, as the officer cadets appearing before him every year naturally were always different ones.

Thinking he need not come up with anything new, he reiterated the following “philosophical considerations” in the Sportpalast appeals during the war:

1. “Party narratives,” more or less lengthy in nature, gave way to reflections upon German history as interpreted by Hitler. Therein he expounded Germany’s fate throughout the past centuries and millenniums much in the manner already employed in *Mein Kampf*. The term “struggle” as the essence of life, its sense and mission, played a central role in these expositions.

2. The relationship between population size and Lebensraum, which was to be and had to be resolved through “adaptation.” Either population figures “adapted” themselves to the Lebensraum available (possible either through starvation or a decline in birth rates), or the Lebensraum was “adapted” to an ever increasing population (and this unequivocally meant conquest of new lands). Hitler had already expounded this topic in his speech before the generals on November 23, 1939.⁴⁵

3. The German Volk in its role as not only the best, but the numerically strongest people in Europe, and, with the exception of China, in the entire world. Hence Germany had to win and would win. Hitler had warmed to this argument previously when, on November 10, 1938, he resorted to it for the first time in a speech before representatives of the German press.⁴⁶

On Hitler’s address to the 7,000 officer cadets on January 24, 1940, the following communiqué reached the public:⁴⁷

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht assembled officer cadets of the Army and Luftwaffe at the Sportpalast on Wednesday [January 24]. These candidates await appointment as officers and return to their contingents along the front after the completion of their training. Junkers of the SS Verfügungstruppen also participated in the roll call.* In consideration of the meaning and vital necessity of struggle in life, the Führer spoke of the duties and tasks of the officer in the National Socialist Wehrmacht. On the anniversary of the great King, the Führer pointed to Frederick the Great and his soldiers as models of the best soldiery.

The 7,000 young soldiers enthusiastically reacted to the Führer’s words. Field Marshal Göring led them in endless cries of *Sieg Heil* for the first soldier of the Reich.

Some gems from Hitler's speech of January 24 are quoted below:⁴⁹

"We have two states as our enemies: England and France! These two states owe their existence as world powers and as great powers solely to the century-long decline of the German Volk."

"We Germans number eighty-two million people in today's Reich. [—] This means that we are the only state, aside from China, to boast such a great number of people of one *Volkstum* in a contiguous setting."

"Germany has become a factor again [in world politics] through National Socialism."

"This war was an inevitable one! This Europe at the mercy of France and England begrudges the German Volk its existence since it does not want to bear German greatness and power and because it believes it cannot bear this structure. However much we limit ourselves we shall never be able to appease France and England!"

"You are soldiers today. I, too, was once a soldier and I remain one today. Though this struggle for my Volk was an inevitable one [historically], I have the absolute will to see this struggle through in my lifetime. Then today's German generation shall take up this great task, and it shall not say it will leave it to its children."

"Today, for the first time in German history, the German giant faces only one front and is armed better than ever before. They believed that they would be able to engage us in struggle along several fronts this time, too, but in this they failed because of the alliances and treaties formed."⁵⁰

"The one enemy was eliminated within eighteen days."⁵¹

"They [Germany's enemies in the West] are all waiting for action. We decide when these actions will take place.⁵² Let no one entertain any doubt, however, that they will indeed take place. No struggle in world history was ever decided by inaction, by staying low or on the sidelines. Rather, any historic struggle is decided only by victory, and any victory is decided only in the struggle."

While undoubtedly there was some truth to Hitler's theory on inaction in battle, it was ironically he himself who shied away from engagements with the British by "staying low." When he spoke of struggle or battle, he obviously had only France or small neutral states in mind. He was still convinced that, driven "back to the Thames," the British fighting forces would collapse. Thus, he was surprised anew every time he met with England's determination to pursue victory on the battlefield instead of at the conference table.

On January 25, an internal report of the High Command of the Wehrmacht revealed: "The Panzerschiff *Deutschland*, which has participated in merchant warfare in Atlantic waters since the outbreak of war, returned home some time ago." At the same time, the following announcement was published:⁵³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has ordered the Panzerschiff *Deutschland* to be renamed *Lützow* since the name *Deutschland* is to be reserved for a larger vessel. The heavy cruiser originally christened *Lützow* shall be renamed correspondingly.⁵⁴

On January 27, Keitel announced the following desire of the Führer to the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht:⁵⁵

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht desires "Study N" to be placed directly under his personal supervision and to be worked on furthermore in the closest connection with the overall conduct of the war. For these reasons, the Führer has commissioned me to attend to all future provisional measures. To this end, a working staff will be set up at the High Command of the Wehrmacht which will later serve as the nucleus for a functional operational staff. [Technical details follow.]

"Study N" would later be called "Weser Exercise" (*Weserübung*), the code name for the military occupation of Norway and Denmark.⁵⁶ In December of the preceding year, Hitler had laid the groundwork for the formulation of this study.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he apparently felt it necessary at this point to underline that all preparations to be implemented were to "be placed directly under his personal supervision." One reason for this was that "Study N" had not originated with him, but with Raeder. The Grand Admiral had approached Hitler with the idea for a foray to the North in October of 1939.⁵⁸ Hitler had expanded on Raeder's suggestion to take Norway by force and he wished all those involved in the project to know that actually the very idea was his.

Like all other prominent figures in the Third Reich, the Commander in Chief of the Navy had been taken by complete surprise when news of the British declaration of war reached him in Berlin. Raeder had shared the Navy's prevalent conviction that a like move on the part of England was not to be anticipated prior to 1944.⁵⁹

It was not only Raeder's personal ambition to appropriate a role of importance for the German Navy in the conflict which steered Hitler's attention to the possibility of the Third Reich occupying Norway. This particular Scandinavian state proved especially alluring as its long coastline afforded the Navy excellent points of departure for maritime missions against the British Isles and against British escorts crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Such a step would equally underline the might of the Navy and its potential for future operations.

These were not the only considerations prompting Raeder's interest. A role of similar importance was played by a conviction

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known as the "Navy theory." It had gained a significant following in reactionary circles in Germany after the First World War and ranked second only to the "stab in the back legend" of earlier days. The "Navy theory" blamed the German naval leadership of the First World War, primarily consisting of Grand Admiral Tirpitz and the Kaiser himself, for having tarried in the deployment of Germany's High Seas Fleet. Inactivity, the worst form of activity for real soldiers,⁶⁰ had slowly but surely corroded the morale of the Navy's personnel. The "*blaue Jungs*," as sailors were popularly known, had then launched the revolution of November 1918 in the ports of Wilhelmshaven and Kiel. This had then spread like wildfire throughout Germany, precipitating the Reich's defeat in the war. There is no need to go into this obvious nonsense.⁶¹

In 1940, it was a fact, however, that the Navy greatly suffered from the "shame" with which the "boys in blue" felt burdened psychologically and historically. The impression that the Navy had been the first to give way to the pressures of 1918 and had thus abandoned the Reich to the enemy pervaded most of Germany. Hence Raeder stood determined not to allow, under any circumstances, a similar impression of inactivity by the fleet to be generated in the Second World War. He yearned for action. He preferred the sailors to demonstrate that they "knew how to die valiantly"⁶² rather than that the Navy should remain idle in the harbor. Undoubtedly, Hitler was pleased by this predisposition for action on the part of the Navy, although at first he had proved hesitant to initiate a potential military move against Norway.

The Russo-Finnish War had put the possibility of a joint Franco-English intervention in this conflict, across Norwegian territory, back up for discussion. Germany would be harmed by any such move. Two thirds of the German armament industry depended on iron ore imports from Sweden for its output. In winter, this precious and desperately needed raw material could be shipped only through Norway's ice-free port of Narvik. Repercussions from a violation of Norwegian neutrality were a consideration for the Allied Chiefs of Staff as well as for their German counterparts. Intercession in the so-called "Winter War" with Russia on behalf of the gallant Finns was truly tempting for Great Britain and France at this time. And thus, the Allied Chiefs of Staff, too, were drawing up plans to overrun the territory of Norway, in spite of its status as a non-belligerent power.

After all, then as now, it is the task of Chiefs of Staff to contemplate all possibilities. In this context, it should be noted that the German Chiefs of Staff were cleared of charges at Nuremberg related to the

constitution of an “organization of war criminals.” Decisive in the assignment of guilt and responsibility in such matters was not the actual planning of the invasion of Norway, but rather its ruthless implementation, responsibility for which lay entirely with the German statesmen involved.

In England, for instance, pressure to intervene in Finland by way of Oslo was great also, yet Chamberlain and Halifax put up a determined resistance and refused to hear of an invasion of Norway to protect British interests.⁶³ Instead, in the case of Norway, the Allied politicians resolved to leave it up to Hitler to violate neutral territory and thereby assume the burden of the blame.

Though Hitler prided himself on forestalling the actions of his foes by a few days and even as little as “twenty-four hours,”⁶⁴ he could not possibly maintain that the Western Powers seriously considered violating Norwegian neutrality. Even had this been the case, there was a decisive difference between Germany and its adversaries: Germany had to use force to persuade Norway to abandon its neutrality, while the West commanded sufficient political clout to pressure Norway to give it up more or less voluntarily, if need be.

When, in 1940, Hitler determined to see through “Operation Nord,” he evidently was still convinced he could force Norway and later Denmark into acquiescence to his visions of “economic warfare” against Great Britain. With no more Danish bacon for breakfast, the English might well be more disposed to coming to terms with Germany. In any event, the strategic value of the North Sea shores of both countries would greatly enhance Germany’s capabilities for action against England. These contemplations were reinforced by Hitler’s unyielding belief in the “Germanic Reich of the German nation,” which he had formulated as early as 1937.⁶⁵ This he greatly desired to expand to encompass all “Germanic” lands, such as Norway and Denmark, of course.

On January 29, Hitler signed a law “on the representation of the new eastern territories in the Reichstag” which read:⁶⁶

In order to afford representation in the Greater German Reichstag to the German Volksgenossen residing in the eastern territories now returning home, the Reich Government promulgates the following law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

The Greater German Reichstag, elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938, supplemented by the law of April 13, 1939 (RGBl. I, pp. 762 f.), will gain as

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many more deputies as the total of the residents of the various eastern territories who are above twenty years of age, can be divided by the figure 60,000.

§ 2

The deputies entering the Greater German Reichstag in accordance with § 1 are to be appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor from among the number of German Volksgenossen residing in these territories who are above twenty-five years of age.

This law also served to silence those Germans who had clamored and hoped for the Reichstag to convene on January 30. Hitler did not feel inclined to speak on this day of commemoration which, customarily, he took advantage of to deliver a lengthy speech. No news of spectacular victories was at hand. Lack of any specific attainment to be applauded might prompt one of the delegates to interrupt the session to demand a vote on either war or peace—so he feared needlessly.

Therefore, Hitler preferred to have Goebbels stage a “mass rally” at the Berlin Sportpalast on this date. Among the audience, he wished “modest worker’s dress” to predominate. Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, and generals received instructions to seat themselves on the rostrum. Hitler’s speech of January 30, 1940, was replete with empty phrases and rhetorical statements on the war, a tirade against England with its colonial possessions and most annoying propaganda ministry. The only statement worthy of note in the address read: “And I can only say to France and England: you, too, shall have your war!” He placed great emphasis on his determination to attack in the West shortly, an intention he had already underlined in his New Year’s appeal.

Hitler made the following statements before those assembled at the Sportpalast:⁶⁷

German Volksgenossen!

Seven years are a short time indeed. They are only a fraction of a normal human life—only a second in the life of a people. And yet the seven years lying behind us today seem longer than many decades of the past. Within them we feel the concentrated force of historic evolution: the resurrection of a great nation in danger of extinction. This was an eventful, tumultuous period indeed. We were fortunate not only to witness it, but to fashion it in part. At times we nearly lost sight of it.

Today there is much talk about democratic ideals in the outside world. But not in Germany! For here in Germany we had more than enough time—fifteen years—to acquaint ourselves with these democratic ideals. And we ourselves had to pick up the legacy left behind by this democracy.

Now we are being credited with many a truly astounding war aim, especially by the English. After all, England is quite experienced in issuing

proclamations of objectives in warfare as it has waged the greatest number of wars the world over.

Truly astounding are the war aims announced to us today. A new Europe will arise. This Europe will be characterized by justice. This justice will render armament obsolete. This will lead to disarmament at last. This disarmament in turn will bring about an economic blossoming. Change and trade will spring up—much trade—free trade. And with the sponsorship of this trade, culture shall once more blossom, and not only culture will benefit, but religion will also prosper.

In other words: we are heading towards a golden age!⁸

Well, we have heard of this golden age before. Many times precisely the same people attempted to illustrate its virtues to us who are now flooding us with descriptions of its benefits. The records are old ones, played once too often. We can only pity these gentlemen who cannot even come up with a new idea to trap a great people. For all this they had already promised us in 1918. Then, too, England's objectives in the war were the creation of this "new Europe," the establishment of a "new justice," of which the "right to self-determination of the peoples" was to form an integral part. Back then already they promised us justice to render obsolete—for all time—the bearing of any sort of weaponry.

Back then already they submitted to us a program for disarmament—one for global disarmament. To make this disarmament more evident, it was to be crowned by the establishment of an association of nations bearing no arms. These were to settle their differences in the future—for even back then there was no doubt that differences would still arise—by talking them to death in discussion and debate, just as is the custom in democratic states. There would be no more shooting under any circumstances! In 1918, they declared a blessed and pious age to come!

What came to pass in its stead we all lived to see: the old states were destroyed without even as much as asking their citizenry. Historic, ancient structures were severed, not only state bodies but grown economic structures as well, without anything better to take their place. In total disregard of the principle of the right to self-determination of the peoples, the European peoples were hacked to pieces, torn apart. Great states were dissolved. Nations were robbed of their rights, first rendered utterly defenseless and then subjected to a division which left only victors and vanquished in this world.

And then there was no more talk of disarmament. To the contrary, armament went on. Nor did any efforts materialize to settle conflicts peacefully. The armed states waged wars just as before. Yet those who had been disarmed were no longer in a position to ward off the aggressions of those well armed.

Naturally, this did not herald economic prosperity but, to the contrary, produced a network of lunatic reparations payments which led to increasing destitution for not only the vanquished, but also the so-called victors themselves. The consequences of this economic destitution were felt most acutely by the German Volk.

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And culture meanwhile received no support. Instead, it was abandoned to the arbitrary reign of crazed ideas and distortions. Religion, too, had to take a back seat. In these fifteen years, not one Englishman recalled the Christian ideals of charity or of love for one's fellow man. The gentlemen went for walks not with the bible under their arms, but with the Treaty of Versailles in hand as their bible. It contained those 440 articles, all of which represented a burden, an obligation, an indictment, and an extortion of Germany. The League of Nations guaranteed this Versailles. It was not an association of free and equal nations. It was not even a League of Nations; its founding father refused it recognition from the start. It was a so-called League of Nations with the sole intent of guaranteeing this most vile of all Diktats. Its mission was to force us to fulfill this Diktat.

This was the age of democratic Germany! Now that foreign statesmen repeatedly act as though they could not possibly trust present-day Germany, one should remark that this cannot possibly be applied to the Germany back then. This former Germany was their own creation, their own work. They should have been able to place trust in it. Yet, instead, just how badly did they treat it!

Let us recall the true story of those years: the despondency of the collapse of 1918; the tragedy of the year 1919; all those years of economic decline domestically; the continuation of the enslavement; the misery of our Volk; and, above all, the utter hopelessness of those years! Even today the memory of these years profoundly shakes us. Those were the days when a great nation slowly lost not only its belief in itself, but all hope for justice in this world. During this entire period, democratic Germany hoped in vain, pleaded in vain, and protested in vain.

International finance remained brutal and squeezed our Volk ruthlessly. The statesmen of the allied nations closed their hearts to it. In cold blood, they declared that we were twenty million Germans too many.⁶⁹

In those days when all hope was for naught, all pleas were in vain, and all protests bore no fruits, in those days the National Socialist Movement came forth from the realization that, in this world, one must never stoop to hoping, pleading, or protesting. Instead, in this world, it is imperative first and foremost to help oneself.

Belief in our German Volk and the mobilization of its values took the place of hope. We had few real means at our disposal back then. What we regarded as building blocks for our new Reich, besides our willpower, was first our Volk's ability to work, second its intelligence, and third what our soil, our Lebensraum, afforded us.

And thus we began our work and began Germany's inner uplifting. It did not threaten the world. It was a work of purely inner, domestic reform. And nevertheless, it immediately elicited the hatred of others. These got wind of the renewed rise of the German Volk. And it was because we knew of this that we undertook to mobilize Germany's strength.

You know it well: in the year 1933, the year we assumed power, I was forced to declare our withdrawal from the League of Nations and from the Disarmament Conference. This forum was incapable of according us justice.

In 1934, Germany's rearmament began on a large scale. In 1935, I introduced general conscription. In 1936, I had the Rhineland occupied militarily. In 1937, the Four-Year Plan was launched. In 1938, the Ostmark and the Sudetenland were integrated into the Reich. In 1939, we began to establish protection for the Reich against those enemies who had meanwhile cast aside their masks.

The steps taken in 1939 served the defense of the Reich. Everything could have developed quite differently had the outside world had as much as an ounce of understanding for the vital concerns of Germany. Often it is said we should have waited for a negotiated settlement. Remember, my Volksgenossen: did I not repeatedly place the colonial question, for instance, before the world to obtain a negotiated settlement?! Did we ever receive a response? None other than brusque replies and ever new hateful reactions.

The moment the Reich began to re-emerge, the leading classes of England and France determined to take up the battle once again. They wanted it thus. For over 300 years, England has sought to prevent a real consolidation of Europe, just as France sought to prevent a consolidation of Germany for many a century. Today Mr. Chamberlain stands up to preach his pious war aims to the outside world. To this, all I can say is: English history has already betrayed your intent, Mr. Chamberlain!

For 300 years, your statesmen have spoken just as you do today, Mr. Chamberlain, at the onset of war. They always fought for "the Lord and religion." They never had "a material goal." And just because they never fought for such "a material goal," the Lord so richly rewarded them in material terms! That England always declared itself "a fighter for truth and justice" and "a protagonist of all virtues," this Dear Lord has not forgotten. Generously He has bestowed His blessings on the English. In those nearly 300 years, they have subjugated forty million square kilometers of soil on this earth. Naturally, they did this not from egotistical motives or because they lusted for mastery, riches, or enjoyment. To the contrary, they were merely fulfilling a mission in the name of the Lord and religion.

Of course, England did not wish to be the sole crusader for the Lord's cause, and thus invited others to partake in this noble exploit. It did not even seek to claim the battle's greatest burdens for itself. For ventures so pleasing to the Lord one can always find others. And England still does this today. And all this is richly rewarding for England:

Forty million square kilometers obtained through conquest: a succession of rape, extortion, tyrannical abuse, oppression, pillaging. Events mark English history inconceivable for any other state or for any other people. The English waged war for any old reason. They waged war to expand trade; they waged war to force others to smoke opium; they waged war for gold mines and for mastery over diamond mines. Their goals were always material in nature, though hidden beneath a cloak of noble ideals.

And this last war was led in the service of noble purposes, too. To have pocketed German colonies in the process was the Lord's will; to have taken our fleet from us; to have pocketed German accounts abroad. All these exploits were mere side effects of the "noble struggle for a holy religion." When I see Mr. Chamberlain go about, bible in hand, preaching his noble war

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aims, I cannot help having the impression of watching the devil, bible clasped under his arm, creeping up to a poor soul.

All this is no longer original. It is all in exceedingly bad taste. Nobody believes him anymore. Sometimes I fear he is coming to doubt himself.

Besides, every Volk burns its fingers only once. Only once were the children of Hamelin herded off by the Pied Piper; only once was the German Volk herded off by that apostle of the international brotherhood of man.⁷⁰

In this context, I must praise Mr. Churchill. He frankly states what old Mr. Chamberlain only thinks quietly to himself and hopes for secretly. He says, our goal is the dissolution, the destruction of Germany. Our goal is the extermination, if possible, of the German Volk. Believe me, I welcome this openness.

And the French generals also freely discuss what is actually at stake. I believe we can understand each other more easily in this manner. Why always fight with lies and empty phrases? Why not be open about things? We should greatly prefer this. We know the objective they are pursuing whether or not Mr. Chamberlain walks about with the bible in hand or not; whether he is acting piously or not; whether he speaks the truth or not. We know their goal: it is the Germany of 1648 which they envision, a Germany disintegrated and torn to pieces.⁷¹

They know only too well that over eighty million Germans sit in this Central Europe. These human beings have a right to live—they have a right to a piece of the pie—and for three hundred years they were cheated out of it. They could only be cheated since their disintegration led to the weight of their numbers being proportionally undervalued. And thus today we have 140 men living on one square kilometer. And when such numbers unite, they have power. When they are divided, they are defenseless and impotent. There is a moral imperative lying within their unity also. What does it matter when thirty, fifty or 200 small states rise to protest or to claim their vital rights? Who takes note? When eighty million men rise up—that is a completely different story!

Hence the disinclination against the state-forming activities in Italy, the unity of Germany. They would much prefer to see these states dissolve into their former elements once more.

A few days ago, an Englishman wrote: "So it is, indeed. The hasty foundation of the German Empire—that was not right." Indeed, it was not right. It was not right that eighty million men came together to jointly realize their vital rights.⁷² Instead, they would much prefer to see us under 200 or 400 different little flags or, if possible, in some 200 or 300 dynasties. Every dynasty would rule some 100,000 odd men and these would be silenced, never to be heard of by the rest of the world. Then we as a Volk could try to survive as a people of poets and philosophers. Besides this, poets and philosophers also need less food than hard laborers do.

This is the problem up for discussion today. Here are great nations which in the course of the centuries were cheated out of their right to life in this world due to their divisions. These nations have now overcome their inner divisions. Today they have entered, as young peoples, the circle of all others

and are staking their claim. They are opposed by the so-called owners. These latter peoples who today possess and block large sections of the world without sense or purpose; these who pillaged Germany only a few years ago; these now place themselves in the same position as the so-called possessing classes within a society do.

On the world stage, the same thing is repeated which we have already witnessed inside the life of a people. Here, too, there were economic analysis and political opinion to the effect that he who has something, has something; he who has nothing, has nothing. It was to please the Lord that the one should possess while the other should not. And it was to remain so for eternity. New forces have come to oppose this. The one simply cries out: "We want only to destroy! What we cannot possess we will destroy!" This nihilistic force has raged in Germany for a decade and a half.⁷ Constructive National Socialism has overcome this force. It has refused to acknowledge the existing state of affairs and undertaken its modification. It changed the method of eradicating the state of affairs by saying: "We want to change this state of affairs by gradually permitting the non-possessing classes to partake in the national wealth and by educating them to partake in it."

Under no circumstances can the man who possesses everything presume himself to possess all-encompassing rights while the other man has no rights. It is no different in the world either. It is not acceptable for forty-six million Englishmen to simply block forty million square kilometers on this earth and to declare: "The Good Lord gave us this. Twenty years ago we got a little more yet from you. Now this is in our possession, and we shall not give back any of it."

And France? With its truly none-too-fertile people, numbering hardly eighty men per square kilometer, it has set out to conquer over nine million square kilometers of soil. Germany with its eighty million men possesses barely 600,000 square kilometers. This is the problem which must be solved, and it will be solved just as other social questions will be solved.

And what we witness today is a larger replay of the same drama we already observed on a smaller stage in the interior when National Socialism launched its struggle for a truly tolerable order and a true community of man for the benefit of the broad masses of the Volk. At the time, liberal and democratic circles—i.e. the possessing classes, and their parties—attempted to destroy National Socialism. "Dissolve the Party! The Party must be outlawed!" This was their eternal battle cry. They saw the Movement's dissolution or prohibition as the only means of destroying this force which they feared might well prove capable of bringing about a change in the existing state of affairs.

National Socialism dealt squarely with these other forces; it survived; it inaugurated a new order in Germany and has persisted in so doing. And today the possessing part of the world is crying: "We must dissolve Germany! We must atomize these eighty million. They should not be allowed to remain within a contiguous state structure. Thereby we can rob them of the force to see their demands through!" And these are the objectives England and France are pursuing in this war!

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Our answer to them nevertheless remains the very same one with which we replied to our adversaries internally. My Old Party Comrades! You know well that the victory of the year 1933 was not a gift. It was the outcome of an unparalleled struggle which we had to lead for nearly fifteen years; of a nearly hopeless struggle.

You will recall that Providence did not all of a sudden bestow a great movement upon us. A handful of people founded it. They had to laboriously fight to attain their position back then and subsequently to expand upon it. This handful of people then became hundreds; then thousands; then tens and hundreds of thousands; and finally the first million. Then they grew into a second million, later into a third and fourth million. And it was thus, in the course of a long struggle against thousandfold resistance and assaults, pillage and violation of our rights, that we grew. And we became strong through this struggle: strong internally. And it was thus we struggled for power in these fifteen years. We received it not as a gift from the Lord, but as recompense for an unequaled, tough struggle; for courageous persistence in the struggle for power.

As I took hold of this power in the year 1933 and took over responsibility, along with the National Socialist Movement, for the future of Germany, I realized that the liberty of our Volk must no longer be restricted. I further realized that our struggle had by no means come to an end, but had only begun to be led on a far larger scale. For before us we had not only the victory of the National Socialist Movement, but the delivery of our German Volk! This was our objective! What I have labored for since is but a means to an end: Party; Labor Front; SA and SS; all other organizations like the Wehrmacht, the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Navy; all these were not ends in themselves, but means to an end.⁷⁴ The imperative of securing the liberty of our Volk reigns above all of these.

Naturally, at home as well as abroad, I have tried to see through the most urgent, inalienable demands by means of negotiations and appeals to reason. I have succeeded in doing so only in a number of cases and instances. In 1938, the realization forced itself upon us that the old war agitators of the World War were beginning once more to get the upper hand in the hostile states. It was then already that I began to issue warnings. For what should we think of these states when they first sit down at Munich to conclude an agreement, only then to depart for London to resume agitation, to denounce this agreement as a disgrace—even to insist such a thing would not be repeated a second time—in other words, to declare a voluntary understanding precluded and inconceivable for all times.

It was then that the outsiders appeared on the stage in the so-called democracies. I immediately warned of them. For it was perfectly clear: the German Volk harbored hatred neither against the English nor the French people. The German Volk desired only to live in peace and friendship with them. The demands we make do not do injury to these peoples, they rob them of nothing.

Hence the German Volk has never been educated to harbor hatred for them. Yet at this point, in England, certain circles launched an impertinent,

intolerable campaign. To me, this indicated the moment had come to say: we cannot stand by silently any longer. For one day these agitators in London might well find themselves in government and realize their plans. And then the German Volk will not know what precisely hit it. And thus I gave orders to enlighten the German Volk regarding this campaign. And from this moment on, I also stood determined to secure the Reich's defenses in one way or another.

In 1939, the Western Powers finally dropped their masks. Despite all our attempts and our advances, they sent us their declaration of war. And today they freely admit: "Indeed, Poland may well have given way, but we did not want it to." Today they admit it would have been possible to arrive at an understanding. But they wanted war.

This was precisely what my domestic opponents used to tell me. I held my hand out in friendship to them. But they also refused it. And they also cried: "No reconciliation. No understanding. Only war!" Well, they got their war! And I can only say to France and England: you, too, shall have your war!

The first phase in this war consisted of political action. It freed our rear first of all. For years Germany collaborated with Italy in policy formation. This policy has not changed to this day. The two states are close friends. There is a common denominator to their interests.

In the past year, I have tried to rob England of the means to allow the conflict it envisioned to escalate into a general world war. The pious Mr. Chamberlain who studies, reads, and preaches the bible, labored for months to arrive at an understanding with the atheist Stalin. He attempted to conclude a pact with him. In this he failed at the time.

I understand that England is raging now that I have done what Mr. Chamberlain in vain sought to do. And I also comprehend that what was pleasing to the Lord in Mr. Chamberlain's case should be far less pleasing to the Lord in my case. But, nevertheless, I do believe the Lord Almighty to be well pleased that a senseless war on so vast a terrain was prevented.

Throughout centuries Germany and Russia have lived next to each other in peace and friendship. Why should this not be possible in the future once again? I believe it to be possible since both peoples so desire! Any attempt on the part of the British and French plutocracies to raise renewed controversy between us will fail as we realize their true intentions.

And thus today Germany does not have to worry about its rear politically.

The second task of the year 1939 was to secure this rear militarily as well. The strength of our Wehrmacht trampled to the ground the hope of the English military experts that under no circumstances could the war against Poland be decided in less than six months or a year. The state to which England had extended its guarantee was swept from the map within eighteen days.⁷⁵ Hence the first phase of this war has come to an end, and the second one begins.

Mr. Churchill is already dying to start it. He cherishes the hope, as expressed by intermediaries as well as by his own person, that bombardment should finally, and as soon as possible, feature in this war. And already they are crying that this war should not pay heed to women and children. For when

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has England ever paid heed to women and children?! After all, this entire blockade warfare is nothing other than a war against women and children, just as once was the case in the Boer War. It was then that concentration camps were invented. The English brain gave birth to this idea. We only read about it in the encyclopedias and later copied it—with one crucial difference: England locked up women and children in these camps. Over twenty thousand Boer women died wretchedly at the time.⁶ Why should England fight differently today? We have anticipated this and we have prepared ourselves.

May Mr. Churchill rest assured that we do know what has happened in England within these five months and in France, too. However, he apparently does not know what has happened in Germany within these five months!

Evidently these gentlemen are of the conviction that we slept through these past five months. Since the day I stepped onto the political stage, I have never yet slept through a single day of importance, not to speak of five months.

I can assure the German Volk of one thing: in these five months, we have scored enormous achievements. What was built within Germany in the previous seven years pales in comparison to the attainments of these five months! Our armament program was launched according to plan. The plan proved its worth. Our foresight is just now beginning to bear fruits. These fruits are of so impressive a nature that our adversaries are beginning to imitate us. Alas—they are poor imitators. Naturally, the English broadcast services know better. According to them, the skies above England are so darkened by British squadrons flying overhead that the sun can no longer shine there today; the world is one immense arsenal, equipped by England, working for England, supplying the massive British armies; Germany is standing on the brink of a total breakdown.

I just heard today that we possess only three more U-boats. This is truly disastrous—not for us, however, but for English propaganda, since should these three items be destroyed—and this could be as early as today or tomorrow—what will be left to be destroyed? The English will then be forced to sink U-boats preemptively which we are to build only in the future. And then somehow they will have to come to terms with a method of resurrecting U-boats. Undoubtedly, English ships will continue to be sunk and, as we possess no more U-boats, the U-boats attacking them will have to be U-boats which the English have previously sunk.

Further I read that I have succumbed to deep despair and sadness as I had expected us to build two U-boats every day, while we were turning out only two every week. To this I can only say: it is not good to have one's war reports and especially one's radio broadcasts authored by members of a people which has not fought for several thousands of years. For after all, the last documented battle involving the Maccabees is slowly losing its instructive value for military history.

When I turn to look at this foreign propaganda, my belief in our victory grows to the immeasurable! For this propaganda I experienced once before. For nearly fifteen years, this propaganda was directed against us. My Old Party

Comrades, you remember this propaganda! There are the same words, the same phrases—yes—when we look more closely we see the same heads speaking the same dialects.

I finished off these people as a lonely, unknown man who gathered but a handful of people about him. Throughout fifteen years I finished off these people. And today Germany is the greatest world power.⁷

It is not as though age as such results in wisdom. No more are the blind restored to sight by old age. Whoever was afflicted with blindness before remains so today. Whoever is afflicted with blindness will be cursed by the gods.

Today the German Wehrmacht, the best of its kind, is fencing off these forces. Above all, the German Volk is fencing off these forces with its insight and its discipline. For seven years, National Socialist work has educated it in all areas. That this is not just a fantasy is something you can see today. This education has overcome differences of classes and ranks. It has eliminated parties, eradicated different *Weltanschauungen*, and has placed the community in its stead. Today the soul of this community is suffused with a singular, glowing trust and a fanatical will. This time this community will not make the mistake of 1918.

When today Monsieur Daladier expresses doubts regarding this community, or when he believes that parts of this community are lamenting their lot, or when he is quoting my own homeland—oh, Monsieur Daladier, you shall yet get to know my men of the Ostmark (*Ostmärker*)! They shall personally instruct you. You shall get to know their divisions and regiments just as well as the other German ones. Perhaps then you shall be cured of a peculiar form of insanity, namely, the insanity of believing you are faced by the German tribes of old. Monsieur Daladier, you are faced by the entire German Volk today! And it is the National Socialist German Volk!

This Volk for which National Socialism has so struggled and which through laborious works has received its present-day education, is immune to these international delusions. And this in fact represents a permanent cure. The National Socialist Party guarantees this.

And the hopes they entertain to drive a wedge between Volk and Party, or Party and State, or Party and Wehrmacht, or Party and me, are childishly naive. Fifteen years ago my adversaries clung to exactly the same hopes.

As a National Socialist, I have known nothing other than work, struggle, worries, labors. I believe Providence has destined our generation for nothing else. Once, twenty-five years ago, the German Volk set out to fight a war forced upon it. The Volk was not well armed. France applied the power of its people in a fashion quite different from the Germany of the time. Russia was the mightiest adversary. The whole world was successfully mobilized against this Germany. Thus the Volk set out to do battle and wrought many a wondrous heroic deed. And Providence was with our Volk.

The year 1914 delivered our homeland from the threat of foreign break-ins. The year 1915 improved the situation of the Reich further still; 1916, 1917; year after year; battle after battle. At times, everything seemed on the verge of collapse when, as though by miracle, the Reich was rescued. Germany then

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afforded us with truly astounding proofs of its internal strength. Obviously, Providence had blessed it. Then the German Volk became ungrateful. Then it began to listen to the promises of others, instead of looking trustingly to its own strength and hence to its own future. And finally, in its ungratefulness, the German Volk turned against its own Reich, its own leadership. And it was then that Providence turned away from the German Volk.

Since then, I have come to regard this catastrophe as something not wholly undeserved. I have never complained that Providence had somehow wronged us. On the contrary, I always supported this thesis: Providence only gave to us what we deserved in the end. The German nation was ungrateful. Therefore it was deprived of its recompense!

This will not happen a second time in our history.

The National Socialist Movement has already passed through a trial period. The fifteen years of struggle were not only days of glory, of marvelous victories. They were a time of many a worry. At times, our enemies were already jubilantly hailing our destruction. Yet the Movement held its own with a heart filled with strength and joy. Time and time again, trusting in the necessity of our struggle, it leapt up once more to face the enemy and to carry the victory in the end.

This is the task of the German nation today. Eighty million men are stepping up to the line now. As many enemies are standing across from them. These, our eighty million today, enjoy an excellent internal organization—the best possible in fact. They have a strong faith. Their leadership is not bad. Rather, as I am convinced, it is the best.

Führer and Volk today realize that no understanding is possible if we do not insist upon our rights. We do not wish the struggle for these rights to burst forth anew in two, perhaps three or five years. The rights of eighty million are up for discussion, not those of a party or a movement. For who am I? I am nothing other than your speaker, German Volk, the speaker for your rights!

The Volk has vested its trust in me! I will prove myself worthy of this trust. I wish to draw attention not to my own person and my surroundings, but rather to the past and to the future. I wish to stand up in honor before the past and the future, and with me the German Volk shall honorably hold its own.

The generation of today—it is the bearer of Germany's destiny; of Germany's future or Germany's fall. Our enemies, they already cry out today: Germany shall fall! Yet Germany can give but one answer: Germany will live, and hence Germany will win!

At the beginning of the eighth year of the National Socialist revolution, our hearts turn to our German Volk and its future.

We want to serve this future. We want to fight for it and, if necessary, fall for it. We will never capitulate—for Germany must win and it will win. *Heil!*

Hitler's speech of January 30 made little impression abroad, not even in Italy. Ciano entered the following remark in his diary: "Hitler has made a speech for which I see no reason, except that of celebrating the date of his assumption of power."⁷⁸

On January 30 also, Hitler accorded General Governor Frank the right to pronounce a general amnesty in the Polish territories captured. The decree read:⁷⁹

In the Polish territories occupied I, given the right to delegate powers, transfer the exercise of suppressive measures as well as full powers for pronouncing or denying general amnesty in all questions concerning matters of amnesty to the General Governor for the occupied Polish territories. I reserve for my person the right of decision in individual instances.

Little information reached the public in the next two weeks regarding Hitler's activities. In early February, according to Ciano, Hitler sent Prince Philip of Hesse to Rome to stretch out feelers for a possible summit meeting with Mussolini.⁸⁰

On February 6, Hitler took a short leave of absence from Berlin where he returned on February 10 to confer with Halder. He also viewed a newly developed anti-tank weapon.⁸¹ Later in the day, he sent the Tenno a congratulatory telegram on the 2,600-year anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Imperial House.⁸²

On February 12, Hitler suffered from a cold and was hence unable to hear his military attachés' report of the day. By the next day, his condition had improved so that the briefing could proceed on schedule. On this occasion, Hitler voiced his opinion that it was entirely possible that the Western Powers would remain inactive even in view of a German occupation of Holland and Belgium.⁸³

On February 15, Hitler called on the Head of Political Organization at his Berlin flat to congratulate Ley on his fiftieth birthday.⁸⁴ On the same day, Hitler addressed the following handwritten note to Ley, detailing provisions for a "generous old age pension" plan:⁸⁵

To the end of the further realization of the National Socialist Party program, I commission you, Party Comrade Ley, to see to the establishment of principles and conditions for implementing an all-encompassing and generous old age pension for the German Volk, in cooperation with the appropriate offices of Party and State. You are to review the matter, clarify issues, scrutinize the resulting proposals without delay, and submit these to me. This new piece of legislation for the buildup of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft shall for all time remind our Volk of the common struggle at the front and at home for the freedom and independence of the Greater German Reich.

This "historic" task, as the *Völkischer Beobachter* instructed the reader, was apparently intended as a "birthday present" for Ley, whom Hitler had once termed "our greatest idealist."⁸⁶

On February 16, an incident in the waters off Norway disturbed the general calm sometime between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. The crew of the British cruiser *Cossack* boarded the German steamer *Altmark* traversing the Jössing Fjord. As a supply ship, the *Altmark* had accompanied the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* which had been scuttled off the coast of Uruguay on December 17, 1939. In this function, the *Altmark* had captured British seamen aboard who had been taken prisoner on English ships sunk by the armored vessel. The *Cossack* boarded and liberated the Englishmen held captive aboard the *Altmark*. In the course of the skirmish, six German sailors were killed, several others wounded, one of whom subsequently died of his injuries. An additional German seaman was declared missing.⁸⁷

The English exuberantly hailed the brave foray of the British cruiser to free its fellow countrymen.⁸⁸ Among neutral states, the adventurous undertaking equally elicited unreserved enthusiasm. This was true even of Italy.⁸⁹ Hitler did not share this enthusiasm, naturally. He reacted by pressing for an occupation of Norway and Denmark and speeding up preparations.

On February 19, Hitler ordered his Envoy Dr. Bräuer to place a wreath at Sogndal, the burial site for those killed aboard the *Altmark*.⁹⁰ That day, Jodl confided to his diary:⁹¹

Führer exceedingly displeased with behavior of the *Graf Spee* guys on the *Altmark*. No resistance. No English losses. Führer pushes preparations for Weser Exercise very much. Fit steamers. Hold units ready. Wants to speak to staff.

On the same day, Hitler wired his congratulations to Sven Hedin on his seventy-fifth birthday. Through the offices of the German Envoy in Stockholm, Hitler had Hedin presented with the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.⁹²

On February 21, Hitler summoned General von Falkenhorst,⁹³ whom Jodl had indicated as a candidate for the position of Commander in Chief for the occupation of Norway. Falkenhorst had served under General von der Goltz in Finland in 1918. Jodl recorded in his diary:⁹⁴

Führer speaks with General von Falkenhorst, entrusts him with preparations for Weser Exercise. Falkenhorst accepts joyously. Directives issued to all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

Before the Nuremberg court, Falkenhorst recounted that, upon entering the room, he was made to sit down by Hitler and to tell him of his experiences in Finland.⁹⁵ Then Hitler led him up to “a table

covered with maps.” Finally, Hitler dismissed Falkenhorst with the instructions to return later that afternoon with concrete plans for the envisioned military move against Norway. Falkenhorst later recalled:

I went out and bought a Baedeker in order to find out just what Norway was like. I didn't have any idea. Then I went to my hotel room and worked on the Baedeker. At 5:00 p.m., I went back to the Führer.

On February 23, on Hitler's orders, Chief of Staff Lutze placed a wreath at the tomb of Horst Wessel.⁹⁶

On the following day, Hitler congratulated the Reich Leader of Labor, Konstantin Hierl, on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁹⁷

Later that day, Hitler delivered an address in the hall of the Hofbräuhaus at Munich on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Party program. In commemoration of the event, a bronze plaque, with Hitler's profile engraved upon it, was affixed to the wall behind the rostrum. Standing in front of this metal relief reproduction of his facial features, Hitler exalted the “hardest and most fanatic decision of his life” which had first led him into this hall. He congratulated himself on the mediocrity of his adversaries: “At home and abroad, I have always had the misfortune of fighting against zeroes.” Further, he stated, “I am nothing other than a magnet which, in constantly passing over the German nation, extracts the steel from within this nation,” and, “as, during these thirteen years, I fought at home for the freedom of my Volk, against its domestic oppressors, exploiters, and so on, I will fight today abroad as well, if necessary.” Indeed, “if necessary,” Hitler also declared himself willing to fight against England. Still it was his belief that it would not actually come to this fight, as with the German Nationalist “zeroes” so many years before. Now, he had to deal squarely with “zeroes” such as Churchill, Chamberlain, Duff Cooper, Eden, and the like. Hitler had only contempt for his adversaries, mocking them for dropping “leaflets . . . for lack of other ammunition.”

On the topic of Russia, Hitler sought to dissuade the English from placing hopes on any abrupt rupture of friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union: “Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain!” The “party narrative” culminated in the following exclamation:⁹⁸

In four years of struggle, this Volk faced off twenty-six states and was only vanquished by betrayal and dishonesty! Had there not been Germans back

then to undermine trust in their own regime, England and France would never have won! Had then [in 1918] a certain Adolf Hitler, instead of serving as a German musketeer, been German Reich Chancellor, do you really believe that then the false gods of capitalism and international democracy would have carried the victory?!

Thereafter Hitler turned to ridicule the Western statesmen:

When I conjure up all these so-called international statesmen in the democracies, who today talk big in Europe, before my mind's eye and envision their lives' achievements, then all I can say is: At home and abroad, I have always had the misfortune of fighting against zeroes. These folk rule over the largest of terrains on this earth and yet are not even capable of eliminating unemployment in their own countries. And these folk speak of the necessity of a new order for Europe. That reminds me of the talk of our own democrats of earlier days who preached the necessity of a new order for Germany. This new order was indeed established—although without them. And a new order will be established in the world—although equally without them!

My struggle for the liberty of our Volk was a struggle against Versailles. What was at stake were not so much the endless paragraphs of Versailles, but beyond this it was a struggle against the mentality which found its expression in the Diktat of Versailles. Its roots lie in the conception that two to three peoples have simply been ordained by the Lord to rule over the entire earth, and that, every time one people refused to be subjected to their rule, they have the right to claim that this one people is set on mastery of the earth. Mr. Chamberlain is saying as much at a time when all of India is rising up in protest against him, at a moment when Arabs are calling for resistance to him.

Against such a background, this Mister stands up to declare: England is fighting against a German attempt at forcible mastery of the world.

With similar phrases it was perhaps possible to make some impression on the Germany of the year 1918. But this is no longer the case with National Socialist Germany! The Lord Almighty assuredly did not create this earth for the English exclusively! The Lord Almighty has assuredly not provided that a few small races, which cannot supply their own people with basic necessities, should subjugate three quarters of the earth and condemn all other peoples to starvation. This all became possible only due to the weakness of these other peoples. But this weakness has been overcome!

And these peoples are now staking their own vital claims. I have expressed this claim in the most modest of terms. Our goal was:

1. To secure our own Lebensraum. And this Lebensraum encompasses, in my understanding, all that was cultivated, civilized, and economically developed by us Germans, and not by the English. There are several of these areas. At least in Central Europe, the inspiring influence of Great Britain has not yet been felt, neither in the past nor in the present. Germany built up this Central Europe. We desire to live in this German Lebensraum. Here we will not stand for foreign threats. Here we will not stand for political alliances being constructed to our detriment. And,

2. I demanded the return of the German colonies, our German rightful possessions which the world plutocrats have robbed us of without any discernible benefit for their own peoples. The goals I set were limited in nature. I took all precautions to clearly delineate our claims against England and France so that their peoples could under no circumstances feel threatened. In spite of this, our old acquaintances from the World War made their appearance once more and so did their agitation for war. Mr. Churchill, Mr. Duff Cooper, Mr. Eden, and Mr. Chamberlain himself rose up, followed by the specter of the eternal Jew Hore-Belisha. In the Great War, Mr. Churchill had already served as the well-known party whip who belongs to those people who today make no bones about having plunged the world into a war back then. Back then I was only an exceedingly small, unknown soldier without any political clout. I did my small duty just as any other German. Hence we came from completely different worlds: there was the capitalist war agitator and here the simple German soldier. After the war the people there went about their business in the armament industry and pocketed enormous profits. I, however, fought then for my German Volk. And just how hard I fought you know best yourselves as my witnesses.

For years now, these people have agitated for war once again. Once more they make no bones about their one, actual objective: to wage a great war. And once more they cherish the hope that other people shall step in for them. And this hope is not unfounded on the one hand as they have their Jewish cohorts sitting everywhere. On the other hand, this hope has already been disappointed. For this time a German front-line soldier has risen up against them and, for his part, has taken all precautionary steps. He has done so as thoroughly as only a man can who is suffused with his duty towards his own Volk.

I warned of these people when it became necessary. I never left a doubt as to one thing: it is my unshakeable will and decision to free Germany again. That they should hate me for this fills me with the greatest of pride. You know well, my Old Party Comrades, how often I told you in this very hall: when the Jews and all that other riffraff running about Germany at the time turned to scold me—how often did I tell you this in this very hall—then I felt this to be a great honor.

Had they turned to praise me, I should have felt like the greatest scoundrel. And this holds true today.²⁹ When a man like Churchill says he hates me—then: I must thank you, Mr. Churchill, for this compliment! When Mr. Chamberlain declares that he cannot trust me—I must equally thank you, Mr. Chamberlain, for not believing that I could ever become a traitor to my Volk. When Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Eden asserts that, in their eyes, I am a most despicable monster—I am happy that they do not count me among their friends, at least.

I have only one ambition: to struggle for the love and affection of my own Volksgenossen and to preserve this! The hatred of my enemies does not move me in the least. Neither did it move me in the thirteen years I struggled for power in Germany, nor does it move me in the least now. As, during these thirteen years, I fought at home for the freedom of my Volk, against its

domestic oppressors, exploiters, and so on, I will fight today abroad as well, if necessary. They do not know us. The best proof for how little they know us lies in the British hope, so I believe, to see another year 1918 come to pass. This probably best explains the idiotic leaflets they drop on Germany for lack of other ammunition.

Apparently, they believe they can repeat the maneuvering of the years 1917 and 1918 in the Germany of the present. The gentlemen are completely ignorant of today's Germany. Today the situation has changed significantly from that of the year 1914 and has done so in a number of spheres. First of all, foreign policy has changed, as Germany is Italy's friend today. It is not only the friendship of the two regimes, I may well say the friendship of the two leading men, but it is above all the realization that the two countries' futures lie with each other and are dependent one upon the other. And towards Russia, too, our relations have changed. The hope to spark a great war between Russia and Germany as in 1914, this hope has pitifully failed its authors.

I do understand that London is nettled by the "baseness" with which I of all people succeeded in precluding this move all of a sudden. But I do believe that, in this instance, the Russian and the German regimes did something most beneficial for both peoples as both of us are too good to bleed to death only so that the London stock exchange and all of Jewry might rejoice. With this another mighty state deserted the front against Germany. And you know, my Volksgenossen, that I do not do anything by halves. Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain! And Japan, too, which also joined the ranks of Germany's enemies in 1914, stands on our side as a close friend this time. That makes three mighty states which were our foes then and today stand by our side in the most benign neutrality. Quite a significant change in the political landscape.

And militarily the situation has changed also. I have armed and—as always in my life I go the whole way and not just half the way—I have thoroughly carried out this armament. For years I did not speak of this for reasons you can well imagine. I did not want to upset the others needlessly!¹⁰⁰

For years I remained silent, but as you all know I did work. We built up a Wehrmacht which looks quite different today from the one of 1914. Back then, it was poorly equipped; in part it was truly wretchedly short of supplies.¹⁰¹ This time we spared no efforts to equip our Wehrmacht with the most modern armament in the world. That this is not an empty phrase was proved in the Polish campaign. I believe it went a bit faster than the strategists in London and Paris had anticipated.

And the future will continue to confirm this. As for the spirit of this Wehrmacht, beyond all material considerations, you may all rest assured. The spirit of the soldier is always the spirit of the supreme leadership. May the Lord see to it that this supreme leadership of today is not mistaken for the leadership of the year 1914! And in economic matters also, we have prepared ourselves in a different fashion. For years, I have had the basis for self-sufficiency secured, much to the anger of our enemies. Actually our

opponents should have rejoiced at this and said: "Thank God, the Germans are assuring their own existence within their sphere of life." But no, they were angered instead, since they knew only too well that this self-sufficiency robs them of the opportunity to suddenly attack Germany and to strangle it with a blockade. This blockade nevertheless affords us certain loopholes, and we are protected against blockades today in a manner quite different from 1914.

Back then our resistance to the blockade was almost zero, just as were our preparations for self-sufficiency. Today we are actively resisting from day one on. This resistance is made possible through the securing of thoroughly organized bases for economic self-sufficiency to rest on. Neither militarily nor economically can Germany be wrestled to the ground! Decisive, nonetheless, is the leadership. And when I speak of leadership here, I am not speaking of myself alone, but of all those who have come together in the leadership in Germany within the twenty years since I first spoke to you.

I have often told you: I am nothing other than a magnet which, in constantly passing over the German nation, extracts the steel from within this nation. I have often declared the time would come when everyone who counts himself a man in Germany will stand on my side, as he who does not stand on my side is not worth much anyway. I have termed this process the formation of the historic minority. And it came to pass as I predicted. In the course of thirteen years, a sum of personal energies gathered in the National Socialist Party, from the smallest Blockwart or Zellenwart to the Ortsgruppenleiter, the Kreisleiter, the Gauleiter, the Reichsstatthalter, the Reichsleiter, and so on. Selection took place in all areas. Enormous energies were mobilized and today are positioned in the appropriate places.

If you find it difficult to grasp the whole picture at first glance, just imagine any old national event of the years 1903 or 1905, let us say 1908, 1910, or 1912. And then look at a similar national celebration today. Let us think of the unveiling of a memorial dedicated to a national hero, let us say Bismarck, or the launching of a ship. The first impression: a sea of top hats—only top hats—no real people anywhere. And today there are real people and no top hats. That is the difference! When I speak to you today, my dear Old Party Comrades, you will say to yourselves: our dear old revolutionary Führer!—Sorry, your head of state. And do not forget how all this would look abroad if a head of state were speaking.

Just as it might have looked twenty or fifteen years ago. Look at the picture today. Today we truly have a German Volk and at its head we see leaders all over today, leaders who issued forth from the people, irrespective of descent. It is truly an immense sum of manly energy and determination which leads the German nation today. It is truly worth something when a nation is so well organized that at each post someone stands who issued forth from the Volk itself. He does not stand there by virtue of name or high birth, but only due to his ability as a man of action. And one last point: we have a different Volk today. This Volk has straightened itself up, it has found its way back to itself. It has recovered its self-confidence to an unprecedented degree. It knows nothing is impossible in this world. It knows our history. It knows that in our resolve today we are no less than the great heroes of our past.

February 24, 1940

The German Volk graduated from a school which, in Western Europe, no other Volk possesses, with the exception of Italy. It is a school of enlightenment and political education. This Volk is organized through and through. When today one of those English top hats wants to make propaganda, propaganda to work inside our Volk, then I say: Others have tried and have failed faced with us. Mr. Chamberlain might use his phrases for his own people. With us they have no effect whatsoever.

We know these gentlemen; we know their advisors better yet. We know them exceedingly well because only eight years ago they were still among us. We recognize their accents when they speak.

They speak German as awkwardly as they probably speak English awkwardly. We had these people living in our midst once when they ruled Germany by force. Today they have no force other than the force of their voices. These find little resonance here in Germany. The German Volk dislikes this jargon. It does not want to hear it. And when it sees the persons hiding behind these voices, the German Volk has already seen more than enough. What these people say is of no import; no one in the German Volk believes a word of it. They lie their heads off—this every German knows.

No, this German Volk has become a different one today. There are no more Bethmann-Hollwegs among its leadership.¹⁰²

No more Spartacist gangs permeate the Volk. All this is over. A new Volk has come and this Volk will wage the war forced upon it. And I am determined to wage this war! Doubtless there will be some who say: "But why not wait a few years?" No, it is better this way since the fight cannot be avoided. These gentlemen forced it upon us now. And, moreover, it is intolerable that, every other decade, one people should say to another, which is eighty million strong: "We do not want you to do this or that. And if we feel like it we will cut you off from imports through a blockade, and then you will get nothing and starve." We will not tolerate this! We will eliminate this organized terror of this despicable clique of world plutocrats! We have routed these sharks of international finance in Germany, and we will not stand for others telling us what to do now. The German nation has the same right to life as other peoples do.

We are hence determined to wage this war until we break this reign of terror abroad, just as we once destroyed the reign of terror of this clique at home! That I have no respect for these people is founded on a few facts of life:

Insofar as they were already here with us in former times, you will understand that there is no need for me to respect them. Those who held power before in Germany, after thirteen years, had to vacate their posts for me, an anonymous, unknown soldier. Why should I respect them? And abroad, the story is no different. As a soldier, I myself sat across from these people for four years. No one can tell me they were better than we were! At the time, they faced us with gigantic superiority. They no longer possess this superiority today, not even in terms of weaponry.

And that I have taken advantage of the intervening time, this you, my Old Party Comrades, will certainly believe. Whatever I may be blamed for—one

thing assuredly not: that I have ever been lazy, or that I sat around for half a year with my hands folded in my lap and did not do anything. I worked during these past five months as only a man can work. Actually it was relatively easy, as I had only to launch something we had prepared for launching long ago. And now that it is launched, it runs and does so thoroughly. The German Volk today is better prepared militarily than ever before in its history. We can calmly vest our trust in its leadership. And its military leadership is also at the height of its potential to meet the demands of the day. The others still have to prove what we have proved already.

Besides that, I believe one thing: there is a Lord God! And this Lord God creates the peoples. And, as a matter of principle, He accords all these peoples the same fundamental rights. We Germans terribly misbehaved in history some twenty, twenty-two, twenty-three years ago. There came a revolution and hence we suffered a defeat.

Then began the resurrection of our Volk in immeasurable labor. And during this entire period, Providence blessed our work time and time again. The more brave we were, the greater were the blessings accorded us by Providence. And within the last six years, Providence was constantly on our side for, believe me: some call it luck, some have another name for it, but in the end such great works cannot be accomplished without its approval. And just a few months ago, I myself bore profound testimony to the workings of Providence which stands by mankind and assigns it missions to be fulfilled. And we serve it through these missions. What we desire is not the oppression of other peoples, but our freedom, our security, the securing of our Lebensraum. It is the securing of our Volk's life itself. For this we fight!

Providence has blessed us in this fight, a thousand times over. Could it have done this, would it have done this, had it harbored the intent now, all of a sudden, to allow this battle to end to our detriment? Here I believe in a higher and eternal justice. It is imparted to him who proves himself worthy of it. And it was in this belief that I stood up before you here for the first time twenty years ago. Back then I believed: it simply cannot be that my Volk is forsaken. It will be forsaken only if there are no men to be found to rescue this Volk. If, however, someone pledges himself with a trusting heart to this Volk and works for it, who places himself wholly at the disposal of this Volk, then it cannot be that Providence will allow this Volk to perish. Providence has wrought more than miracles for us in the time since.

All I can ask of you now: Firmly take hold of your faith as old National Socialists. It cannot be any different: we must win, and therefore we will win!

And even if our foes so terribly threaten and press upon us, it cannot be any worse than it was once before. Our ancestors were forced to endure all this many times. And thus we all want to bring ourselves to pronounce once more the great avowal of faith once spoken by a mighty German: "And if there were only devils in this world, we would still succeed!"¹⁰³

Hitler's idiosyncratic logic, "We must win, and therefore we will win!" was destined to become the German leadership's main slogan in the war years.

2

On February 28, Hitler sent the President of the Dominican Republic a telegram congratulating the Caribbean state on the anniversary of its independence.¹⁰⁴

For late February–early March 1940, President Roosevelt's Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, had announced to the Axis Powers his intent to visit first Rome and then Berlin. Thereafter he planned to journey to London and Paris, before returning to Rome.

On February 29, the Führer himself dictated guidelines for the "Conversations with Mr. Sumner Welles." This extraordinary step notwithstanding, those German officials scheduled to meet with the American representative were in no need of special instructions. Göring, Hitler's fabled "best man," was surely intelligent enough not only to reiterate his master's arguments but to do so with zeal in an attempt to convince his caller that these ideas were indeed his own. However, Ribbentrop repeated Hitler's slogans with that monotony that made Göring dub him "Germany's No. 1 parrot."¹⁰⁵

The reason Hitler troubled himself with penning the secret directive for the talks to be conducted with Sumner Welles was undoubtedly so that he could transmit these to the Italians and thereby influence their behavior towards the American emissary as well.

The guidelines to be observed read as follows:¹⁰⁶

1. In general I request that on the German side reserve be exercised in the conversations, and that as far as possible Mr. Sumner Welles be allowed to do the talking.

2. With regard to Germany's relations with the United States, it may be stressed that the present situation is unsatisfactory to both nations. The Government of the Reich has done nothing for its part to bring about this development in the relations between the two countries; if by sending Mr. Sumner Welles to Berlin the American Government is seeking to bring about

a change in this regard, that would doubtless be in the interest of both peoples.

3. Germany's viewpoint with regard to the international situation and the war has been made known to the world through my speeches. In particular, the following points are to be stressed: Germany did not declare war on the Western Powers, but, on the contrary, they declared war on Germany.

England and France had no just reason at all for a war against Germany. Just as on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine the United States would firmly reject any interference by European governments in Mexican affairs, for example, Germany regards the Eastern European area as her sphere of interest, concerning which she must come to an understanding with Russia alone, but never with England and France. After the end of the Polish campaign, Germany came to terms with Russia on Eastern questions and thus conclusively safeguarded her European position by this revision in the East which had become unavoidable. Then at the beginning of October, I again made one last offer of peace to England and France. Thereupon both these countries committed the biggest blunder they could possibly have made: they considered this offer a sign of weakness and rejected it with scorn.

Germany drew the only possible conclusion from this: she accepted the challenge of England and France.

Since then the war aim of England and France has been revealed more and more clearly. It consists, as it now openly stated, in the destruction of the German state and the dismemberment of the German people under a Versailles system even worse than before. Considering this development, Germany, as a state under attack, has nothing to say on the subject of peace. She is unshakeable in her determination once and for all to break the will to annihilate [Germany] which now dominates British and French policy and to use the power of her 80 million people to this end. Not until the Anglo-French will to annihilate [Germany] has been broken can a new, really peaceful Europe be built. While in their unprecedented delusion England and France are more and more openly proclaiming as their war aim the annihilation of Germany and a new division of Europe into nations with rights and others without rights, even today Germany does not demand the annihilation of the British Empire and France; rather she regards the satisfaction of the vital interests of the great nations in their natural Lebensraum as a guarantee for the consolidation of Europe, in which there is room for small states which have proved their viability in the course of history as well as for the large ones. Germany is convinced that this goal can be attained only by a German victory.

4. As regards economic matters, it can be stated that the British blockade is not of decisive importance to Germany. In both food and raw materials Germany can defeat any blockade by her self-sufficient economy and her trade with European countries, with Russia, and by way of Russia with Japan and a large part of the world. National Socialist Germany is not at all opposed to a world economy. The trade policy of the world forced upon her the development of her own self-contained economy. Only with its attainment, which is coming ever closer to realization, will Germany be in a position to participate in the world economy again as a sound partner.

5. A discussion of single concrete political questions, such as the question of a future Polish state, is to be avoided as much as possible. In case the other side brings up subjects of this kind, the reply should be that such questions are decided by me. It is self-evident that it is entirely out of the question for Germany to discuss the subject of Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which has constantly been brought up by England and France.

6. Attention may be called to Germany's completely changed international position as compared to 1914. All statements are to be avoided which could be interpreted by the other side to mean that Germany is in any way interested at present in discussing possibilities of peace. I request rather that Mr. Sumner Welles not be given the slightest reason to doubt that Germany is determined to end this war victoriously and that the German people—united today as never before in their thousand-year history—and their leadership are unshakeable in their confidence in victory.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's intent in pursuing the strategy indicated above was an obvious one: he wished to convince Sumner Welles of his "unshakeable" determination to fight and his certainty he would win. This the American was to duly relate to London. The unity and determination of the German people he portrayed were to dissuade the English from further opposing Germany.

The English did not take fright as desired, since the supposed "unity" of the one belligerent rarely outweighs the numerical superiority of the arsenal commanded by the other in a real conflict. The old myth still roamed at large in Hitler's brain: the idea that the divisiveness of Germany had prevented its rise to world power and had precipitated its fall. In the Second World War, the German people were "united," i.e. they resigned themselves to Hitler's reign, and yet the outcome was no different. Germany was not in a position in either of the World Wars to pursue an aggressive policy of expansion opposed by the remainder of the world.

Hitler's resolve to attack in the West shortly, to move against France at the very least, was apparent from a new regulation published in the Army Decree Gazette on the same day he received Sumner Welles, namely on February 29.¹⁰⁷

In view of the changed situation, there are no more objections to singing the song: "*Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen.*"¹⁰⁸

On March 1, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on the occasion of his twentieth anniversary as Regent of Hungary.¹⁰⁹ Later the same day, Hitler received Lieutenant Commander Schultze at the Reich Chancellery to award him the Knight's Cross. With his U-boat, Herbert

Schultze had sunk sixteen enemy ships with a total tonnage of 114,000 tons.¹¹⁰

On this same March 1, Hitler also signed the directive for “Weser Exercise” (*Fall Weserübung*) which detailed the following:¹¹¹

1. The development of the situation in Scandinavia requires the making of all preparations for the occupation of Denmark and Norway by a part of the Wehrmacht (Weser Exercise).

This operation should prevent British encroachment on Scandinavia and the Baltic. Further it should guarantee our ore base in Sweden and give our Navy and Luftwaffe a wider start-line against Britain. The part which the Navy and the Luftwaffe will have to play, within the limits of their capabilities, is to protect the operation against the interference of British naval and air striking forces.

In view of our military and political power in comparison with that of the Scandinavian States, the force to be employed in Weser Exercise will be kept as small as possible. The numerical weakness will be balanced by daring actions and surprise execution. On principle, we will do our utmost to make the operation appear as a peaceful occupation, the object of which is the military protection of the neutrality of the Scandinavian States. Corresponding demands will be transmitted to the Governments at the beginning of the occupation. If necessary, naval and air demonstrations will provide the necessary emphasis. If, in spite of this, resistance develops, it is to be crushed by all available military means.

2. I put in charge of the preparations and the conduct of the operation against Denmark and Norway the Commanding General of the XXI Army Corps, General of Infantry von Falkenhorst (Commander of “Group XXI”). In questions of the conduct of operations, the above-named is directly under my orders. The Staff is to be completed from all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

The forces which will be selected for the purpose of Weser Exercise will be under separate command. They will not be allocated for other operational theaters. The part of the Luftwaffe detailed for the purpose of Weser Exercise will be tactically under the orders of Group XXI. After the completion of their task, they will revert to the command of the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe.

The employment of the forces which are under direct Naval and Luftwaffe command will take place in agreement with the Commander of Group XXI.

The administration and supply of the forces posted to Group XXI will be ensured by the Wehrmacht branches themselves to the demands of the Commander.

3. The crossing of the Danish border and the landings in Norway must take place simultaneously. I emphasize that the operations must be prepared as quickly as possible. In case the enemy seizes the initiative against Norway, we must be able to apply immediately our own countermeasures. It is most important that the Scandinavian States as well as the Western opponents should be taken by surprise by our measures. All preparations, particularly those of transport and of readiness, drafting and embarkation of the troops,

March 1, 1940

must be made with this factor in mind. In case the preparations for embarkation can no longer be kept secret, the leaders and the troops will be deceived by fictitious objectives. The troops may be acquainted with the actual objectives only after putting to sea.

On March 2, Hitler received the American Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, at the Reich Chancellery in the presence of the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Kirk, and of Ribbentrop and Meissner.¹¹² Although he himself had ordered that "Mr. Sumner Welles be allowed to do the talking,"¹¹³ Hitler could not restrain himself for long. Barely had the American made a few introductory statements, when Hitler found himself dominating the conversation. In long monologues, he lamented how England and France were bent on destruction, how America was incomprehensibly blockading the transport of goods to Germany. He reiterated details of German-American financial relations and of his own ever so "generous" proposals for disarmament. Having exhausted these topics, Hitler proceeded to lecture Sumner Welles on the formation of "public opinion." He dwelt on "historical memories," spoke of political interests and various theories of international trade. Afterwards, he sought to document his familiarity with the American scene by referring to the Monroe Doctrine and the 1932 Ottawa Conference.¹¹⁴ These examples led him right up to the outstanding issue of the return of Germany's former colonies.

Sumner Welles possessed sufficient discretion to respond to Hitler's professorial discourse. He also briefly philosophized on politics and economics, and then came to the point, asking what precisely Hitler's intentions were regarding disarmament and economic woes in the event of a peaceful settlement. Hitler naturally immediately retorted by proposing international conferences which, given certain prerequisites, might serve as a means for solving problems:

The Führer repeated that the decisive thing was that it was not a matter of the German war aims but the war aims of the others who were seeking the annihilation of Germany. He could assure Mr. Sumner Welles that Germany would never be annihilated. He had been a soldier on the western front for four years, and was of the opinion that Germany would not have been defeated then either if there had been another regime at the helm. It was not a question of whether Germany would be annihilated; Germany would know how to defend herself from annihilation, and in the very worst case everyone would be annihilated. Today Germany was in a totally different situation from the last war and he, the Führer, had made all preparations, and made them

thoroughly, in order to be able to break the will to annihilation of the others. The German war aim—"peace"—stood opposed to the war aim of the others—"annihilation." The German people, who had learned from the terrible experience of 1918, stood behind him to a man. Anybody who wanted to establish peace had to induce Germany's opponents to abandon their war aims of annihilation. Germany was of the view that America even with the best will in the world—which was recognized by the Germans without question—would find it difficult to attain this goal.¹¹⁵

Sumner Welles thereupon thanked Hitler for the "open and candid way in which he had made his statements" and assured him he would relay the thoughts expressed to President Roosevelt. The American Government nevertheless hoped that "all" parties to the present conflict were spared destruction rather than only Germany. Hitler's rhetoric had apparently failed to impress the American. On a side note, Sumner Welles was the last Anglo-Saxon statesman Hitler was to speak to in person before his death, with the exception of the American Chargé d'Affaires, who remained in Berlin until 1941.

On March 3, Hitler wired the following note to the office in charge of the Leipzig fair:¹¹⁶

I wish the best of success to the Leipzig spring fair 1940 which opens its gates as a war exhibition today. It will bear testimony to Germany's unbroken economic might and—insofar as it promotes the export of German quality products to the neutral states—it will serve the peaceful exchange of goods among the peoples of this world in time of war as well.

Adolf Hitler

On March 4, Sven Hedin was once again Hitler's guest at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁷ Unlike in their previous encounter, the two men no longer exchanged platitudes on the "hopeless" nature of the situation England faced. Almost immediately, Hedin inquired whether Germany was not inclined to perhaps intercede in the Russo-Finnish conflict in an effort to end the bloodshed. He came to the wrong man with such a plea. For one thing, Hitler did not share the sympathies for the Finns cherished in certain German circles ever since 1918.¹¹⁸ On a side note, this German inclination towards their "Nordic" neighbors was not reciprocated by the Finns. Second, Hitler undoubtedly still harbored resentment because of the negative stance Finland had up to now taken toward the Third Reich, and because it had rejected his offer of a non-aggression pact in the spring of 1939.

Not surprisingly, Hitler turned to express his regret at not being able to oblige Hedin, explaining that, according to Schmidt's notes:

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There was really not the slightest justification for Germany to step in. As a result of the new relationship which she had established with Russia, her sympathies were naturally also on the side of that country.

Sven Hedin interjected here that some consideration should be given to the Finns, too, who were fighting so bravely. The Führer admitted that the Finns were brave, but their policy had been entirely senseless. It was absolutely sure that they would not stand up against the Russians in the long run. Up to now the bad weather had been extremely advantageous to them. They should never have entered into a conflict with the Russians, for Stalin had after all asked nothing more of them than a secure access to an ice-free sea. Stalin was undergoing a change, anyway. He was no longer the international Bolshevik, but showed himself as an absolute Russian nationalist and was in the last analysis following exactly the same natural policy of Russian nationalism as the Tsar.

Sven Hedin countered by pointing to the danger of a Russian advance across Finland in a drive towards Sweden and Norway. It was conceivable, so Hedin stated, that Moscow had cast an eye on the Swedish iron ore mines.

The Führer stated in this connection that he did not believe that Stalin had such expansionist aspirations; he again stressed Stalin's policy of Russian nationalism with its drive for an ice-free port and emphasized that once this goal had been achieved there need be no fear of further expansion. He was also not concerned about a possible advance by the Russians into the Baltic, which was being discussed so much abroad as an alleged threat to the German position there. In the age of the airplane, the Baltic was no longer an operations area for navies. Even the North Sea had lost this character for the British Navy as a result of German air supremacy in that area.

When Sven Hedin asked once more that something be done for the poor Finns by means of mediation between Finland and Russia, the Führer refused with the observation that he predicted the Finns would certainly not thank him, but at most blame him subsequently for the loss of Hangö or other areas. The Finns had every reason, by the way, to be grateful to Germany, for without the active interference of the German troops in 1918 Finland would never have come into being at all.

After stating as much, Hitler dismissed Sven Hedin. Unanticipated future developments would force Hitler to be less brusque in his dealings with the Finns, as he was to sorely need their support for his aggression against the Soviet Union later.

On March 5, the President of the Society for the Development of Heavy Industry in Manchuria, Aikawa, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁹

For the same day, Hitler had scheduled an important conference with the heads of the Wehrmacht branches. "Weser Exercise" was to

be discussed. As Jodl noted in his diary,¹²⁰ Göring took advantage of the occasion to express his outrage that he had not been consulted beforehand. Hitler sought to appease the angered Field Marshal by making small, insignificant concessions. As a result of the talk, forces at Narvik were reinforced while armored vessels received instructions to continue their wait off the shore of Trondheim. Six instead of five divisions were earmarked for the offensive. A base was to be established at Copenhagen immediately.

On March 6, Hitler had a wreath laid at the funeral of Dr. Muck, who had served as general music director in Stuttgart.¹²¹

On March 8, Hitler finally determined that the time had come to respond to Mussolini's insolent letter of January 3. It was imperative to strengthen the Axis upon which the Italian aspect of his conceptions of 1919 hinged. Hitler could ill afford a vacillating Mussolini in view of Sumner Welles' pending second visit to Rome. The Reich Chancellor's letter of March 8, 1940, was to tie Rome even closer to Germany militarily, and to prevent the Duce from perhaps succumbing to Anglo-American overtures. Its ultimate goal was to induce Mussolini to commit Italian forces on the side of the Third Reich.

Not surprisingly, Hitler's correspondence was nearly twice as long as the Duce's exceedingly forward letter.¹²² Hitler, in view of the situation, found it opportune to restrain the fury he had felt two months earlier. Lest he offend the Duce, he conscientiously responded to all questions raised by Mussolini: the unexpected declaration of war by the Western Powers; Germany's treatment of Poland; the Russian question; the issue of the Balkans; and so on. Still he could not resist mentioning his conviction that he had always been proved right by events in the end.

Particularly absurd was Hitler's overt attempt to make the Duce feel guilty and induce him to be obliging by blaming Germany's difficulties with England on the implications of Italy's aggression against Ethiopia:

Duce!

From the moment when England discovered during the Ethiopian conflict that Germany is not a vassal state that can be ordered about at will, and especially since the intervention by the Reich in Spain on behalf of the Spanish Nationalist regime, she began to think about and prepare for the conflict with the Reich.

Hitler was naturally eager to defend his pact with the Soviet Union: "Specifically, however, what Germany has done was simply a clear-cut

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delimitation of zones of interest with respect to Russia, in which nothing will ever change again.” Like his talk with Sven Hedin, the letter of March 8 revealed how little good will Hitler bore in his heart for the Finns:

The Finnish state owes its existence entirely to a sea of blood from German soldiers, German regiments and divisions, and its subsequent independence is also due to German units under General von der Goltz. In appreciation of this Finland later took sides against Germany on every occasion, and so far as it was possible took active part in every repressive measure against Germany. This does not imply, Duce, that the German people feel any hatred for the Finnish people; it merely signifies that we have no cause to champion Finland’s interest.

Hitler came to the point in the final section of his letter. Obviously, he sought to render the Italian dictator immune against potential American overtures. He labored to draw Mussolini into a closer alliance yet; for Italy to “fight together” with Germany:

Regarding the visit of Sumner Welles, the American representative, all there is to say is that it contributed no new element for appraising the situation. I have already sent you, Duce, the protocols of the conversations for your information. Whatever may have been intended by this visit, one thing seems to be certain: it cannot bring about any change in the war aims of the British and the French, even if this was sincerely intended. Thus any notion of practical results in the sense of advancing the cause of peace is ruled out. On that account I also believe that in such circumstances one should at least listen to the views of those who claim that the only purpose of this intervention is to gain time for the Allies, that is, to paralyze any German intentions for an offensive. I need not assure you, Duce, that quite apart from this, Germany’s decisions are governed exclusively by military considerations and therefore cannot be affected in any way by influences of that kind.

Germany has absolutely no other war aim than peace! England and France have basically no other war aim than the annihilation of the totalitarian peoples’ states, and thus of Germany. Germany will therefore fight until this plutocratic clique of war criminals is forced to abandon this design once and for all. This resolve cannot be shaken! It can all the better be understood because over and above this task we must in any case settle a chapter of world history which, through fraud on one side and weakness on the other, forced the German people into the most humiliating and frightful period of their entire development.

In summing up, let me thank you once more for your last letter, Duce, and the exposition which you gave me. Let me also ask you to believe that I understand and appreciate your attitude. And, finally, let me assure you that in spite of everything I believe that sooner or later Fate will force us after all to fight side by side, that is, that you will likewise not escape the clash of arms, no matter how the individual aspects of the situation may develop today, and

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that your place will then more than ever be at our side, just as mine will be at yours.

I, too, would be glad if a personal meeting could be arranged to talk about the gigantic complex of the general and special problems connected with the situation. There are many things which can be explained only in lengthy discussions. In conclusion, let me hope that it might be possible to strengthen even further the economic relations between our two countries and just at this time to find a solution for the coal problem, which is perhaps causing you great concern. For anything that helps to make one of our two countries stronger is of benefit to both!

In this belief I salute you cordially, with my best wishes for you and your country!

Your Adolf Hitler

The Führer placed great hopes on the effectiveness of the bait of “coal shipment” via land routes. He knew Italian industry depended on this raw material in particular, and the furnishing of these supplies would tie Mussolini inexorably to the Führer. Immediately he instructed Ribbentrop to personally travel to Rome to lure the Duce into the trap and to transmit the Führer’s letter and sentiments.

On March 9, the daily military briefing particularly angered Hitler, as Jodl recorded in his diary:¹²³

Great indignation on part of Führer when he hears that Prince Oskar¹²⁴ leads a Rgt. [regiment]. Schmundt was just about to propose that he obtain a Div. [division] and was able to suppress this barely in time.

Hitler was so outraged he missed the luncheon meeting. His resentment was comprehensible, given that he had just thought he had finally removed all persons who could somehow challenge his power from positions of influence. The only men he still felt compelled to fear, in the event things took a turn for the worse in the war, were the Princes of the House of Hohenzollern. The appeal of the Princes to the masses as traditional leaders might well challenge that of the Führer. To entrust an entire division to Oskar Prince of Prussia, the youngest surviving son of William II, to accord him the power of military leadership, was truly an ill-considered political move as far as Hitler was concerned. In general, the Führer could find no rest until all descendants of the House of Hohenzollern had been removed from the Army. Even after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, for instance, Hitler’s first thought was that the culprit had issued forth from among the Prussian Princes.¹²⁵ He need not have worried. Members of the Hohenzollern family generally distanced themselves from plots against him as did other leading segments of German society.

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On March 10, the customary festivities took place in celebration of Heroes' Memorial Day. At 11:00 a.m., Hitler delivered an address before the Third Reich's dignitaries assembled at the Berlin Zeughaus. In the radio broadcast of the speech, the German public heard him praise the German soldiers for their "unequaled victorious campaign in the East." He declared them ready to "take up the defense of the Reich in the West against the enemies of old." The content of Hitler's speech, reproduced by the German News Bureau, was as follows:¹²⁶

It is at a solemn hour that the German Volk celebrates its Heroes' Memorial Day today. With more justification than ever before in the past twenty years can one step before the spiritual eye of those who once, as courageous sons of our Volk, sacrificed themselves for the future of the nation, the greatness and inviolability of the Reich. What once resounded as empty phrases of an unworthy posterity has today become an expression of proud gratitude by a worthy present. After an unequaled victorious campaign in the East, the soldiers of our Field Army's divisions, the crews of our ships, the fighters of our Luftwaffe, are henceforth prepared to take up the defense of the Reich in the West against the enemies of old with the same sense of duty, the same obedience, as true to their orders as soldiers of the Great War. Behind them stands the homeland, cleansed of elements of disintegration and fragmentation. For the first time in our history the entire German Volk steps before the countenance of the Lord Almighty to implore Him to bestow His blessings on our struggle for existence.

The struggle of our soldiers is a hard one. Insofar as we comprehend nature and have gained insight into its ways, we know that just as life, to sustain itself, demands sacrifice time and time again to bear new life and deals out pain to heal wounds, the soldier is the foremost representative of life itself. At all times, he represents the cream of a people. He places his life at risk, and gives his life if need be, to render possible and to secure the life of his contemporaries and hence of posterity. In the hour in which Providence shall come to weigh the intrinsic worth of a people, he steps up before the Lord Almighty to face trial by ordeal.

And through him, the nations shall be weighed. They will be judged either too light and hence they will be erased from the book of life and the book of history, or they will be deemed worthy enough to create new life. Only he who himself had the opportunity to fight under the most adverse of conditions, who himself saw death's shadow pass him by time and time again in years of struggle—only he can measure the greatness of the risk taken by the soldier, only he can appreciate the graveness of the sacrifice. The instinct of survival has engraved upon mankind universal principles for the evaluation of those who were willing to give up themselves so that the life of the community should be sustained.

Mankind places the idealist in opposition to the repulsive egoist. And when it despises the one as a coward, then its gratitude for the other is all the greater in the subconscious realization of the sacrifice brought. It glorifies him

as a hero and raises him above the mass of other, indifferent phenomena. No one has a greater right to celebrate its heroes than the German Volk!

Given the most precarious geopolitical location of its lands, it was possible to assure the existence of our Volk time and time again only thanks to the heroic mustering of its men. And if we have enjoyed a historic existence within these past 2,000 years, then we did so only because men were willing, time and time again within these 2,000 years, to place their lives at risk for the community—and, if necessary, to sacrifice their lives. Every one of these heroes gave his life not in the mistaken belief that he would deliver future generations of this duty. All the achievements of the past would be for naught should only one future generation lack the strength to make similar sacrifices. For the life of a nation resembles a chain without end until the day one generation decides to sever this link and thereby brings to an end the course of evolution. No one has the right to celebrate heroes who is not himself capable of such conviction. No one has the right to speak of tradition who is not himself willing to enrich this tradition through his own life and works. This principle applies to all peoples just as to all statesmen. And it applies to soldiers no less than to generals.

From within the sacred halls of this building, relics of an incomparably glorious past speak to us. They were fought for and sealed with the blood of countless German heroes. We have no right to enter into this hall unless we bear in our hearts the solemn resolve to be no less valiant than the bearers of these weapons, of these emblems, and of these uniforms before us. The risking of his life was no less difficult for a musketeer in the Seven Years' War than for one who, 1,000 years before, as a German knight, fought off the hordes of the East to protect the German lands. And it was no less difficult than that demanded of us today. The power of decision, the cool daring courage of the great statesmen and warlords of the past were not less than those expected of us today. Then, too, the gods loved these great statesmen and warlords only because they attempted and demanded the apparently impossible. Hardly one of the great battles in the history of our Volk and, above all, in the history of Prussia, already betrayed its likely outcome at the beginning. Based on numerical and material superiority, many an action seemed destined to success, only to end in defeat due to the lack of spirits of the fighters. Conversely, many others which seemed doomed from the very start, based on all human intuition, entered into history as glorious victories. The secret of the miracle of life will never reveal itself to the pale theoretician. He will always see amiss the mighty formative force of existence that he himself most sorely lacks, namely: willpower, boldness in making and carrying out decisions.

And thus we commence this day of commemoration of our heroes with a feeling of new, inner dignity. Not with heads bowed, but rather with heads carried high and with pride we greet them, conscious that we are their equals, capable of the same achievements, and—should this be necessary—willing to take upon ourselves the same sacrifices.

What they once fought for, we now fight for ourselves. What was noble enough a goal for them to fight and, if necessary, to die for—every hour will

find us braced for a like deed. The faith which inspired them has grown within us. Whatever life or destiny might deal to the individual among us, the existence and future of the community takes precedence over it. There is something which carries us further yet than in the ages past, namely, the realization of what it was that many earlier ages unconsciously were forced to fight for: the German Volk!

To be allowed to live within it is our greatest earthly good. To belong to it is our pride. To defend it in unconditional loyalty even in the worst of times, is our fanatic defiance. The greater the dangers surrounding us, the more precious this treasure of our community seems to us. All the more important is, therefore, the realization that in its development and promotion lies the strongest *raison d'être* for German survival. Now that the outside world of plutocratic democracies has declared the wildest of campaigns against National Socialist Germany and has pronounced its destruction as the loftiest of war aims, then this simply reaffirms to us what we already know: the thought of a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft alone has made the German Volk especially dangerous in the eyes of our enemies, because it has made it invincible. Above all differences of class or rank, profession or confession, and above all the usual confusion of everyday life, looms the social union of the German man, irrespective of caste or origin, based on blood, forged in communal life throughout thousands of years, bound together by destiny for better or for worse.

The world desires our dissolution. Our answer to this can be but a renewed oath sworn to the greatest community of all time. Their aim is the disintegration of Germany. Our avowal of faith is German unity. They hope for the success of capitalist interests, and we will the victory of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft!

In nearly fifteen years of laborious work, National Socialism has delivered the German Volk from its state of tragic despair; in a unique historic work, it has uplifted the conscience of the nation and has driven away the wretched specter of a defeatist capitulation; it has built the general political foundations for a rearmament. In spite of all this, I stood prepared throughout the years to extend my hand to the world for a true understanding. They rejected the idea of a reconciliation of all peoples based on equal rights.

As a National Socialist and a soldier, I have always upheld the principle of securing the rights of my Volk either in peace, or—if necessary—in a fight.

As the Führer of the nation, the Chancellor of the Reich, and the Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, I live today for the fulfillment of one great task: to think of the victory, day and night; to struggle for it; to work for it; and to fight for it. If necessary, I shall not spare my own life either in the realization that this time around the future of Germany shall be decided for centuries to come.

As a former soldier of the Great War, nevertheless, I have devoutly pleaded with Providence to accord us the grace of closing honorably this last chapter in the great struggle of nations (*Völkerringen*) for the German Volk. Then the spirits of our fallen comrades shall rise from their graves to thank all those whose courage and loyalty have now once more atoned for the sins

committed in an hour of weakness against them and against our Volk. Let our avowal of faith on this day be a solemn oath: the war forced upon the Greater German Reich by the capitalist rulers of France and England must be transformed into the most glorious victory in German history!

Truly a resounding speech, one Jodl celebrated as simply “wonderful” in his diary.¹²⁷ If wars were decided by speeches, then Hitler would have assuredly done decidedly better than he did in the end. Still the most rousing of speeches can accomplish little if there is no power base for it in reality. “Willpower” alone was not decisive in the conflict, despite Hitler’s proclamations to the contrary. His determination to obtain his ends by force [“if necessary—in a fight”], called up a coalition of opponents in the West whom he had not the means to keep at bay.

After the speech, Hitler toured an exhibition entitled “The Campaign in Poland,” set up in the courtyard of the Zeughaus.¹²⁸ Thereafter, he reviewed a guard of honor at the avenue Unter den Linden.

On that same March 10, Ribbentrop’s train reached Rome. The Duce received the German Foreign Minister without delay. Ciano and the German Ambassador von Mackensen were present at the meeting as well.¹²⁹

Ribbentrop immediately presented Mussolini with Hitler’s correspondence and brought up “the coal problem.” When Mussolini indicated that Italy’s total requirements ranged from 500,000 to 700,000 tons per month, Ribbentrop at once interjected that Germany stood prepared to furnish a “total requirement of one million tons per month” to be transported by rail. “If there should be any further wishes of an economic nature on the part of Italy,” so the German Foreign Minister obligingly continued, his government would gladly discuss these. Remarkably, he took it upon himself to dominate the conversation, something he habitually shied away from, adding to Hitler’s own long-winded exposition speculations of his own: “The French Army would be beaten before next fall and after that the only British soldiers left on the Continent would be prisoners of war.” He was persuaded that the German troops and “the special tactics” they employed would wreak havoc at the Maginot line. For his part, he stood “fully convinced that the British and French Armies were moving toward the greatest disaster of their histories.”

Mussolini expressed his approval at the proper cues. “In any case, events proved the Führer to be right,” commented the Duce in one instance. And then, pointing to Hitler’s letter, he obligingly stated: “I believe the Führer is right.”

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Having brought the conference with Mussolini to a close on so congenial a note, Ribbentrop turned his attention to the second objective of his journey. While equally important, it was naturally secondary to conferring with the Duce and seeing the Italian King. Nevertheless, Ribbentrop had in fact requested an audience with Pope Pius XII to convey the Führer's greetings and to discuss Hitler's proposals for a "basic settlement between National Socialism and the Catholic Church."

This advance on the part of Hitler may well have appeared astonishing in consideration of his slight of the Holy Father during his visit to Rome in 1938 when Pius XI had occupied the Holy See. The Pope became increasingly unpopular with the National Socialists over time. His successor, Pius XII, was known to be more inclined towards the German Government than Pius XI had been from about 1937 on. In view of the pending confrontation in the West, Hitler sought the support of the Vatican or at least assurances of its neutral stance should a conflict erupt. Naturally, this was a question of power politics and not of such peripheral concerns as religious conviction.

On March 11, the Pope granted Ribbentrop the audience requested. The German Foreign Ministry kept the following record of the Foreign Minister's statements to the Pope:¹³⁰

The Führer was of the opinion that a basic settlement between National Socialism and the Catholic Church was quite possible. There was, however, no point in wanting to settle the relations between these two by raising separate questions of this or that kind or by provisional agreements. Rather, they must come at some time to a comprehensive and, so to speak, secular settlement of their relations; this would then form a really lasting basis for a harmonious cooperation between them. However, the time had not yet arrived for such a settlement. Germany was engaged in a struggle for existence which she would fight, in all circumstances, to a victorious end; naturally, this occupied all her efforts and did not permit the Führer to get interested in other problems. Moreover, it ought to be borne in mind, that an understanding between National Socialism and the Catholic Church depended on one principal preliminary condition, namely, that the Catholic clergy in Germany abandon any kind of political activity and limit itself solely to the care of souls, the only activity which was within the clergy's province.

The recognition of the necessity of such a radical separation, however, could not yet be considered to be the dominant view of Catholic clergymen in Germany. Similar to the manner in which England, in international politics, had claimed the role of a kind of guardian of the continent and the right of intervening in every possible problem of third countries, the Catholic Church had also become accustomed, in the course of events, to intervention in politics. The Catholic Church in Germany had come into the possession of

positions and rights of the most various kind which it considered, to be sure, duly acquired, but which were not compatible with the absolutely necessary limitation to its spiritual functions.

The Catholic clergy must be imbued with the realization that with National Socialism an entirely new form of political and national life³¹ had appeared in the world. Only after this had happened could a fundamental settlement and understanding be approached with any chance for a lasting success. One must not repeat the mistake made with the prematurely concluded concordats (Länder concordats and Reich concordat), which already had to be considered out of date, if only on account of the formal constitutional development in Germany which had taken place since they were concluded. In the opinion of the Führer, what mattered for the time being was to maintain the existing truce and, if possible, to expand it. In this respect, Germany had made very considerable preliminary concessions. The Führer had quashed no less than seven thousand indictments of Catholic clergymen. Also, it should not be forgotten that the National Socialist State was spending 1 billion RM annually for the Catholic Church; no other state could boast of such an achievement.

The Pope showed complete understanding toward the Reich Foreign Minister's statements and admitted without qualifications that the concrete facts were as mentioned. True, he attempted to turn the conversation toward certain special problems and complaints of the Curia, but did not insist on going on, when the Reich Foreign Minister once more emphasized the necessity of a fundamental and comprehensive settlement of the whole relationship between Church and State which would be possible only at some later date.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister pointed to the historic fact that never before in history had a revolution as radical as that carried out in the total life of the German people by National Socialism done so little injury to the existence of the Church. On the contrary, it was due, in the last analysis, only to National Socialism that Bolshevik chaos did not break out in Europe and thus destroy Church life altogether.

Hitler's favorite references to the threats of "Bolshevism" and to his role as the "savior of Europe," which was now enlarged upon to read "savior of Christianity and of the Church," concluded his wordy message to Rome. Ribbentrop could not let the opportunity pass him by without pointing to the imminent collapse of the Western Powers: "We believe that France and England will sue for peace yet this year. This is the conviction of the entire German Volk."

Having been heard by the Holy Father, Ribbentrop faced a conference with the Papal Secretary of State Maglione, who was not content with hearing only platitudes. Insistently, Maglione pointed to the desperate situation of the confessional schools and especially to the dire straits in which the Catholic Church in Poland found itself during

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these days. But he could not induce Ribbentrop to veer from the letter of Hitler's instructions not to say or discuss any concrete matter. All he got were vague promises that the German Government would investigate the issue of anticlerical writings by the late Ludendorff.¹³²

Returning to the Palazzo Venezia later in the day, Ribbentrop was met by a pleasant surprise. Mussolini had thought matters over and eagerly acquiesced to playing the role assigned by Hitler. He now completely agreed with the Führer's conception of world affairs.¹³³ He even strove to outdo his counterpart in terms of optimism, declaring: "It was his conviction that the United States would never enter the war. . . . The Americans . . . took that attitude because they were doubtful of the success of the Allies and did not want to put their money on a losing horse." Hitler had indeed achieved what he had set out to do. He no longer needed to fear Mussolini's vulnerability to any advances Sumner Welles might seek to make.¹³⁴ Reassuringly, the Duce was eager to meet shortly with the Führer for further consultations at the Brenner Pass.

In the meantime in Berlin, Hitler had occupied himself with the penning of statutes for a new order of merit, i.e. the introduction of an "oak leaf" category in addition to previous stipulations for the Knight's Cross.¹³⁵ He had also sent out two telegrams. In one he expressed his condolences on the death of the State President of the Dominican Republic, Peynado,¹³⁶ while in the other he congratulated the Pope on the anniversary of the coronation.¹³⁷

On March 12, a peculiar guest called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery. His name was Colin Ross, a world traveler of German origin, who sought to present Hitler with his views on the United States and Canada.¹³⁸ As customary, Hitler received him because his guest's opinions appeared to coincide with his own propositions of 1919. Whether or not these corresponded to reality was a matter of indifference with Hitler. And it was thus that men like Sven Hedin, Colin Ross, etc., travelers with absurd political opinions or questionable expertise, were welcome guests at the Führer's office.

On this March 12, Colin Ross stated:

. . . that after long study he had reached the following conclusion. If Germany succeeded in convincing the Americans that it was in accordance with our German and National Socialist principles that the Western Hemisphere belonged to the Americans (since in the contemporary world large spaces were being formed on the basis of geopolitics such as, for example, the Soviet Union as ruler over the western Asiatic space, the union of Chinese and

Mongols in East Asia under Japanese leadership, and the union of central Europe under German leadership), then the Americans would develop very much understanding for our struggle since they would, after all, derive a clear profit from it. He had worked out a map on which he had marked in, from north to south, the English spheres of influence against [!] the United States. If an American should see this map and should, moreover, hear that in Germany's view the Western Hemisphere should belong to the Americans, America automatically would take a position directed against England. It was his great desire to be active and to work in this direction and he was waiting for an instruction by the Führer in order to continue his work in this special field of his.

Hitler immediately directed the Foreign Ministry to render "Herr Colin Ross . . . every possible assistance." Once Ross had left, Hitler turned to Legation Counselor Hewel to remark, according to the latter's records, "that Colin Ross was a very intelligent man who certainly had many good ideas."

Late that evening, he received Ribbentrop, who had in the meantime returned from Rome. The report on Mussolini's obliging disposition greatly relieved Hitler: the Führer was "very content," as Jodl noted.¹³⁹ He instructed Ribbentrop to schedule the envisioned rendezvous at the Brenner Pass for as early as March 18.

By March 12, or rather March 13, the Russo-Finnish War had surprisingly ended.¹⁴⁰ Hitler's notion that the Russians were driving to occupy the ice-free harbor of Petsamo was proved wrong.¹⁴¹ Apparently, they were seeking primarily to secure Leningrad, establishing control on land (the Isthmus of Carel; Wyborg; Lake Ladoga), as well as at sea (the islands in the Gulf of Finland; lease of the Hangö peninsula).

All in all, the Finns got off lightly in the peace settlement, considering that the Soviets did occupy militarily and annex, wholly or in part, all other states which had belonged to Russia prior to 1918, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

The Finns had been forced to lay down their arms after only three and a half months, realizing that in spite of all the courage they had mustered they could not prevail in the long run. The Russians had shown little enthusiasm in the pursuit of this peripheral conflict. Most of the troops deployed came from the neighboring district of Leningrad. At any rate, the General Staff of the Leningrad Military District issued the daily war bulletin for the duration of the conflict.

Foreign Soviet experts who interviewed Russian prisoners of war in the Finnish camps arrived at the conclusion that no elite troops had been used in the fighting.¹⁴² In spite of this, the leading men in Finland

and particularly in Germany remained persuaded that the Russo-Finnish War had clearly demonstrated the inferior capacities of the Red Army. Hitler felt that the Winter War of 1939–40 confirmed his theory on the “primitive Bolsheviks,” who would just as easily be crushed by force abroad as the communists at home. Little more than a year later, at Hitler’s instigation, the Finns allowed themselves to become involved in yet another war with the Soviet Union. The irony of this in view of the Führer’s previously demonstrated lack of sympathy for the Finns cannot be denied.

On March 13, Hitler sent the Slovak State President Tiso a congratulatory telegram on the “Slovak National Holiday,” the celebration of one year of independence.¹⁴³ That day also, Hitler visited State Minister Meissner in person at the official’s Berlin residence to congratulate him on his sixtieth birthday.¹⁴⁴

As Jodl noted on that March 13, Hitler was “still searching for a justification” for launching “Weser Exercise.”¹⁴⁵ The unanticipated end of the Russo-Finnish confrontation had robbed him of a good excuse. The “*Altmark-Cossack* incident” was of too delicate a nature to furnish the desired pretext for attacking in the North.

On the next day, Hitler wired his best wishes and congratulations to the Shah of Persia on his birthday.¹⁴⁶

On March 15, Hitler signed into law a decree on the termination of the office of Reich Commissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich. The post was pronounced non-existent as of March 31.¹⁴⁷ Legislative powers within the city of Vienna would nonetheless remain Bürckel’s prerogative even as he served as Reich Governor with his seat in Vienna.

In addition to this, Hitler exchanged telegrams with dignitaries commemorating the creation of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia a year earlier. Telegrams arrived at the Chancellery from State President Hácha and from Neurath, who served as Reich Protector.¹⁴⁸

In his response to Hácha, Hitler wrote:

Recollections of our first meeting a year ago, Herr Staatspräsident, move me deeply. The realization of the necessity that both people coexist peacefully on so little terrain is an irreversible, historic fact which obliges all of us. It is hence not the goal or intention of the German Reich to burden the Czech people unduly, to thereby threaten its national existence or to bring its national conscience into conflict with the general necessities compelling the Reich. Therefore, I hope we shall succeed in sparing this section of the Reich the horrors of war. Hereby the wise foresight of the decisions of March

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1939 is best proven.

I thank you, Herr Präsident, for the best wishes relayed for this great struggle which our common Reich has to lead today. It is my wish that victory in the end will secure a lasting peace, prosperity, and rich social benefits for the German Volk just as much as for the Czech people.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler sent the following response to von Neurath:

I thank you, Herr Reichsprotektor, for your remembrance of the anniversary of the day on which the German Reich extended to the old lands of Bohemia and Moravia its strong arm in protection. For nearly a thousand years these two lands belonged to the most beautiful of pearls in the old German Reich. It is my wish that these loyal relations shall constitute a blessing for the German and Czech peoples alike in the new Reich for all eternity.

Adolf Hitler

On March 17, Hitler appointed Todt as Minister for Armament and Ammunition. The corresponding decree read:¹⁴⁹

Berlin, March 17, 1940

To place under a single command all offices involved in the production of armament and munitions in the Greater German Reich, as well as in the General Government and the occupied Polish territories, and to effect the highest production possible, I appoint a Reichskommissar for Armament and Ammunition.

I name the General Inspector for Railroad Construction in Germany, Chief Engineer Dr. Todt, Reich Minister for Armament and Ammunition. I reserve to my person the decree effecting implementation.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler, accompanied by Ribbentrop, left Berlin aboard a special train bearing him towards his meeting with Mussolini in the Alps.

On March 18, the train arrived at the station at the Brenner Pass at 10:10 a.m., where Mussolini and Ciano were awaiting their German guests. Having reviewed the honor guard, the men entered the Duce's train compartment just across the platform. It was then that the announced conference "of world historic import" began. It lasted nearly two and a half hours, during which Hitler indulged in his customary long-winded monologue. Hitler resorted to his tried rhetorical tricks and his astounding capacity to retain numbers to impress Mussolini. The interpreter Schmidt vividly described the scene in his memoirs in the following terms:¹⁵⁰

Full of self-confidence, Hitler furnished the attentively and almost

admiringly listening Mussolini a highly detailed exposition of his military successes in the Polish campaign and of his preparations for the great confrontation with the West. Numbers followed on numbers: the strength of troops; casualty figures; size of reserves; all this Hitler had in his head as astoundingly clear as the technical specifications of cannons, tanks, and infantry weapons. He seemed less interested in Air Force or Navy matters. At any rate, he knew just how to squash Mussolini beneath the weight of all these figures and facts. His big, brown eyes wide open with astonishment, his eyes nearly falling out, Mussolini sat there like a small child you hand a new toy to for the first time.

Schmidt remarked that despite Hitler's lengthy exposition, he neither uttered a word regarding the planned move against Norway and Denmark, nor did he mention *Fall Gelb* ("Case Yellow," the code name for the attack in the West). This was not surprising, since Hitler customarily insisted on complete secrecy for all pending ventures even as far as allies, like the Italians or the Japanese, were concerned.¹⁵¹

In his recollections, the interpreter noticed the following about Mussolini's behavior towards the end of the meeting:

The few minutes which remained for Mussolini to voice his own opinion he spent, to my surprise and to the horror of his colleagues as I found out later, reinforcing with strong words his determination to enter the war on the side of Hitler.

Ciano noted in his diary:¹⁵²

The conference . . . is more a monologue than anything else. Hitler talks all the time, but is less agitated than usual. He makes few gestures and speaks in a quiet tone. He looks physically fit. Mussolini listens to him with interest and with deference. He speaks little and confirms his intention to move with Germany. He reserves to himself only the choice of the right moment.

Mussolini was veritably intoxicated by Hitler's words. It was not until a day later that he sobered up. His subsequent assessment of the conference reflected this, as Ciano remarked:

Actually he is rather angry because Hitler alone spoke all the time; he had made up his mind to tell him many things, but instead he sat there in silence.

The following communiqué was issued on the Hitler-Mussolini talk at the Brenner Pass:¹⁵³

The conference between the Führer and the Duce lasted two and a half hours. Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano were both in attendance. The meeting was characterized by great warmth.

Hitler left for Germany at 1:11 p.m. Mussolini and Ciano waved

goodbye from the platform. This was the fifth personal encounter of the two fellow dictators.

On the return trip, the train stopped over in Innsbruck where the Führer stepped out to review an honor guard. According to the Party newspaper, he was “very touched by the enthusiasm demonstrated by the Tiroleans.” Significantly, they sang the “Englandlied” to greet him.¹⁵⁴ March 19 found Hitler back in Berlin where he had returned, as Jodl noted, “radiant with joy and highly content” with the success of his journey.

One day later, Hitler received the Icelandic poet Gunnar Gunnarsson at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁵⁵

On March 22, Hitler penned the following telegram to be sent to Colonel General von Brauchitsch:¹⁵⁶

On the fortieth anniversary of the day you entered the Army, my thoughts turn to you in heartfelt gratitude for your service and for the services you rendered the Armed Forces.

Adolf Hitler

On March 29, Hitler awarded the Yugoslavian Minister-President Dragisha Cvetkovich the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle. The German Envoy in Belgrade presented the distinction to the Minister-President.¹⁵⁷

Two days later, Hitler sent the King of Thailand a congratulatory telegram in celebration of the Thai New Year’s festivities.¹⁵⁸

On April 1, Hitler wired the following telegram to Franco:¹⁵⁹

On the anniversary of that memorable April 1, 1939, the day on which the Spanish people’s fight for independence under your leadership was crowned with victory, I send Your Excellency my heartfelt best wishes and greetings. As in the years of fighting, the German Volk now also takes an active interest in the work of reconstructing the peace which may furnish the basis of a prosperous future for the Spanish people.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, General von Falkenhorst was summoned to appear before Hitler to present his thoughts on the “Weser Exercise.” A briefing of the respective heads of the Wehrmacht branches took place subsequently.¹⁶⁰

On April 2, Hitler conferred once again with Falkenhorst, Göring, and Raeder at 3:30 p.m. Thereafter, Hitler issued orders to implement the provisions for “Weser Exercise” on April 9, i.e. to begin the invasion of Norway and Denmark on that day.¹⁶¹

April 3 witnessed the first massive troop movements in a northerly

April 3, 1940

direction. Steamers left harbor to ferry the soldiers to the Norwegian coast. Naturally, the other countries were aware of what was going on. Already on the next day, the Swedish Government inquired at Berlin as to the meaning of "preparations for redeployment of troops at Stettin."¹⁶²

Also on April 3, the British War Cabinet convened and determined to grant the Admiralty full powers to mine Norwegian coastal waters, beginning April 8. In the event of German measures to counter this move, a British brigade and a French contingent were free to proceed to Narvik. Additional units would then be ordered to advance towards Stavanger, Bergen, and Trondheim.¹⁶³

On April 4, Hitler drafted the appeals, or rather memorandums, which were to be presented to the Governments in Oslo and Copenhagen on April 9.¹⁶⁴ On the same day, he sent a telegram of condolences to the President of Argentina, Robert Ortiz, on the death of his wife.¹⁶⁵

Hitler ordered a state funeral on April 8 for the deceased President of the Reich Research Council, Artillery General Professor Karl Becker.¹⁶⁶ As announced, the British began mining the waters off the coast of Norway on that day. The intent obviously was to hinder the advance of the German troop transports.

On April 9, the operation "Weser Exercise" was launched at 4:20 a.m. As usual, Hitler had not initiated Mussolini into his plans. Instead he had him roused at 7:00 a.m. to inform him by a written "message" of the beginning of the operation. This was the first in a series of letters which, in the subsequent two months, would reach Mussolini at short intervals. Their sole purpose was to impress upon the Duce Hitler's various military measures and successes and his detailed knowledge of operations.¹⁶⁷ The High Command of the Wehrmacht issued the following statement on April 9, which informed the German public of Hitler's latest foray:¹⁶⁸

To thwart the current British assault upon the neutrality of Denmark and Norway, the Wehrmacht has undertaken the armed defense of these states. To this end, strong German forces of all branches of the Wehrmacht have entered, or rather landed, in these countries in the morning. To protect these operations, vast mine barriers have been erected.

At the time military operations against Norway and Denmark began, the respective German Envoys Bräuer and Renthe-Fink presented the Governments in Oslo and Copenhagen with the memorandum

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reproduced below. The German diplomats had been informed of Hitler's intentions only the night before.¹⁶⁹

Berlin, April 9, 1940
MEMORANDUM

Contrary to the sincere desire of the German people and their Government to live in peace and amity with the English and French peoples, and in spite of the absence of reasonable grounds for a conflict between them, those in power in London and Paris declared war on Germany. With the unleashing of this war of aggression against the existence of the German Reich and the German people for which they had long been preparing, England and France also started a maritime war against the neutral world.

While with complete disregard of the most elementary rules of international law they sought to direct a hunger blockade against German women, children, and old people, at the same time they subjected neutral states to their ruthless blockade measures. The immediate consequences of these methods of warfare initiated by England and France, which are contrary to international law and which had to be met by Germany with countermeasures, were the most severe damage to neutral shipping and to neutral trade. This English procedure, however, dealt the very concept of neutrality a shattering blow. Yet Germany, for her part, has made serious efforts to preserve the rights of neutral countries by her endeavors to limit maritime warfare to maritime zones lying between Germany and her opponents. In contrast to this, England, with the object of diverting danger from her own islands and at the same time of preventing German trade with neutral countries, has expended greater and greater efforts on carrying maritime warfare into neutral waters. In pursuance of this truly British method of waging war, England has taken belligerent action at sea and in the air and even in the territorial waters and on the territory of Denmark and Norway to an ever increasing degree and in flagrant breach of international law.

From the outbreak of the war Germany had foreseen this development. Through her economic policy at home and abroad she has known how to frustrate the attempt made by the British to set up a hunger blockade against the German people and to prevent the strangulation of German trade with neutral states. This has caused the complete collapse of the British blockade policy to become increasingly evident in recent months.

This development, together with the hopelessness of any direct attack on German western defenses and the growing anxiety in England and France in the face of successful German counterattacks at sea and in the air, has recently caused both nations to make increasingly serious efforts by every means in their power to transfer the theater of war to the neutral mainland both within and outside of Europe. It goes without saying that following British tradition, England and France, in making these attempts, have the territories of the small European states primarily in view. During recent months English and French statesmen have quite openly proclaimed the extension of the war to these territories to be the fundamental strategical concept of their conduct of the war.

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The Russo-Finnish conflict offered the first occasion for this. The English and the French Governments expressed quite openly their intention to intervene with military force in the conflict between Soviet Russia and Finland, and to use the territory of the northern states as a base of operations for this purpose. Only the early conclusion of peace in the north, which occurred contrary to their wishes and expectation, hindered them from putting this decision into effect at that time. When the English and French statesmen subsequently declared that they had intended to make the carrying out of this action dependent upon the concurrence of the northern states, that was a gross untruth. The Reich Government has documentary proof in its possession showing that England and France had together decided, if necessary, to carry out the action through the territories of the northern states even against their will.

The decisive factor is, however, the following:

From the attitude of the French and English Governments before and after the conclusion of the Soviet-Finnish peace, and from the documentary evidence in the hands of the Reich Government, there is indisputable proof that the decision to assist Finland against Russia should over and above that serve to aid further plans.

The further aim of England and France in Scandinavia was and is rather:

1. By occupation of Narvik to cut off Germany from her ore supply route from the north.

2. By the landing of English and French fighting forces in Scandinavian countries to establish a new front in order to attack Germany's flank from the north.

In this way the northern countries would serve as a theater of war for the English and French forces, while the northern people in accordance with age-long English tradition would be allotted the role of auxiliary and mercenary troops. As by reason of the conclusion of the Finnish-Russian peace this plan was frustrated, it then became even clearer to the Reich Government that England and France were making definite endeavors immediately to realize and develop their plans in a different way. With the continued necessity of preparing an intervention in the north, the English and French Governments in recent weeks have openly proclaimed the thesis that there could be no neutrality in this war, and that it was the duty of small countries actively to take part in the war against Germany. This thesis was spread abroad by the propaganda from the Western Powers, supported by ever increasing political pressure on the neutral countries.

If there ever was the slightest doubt regarding the definite intention of the Western Powers to intervene in the north, it has finally been removed during the last few days: The Reich Government has in its possession conclusive evidence that England and France intended to effect a surprise occupation of certain territories in the northern countries within the next few days. The northern countries have on their part not only not offered any resistance to these encroachments by England and France thus far, but have even tolerated without taking any countermeasures the gravest encroachments on their sovereign rights.

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The Reich Government must, consequently, assume that the Royal Norwegian Government will adopt the same attitude toward the action now being planned and about to be carried out by England and France. But even if the Royal Norwegian Government had been intending to take countermeasures, the Reich Government is quite certain that the Norwegian military forces would not be sufficient to be able to oppose the English-French operations successfully. In this decisive phase of the fight for existence forced on the German people by England and France, the Reich Government can in no circumstances tolerate that Scandinavia should be made by the Western Powers the theater of war against Germany, and that the Norwegian people, whether directly or indirectly, be misused in a war against Germany.

Germany does not intend to await idly or to put up with such a realization of her opponents' plans. The Reich Government therefore has today begun certain military operations, which will lead to the occupation of strategically important points on Norwegian territory. The Reich Government therewith undertakes the protection of the Kingdom of Norway for the duration of the war. It has resolved, from now on, to protect and definitely assure peace in the north with all its power against any English-French attack.

The Reich Government did not wish this development. England and France alone bear the responsibility. Both States proclaim quite hypocritically the protection of small countries. In reality, however, they offer violence to them in the hope of being able thereby to realize their will to destroy, directed against Germany and every day proclaimed more openly.

The German troops therefore do not set foot on Norwegian soil as enemies. The German High Command does not intend to make use of the points occupied by German troops as bases for operations against England, as long as it is not forced to do so by measures taken by England and France. On the contrary German military operations aim exclusively at protecting the north against the proposed occupation of Norwegian bases by English-French forces. The Reich Government is convinced that by this action it is at the same time serving Norway's interests. For this protection by the German Wehrmacht offers the Scandinavian peoples the only guarantee that during this war their countries will not become a field of battle or the scene, perhaps, of most terrible engagements.

The Reich Government therefore expects that the Royal Norwegian Government and the Norwegian people will respond with understanding to the German action and offer no resistance to it. Any resistance would have to be and would be broken by all possible means by the German forces employed and would therefore lead only to absolutely useless bloodshed. The Royal Norwegian Government is therefore requested to take all measures with the greatest speed to ensure that the advance of the German troops may take place smoothly and without difficulties.

In the spirit of the good relations between Germany and Norway which have existed hitherto, the Reich Government declares to the Royal Norwegian Government that Germany has no intention of infringing by her measures the territorial integrity and political independence of the Kingdom of Norway now or in the future.

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The bombastic tone of the memorandum, the rhetorical references to the “fight for existence forced on the German people” and the “protection of the Scandinavian peoples,” did not change the facts. It was clear that Hitler had once more overrun two neutral states, despite repeated prior pledges to respect the declared neutrality of these countries. As recently as May 31, 1939, Hitler had even entered into a solemn pact of non-aggression with Denmark.¹⁷⁰

Still, why should a man like Adolf Hitler feel obliged to uphold his own promises when visions of a “Germanic Reich of the German Nation” were dancing in his head? On the same day German troops were raping Denmark and Norway, Hitler declared in front of his closest assistants: “Just as the year 1866 gave birth to the Reich of Bismarck, so this day will give birth to the Greater Germanic Reich!”¹⁷¹

Resistance to German troops led by General von Kaupisch lasted but a few hours in Denmark.¹⁷² The Danish soldiers on Jutland put up resistance as best they could. The country’s ports were taken by complete surprise, however. Crews were fast asleep when German soldiers boarded their various battleships, supply or transport vessels. Copenhagen was taken with equal ease. Only the Danish royal guards made a desperate attempt to liberate the citadel already in German hands. Several of the German troops’ commanders had already arrived in Denmark several days earlier, disguised as tourists.¹⁷³ The familiarity they acquired with the future theater of operations was of great benefit to them on April 9. Rumors of a “fifth column,” consisting of ethnic Germans residing in Denmark and Danish traitors, which allegedly rendered the surprisingly speedy defeat of this country possible, were completely unfounded.¹⁷⁴ Rather it was the element of surprise which figured heavily in the easy victory and which forced King Christian X and the Danish Government to surrender by 7:30 a.m.

From the Allies’ standpoint, it is true that the swift defeat of the Danes was regrettable. However, even had resistance continued, it would have been only a matter of days before the Wehrmacht trampled it to the ground. Resistance was senseless in view of the vast numerical superiority of the German forces deployed.

News of the Danes’ early capitulation delighted Hitler. Consequently, he was extraordinarily lenient in his treatment of Denmark, which was to occupy a type of most-favored nation status among the territories the Third Reich conquered. Both the King of Denmark and his government were allowed to retain office, though only symbolically. Supplies of foodstuffs throughout the war remained better there than

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in any other occupied territory. Hitler neither insisted on repatriating northern Schleswig to Germany, nor on “shredding” the paragraph of the Versailles Treaty which had transferred this province to Denmark after the First World War.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, his leniency could be termed “magnanimous”—so Hitler might well have applauded himself. In fact, he was most generous in his treatment of others as long as they abided by his terms.

In Norway, too, Hitler had entrusted the occupation of the territory exclusively to the Wehrmacht. This was his habit in all his foreign policy dealings.¹⁷⁶ Having already judged the collaboration of ethnic Germans, even if they were tried and true National Socialists, in such ventures as an element too unreliable, he was reluctant to accord men like Vidkun Quisling a role of importance in the new administration.¹⁷⁷ There could be even less talk of a “fifth column” operating in Norway than in Denmark, where at least a few ethnic Germans in northern Schleswig had openly welcomed the advancing German troops.

In Norway, however, the element of surprise in the Wehrmacht’s assault was not as complete as had been the case in Denmark. Already on the previous day, the Norwegians had torpedoed the German steamer *Rio de Janeiro* off the southern coast of the country. Hundreds of German soldiers had saved their lives by jumping overboard and swimming ashore, where the Norwegian officials took them prisoner.

The element of surprise was maintained in locations such as Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger only. The attack on Narvik could equally be considered a success. Most of the aerial landings went according to plan. Still, enemy fire was heavy in the fjord of Oslo. The heavy cruiser *Blücher* sustained artillery and torpedo hits there and sank.¹⁷⁸ The cruiser *Karlsruhe* suffered a similar fate off Kristiansand.¹⁷⁹ At Bergen, the cruiser *Königsberg* was lost.¹⁸⁰ News from Narvik left no doubt that, should British destroyers appear on the horizon, the German ground forces would not be able to hold on for long.

A far greater setback for Hitler, though mostly psychological, was the Norwegian rejection of the German memorandum which the Envoy Bräuer had transmitted in compliance with instructions from Berlin. King Haakon and his government summarily dismissed the German summons to surrender in the following statement: “We will not submit voluntarily: the struggle is already under way.”¹⁸¹

But Hitler was not a man easily discouraged. He persisted in repeated attempts to change the King’s mind at the Court’s place of refuge about 100 kilometers to the North of Oslo (first located at

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Elverum, later at Nybersund). Time and time again Bräuer received instructions to try persuading the King and his ministers, as on April 10 and April 11. And time and time again the German Envoy failed. In face of the unyielding stance of the Court and the Norwegian Government, Hitler finally resolved to have the King's refuge bombed. This failed to eliminate the indomitable King and his cabinet.

On April 11, Hitler sent out another "urgent" letter to the Duce, asking him to make a military contribution or demonstration of some kind. Hastily Mussolini replied in the affirmative. Ambassador Attolico received prompt instructions to relate to the Reich Chancellery that "our preparation in the air and on land is proceeding at an accelerated pace."

Ciano further noted that Hitler "has given optimistic reports on the course of the present aero-naval battle. I wonder. Only time will prove whether the Führer has acted as a strategist or has run into a dangerous trap."¹⁸²

3

The military occupation of Denmark and Norway took the German public by complete surprise, much like the rest of the world. Few Germans were familiar with these countries, at best having passed their coasts on board KdF ships on holidays prior to the war. Even within the Party, few Germans were of a “Nordic” orientation or enthusiastic about all things “Germanic.” Least of all was Germany a “seafaring” nation. The sea meant nothing to the population at large.

There was but one thought in the heads of most who bent over the maps reproduced in the newspaper that morning: Why should their sons and brothers fight and die so far away? Not even in the First World War had it appeared that German soldiers were perishing in such distant lands. The fact that the newspaper reports claimed only two ships had been lost, namely the *Blücher* and the *Karlsruhe*, and remained silent on the sinking of the *Königsberg*, did little to relieve the oppressive atmosphere.

Naturally, everyone realized that the further developments in Norway hinged especially on the reaction of the Allies to the unexpected German aggression. German soldiers in the North were doomed should large Allied contingents enter the war. Nonetheless, there was little enthusiasm on the part of the Allies to transform Norway into the main theater of war.

Churchill was persuaded that it was of singular importance to point to the Wehrmacht’s assault upon two defenseless, neutral states without prior declaration of war as an act to be condemned, violating international law and custom. He likened the Wehrmacht to a waterfall. It would be against all rules of common sense to subject oneself to its concentrated onslaught. It was more cautious to wait until the stream of water had broadened and the forces dissipated. Once the German military was engaged along many fronts, the Allies could deal

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far more effective blows to the Wehrmacht. Norway with its long coastline, its many fjords and mountains, provided the Wehrmacht ample opportunity to water down its forces in the attempt to occupy the entire country. On April 11, Churchill commented on the German conquest of Denmark and Norway:¹⁸³

The strange and unnatural calm of the last few weeks was violently broken on Monday morning by the German invasion of Norway and Denmark. This crime had, of course, been long and elaborately prepared, and it was actually set in motion in the last week of March. For several months past we have received information of large numbers of German merchant ships being fitted as transports and of numerous small vessels being assembled in various Baltic ports and, also, in the mouths of the River Elbe. But no one could tell when or against what peaceful country they would be used. Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were, as it seemed, all equally liable to a sudden, brutal, capricious and, in any case, unprovoked attack. [—]

The Nazi German Government is accustomed to spreading through its channels a continuous flow of threats and rumors. These are put forth by all their agents in neutral countries, by the “hangers-on” of their legations and by their sympathizers and backers, wherever they may be found. All these countries have been threatened, and as the German Government are not restrained by law or scruple, and as they have an obvious preference for striking at the weak rather than the strong, all the small countries on their borders were, and still are, in a high state of alarm. [—]

In the small hours of Monday morning we learned that Norway and Denmark had drawn the unlucky numbers in this sinister lottery.

Given the Allies' intent to engage Germany in a long and costly war, it was not surprising that the Allied military commanders resolved to play a subdued role in Norway. Nevertheless, the invading German troops suffered heavy losses at the hands of the British Navy and Royal Air Force. At Narvik, the English sank all ten German destroyers deployed. A joint Anglo-French ground force set out from the two small ports of Namsos and Andalsnes, and from the area north of Narvik. These were but small operations and largely symbolic in nature. Nonetheless, they served their purpose of reinforcing the Norwegian Army's willingness to resist the German invaders.

Despite the small scale of the British operations, the measures taken in the vicinity of Narvik nearly caused Hitler to panic. He had not anticipated any armed resistance by the Western Powers to the German onslaught in Denmark and Norway. Even the slightest move on their part now induced him to fear for “Case Yellow,” his favorite brainchild, namely the attack first on Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and then on northern France. The urgent calls for help from the

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German mountain infantry units, led by Lieutenant General Dietl,¹⁸⁴ did little to relieve Hitler's concern.

On April 14, Hitler was so downtrodden at the plight of Dietl's men and at the other unexpected developments that he contemplated instructing them to fight their way south. He even thought of issuing orders for them to retreat to Swedish territory and to let themselves be taken prisoner.

By April 17, an inconsolable Hitler even studied plans for an aerial rescue mission to rescue Dietl's group. Technically speaking, this was impossible. Desperation authored the plan. In view of Hitler's desolation, Jodl was forced to encourage his Führer to take heart. Finally, he persuaded Hitler to sign an order for Dietl to hold out as long as possible.¹⁸⁵

On April 17 also, Hitler issued the following appeal to the Kriegswinterhilfswerk, now including the Red Cross, too:¹⁸⁶

For seven months now, the German soldier has been risking his life on land, at sea, and in the air, in the defense of the homeland. In turn, he expects that, should he be injured or fall ill, the homeland will afford him the best of care and attention.

For this task, the men and women of the Red Cross, as the most experienced personnel with the best technical means, are at his disposal day and night. As manifold as the tasks of the Red Cross are, as great are its needs for technical equipment. I have hence ordered proceeds of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk collections in the coming months to benefit the Red Cross. I appeal to the German Volk to show itself worthy, through its contributions, of the sacrifices of its soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

On April 18, Hitler signed into law new statutes for a German library in Leipzig, and thereby incorporated it under public law.¹⁸⁷

On April 19, Hitler was forced to concede that his repeated attempts had failed to induce the Norwegian King and his government to place themselves under German "protection." In frustration, he expelled the Norwegian Envoy in Berlin, Scheel, from the Reich and recalled the German Envoy in Oslo, Bräuer. At this time, he also summoned the Gauleiter and High President of Essen, Terboven,¹⁸⁸ to Berlin. After a short talk that evening, he appointed Terboven Reichskommissar for the occupied Norwegian territories.¹⁸⁹ Terboven was devoted to Hitler as a convinced National Socialist. As with Bürckel in the case of Austria, his expertise was not "burdened" with any bonds to Norway or intimate knowledge of the country.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, Hitler judged him well-suited to assume the position of Reichskommissar and to see

April 19, 1940

through the Third Reich's designs in Norway. He placed Terboven directly under his command.¹⁹¹

April 20, 1940, marked Hitler's fifty-first birthday. Celebrations were subdued in view of the war. No gigantic parade rolled through Berlin's streets. Merely a few delegations of representatives of the "Volk," with adults attired in traditional costumes and children bearing flowers for the Führer, were summoned to the Wilhelmsplatz to demonstrate their dedication to the head of the nation. From the early morning hours on until 8:00 p.m., Hitler made several token appearances on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery.

The following communiqué was issued on the occasion:¹⁹²

The Führer spent his birthday surrounded by a small circle of his political and military co-workers in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. This year he distanced himself from official celebrations of the event.

Taking advantage of the military's morning briefing, the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht branches, Field Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, and Colonel General von Brauchitsch, relayed the Wehrmacht's congratulations to the Führer. Field Marshal Göring reported on the scrap metal collection of the German Volk, which has proven an overwhelming success. Approximately at noon, the Deputy of the Führer, Reich Minister Rudolf Hess, congratulated the Führer. The Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, and Gauleiters present in Berlin followed suit.

The number of foreign dignitaries who sent their best wishes to Hitler on his birthday was significantly smaller in 1940 than in any previous year. In the course of the war, their numbers were to decline further. The German News Bureau published the following statement on this topic:¹⁹³

Numerous foreign heads of state and heads of government have remembered the Führer on his birthday again this year.

And thus the Führer received congratulatory telegrams of a heartfelt nature from: the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the King of Belgium; the King of Denmark; the Queen of the Netherlands; the King of Romania; the King of Thailand; the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Spanish Head of State, Franco; the Regent of Hungary, Horthy; the State Presidents of Slovakia and of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Moreover, the Italian Head of Government relayed his friendly congratulations to the Führer by telegram. The Royal Foreign Minister Count Ciano transmitted his congratulations by telegram as well, as did other prominent personalities abroad. The foreign representatives accredited in Berlin expressed their best wishes by signing their names to the guest book open to the public at the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer.¹⁹⁴

April 20, 1940

Hitler thanked King Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini in the two following telegrams:¹⁹⁵

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt gratitude for the best wishes conveyed to me on the occasion of my birthday today.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the best wishes you sent me on behalf of the Fascist Government and the people of Italy. I reply to your greetings in the unshakeable faith that, thanks to the solidarity of our Weltanschauungen and our goals, our allied nations shall victoriously emerge from this struggle for their vital rights.

Adolf Hitler

On the occasion of his birthday, Hitler awarded the Knight's Cross to Schniewind and Dönitz. The following statement was issued to the public:¹⁹⁶

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross to the Chief of Staff of the War Navy, Vice-Admiral Schniewind, and to the Commander in Chief of the Submarine Fleet, Rear Admiral Dönitz. The Führer has hereby bestowed this high distinction on two officers who, respectively, exercised decisive influence on the planning and conduct of operations at sea and bore responsibility for the deployment of the U-boat force.

In addition, Hitler effected a series of promotions in Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, and the police on that day.

On April 22, Hitler published the following expression of gratitude for the congratulations received on his birthday:¹⁹⁷

From all circles of the German Volk and of ethnic Germans living abroad issued forth the best wishes and other tokens of appreciation which I have received on the occasion of my fifty-first birthday. As it is impossible for me to express my thanks for each of them individually, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to each individual Volksgenosse in this fashion.

In the latter part of April, Hitler exchanged a significant correspondence with King Gustav V of Sweden. The topic was Sweden's future neutrality and Germany's intention to respect it. It was not until some weeks later, that the following official statement on this subject was made public:¹⁹⁸

In the second half of April, the Führer and the King of Sweden engaged in an exchange of ideas on the political situation. This exchange of ideas has reasserted, in addition to the respective public declarations of the German and the Swedish Governments, full agreement on the further conduct of mutual relations.

April 22, 1940

On April 22 and April 23, as Jodl noted in his diary, Hitler grew “increasingly uneasy about the English landings.”¹⁹⁹ By April 24, however, the situation had improved vastly. Reassured, Hitler now signed into law a decree on the exercise of governmental functions in Norway. In part, this edict yielded to the generals’ demands by according them a certain “military sovereignty.” Nevertheless, none of the generals received any political powers to speak of. The decree read:²⁰⁰

The Nygaardsvold Government,²⁰¹ by virtue of its proclamations, its conduct, and its initiating of military action between Norway and the German Reich, has created a state of war. In order to ensure public life and public order in the Norwegian territories under the protection of German troops, I hereby give the following orders:

Article I

The occupied Norwegian territories are to come under the jurisdiction of the “Reichskommissar for the Occupied Norwegian Territories.” His headquarters are to be in Oslo. The Reichskommissar is to be the protector of the Reich interests and to exercise supreme governmental power in the civilian sector.

Article II

The Reichskommissar may make use of the Norwegian Administrative Council²⁰² and of the Norwegian authorities for the execution of his orders and for administrative purposes.

Article III

(1) The hitherto existing body of law shall remain in force wherever it is compatible with the occupation.

(2) The Reichskommissar may issue laws by decree. The decrees will be published in the official Gazette for the occupied Norwegian territories.

Article IV

The commander of the German troops in Norway shall exercise the supreme military authority; his requests will be carried out in the civilian sector exclusively by the Reichskommissar. He shall have the right to order measures necessary for the execution of his military mission and for the military security of Norway, in keeping with military requirements.

Article V

The Reichskommissar may make use of German police organs for the execution of his orders. The German police organs shall be at the disposal of the commander of the German troops in Norway as far as is necessary in the interest of military requirements and compatible with the duties of the Reichskommissar.

Article VI

The Reichskommissar shall be directly responsible to me and shall receive his guidance and directives from me.

Article VII

I appoint Oberpräsident Terboven Reichskommissar for the Occupied Norwegian Territories.

April 24, 1940

Article VIII

Regulations for the implementation and supplementation of this decree will be issued in the civilian sector by the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery and in the military sector by the Chief of the OKW on the basis of my directives.

Berlin, April 24, 1940

The Führer Adolf Hitler
The Chairman of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich,
Göring, Field Marshal
The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers
The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

On April 26, Hitler visited Rudolf Hess in his Berlin flat to congratulate him on his forty-sixth birthday.²⁰³

Two days later, the Führer sent yet another letter to the Duce to brief him on his latest military exploits in Norway.²⁰⁴

On April 29, Hitler penned two congratulatory telegrams, the first addressed to the Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia, and the second to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito. In addition, one day later, Hitler instructed Duke Carl Eduard of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to present the Imperial family in Tokyo with his congratulations on the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese Emperor's lineage.²⁰⁵

Also on April 30, Hitler awarded the famous operetta composer, Franz Léhar, on his eightieth birthday, the Goethe Medal for the Arts and Sciences.²⁰⁶

Moreover, Hitler called on Ribbentrop at his house in Berlin that day to congratulate him on his forty-seventh birthday.²⁰⁷

At 1:35 in the afternoon, Jodl reported to Hitler that German troops had established a land bridge between Oslo and Trondheim. Hitler was "overjoyed" at the news, as Jodl carefully noted in his diary. That day Jodl was granted the special distinction of sitting next to Hitler at the dinner table.²⁰⁸ It was only natural that Hitler would rejoice at this development since it heralded the end of the war in the central and southern sections of the country at least. This was a first step towards a swift end to the unpleasantly prolonged engagement.²⁰⁹

In the late evening hours of April 30, Hitler issued the following proclamation, addressed to the German soldiers fighting in Norway:²¹⁰

Berlin, April 30, 1940

Soldiers of the Norwegian Theater of War!

Through tremendous advances, German troops have established a land connection between Oslo and Trondheim. Thus, the ambition of the Allies

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to force us to our knees by belatedly occupying Norway has been quelled for good.

Units of the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe have in exemplary cooperation secured an achievement, the boldness of which does great honor to our young German Wehrmacht.

Officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men! You have fought in the Norwegian theater of war against all adversity at sea, on land, and in the air, and against enemy resistance. You have solved the immense task which I was forced to impose upon you in my belief in you and your strength. I am proud of you. Through me, the nation expresses its gratitude to you.

As an outward sign of appreciation and gratitude, I bestow upon the Commander in Chief in Norway, General von Falkenhorst, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

By recommendation of your Commanders in Chief, I shall decorate the most valiant among you as well. May the greatest reward to you consist in the knowledge that you have contributed decisively in this struggle of our Volk for existence. I know that you shall continue to fulfill your assigned mission in the future as well. Long live our Greater Germany!

Adolf Hitler

May 1 marked the “national holiday of the German Volk” in the National Socialist tradition. In previous years, the festivities usually culminated in two public addresses by Hitler. By 1940, however, he no longer felt comfortable at mass rallies and chose not to appear before the German public. Instead, he left it to Hess to say a few appropriate words on the occasion of a gathering at the Krupp Engine Works.

On this first day of May 1940, Hitler set the date for “Case Yellow”: May 5.²¹¹ The swift progress made in Norway, especially the pending conclusion of hostilities, compelled him forward. He wished to lose no more time and to finally launch the assault on the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. May 5 was a Sunday and in light of Hitler's preference for starting his ventures on weekends, if possible, this date appeared very suitable. Yet adverse weather forced a postponement until the sixth, then the seventh, then the eighth, and finally the tenth of May.

On May 2, Hitler conferred with Göring and other high-ranking Luftwaffe officers. They discussed the deployment of airborne assault units and paratroopers to conquer “fortress Holland.”²¹²

On May 3, in the Berlin Sportpalast, 6,000 officer cadets were summoned to bear witness to an appeal by the Führer. For the occasion, Hitler dressed in riding pants and knee boots as though to underline he was ready for a “fight.” The following statement was published on Hitler's appeal to the cadets:²¹³

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On Friday [May 3], the Führer and Supreme Commander once more gathered about him candidates for officer and leadership positions in Army, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS at the Sportpalast. In an impressive address, the Führer outlined the tasks his young comrades would face at the front in the fight to decide the existence or non-existence of our Volk. Field Marshal Göring concluded the appeal with a *Sieg Heil* shout for the Führer. The young soldiers demonstrated that they had understood their Supreme Commander with enthusiastic shouts of *Heil*.

The speech was typical for the appeals which Hitler enjoyed making to this audience,²¹⁴ as it included all major points usually discussed on similar occasions.

Key phrases were: the adaptation of the Lebensraum to increasing population; Germany as the most populous nation on earth, with the exception of China; struggle as the essence of life. Hitler's comments were decidedly colored by the imminent launch of the offensive in the West.

Hitler spoke of the "second act in a gigantic struggle," referring to the First World War as the "first act," and of a "period of rapidly approaching great decisions of world-historic import." He could not resist mocking "the pitiful leadership of the World War" which constantly "stumbled over threads" and dared not "step across lines drawn in crayon." Hitler need not have worried himself; he was not the man to be held back by threads, such as those tying Germany to its obligations under international law or contracts previously entered into with other states. His "philosophy of state" was decidedly less complex in nature. It was steeped in the concept of brute force which he had already set forth in *Mein Kampf*.²¹⁵ And he had few qualms about frankly admitting this in various boasts before the young officers sitting in front of him: "The earth is there for him who takes it. [—] It is a challenge cup which is taken from those peoples who become weak, . . ." because: "Strength (*Kraft*) determines right on this soil."

Hitler began his speech as follows:

Heil Offiziersanwärter!

The battle in the midst of which Germany finds itself today is the second act of the great, decisive struggle which will determine the future of our race, of our Reich. You often hear the term balance of power these days: the balance of power in Europe. In particular of late, you will have had occasion to read that the cause for this battle lies with the threatened disruption of this balance of power in Europe.

Now what is the meaning of this thesis? Germany's racial core consists of a mass of Volk of over eighty million men. Throughout the centuries, albeit

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in lesser numbers, this mass of Volk formed the center of gravity in Europe. Over the past 300 years, this center of gravity in terms of the Volk's mass has lost its significance in power politics.

At the end of the Thirty Years' War, the political unity of this mass began to disintegrate and to evolve into a conglomerate of small, individual states. With this, it lost its inner value—and, in particular, the impact in terms of power normally attributed to the center of gravity in Europe. The Peace of Münster—it established at least the vision of the political divisiveness of the German nation. Hence, it created the prerequisites for the rise of other powers to hegemony on the world stage—to a degree far beyond the numeric significance and value of these other races. Without this fragmentation of Germany, this political atomization, the rise of England as a world power over the past three hundred years would not have been conceivable. Without this, France would never have become what it became later, after overcoming its political, internal multifariousness, and what it would still like to be today. Broadly speaking, these two world powers are nothing other than the result of the elimination of the German nation as a factor in power politics. By the same token, the political impotence of the German nation remains a prerequisite to their continued existence in the future, as well. Hence, a balance of power has established itself in Europe devoid of a foundation in terms of the masses. The strongest European nation by far has rendered this exaggerated significance possible through its political fragmentation. Without this fragmentation, Germany undoubtedly would still constitute the determining factor in Europe as was the case earlier. And thus came about a state of affairs called the balance of power in Europe. Its mission is to eliminate the strongest European force as a factor in power politics by fostering its internal fragmentation.

For us Germans, the question arises: is a modification of this state of affairs necessary? Today, we need not reply to this any more. Its answer lies in the natural drive of all living beings. Its political answer goes back to the time when at the moment of collapse, or rather when the collapse of the Old Reich was imminent, a rebirth already became evident in the creation of a new cell, that of the Brandenburg-Prussia of the day.

He then proceeded in detail to the subject of Lebensraum.

Yet, beyond this, there is another compelling reason to seek a modification in this balance of power in Europe. The problem presents itself in the following manner to us Germans. There are two decisive elements in the life of a Volk. On the one hand, there is a variable: the Volk's numbers; and, on the other hand, there is the Lebensraum as a given—a fact which does not change by itself. The Volk's numbers and the Lebensraum exist interdependently and this interdependence is of fateful significance in the lives of peoples. Man lives not by theories alone. He lives not by phrases, nor does he live by programs. Man lives by what the Lebensraum at his disposal affords him in terms of foodstuffs and raw material, and by what he is then able, thanks to his industriousness, to reap from it through his work. Nonetheless, the Lebensraum is of primary importance, of course. For while a Volk of great

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industry may be able to fashion a bearable existence from even the most modest of Lebensraums, there will come a time when the discrepancy between the Volk's numbers and the Lebensraum becomes too great. This then leads to a restriction of life, even to an ending of life.

And thus, ever since there has been a history of man, this history has consisted of nothing other than the attempt to bring into harmony the naturally increasing numbers of a Volk with the Lebensraum. This meant either to adapt the Lebensraum to the Volk's numbers or to adapt the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. These are the two ways of establishing a tolerable relationship here.

I will begin with the first alternative: people adapt to the Lebensraum. This can occur naturally as the insufficient Lebensraum cannot provide for people. Weak peoples then begin to capitulate in the face of necessity and to abandon the foundation of their existence. This means that they start to reduce their numbers, primarily due to need.

There is yet another way of adapting the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. It is called emigration. In both ways, Germany has lost human material of immense value throughout the centuries. In centuries past already, need had been great in the German lands. Often this has led to a virtual decimation of men. The second way robbed us of yet more German blood. Throughout centuries, pressured by insufficient Lebensraum of their own, German men left their homeland and helped to build up those foreign states which now face us as enemies.

Another, third way was found of adapting the Volk's numbers to the given Lebensraum. It is called: voluntary reduction of birth rates. After the first way—that of hunger—no longer appeared tolerable and the second way—that of emigration—was blockaded by the Peace Treaties of Versailles, people turned to the third way in increasing numbers. It was even hailed as a virtue to voluntarily limit the strength of one's own Volk, to reduce the Volk's numbers. I need not tell you where this led. In the end, the result of all these attempts was that the potential for natural selection in a people was severely curtailed.

And, in the end, it begins to surrender its forces to better peoples. For it is emigration above all which, like a magnet, draws the active element out of a race, a Volk, and leaves behind only the weak, the cowardly, the meek. And if such a state of affairs is allowed to persist over the centuries, then a formerly important people will slowly but surely lose its steel and turn into a weak, a cowardly mass of men, willing to accept any fate.

This is the first way of establishing balance between a Volk's numbers and the Lebensraum. This way, no matter what the circumstances, will always lead to the destruction of a Volk. In the future, this will lead to a reduction of such a Volk in comparison to those peoples who choose the second way, namely, not to adapt the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum, but rather to adapt the Lebensraum to the Volk's numbers. This is the way chosen by all vigorous nations of this earth. It is the natural way since Providence has placed man upon this earth and has given him this earth as his playground, as the basis for his existence. Providence has not initiated man in its designs. It has not

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assigned peoples certain Lebensräume. Instead Nature has placed these beings on this earth and has given them freedom. He who wants to live asserts himself. He who cannot assert himself does not deserve to live. He will perish. This is an iron, yet also a just principle. The earth is not there for cowardly peoples, not for weak ones, not for lazy ones. The earth is there for him who takes it and who industriously labors upon it and thereby fashions his life. That is the will of Providence. That is why it has placed man upon this earth, along with the other beings, and has paved the way for him, has freed him to make his own decisions, to lead his own struggle for survival.

And should he fail in this struggle, should he become weak in asserting his existence, then Providence will not rush to his aid. Instead, it will sentence him to death. And rightly so. Other men will come. The space will not remain empty. What the one man loses, another will take. And life continues in accordance with its own eternal rhythm without consideration for the weakling.

The earth is a challenge cup. It is a challenge cup which passes into the hands of those peoples who deserve it, who prove themselves strong enough in their struggle for existence, who secure the basis for their own existence. It is a challenge cup which is taken from those peoples who become weak, who are not willing, at the risk of the life of one generation, to secure the life of later generations. The right to this soil is given equally to all these peoples. On this earth, no Englishman has more rights than a Frenchman, no Frenchman has more rights than a Russian, no Russian has more rights than a German, no German has more rights than an Italian, and so on. Strength (*Kraft*) determines right on this soil. And strength is nothing other than an expression of a healthy sense of self-assertion. Peoples who start to lose this strength are no longer healthy and therefore lose their right to this earth. And to be able to exercise this strength, which is first of all a question of will, it is necessary to create certain organizational prerequisites. Foremost amongst these is the inner unity of a Volk. In Germany, we have witnessed the long, almost tragic evolution which was necessary to lead us from inner political conflicts once more to the core not of a new philosophy of state, but to the creation of a new state.

The core which gave us not only political unity, but above all the foundation of ethnic unity. Hereby it created the prerequisites for the inner unity of the German nation. What has come to pass in this realm within these seven years is the greatest of chapters in German history. Not only have countless political forms, old, no longer viable structures, been broken down, but also, in the realm of society, the birth of a new Volksgemeinschaft and hence of a new German Volk became apparent. In the course of the last years, we were able to observe how the toughness and the power of resistance of this new formation passed the test. I do not doubt that it will hold its own in emerging victoriously from this greatest trial in German history. And hence out of this social and moral revolution grew the new German Volksstaat.

Hitler could not resist the temptation of exaggerating in his “party narrative” either:

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Since 1933, this new German Volksstaat has undergone change, strengthened its inner formation, through numerous acts of a lawgiving nature. And thus, this Volksstaat has now begun to create the elements necessary for its external liberation. What has been attained in this area within these seven years, is one of the greatest chapters in German history. In these seven years—I feel free to avow this openly before history—we have not wasted a single month in securing that power, without possession of which a people is doomed in its search for justice on this earth.

Its lack has shown us how helpless a Volk is when it depends upon the insight or mercy, the compassion or goodwill of other peoples whom it must implore and for which it must beg. And thus the Greater German Reich has fashioned its own arms. And with the increases in its arms and its power, the Greater German Reich itself has been strengthened. And today, we find ourselves in the midst of a great historic conflict, the second phase in a gigantic struggle. The initial phase we once lost not because our arms were bad by themselves, rather we lost it because the leadership failed and the German Volk in its inner formation was not yet prepared to see through such a struggle, as it lacked inner cohesion and strength. I have striven to make up for this within twenty years' time. And, so I believe, I succeeded. Whereas once the German soldier fought a lonely battle at the front, today he knows behind him the united force of a uniformly led and orientated Volk. This Volk today expects of the German soldier that he fulfill the mission of his life. The German soldier today can rest assured that the Volk standing behind him will recognize his needs and fulfill his wants.

Hitler then reproached the “small skeptic, the apprehensive man,” for his misgivings regarding victory in the end:

And then comes the question which will plague every small skeptic, every apprehensive man, one time or another, and which might well make you ill-at-ease also in the most trying of hours: “Is it actually possible to win this fight?” And, from the depths of my convictions, I would like to give you the following reply. I give it to you not as a pale theoretician, not as a man who is a stranger to the demands facing you at present. I face them myself. I am acquainted with all the needs, all the worries, all the cares, and all the hardships, which you will encounter and which some of you have already encountered.

I have experienced them all myself. And in spite of this, after the greatest of collapses then suffered, I already immediately knew the answer to this question. I found it for myself. At no moment was there any doubt in my heart that Germany would survive and that it would win this most difficult of struggles in its history.

Having proved the veracity of his convictions beyond all doubt in this proclamation, Hitler once more focused on the numbers and value of the German Volk and claimed that “there is no Volk better on this earth than the German one.”

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Reasons for this belief lie not with some sort of fanatical hope, rather they are founded in recognition. For one, the numbers of the Volk. Even the most expert and most worthy of peoples can fail in their struggle for survival if the discrepancy of their numbers is too great and too obvious in view of the tasks faced and especially, of the forces of the environment. Antiquity furnishes us with two great, tragic examples: Sparta and Hellas. They were both doomed to failure in the end because the world in which they lived was numerically so superior to them that even the most successful of struggles was bound to tax their forces beyond measure.

When we look at today's Germany in light of this consideration, then, my young friends, we recognize a fact which occasions great joy: certainly, there is a British Empire, but there are only forty-six million Englishmen in the motherland. There is a huge American state, but amongst its 130 million inhabitants, there are barely sixty-five million true Anglo-Saxons, and that's that. The rest are Negroes, Jews, Latins, Irishmen, and Germans, and so on.

There is a huge Russian state. However, it has not even sixty million true Great Russians as its bearers. The rest consists of, in part, greatly inferior races. There is also France, spanning over nine million square kilometers of earth and with more than 100 million men, but amongst them are perhaps at most thirty-seven million true Frenchmen who must uphold this structure.

Well, here we stand, my young friends, a state of a total of 82 million German Teutons (*deutsche Germanen*). At present, we are the ethnically most numerous political structure of one race which exists on this earth, with the exception of China. This fact is not new. In former times as well, the German Volk determined, thanks to the force of its numbers, Europe's destiny.

And now there arises a second question, one of equal decisiveness, namely, that of the value of the Volk. For all of us know that numbers by themselves are not in the final instance decisive. And here, my young friends, we are able these days to proudly acknowledge: there is no Volk better on this earth than the German one. Believe me, in the days and months of the collapse of 1918, one thought uplifted me, put me back on my feet again, and returned to me my faith in Germany. It made me strong internally to begin and to take up this gigantic struggle. It was the conviction that even the World War had not proven us to be second class. On the contrary, it had proved us to be undoubtedly the best Volk, especially insofar as this was a question of soldierly virtues. And this is apparent again these days. Here is a Volk which in terms of numbers is the strongest state people on this earth. And beyond this, it is also the best Volk in terms of value, for this value in the end becomes apparent in the soldier. A Volk which does not cherish soldierly virtues is like straw on this earth; it will be blown away by the wind. However, a Volk which possesses as much metal as the German one needs only to develop its values and to apply these subsequently. Then no one can take its future from it.

There is yet another factor which must give all of us internal confidence: it is the ability of our Volk, also its economic ability. Here as well, great feats have been accomplished. The German Volk has wrought a miracle economically within these barely seven years. You all know of our great plans. They were inspired but by one thought.

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Naturally, Hitler did not forget to mention the Wehrmacht, with “the best equipped soldier of the world.”

Above all reigned the thought of the resurrection of the German Wehrmacht, the increasing independence of our economy, its freedom from exterior influences, its stability in the event of a blockade. These were the principles which moved us from day one to implement all these plans, which in the final instance found their realization in the Four-Year Plan. We have an economy in Germany today which ranks at the top of the world economy in particular as far as production in realms of vital importance to the war is concerned.

There is something else, too: the German organization. It is today's organization of our *Volkswesen*, of our Volksgemeinschaft. Said organization which today encompasses the entire German Volk, which reaches into every home, into every village, and there again into every farmstead, into every factory, into every craftsman's shop. There is no German who is not integrated into this gigantic organization. We have created a miracle instrument which enables us to issue a single directive and to drive it home into even the most remote hut within a few hours.

No Volk in the world today possesses a better form of organization than the German Volk; most do not even possess one nearly as good. A state of affairs which is accepted as a matter of course in other countries even today, we have long overcome. You need only think of the parliamentary theatrics in these states and, as soldiers, apply this mentally to a company or a battalion.

You will laugh at the idea of being able to hold your own in battle with such a lot. With such peoples, you cannot score successes in the long run. And this is better, too: we are the state which has created the most profound harmony between political organization and its military implementation; the state in which soldierly principles have been applied in the buildup of the Wehrmacht and which, in turn, have already found their political translation therein. And thus we can say that between the Wehrmacht and its principles on the one hand, and the political organization and the constructive elements therein on the other hand, there exists complete harmony. To this we must add the German soldier as a warrior. His equipment—today we have the best-equipped soldier of the world in our Army and in our Luftwaffe.

And secondly, the German soldier and his training. When today we hear of so low—relatively low—losses across the board, which stand in no relation to the losses which I myself had the opportunity to witness in the World War, then we owe this to the improved training of the individual soldier. But also we owe it to the leadership experienced in war, the more thorough training. Surely, today we have the best Wehrmacht there is in the world at this time.

The most important factor, however, was the leadership and the trust in this leadership, i.e. Adolf Hitler. In this context, Hitler portrayed himself as the role-model for the young soldiers. He claimed that he had not forgotten the “gnawing fear of death” which had

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gripped hold of him, too, as he had lain in the trenches. He had compassion for the young officers, but still he insisted: "It is of no import whether the individual among us lives—what must live is our Volk!"²¹⁷

Hitler relished playing the role of a Frederick the Great and called upon the soldiers to be "brave and valiant." Other phrases followed, such as "the German is no scoundrel that he will ever abandon his company commander," since "he will love him who leads him." Hitler stated in detail:

And finally, and this ought to be almost at the top of the list, there is one more thing which ought to reinforce us in our belief in victory: trust in the German leadership; in the leadership on top and way down. Trust in a leadership that knows only the thought of winning this battle, which subordinates all other concerns to this, which is suffused with the fanatical will to do everything and to risk everything for success in this battle, which unlike the pitiful leadership of the World War does not stumble over threads or is unable to step across lines drawn in crayon.

Instead the German Volk and above all you, as soldiers and future officers, must know that at the helm of the Reich there stands a leadership which night and day knows only the one thought: to force the victory under all circumstances! And to risk everything for it. And beyond this, you must know that this leadership naturally can only accomplish what is provided for by the highest echelons of leadership. And that you yourselves form part of this total leadership. Every one of you will have to struggle with the same problems which are not spared the supreme leadership of today either. For when I look back upon the war myself, then I have not forgotten those difficult hours full of worries, the gnawing fear of death, and all those other sentiments which man experiences in face of these most horrendous stresses placed upon nerves and willpower, of physical strain. I have not forgotten these—yet, still, how easy do all the decisions of the soldier then appear to me as opposed to the decisions which one later has to take upon oneself in positions of responsible leadership. How easy all of this is when it is merely a question of one's own life as opposed to holding, in the final instance, the nation's life and destiny in one's hands.

Whatever situation you may encounter individually, never forget one thing: Every decision you make, every action you order, every stand you occupy, all this will not be any more difficult than the same decisions, the same stands, the same willpower asked of those who in other places have to bear the responsibility, and have to bear it overall. In this respect, a great community of leadership must take hold in which every one occupies his place, is ready to fulfill his mission, is ready to rejoice in taking on responsibility in the one thought: It is of no import whether the individual among us lives—what must live is our Volk!

We now stand in the midst of the most decisive struggle for Germany's entire future. Of what importance is it should the individual amongst us, every

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individual included, leave the stage? What is decisive is that our Volk can assert itself. And it will only then be able to assert itself when its leadership, at every instance, is willing to fanatically do everything for the one goal: To win this struggle. And believe me, my young friends, the individual man is always brave and valiant; the musketeer, he is always decent basically, he looks up to his leaders, he sees his company commander before him, his platoon leader. And let no one forget: The German is no such scoundrel (*Hundsfott*) that he will ever abandon his company commander. He would never do such a thing. He will follow his leader, but his leader must make it easy for him through his dedication, his daring, his courage. Such a leader will then always find a following and will chain it to himself—whatever his position may be, at the top or at the head of a group or platoon, or company. It will always be the same. The result: he will love him who leads him!

And even if life is wonderful and the sacrifice of life ever so hard, my young friends, many generations lived before us. That we are here today we do not owe to their peaceful existence, but to their placing at risk their own lives in the struggle. For the soil upon which we stand today was not given us by the Good Lord as a gift. It had to be gained in battle. And time and time again, there were Germans to be found who were willing to place their lives at risk in the past so that life might be given to later generations. And it is not as though placing one's life at risk was any easier then than it is today. It was just as bitter and just as difficult.

When we speak of the dead of the World War, then we should never forget that every single one of these two million gave his life for the future of the nation just as this may be asked of us and of you individually at one point. Another thing yet is certain: the more determined a Volk is in taking up a fight, the more ruthlessly it acts, the less the sacrifices will be!

And thus, I expect of you in this era of an approaching great, world-historic decision that you shall first be valiant, courageous, and exemplary officers, that you shall be comradesly and loyal not only amongst yourselves, but also with the men placed in your care. Today you have a Volk—not mercenaries, not vagrants caught along country roads. Rather Volksgenossen are entrusted to your leadership. And this you may never forget. These Volksgenossen will all the more attach themselves to you, the more they feel they can see in you true leaders of the German Volk, of the Volk in arms. Expand your horizon, for the soldier needs—beyond heroics and courage and enthusiasm—the true foundations of knowledge. Here, too, knowledge is power. Above all, apply this expertise and knowledge in the care for the Volksgenossen entrusted to you. It is because of the absolute authority this state grants you that you are obligated to carefully attend to this authority in the service of the leadership of the men entrusted to you. To be a leader means to truly care for all those with whose care one has been entrusted. Above all, be a man in the hours of great trial. Persevere and above all be persistent.

Such ideas were not far off the mark when one attacked smaller, weaker nations. Hitler remarked that “today Germany fights as the strongest military state against a front of enemies inferior to it in terms

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of numbers and value.” However, with a superior adversary, the same maxims quickly turned against the aggressor. Hitler’s beloved metaphor of the “last battalion”²¹⁸ did not apply to Germany, no matter how loudly he proclaimed it:

The great victories of world history were accorded to that party which commanded the last battalion on the battlefield, i.e. the men who knew how to carry their heads high to the last minute. It is not as though the dice fell during the first minute of any battle. It is not as though one could say in the first minute already: naturally there will be success for the one side, it will carry the victory, no one can deny it, while on the other side, there will be only destruction. Great world-historic decisions seldom look like successes from the start. Many times the struggle is a difficult one and victory appears elusive. In the end, it will bestow its favors upon him whose persistence, whose fanatical, indestructible stand makes him the more deserving one. And here we Germans can look with pride to one soldier who has entered the halls of history as an immortal.

If there are men who doubt success or the possibility of success, then all we can say to them is: today Germany fights as the strongest military state against a front of enemies inferior to it in terms of numbers and value. Once a man, with a state of 2.7 million, dared to attack the monarchy in the Reich of the day and, after three wars against a European coalition of over forty million men, he carried the victory in the end. His were not only victories. What was so wonderful in all this was his attitude in the most critical of situations, his attitude when he faced defeat. Everyone can suffer a defeat now and then. What is decisive is his character, how he takes it, and immediately goes on the offensive again. This, my young friends, must be instilled in your flesh and blood, and this you must instill in your soldiers: we may be defeated once perhaps, but vanquished—never! And in the end, the victory will be ours—one way or another!

Thereupon, Hitler indulged in sentimental reminiscences on his “eventful life,” his many “defeats, blows, worries, and setbacks.” The masses, however, had failed to recognize these.

I can look back upon a most eventful life. It was not as though this struggle for power in Germany, for the new Movement, had consisted of only victories. You need only read the prophecies of my opponents. Who believed in my carrying the victory? Who believed in the certainty of the outcome of this struggle? It was a question of a great deal of persistence to overcome all these defeats, these blows, to emerge from them only to take power in the end. And in these last years as well—there have been many worries in countless realms. Many setbacks. The mass of the people may well not even have realized all of this, for the leadership has learned to come to terms with these [setbacks].

It is one of the most uplifting tasks of leadership to allow one’s followers to mark only the victory; and to take upon oneself the entire responsibility

at critical moments; to step in front of one's followers to shield them against this responsibility.

And now I ask of you to be aware at every hour that in your hand lies the honor of a great Volk, the honor not only of your generation but that of generations past. At every hour, not only the eyes of millions of your living contemporaries follow you, but also the eyes of those who closed them before us upon this earth. They look upon you through the past and hence through immortality and they will seek to determine whether and to what extent you are fulfilling those duties which other men before us so gloriously fulfilled. They expect of us that posterity should have no more cause to be ashamed of us than we have cause to be ashamed of the great eras of our past. When we hold up this sacred banner of honor and hence of a sense of duty, and when we with faithful hearts follow this flag, then the goal we all pursue can be nothing other than the victory of Greater Germany!

Hitler's conclusion, affirming the certainty of victory for Greater Germany, compelled Göring to pledge himself and the audience once more in an "oath of loyalty" to the Führer. Göring customarily did this at the end of each Reichstag speech. On this day in May 1940, Göring proclaimed: "The force and the strength of the first soldier have now been conferred upon you. May the strength of the Führer uplift you!"

On May 4, at the daily briefing on the progress of the campaign in Norway, Hitler declared himself "outraged that people other than himself interfered with the reporting." He insisted that the OKW was his personal staff, as Jodl recorded.²¹⁹ In fact, Hitler so dominated the daily briefing that he would alter with his own hand the military's report on the events in Norway, not being able to resist the temptation to add superlatives and bombast to the dry formulation the generals preferred.²²⁰

On May 5, Hitler sent a note to the composer Emil Nikolaus von Reznicek to congratulate him on his eightieth birthday. In the letter, Hitler emphasized his appreciation of the musician's contribution to the cause of music in Germany.²²¹

On the same day, Hitler wrote yet another letter addressed to Mussolini, in which he detailed the military aspects of the victory in Norway. He ridiculed "the military capacities of the Allies." He complained "about the excessive rapidity of the victory which has not permitted his involving the English forces more effectively to destroy them completely."²²²

On this May 5, as Jodl noted in his diary, Hitler had "successfully contrived a justification for "Case Yellow."²²³ Public pronouncement of this "justification" was awaited with great curiosity, as Hitler had earlier

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promised that the rationale for the violation of neutral territory presented in 1940 would not be as “idiotic” as that of 1914.

Hitler had planned heading for his new wartime headquarters in the West on May 7. Much to his regret, adverse weather made a renewed postponement necessary. He could not allay the fear that any further delay would bring with it the “danger of treason.”²²⁴ He need not have troubled himself, however. After all, it was impossible that the large-scale concentration of forces in the West and the connected military moves could escape the attention of the neutral states in question. On May 8 already, newspapers abroad carried disquieting reports on German troop concentrations and apparent preparations for a move against the Netherlands. On the same day, the German News Bureau hurriedly issued the following denial:²²⁵

The revelation of British plans for southeast Europe²²⁶ has made so strong an impression on the people concerned that the British warmongers are now resorting to diversions as stupid as they are awkward. In this, they take advantage of American press agencies disseminating information according to which the Netherlands are gravely threatened. It is the old game of “stop the thief” which is being played here. Thus, according to the Associated Press’s information, obtained from “a highly reliable source,” two German armies were moving from Bremen and Düsseldorf in the direction of the Netherlands and doing so at a speed which should allow them to reach the frontier shortly.

According to what we were able to ascertain, the “reliable source” of this military nonsense is none other than the British Ministry of Information. This British Ministry of Information was so disconcerted by the German revelations of the immediately impending British and French plans that, under any circumstances, it had to stage this attempt at diversion.

Only two days later, the libelous nature of this denial was revealed by the Führer’s proclamation to the soldiers of the Western Front.

On May 9, Hitler relayed his congratulations to King Carol on Romania’s national holiday.²²⁷ He also hosted the Italian Ambassador and his spouse at the Reich Chancellery to bid them farewell.²²⁸ Behind the Ambassador’s back, Hitler had agitated for the Italian’s replacement. He faulted Attolico for his “not clearly pro-German stance,” according to Jodl’s records.²²⁹ The truth of the matter was that Attolico knew too much; too many times had Attolico heard Hitler contradict himself.

Also on May 9, Hitler issued the following instructions to the Commanders in Chief of the troops deployed in Norway:²³⁰

Contrary to the will of the German Volk and its Government, King Haakon of Norway and his Cabinet have issued an appeal to wage war on Germany.

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From this struggle the following conclusions are to be drawn: during the war in the East, Poles mostly tortured and massacred, in the most gruesome fashion, German soldiers who had the misfortune of falling into Polish hands either unwounded or wounded. By contrast, one must concede to the Norwegian Army that not one such case of degeneracy in the conduct of war has occurred within its ranks. The Norwegian soldier has shown only disdain for all the cowardly and insidious methods which were resorted to daily by the Poles. He fought openly and honestly. He has treated our wounded and prisoners of war well, to the best of his ability, affording them respect and dignity. The civilian population has behaved in a similar manner. It did not interfere in the combat and has accorded the wounded its care.

Hence, I have determined, in recognition of these circumstances, to grant permission to release all Norwegian soldiers taken prisoner. Only professional soldiers are to be kept incarcerated until the former Norwegian Government retracts its appeal to wage war on Germany, or until each individual officer and soldier has given his word of honor not to continue, under any circumstances, his participation in the action against Germany.

Adolf Hitler

The “kindness” in evidence towards the Norwegians did not by any means reflect a humane strain in Hitler’s character. Rather it mirrored Hitler’s ambition to integrate this “Nordic” people into his community of the “Germanic Reich of the German nation.” This motive was equally in evidence in his lenient treatment of the Dutch, apparent in the later release of prisoners of war taken in the Netherlands. Belgian prisoners were far less fortunate than their Dutch and Norwegian counterparts, although the Belgian soldiers had not behaved in a manner discernibly different from that of the armed forces of the other two nations.

Hitler’s objective of assimilating all “Nordic” peoples into one Reich was of strategic importance to his move against the Netherlands. Occupation of the country brought no decisive strategic advantages, as its possession was not essential to a circumvention of the Maginot Line. Neither were German troops stationed in the Dutch ports instrumental in driving a wedge between France and Britain. Imperial Germany, for instance, had refrained from violating Dutch neutrality on these considerations. In 1914, German troops had limited their transgressions to territories lying in Belgium and Luxembourg. Hitler likewise could have limited his aggression, had not visions of a “Germanic Reich” so clouded his view that he took precautions not to end as William II did, whom he claimed to have “constantly stumbled over threads and dared not step across lines drawn in crayon.”²³¹

On the same day, Hitler composed a “Proclamation to the Soldiers of the Western Front.” It read:²³²

May 10, 1940

Berlin, May 10, 1940

The hour of the most decisive battle for the future of the German nation has come.

For over 300 years it has been the ambition of British and French rulers to prevent a real consolidation of Europe and, in particular, to keep Germany weak and impotent. To this end, France alone has declared war on Germany thirty-one times²³³ in the course of two centuries.

For decades it has also been the ambition of the British rulers of the world to prevent Germany, under all circumstances, from attaining unity while denying the Reich those vital goods necessary to sustain a people of eighty million.²³⁴

England and France have pursued this policy regardless of which regime reigned in Germany at any point in time. Their target was always the German Volk. Men of responsibility in those countries proclaimed this ambition openly.

Germany was to be shattered and dissolved into many small states. Then the Reich would lose its political power and hence its means of securing for the German Volk its vital rights upon this earth. For this reason, all my offers of peace were rejected and war was declared on us on September 3 of last year.

The German Volk harbors neither hatred nor animosity toward either the English or the French people. Today, however, it faces the question whether it desires to live or rather to perish.

Within a few weeks, the valiant troops of our armies have defeated the Polish enemy sent up to the front by Britain and France. Thereby they have eliminated the danger in the East. Consequently, Britain and France determined to assault Germany in the North. Ever since April 9, the Wehrmacht has quelled this attempt from its very beginnings.

Now has come to pass what we have envisioned as a threatening danger throughout the past months. Britain and France aim to push for the Ruhr territory through Holland and Belgium while undertaking a gigantic effort at diversion in southeast Europe.

Soldiers of the Western Front! Your hour has come. The battle beginning on this day will determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years. Now do your duty. The German Volk is with you in its desire for victory.

Adolf Hitler

The hour had struck for the launching of the offensive in the West. If one believed Hitler's words, this campaign was to determine Germany's fate for the "next one thousand years." According to his estimates, one million German soldiers would lay down their lives in the foray.²³⁵ In his mind, this was not a matter of great concern! The enemy stood to lose at least an equivalent number of its men. And since Greater Germany boasted a population of eighty million, a sacrifice of one million seemed of little consequence to the Führer.

At 5:00 p.m. finally, Hitler's special train bore him and his staff to the Felsenest headquarters site.²³⁶ The small railway station of Finkenkrug²³⁷ was ideal for an inconspicuous departure, preparations for which were made with great care as though the success of the military operations depended upon it. Having finished translation of the memorandums to the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the foreign language section with the Foreign Ministry was put in virtual quarantine.²³⁸ Other than Hitler's military staff, no one aboard the train knew where the journey would take him. As the train initially headed northwest, many speculated they were traveling to a site either in Norway or Denmark.²³⁹ This maneuver was to disguise the fact that the train was actually heading west.

At 9:00 p.m., weather reports indicated favorable conditions for the next day. Now Hitler pronounced the code word "Danzig."²⁴⁰ This signaled the launch of the offensive in the West at 5:30 a.m. on May 10.

It was still dark when Hitler's train finally reached the Euskirchen station that morning.²⁴¹ By 5:30 a.m., Hitler and his staff were at their desks at the new Felsenest headquarters. The towering heights of the Eifel mountains afforded them a superb view nearly up to the Belgian frontier. And precisely at this hour, the Third Reich's troops went on the attack as ordered.

As was his custom, Hitler had left Mussolini completely in the dark. That morning, the German Ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen, carried out his instructions to rouse the Duce at 5:00 a.m. with the "news" of Hitler's foray to the West. Von Mackensen then gave Mussolini a lengthy exposition of the motives behind this move against three small, non-belligerent states. This "large package of papers," with which Mussolini was presented that morning, "certainly could not have arrived by telephone," as Ciano sarcastically remarked. Concealed in this package was "a kind of invitation to Mussolini to make the decisions he considers necessary for the future of his country."²⁴²

In Berlin in the meantime, Ribbentrop presented the diplomatic representatives of Belgium and the Netherlands with the memorandums Hitler had already taken the precaution of signing on May 5. Their contents failed to account, however, for the precise motivation behind the unwarranted aggression against the two states. The two lengthy papers, handed to the Dutch Envoy Haersma de With and to the Belgian Ambassador Viscount Jacques Davignon, were nearly identical in content:²⁴³

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Berlin, May 9, 1940

MEMORANDUM

The Reich Government has for a long time had no doubts as to what was the chief aim of British and French war policy. It consists of the spreading of the war to other countries, and of the misuse of their peoples as auxiliary and mercenary troops for England and France.

The latest attempt of this sort was the plan to occupy Scandinavia with the help of Norway, in order to set up a new front against Germany in this region. It was only Germany's last minute action which upset this project. Germany has furnished documentary evidence of this before the eyes of the world.

Immediately after the British-French action in Scandinavia miscarried, England and France took up their policy of war expansion in another direction. Thus, while the retreat in flight of the British troops from Norway was still going on, the English Prime Minister announced that as a result of the altered situation in Scandinavia England was once more in a position to go ahead with the transfer of the main weight of her Navy to the Mediterranean, and that English and French units were already on the way to Alexandria. The Mediterranean now became the center of English-French war propaganda. This was partly to gloss over the Scandinavian defeat and the great loss of prestige before their own people and before the world, and partly to make it appear that the Balkans had been chosen for the next theater of war against Germany.

In reality, however, this apparent shifting to the Mediterranean of English-French war policy had quite another purpose. It was nothing but a diversionary maneuver on a large scale to deceive Germany as to the direction of the next English-French attack. For, as the Reich Government has long been aware, the true aim of England and France is the carefully prepared and now immediately imminent attack on Germany in the west, so as to advance through Belgian and Netherlands territory to the region of the Ruhr.

Germany has recognized and respected the inviolability of Belgium and the Netherlands, it being of course understood that these two countries in the event of a war of Germany against England and France would maintain the strictest neutrality.

Belgium and the Netherlands have not fulfilled this condition. They have attempted hitherto to maintain the outward appearance of neutrality, but in practice both countries have shown a one-sided partiality for Germany's opponents and have furthered their designs.

On the basis of the evidence before it and particularly of the attached reports from the Ministry of the Interior of March 29, 1940, and from the German High Command of May 4, 1940, the German Government has established the following:

1. Since the outbreak of war the Belgian and the Netherlands press have even surpassed the English and French papers in their hostile expressions of opinion regarding Germany. This attitude, in spite of continuous remonstrances by the Reich, they have not altered up to date. In addition to this, leading personalities in the public life of the two countries have in the last few months

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on an ever increasing scale expressed the opinion that the place of Belgium and the Netherlands was at the side of England and France. Many other occurrences in the political and economic life of Belgium and the Netherlands stress this tendency further.

2. The Netherlands in association with the Belgian authorities have in most flagrant violation of the most elementary obligations of neutrality lent themselves to supporting the attempts of the English Secret Intelligence Service to bring about a revolution in Germany. The organization, formed on Belgian and Netherlands soil by the Secret Intelligence Service and enjoying the most widespread support by Netherlands and Belgian quarters even in the highest circles of the civil service and the General Staff, had no other aim than the removal of the Führer and the German Government, by all and every means, and the setting up of a government in Germany willing to bring about the dissolution of the unity of the Reich and to assent to the formation of a powerless federal German state.²⁴

3. The measures taken by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments in the military sphere speak even more clearly. They give irrefutable proof of the real intentions of Belgian and Netherlands policy. They are, further, in most decided contrast to all declarations made by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments to the effect that they would with all their strength and on every hand prevent any use being made of their territory, either for the marching through of an army or as a base of operations on land, on the sea, or in the air.

4. Thus, for example, Belgium has fortified exclusively her eastern frontier against Germany, while on her frontier facing France no fortifications have been constructed. Repeated urgent representations made by the German Government were indeed on each occasion replied to by the Royal Belgian Government with a promise that this state of affairs directed only against Germany would be remedied, but in practice nothing happened and all promises in this direction remained unfulfilled. On the contrary Belgium has until quite recently worked exclusively and unabatedly on the completion of her fortifications against Germany, while the western border of Belgium is open to Germany's enemies.

5. A similarly open and exposed invasion gateway for the British air forces is the Netherlands coastal area. The German Government has continually provided the Royal Netherlands Government with evidence of the infringements of Netherlands neutrality by English aircraft. Since the outbreak of the war English airmen have almost daily appeared over German territory coming from the direction of the Netherlands. One hundred and twenty-seven such English flights were identified indisputably in all details, and brought to the attention of the Royal Netherlands Government.

Actually, however, the number is much greater; it amounts to many times over the number of the cases notified. Similarly, in all these further instances of flights there is no doubt that the aircraft were English. The great number of flights, and the fact that no effective countermeasures were taken by the Royal Netherlands Government, clearly show that the English air force systematically used Netherlands territory as a starting point for its operations

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against Germany, with the knowledge and indulgence of the Royal Netherlands Government.

6. Still more blatant evidence of the true Belgian and Netherlands attitude, however, are the strategic movements of the entire mobilized Belgian and Netherlands troops directed solely against Germany. Whereas at the beginning of September 1939, the Belgian and Netherlands troops were distributed fairly evenly on their frontiers, a short time afterwards, simultaneously with the increasingly closer cooperation between the Belgian and Netherlands General Staffs, and the General Staffs of England and France, the western frontiers of these countries were completely stripped of troops, and all the Belgian and Netherlands troops were concentrated on the eastern frontiers of both countries, with their fronts toward Germany.

7. This massing of Belgian and Netherlands troops on the German frontier was undertaken at a time when Germany had no troop concentrations whatsoever on her frontiers with Belgium and the Netherlands, but when England and France, on the other hand, were forming a strong, motorized invasion army on the Franco-Belgian border. In other words, Belgium and the Netherlands removed their own troops from these endangered western boundaries to place them on the eastern boundaries, which were entirely free of German troops, at a time when their neutrality seemed increasingly threatened in the west by the attitude of England and France, and by the massing of English and French invasion troops, which would have given them every reason for strengthening their defenses there. Only then did Germany take countermeasures, and then also on her side placed troops on the Belgian and Netherlands borders. The Belgian and Netherlands General Staffs, however, by these sudden measures, contradictory in themselves to every military rule, exposed their true attitude. Their procedure can be understood, however, by the knowledge, that these measures were taken in the closest previous understanding with the English and French General Staffs, and that the Belgian and Netherlands troops never considered themselves to be anything but the vanguard of the English and French invasion army.

8. Evidence in the hands of the German Reich Government shows that English and French preparations on Belgian and Netherlands territory for attack against Germany are already far advanced. Thus for some time now all obstacles on the Belgian border toward France which might hinder the entry of the English and French invasion army have been secretly removed. Airfields in Belgium and the Netherlands have been reconnoitred by English and French officers and extensions effected. Belgium has made transport facilities available at the frontier and recently advance parties of the headquarters personnel and the units of the French and English invasion army have arrived in various parts of Belgium and the Netherlands.

These facts, together with further information which has accumulated in the last few days, furnish conclusive proof that the English and French attack against Germany is imminent, and that this attack will be directed against the Ruhr through Belgium and the Netherlands. The picture of the Belgian and Netherlands attitude, as presented by these indisputable facts, is clear and

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unequivocal. Both countries have from the outbreak of war, contrary to the statements given out by their Governments, secretly placed themselves on the side of England and France, and thus of the Powers which had decided to attack Germany and had declared war on her. Although the situation was pointed out to the Belgian Foreign Minister in all seriousness several times from German quarters, it did not make the slightest difference. On the contrary, the Belgian Defense Minister recently made a public declaration in the Belgian Chamber which unequivocally contained the admission that all steps necessary for joint action against Germany had been agreed upon between the General Staffs of Belgium, France, and England. If, in spite of this, Belgium and the Netherlands continue to proclaim publicly a policy of independence and neutrality, it can, in the light of established facts, only be regarded as an attempt to conceal the real intentions of Belgian and Netherlands policy.

In this situation, the Reich Government can, however, no longer doubt that Belgium and the Netherlands are resolved not only to permit the impending Anglo-French attack, but to favor it in every way and that the agreements of the General Staffs of these two countries with the English and French General Staffs are designed exclusively to serve this object. The argument put forward on the part of Belgium and the Netherlands that this is not their purpose, but that the very fact of their helplessness has forced them to adopt this attitude toward England and France, cannot be recognized as sound. Above all, it does not alter the facts of the situation for Germany.

In this struggle for existence forced upon the German people by England and France, the Reich Government is not disposed to await idly the attack by England and France and to allow them to carry the war by way of Belgium and the Netherlands into German territory. It has therefore now issued the command to German troops to ensure the neutrality of these countries by all the military means at the disposal of the Reich.

The Reich Government adds to this announcement the following:

The German troops do not come as enemies of the Belgian and Netherlands peoples, for the Reich Government has neither desired nor brought about this development. The responsibility for it falls upon England and France, who have prepared in every detail the attack against Germany from Belgian and Netherlands territory, and on the Belgian and Netherlands Government departments who have allowed and favored it.

The Reich Government further declared that Germany has no intention of encroaching by these measures, either now or in the future, on the sovereignty of the Kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands, nor on the European or extra-European possessions of these countries.

The Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments, however, today still have it in their power at this last moment to ensure the well-being of their peoples, by seeing to it that no resistance is offered to the German troops. The Reich Government hereby calls upon these two Governments to issue without delay the necessary commands to this effect. Should the German troops meet with resistance in Belgium or the Netherlands, they will use all means to overcome it. The responsibility for the consequences arising

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therefrom and for the bloodshed then unavoidable will have to be borne exclusively by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments.

In his correspondence to Luxembourg, Hitler refrained from maintaining that this country had occupied a stance hostile to Germany. Instead, he justified his actions by referring to the behavior of Belgium and the Netherlands. The German memorandum read:²⁴⁵

Berlin, May 9, 1940

The Reich Government is reliably informed that England and France, in the course of their policy of spreading the war, have decided to attack Germany in the near future through Belgian and Netherlands territory. Belgium and the Netherlands, who in violation of their neutrality long since secretly took the side of the enemies of Germany, not only do not intend to prevent this attack but favor it. The facts which go to prove this have been stated in detail in a memorandum which is being handed to the Royal Belgian Government and the Royal Government of the Netherlands, a copy of which is enclosed herewith.

In defense against the imminent attack, the German troops have now received the order to safeguard the neutrality of these two countries with all the power at the disposal of the Reich.

The offensive, decided upon by England and France with the consent of Belgium and the Netherlands will also involve the territory of Luxembourg. To repulse the attack the Reich Government has therefore been forced to extend its military operations to Luxembourg territory also.

It has been known to the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg that the Reich was prepared to respect the neutrality and integrity of Luxembourg, provided that the other Powers which are neighbors of the Grand Duchy would also take the same attitude. Negotiations for agreements to that effect between the Powers concerned, which seemed to be almost completed in the summer of 1939, were then broken off by France. This breaking off of the negotiations by France is explained by the military decisions now taken by her together with the other enemies of Germany, an explanation which does not need any further illustration.

The Reich Government expects the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg to take account of the position created solely by the guilt of Germany's enemies, and to take all the necessary measures to prevent the Luxembourg population causing difficulties for the German military operations in any way. The Reich Government, on its part, gives the assurance to the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg that Germany has no intention, now or in the future, of interfering with the territorial integrity or political independence of the Grand Duchy.

In speaking to the generals on November 23, 1939, Hitler had maintained: "We shall not justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914."²⁴⁶ He actually cherished the belief that an eloquently

worded rationale justified even the most vile actions, breaches of neutrality, and violations of contract. A good excuse would always render such actions acceptable abroad.

Ever since 1935, Hitler had resorted to this tactic as he perpetrated various breaches of the law, repeatedly violating the Constitution and human rights, even though, time and time again, this strategy had failed him in the end. England had never paid heed to his official proclamations. Instead, it had insisted upon his condemnation by the world community at large. The international public had denounced Germany's transgressions in a number of instances: the 1935 reintroduction of general conscription to Germany; the 1936 military occupation of the Rhineland; the 1939 invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia; the September 1939 assault on Poland; and the 1940 attack upon Norway and Denmark.²⁴⁷

Hitler was blind to all this. He could simply not believe that his carefully contrived argumentation was of no consequence to the international community. He could not conceive of them judging him by his deeds alone and disregarding his words.

In the 1940 case of the Third Reich's aggression against the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the reaction abroad to this insolent violation of contract by Hitler and his accomplices, especially in view of their repeated solemn assurances and of the obligations entered into, was no different from the international public's reaction to Imperial Germany's invasion of Belgium in 1914. In Hitler's mind, he had sufficiently justified his aggression and had done so not "as idiotically" as Bethmann-Hollweg had.²⁴⁸ The Belgian Ambassador Viscount Davignon did not share this opinion. In speaking to the State Secretary von Weizsäcker, the Viscount stressed that the motives appropriated against Belgium would one day backfire on Germany. Had Hitler joined Bethmann-Hollweg in candidly stating, "necessity acknowledges no conventions,"²⁴⁹ he would have been decidedly more to the point.

With German bombers already flying overhead, the German diplomats in Luxembourg, Brussels, and The Hague presented the respective governments with the various memoranda penned by Hitler. When the German Ambassador Bülow-Schwante made his appearance at Belgium's Foreign Ministry at 8:30 in the morning of May 10, Foreign Minister Paul Henri Spaak cut him short to state: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Ambassador. I will speak first." Then he read the Belgian Government's protest:²⁵⁰

May 10, 1940

The German Army has just attacked our country. This is the second time in twenty-five years that Germany has committed a criminal aggression against a neutral and loyal Belgium. What just had happened is perhaps even more odious than the aggression of 1914. No ultimatum, no note, no protest of any kind has ever been placed before the Belgian Government. It is through the attack itself that Belgium has learnt that Germany has violated the undertakings given by her on October 13th, 1937,²⁵¹ and renewed spontaneously at the beginning of the war. The act of aggression committed by Germany, for which there is no justification whatever, will deeply shock the conscience of the world. The German Reich will be held responsible by history. Belgium is resolved to defend herself. Her cause, which is the cause of Right, cannot be vanquished.

When Bülow-Schwante set out to read to the Foreign Minister Hitler's memorandum, Spaak cut him off once again to remark: "Hand me the document. I wish to spare you so painful a task."

On behalf of the Dutch people, their Foreign Minister meanwhile declared:²⁵²

It is with a sense of indignation that the Dutch Government rejects allegations that it has entered into agreements of a hostile intent of the said nature with any other foreign power against Germany. Based on the unprecedented attack on the Netherlands on the part of Germany, which ensued without prior warning, the Dutch Government regards itself to be at war with Germany.

Even the Government of Luxembourg refused to capitulate in face of the rapidly advancing German troops. The Grand Duchess escaped abroad. Hitler had completely failed in his efforts to force the voluntary surrender of three neutral states. Neither his lengthy memorandums, crude threats, nor military pressure could change this.

To give proper credit to the German diplomats abroad, it ought to be remarked that not one of these involved himself in the preparations for the shameful and treacherous assault on his host country. The list of diplomatic personnel Hitler placed in so painful a situation in the course of the Second World War was indeed a long one: Dr. von Rente-Fink in Denmark; Bräuer in Norway; Karl Alexander Vicco von Bülow-Schwante in Belgium; Count Julius von Zech-Burkersroda in Holland; Otto von Radowitz in Luxembourg; Viktor von Heeren in Yugoslavia; Viktor Prince of Erbach-Schönberg in Greece; and Friedrich Werner Graf von der Schulenburg in the Soviet Union.

On May 10 as well, the High Command of the Wehrmacht informed the German public, and the international community at large, of the change in the situation in the following manner:²⁵³

In view of the enemy's imminent transport of the war onto Belgian and Dutch territory and the danger for the Ruhr territory connected therewith, the German Army in the West launched an attack along a broad front across the frontier in the West at dawn on May 5. At this time, the Luftwaffe attacked enemy airfields with great success and intervened to support the Army fighting on the ground with strong units. To coordinate the total operations of the Wehrmacht, the Führer and Supreme Commander has journeyed to the front.

That Hitler now enjoyed these trips to the "front"—at Münstereifel, about thirty kilometers behind the actual frontier with Belgium—had already been evident in the Polish campaign. What was new in this case was that, right from the start, Hitler stressed that it was he who was in charge of "the total operations of the Wehrmacht."

The Allies took the following steps to counter Hitler's coup in the West:

1. Churchill was appointed Prime Minister and assumed responsibility for national policy and the conduct of war.

2. Britain occupied Iceland on the same day (this country had previously formed part of Denmark).

3. In response to a plea for assistance issued by the Governments of Belgium and the Netherlands on this day, an Anglo-French Expeditionary Force rushed to the aid of these two countries.²⁵⁴

Hitler had anticipated this move by Great Britain and France. Central to his plan for the campaign was the following consideration: to take "fortress Holland" by surprise, i.e. from the air. Luftwaffe squadrons, gliders, and parachutists had to occupy all strategic points on the first day of the campaign and these had to be held until relief arrived in the form of ground forces.

A similar tactic was to secure the cornerstone of the Belgian defense structure—Liège—for German troops. A surprise landing of parachutists on top of the fortress Eben Emael was to break down any resistance offered. Besides this, however, German soldiers were to advance slowly and cautiously through Belgium in an attempt to divert the attention of the Allies to this particular war theater.

The Western military commanders were to be deceived into believing that an encirclement maneuver similar to that of 1914 was taking place on Belgian soil. This was to induce them to concentrate forces here in the North, while Hitler's main charge broke through the Sedan-Charleville area with heavy armored units. The German panzers were to force their way through to the Channel in an effort to cut off the Allied armies now in the North and to deal them a deadly blow.

May 10, 1940

No doubt, Hitler played the pivotal role in the development of the Western Offensive and was responsible for the extraordinary rapidity of its success. Later attempts, in particular in Germany after 1945, to belittle his achievements as military commander, e.g. by stating that von Manstein had originated the idea of *Sichelschnitt* (Cut of the Sickle), appear inappropriate and hypocritical. There has been much controversy with regard to operation *Sichelschnitt*, the breakthrough at the central section of the Front. In war, it counts not so much whose idea a particular move was, but rather by whom and in what manner the mission was carried through. In any case, it was Hitler who had the plan which decided that the Battle of France be effected and who was responsible as Supreme Commander.²⁵⁵

Also decisive in the very fast success of the Western Offensive was that Germany was fighting on one front only and its adversary stood alone. In this light, the success of 1940 is comparable to the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. In 1940, 42 million Frenchmen were facing a vastly superior Reich with a population of 82 million. Therefore, without speedy assistance from abroad, France's doom would be sealed.

Things did in fact go according to plan. By May 12, German troops controlled all of Holland up to Rotterdam. The fortress Eben Emael was likewise in German hands.

Hitler was elated by these rapid successes. Suffused with self-confidence, he already began to concern himself with post-war problems, such as the signing of a decree providing for restoration projects in the city of Hanover.²⁵⁶

On May 13 at the Felsenest headquarters, Hitler received officers of the airborne troops who had proved their valor in the conquest of Fort Eben Emael, to award them the Knight's Cross. He granted promotions to two of the commanders of the units involved.²⁵⁷ Afterwards, he allowed his picture to be taken outside with the soldiers standing at his side. In the course of the campaign in the West, similar decorations would be repeatedly distributed to officers at headquarters. At one point, Hitler even permitted his picture to be taken along with that of his entire staff.

On the same day, Hitler dictated a "long and calm account of military events" to his friend Mussolini.²⁵⁸ The Duce was so enthralled by Hitler's account of the events that he immediately imparted to the German Ambassador von Mackensen his intent to join the war effort shortly. As Mussolini put it: "It is now no longer a question of months,

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it is a question of weeks and perhaps days.” Mussolini had yet to learn that not he, but Hitler, would give the date for Italy’s entry into the war.

On May 14, German tank units broke through the French lines at the Sedan-Charleville section of the front and turned to the West. Motorized divisions followed in their wake. Infantry units were to secure the breakthrough in the South and to constitute a southern front along the line Aisne-Somme.

On this day, Hitler issued his eleventh directive for the conduct of the war:²⁵⁹

1) The course of the offensive thus far shows that the enemy has failed to recognize in time the basic idea of our operation. He is still bringing up strong forces to the Namur-Antwerp line and seems to be neglecting the sector in front of Army Group A.

2) This situation and the rapid forcing of the Meuse crossings in the Army Group A sector have produced the first prerequisite for achieving a great success on the lines of Directive No. 10²⁶⁰ by a thrust executed in a north-westerly direction north of the Aisne with a concentration of the strongest forces. The troops fighting north of the Liège-Namur line will then have the mission of tying down and diverting as strong an enemy force as possible by an attack with their own forces.

3) On the north flank the power of resistance of the Netherlands Army has proven to be stronger than was anticipated. Political as well as military considerations require that this resistance be broken speedily. It will be the mission of the Army to bring about rapidly the collapse of fortress Holland by means of adequate forces from the south in conjunction with the attack against the eastern front.

4) All available motorized divisions are to be brought into the operational area of Army Group A as quickly as possible.

The armored and motorized divisions of Army Group B must also be released as soon as operational actions are no longer possible there and the situation permits and be brought up to the left attacking wing.

5) The mission of the Luftwaffe will be to concentrate strong offensive and defensive forces for employment in the sector of Army Group A as the point of main effort, in order to prevent the bringing up of additional enemy forces to the offensive front and to support this front directly.

In addition, the rapid conquest of fortress Holland is to be facilitated through a deliberate weakening of the forces hitherto operating before the Sixth Army.

6) The Navy will operate within the framework of the possibilities open to it against sea communications in the Hoofden and in the Channel.

Adolf Hitler

It was evident that Hitler intended to conduct the war in the manner he felt it ought to have been led from 1914 on. This conviction had already been apparent from his words to the generals on May 23, 1939:

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“Had the Navy been stronger at the beginning of the World War, or had the Army attacked the harbors along the English Channel, the outcome of the war would have been a different one.”²⁶¹ The Second World War afforded Hitler the opportunity to prove his theory. The battles for Flanders and France demonstrated that, although the Wehrmacht prevailed in the taking of the harbors, this changed neither the course of events nor the outcome of the war.

Hitler’s appeal to the Luftwaffe to facilitate “the rapid conquest of fortress Holland” was realized that same day. German pilots flew terror attacks over the inner city of Rotterdam, with the result that the Dutch Army offered to surrender on the evening of May 14. By 11:30 the next morning, the capitulation was signed.²⁶²

On May 15 as well, Hitler issued the following proclamation addressed to the soldiers fighting in Holland:²⁶³

Soldiers of the Dutch Theater of War!

In five days you have attacked a strong, well-prepared army which doggedly defended itself behind apparently invincible barriers and military fortifications. You have eliminated its air force and finally you have forced its surrender. Yours is an accomplishment of truly a unique nature. The future will demonstrate its military significance. This success has been rendered possible only through your exemplary cooperation, through the determination of your leadership, as well as through the valor of the individual soldier. This is true especially of the men of the death-defying parachutist and airborne troops and their heroic mission.

In the name of the German Volk, I convey to you my gratitude and my admiration.

Adolf Hitler

On May 16, Hitler conferred with Göring and Jeschonnek, the Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe. One of the topics discussed in the talk, lasting from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., was the possible reinforcement of the Luftwaffe at Narvik after the swift success encountered in Holland.²⁶⁴

On May 17, Halder noted in his diary: “Führer terribly nervous. Surprised by his own success, he fears going too far; would like to put us on a leash.”²⁶⁵

By May 18, Halder was forced to concede that it was actually not the General Staff, but Hitler himself who determined how to proceed. As Jodl remarked in his notes, it was “a day of tension.”²⁶⁶ Hitler had found out that, contrary to his express orders, infantry divisions were continuing to march westward, instead of “speedily building up a flank to the South.” This latter measure aimed to preclude a re-establishment

of links by the French with the divisions cut off earlier. Brauchitsch and Halder were summoned immediately, so Jodl recorded, “and were instructed in harsh terms to take the necessary steps immediately.”²⁶⁷ Halder saw the matter differently and confided to his diary: “He [Hitler] rages and cries we are ruining the entire campaign for him.”

Also on May 18, Hitler received Dino Alfieri at headquarters. The newly appointed Italian Ambassador presented the German Head of State with his letter of accreditation.²⁶⁸ Hitler placed great hopes on this loyal Fascist party-liner whom he counted on getting along with better than with Attolico. To make the right impression from the start, Hitler even put on his golden sash for the diplomat’s reception, in spite of the war raging about them. In an elated mood, Hitler penned yet another letter to Mussolini after the meeting.²⁶⁹

Moreover, Hitler effected the reintegration of the cities of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet to the Reich on this day. The Belgians had “misbehaved” considerably, since they had not capitulated on request. Consequently, Hitler felt he had to punish them by severing the territories the Treaty of Versailles had accorded Belgium. By contrast, Denmark had “behaved” itself and hence it had been allowed to keep all of northern Schleswig. It was in this fashion that Adolf Hitler sat in judgment over the peoples of this earth.

The decree of May 18, 1940, read:²⁷⁰

Those territories severed from the German Reich through the Diktat of Versailles and integrated into Belgium are once again in German possession. Internally, they have always maintained their bonds to Germany. Hence they are neither to be regarded nor treated, not even temporarily, as occupied enemy country. Therefore I determine as of this date:

1. The areas of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet which were severed from the German Reich through the Diktat of Versailles once more form an integral part of the German Reich.

2. The areas named are appropriated to the Rhine Province (Governmental District of Aix-la-Chapelle).

3. I reserve for myself decision on the implementation of this decree.

On May 18 as well, Hitler appointed Seyss-Inquart Reichskommissar for the occupied Dutch territories.²⁷¹ This procedure was the same Hitler had earlier resorted to in the case of Austria and most recently in the case of Norway: Bürckel, the Palatine, had been transferred to Vienna, while Terboven, who came from the Rhineland, was sent to Oslo. By the same token, the Austrian Seyss-Inquart was now summoned to administer the Netherlands. Under no circumstances

was Hitler willing to appoint a person familiar with the country in question to such a post. The above decree was the same in content as that appointing Terboven to Oslo.²⁷²

On May 20, German tank units reached the Channel coast at Abbéville, thus cutting off the Allied troops fighting in Flanders and Artois. The “greatest offensive operation of all time,” as the OKW report had entitled it, was beginning to bear fruit. Hitler was “beside himself with joy” and had “words of the greatest appreciation for the German Armed Forces and their leadership. Now concerns himself with peace treaty which shall read: return of the territories robbed from Germany for over 400 years and other assets. First negotiations in the Forest of Compiègne as in 1918. English can have special peace at any time after a return of the colonies.”²⁷³

This was precisely how Hitler envisioned the further course of events. In all earnestness he was convinced that, after “attacking the harbors along the Channel,” England and France would accept that the war had been decided and would come to see that a peace settlement with Germany was in their own best interest.

At any rate, Hitler took precautions to continue the war on French soil. It was still May 20 when he issued the following instructions to the Army on how to proceed:²⁷⁴

1st act: Destruction of the enemy north of the Somme and winning of the coast.

2nd act: Advance between Oise and the sea up to the Seine.

3rd act: Main attack on both sides of Reims in a south-westerly direction, the right flank east of Paris accompanied by light forces.

In the intermission of this three-act play, Hitler hoped to receive an Allied offer of capitulation. He quickly abandoned his earlier plan to allow twenty Italian divisions to take part in the action at the section of the Maginot Line running approximately along the upper course of the Rhine.²⁷⁵ As he had made known before, he had no intention of sharing the glory with anyone.²⁷⁶

On May 21, news reached Berlin that measures were being taken to evacuate the British Expeditionary Force from various ports along the Channel.²⁷⁷ Naturally this item caught Hitler’s eye. If the English chose to vacate the Continent voluntarily, then this would eliminate the necessity of driving them “back to the Thames,” as he had promised. This in turn convinced Hitler that nothing stood in the way of a friendly settlement with England any longer. To hurry matters along, he determined to allow the Englishmen’s escape, instead of seeing to their

destruction in Flanders. This gesture would surely persuade them of his good intentions. In eternal gratitude, England would finally accept Germany's hand extended in friendship.

On May 24, Hitler flew to a meeting at the headquarters of Army Group A, then located at Charleville, in the company of Jodl and Schmundt. Once there, he issued the necessary instructions and ordered the tank divisions to halt at the Channel coast. Hitler was in high spirits; a peace settlement appeared to be within grasp. Speaking to the generals gathered at Charleville, he claimed the war would be over in six weeks.²⁷⁸ Now it was imperative to conclude a "reasonable peace with France." This would open the way towards "an understanding with England." According to the recollections of General Blumentritt, Hitler's ill-concealed admiration for the British Empire came as a complete surprise to his audience, since the generals were not familiar with this pro-British orientation of their Führer. To their astonishment, they heard him speak with reverence of "the necessity for its existence and the civilization that England had brought this world."

All he wanted from England, so Hitler continued, was that it should respect Germany's position on the Continent. It was desirable, though not essential, that Germany's colonies be restored.²⁷⁹ It was his goal to conclude a peace with England on this basis, which he could reconcile with his concept of honor.

This idea was not by any means new. Napoleon I and William II, ignorant as well of Great Britain's position and the real power structures in the world, had already propagated the notion that the British Empire, in view of its mastery of the lands overseas, ought to leave the Continent to mainland powers. Despite their differences, Hitler's and Napoleon's shared admiration for the Empire was undermined by the perpetual affronts and provocation of Britain.²⁸⁰ Hitler carried matters a step further yet than the French Emperor by allowing, in a "magnanimous" gesture, for the escape of the British Expeditionary Force, which would otherwise have faced virtually certain destruction.²⁸¹ This move greatly perplexed and angered Hitler's generals. Von Brauchitsch, for example, had already ordered several divisions to join Army Group B in the North, naturally without requesting express permission. Hitler was outraged and made a scene, demanding that Brauchitsch immediately rescind the order.

That evening, Hitler ordered the fast forward units moving towards the Channel to halt on reaching the coast. They were not to venture beyond a line running from Sandez to St. Omer and Gravelines.²⁸² This

was in keeping with Hitler's firm resolve to spare the British as much as possible.

On May 24 as well, Hitler issued "Directive No. 13 for the Conduct of the War."²⁸³

1. The next aim of the operations is the destruction of the French, English and Belgian forces which have been encircled in Artois and in Flanders through a concentric attack by our northern wing and the speedy occupation and securing of the Channel coast there.

It will be the mission of the Luftwaffe to break all resistance by the encircled forces of the enemy, prevent the escape of the English forces across the Channel, and secure the south flank of Army Group A. The fight against the enemy air forces is to be continued at every favorable opportunity.

2. The operation of the Army to destroy the enemy forces in France, which is to follow as quickly as possible, is to be prepared in three phases.

1st Phase: A thrust between the sea and the Oise to the Lower Seine below Paris with the object of accompanying and protecting the later main operation with weak forces on the right flank. If the situation and the available reserves allow, efforts are to be made even before the conclusion of the battle in Artois and in Flanders to take possession of the territory between the Somme and the Oise by a concentric attack in the direction of Montdidier and thereby prepare and facilitate the later thrust to the Lower Seine.

2nd Phase: An attack with the bulk of the Army, including strong armored and motorized forces in a southeasterly direction past Rheims on both sides with the object of defeating the bulk of the French Army in the triangle Paris-Metz-Belfort and of bringing about the collapse of the Maginot Line.

3rd Phase: A supplementing of this main operation at the appropriate time, by a secondary operation with weaker forces which will break through the Maginot Line at its weakest point between St. Avold and Sarreguemines in the direction of Nancy-Lunéville.

In addition, depending on the development of the situation, an attack across the upper Rhine may be planned provided that not more than 8 to 10 divisions are to be committed to it.

3. The mission of the Luftwaffe

(a) Independent of the operations in France, the Luftwaffe—as soon as sufficient forces are at its disposal—will be given complete freedom to carry on the fight against the English homeland. It is to be opened with a devastating attack in reprisal for the English attacks against the Ruhr area.

Targets for attacks will be determined by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe according to principles contained in Directive No. 9 and the supplements thereto which will be issued by OKW. The date and the proposed plan of operations are to be reported to me.

(b) With the beginning of the main operation of the Army in the direction of Rheims, it will be the task of the Luftwaffe, in addition to maintaining air superiority, to give direct support to the attack, to destroy newly arriving enemy formations, to prevent regrouping, and in particular to secure the west flank of the offensive front.

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As far as necessary, cooperation is to be given in the break through the Maginot Line.

(c) Further, the High Command of the Luftwaffe will consider by what means the air defense can be strengthened in areas which at present are being most heavily attacked by the enemy, through the use of additional forces from areas which previously have been less endangered.

In so far as the interests of the Navy are affected hereby, the Commander in Chief of the Navy will participate.

4. Missions of the Navy

Previous restricting regulations are rescinded, and the Navy will be given complete operational freedom in the waters around England and off the French coast.

The Commander in Chief of the Navy will submit a proposal for delimiting the sea areas in which the combat measures permitted for the blockade may be applied.

I reserve to myself the decision as to whether and in what form a public announcement of the blockade shall be made.

5. I request the Commanders in Chief to submit to me orally or in writing their plans based upon this directive.

Adolf Hitler

The further course of events proved that only the section of the directive dealing with the subjugation of France was meant seriously. Obviously, the “annihilation of the forces encircled” applied to all enemy forces other than the British, as was manifest in the recent order to arrest tank movement along the coast. Months would pass before Hitler finally launched a determined strike against the British mainland in September, 1940. Despite his newly found resolve, the “Battle of Britain” turned out to be a complete failure.

May 25 was a day of repose. Apparently, the German tanks were to have a “good rest.”²⁸⁴ Hitler used the momentary quiet to pen yet another letter to Mussolini.²⁸⁵

On May 26, Halder described the situation as follows in his diary: “By highest orders, tanks and motorized units stand as though frozen in their tracks.”²⁸⁶ In the evening of this day, Hitler finally allowed “the tank units and infantry divisions to advance from the West in the direction of Tournai, Cassel, and Dunkirk.”²⁸⁷ By this time, the two-day lull in the fighting had permitted the Allied units to organize and to mount their defenses properly.

May 28 brought the capitulation of the Belgian King Leopold, who acted in defiance of the Belgian Government. On this occasion, the Führer Headquarters issued two public pronouncements of “enormous military significance.” They read:²⁸⁸

May 28, 1940

Führer Headquarters, May 28

Under the impression of the destructive power of German arms, the King of Belgium has arrived at the decision to end further senseless resistance and to ask for an armistice. He has complied with the German demands for an unconditional surrender. As of this day, the Belgian Army has laid down its weapons and has thus ceased to exist.

In this hour, we think of our valiant soldiers, whose unequalled fighting spirit relentlessly overran fortifications which belonged to the most mighty structures in the world. With a feeling of profound gratitude and boundless pride, the German Volk looks to the troops who have accomplished such glorious deeds of arms and who forced this surrender.

Führer Headquarters, May 28

The King of Belgium has proclaimed his decision to lay down arms against the wishes of the majority of his ministers, in order to prevent further bloodshed and a completely senseless destruction of his country. These ministers, who largely bear the responsibility for the catastrophe now overwhelming Belgium, appear willing, nonetheless, to do the bidding of their British and French masters, even at this date.

The Führer has issued instructions to behave towards the King of Belgium and his army in that manner to which all valiantly fighting soldiers have a right. Since the King of Belgium has made no special requests for his person, he shall be assigned to a Belgian Castle as his residence until a final residence has been determined.²⁸⁹

The total figure of the Belgian units affected by the capitulation should amount to about half a million men. The German Armies shall now to a heightened degree strive for the destruction of those most responsible.

The surrender of the Belgian Army aggravated the precarious position of the encircled English and French divisions. The British Expeditionary Force stepped up its retreat. Between May 27 and June 3, in a huge effort ("Operation Dynamo"), Great Britain succeeded in evacuating over 330,000 soldiers—i.e. nearly the entire British Expeditionary Force—from the Dunkirk area, as well as 60,000 French troops, all of whom were forced to leave behind most of their equipment. Battleships, motor yachts, private boats, and other makeshift vessels participated in the improvised mass evacuation. A majority of the soldiers were rescued from the beach at the last minute. The Royal Air Force put in an appearance, on a larger scale than anticipated by the Luftwaffe, and successfully repelled the German fighter planes' assaults. In spite of these endeavors, the "miracle of Dunkirk" would never have materialized without Hitler's connivance.

Over the years there have been allegations that this was a decisive error by Hitler, one highly detrimental to Germany. It has been

maintained that, had Hitler not halted the tanks to allow the British Expeditionary Force's escape, the outcome of the war might well have been different.²⁹⁰ On a realistic assessment, however, Dunkirk no more influenced the outcome of World War II than the Battle of the Marne decided World War I. And even had Hitler captured or killed the entire British Expeditionary Force, it is true that this would have meant a loss of 200,000 to 300,000 men, but it would not have decisively weakened British fighting capacities, especially when one considers that British casualties in the Second World War were considerably lower than in the First World War (440,000 as compared to 870,000 for the British Isles and the Commonwealth).

Assuredly, the loss of an entire Expeditionary Force would have been painful for England. The English do not lightheartedly sacrifice even a single soldier. The Third Reich might well have held on a few months longer had the English been dealt a like blow early on. However, Hitler and his Reich were doomed, irrespective of his immediate successes. Even had he succeeded in taking the British Isles, Britain's overseas allies would have undoubtedly continued the struggle. Sooner or later, the Anglo-Saxon powers' invasion would have taken place as inevitably as in 1944 in northern France.

On May 30, the Italian Ambassador called on Hitler at the Felsenest headquarters. Alfieri related Mussolini's intention to enter the war on June 5.²⁹¹ But Hitler no longer judged such a step by Italy opportune. Should no French or English offer of capitulation be forthcoming by this point, the Wehrmacht alone would finally launch its major offensive along the Somme-Aisne section of the front. Should the Italians intervene at this time, Hitler feared this might lead to claims that France's collapse was due to Rome's action along a second front in the Alps. Naturally, he could not stomach any such lessening of the Third Reich's military glory.

These considerations drove Hitler to a frenzied search for an excuse to delay Italy's entry into the war, which he had so eagerly and persistently desired earlier. In his mind, the role played by the Italians was to be a symbolic one. They were not to take action until the war had already been decided by Germany. This recalled his behavior when the Russians entered the war in Poland. On news of the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland, Hitler had simply pronounced the war to be over. Ever since, he referred to the elimination of Poland as a campaign of "eighteen days."²⁹² The untimely offer by the Duce forced Hitler to contrive a new pretext requiring a postponed entry into the

war by Rome. Uncharacteristically, Hitler was at a loss for words at first. He pretended to be “content, even enthusiastic” about Mussolini’s overture before interjecting that he reserved “final revision of opinion on the date chosen for consultations with his generals.” As though Hitler ever consulted anyone—least of all the generals.

On May 31, Hitler sat down to respond to Mussolini’s letter.²⁹³ First, he attempted flattery: if there was anything to reinforce his belief in victory, then it was the assurances given by the Duce. It was necessary for Italy to delay action, however, as he intended to undertake a large-scale attack on French air bases within the next few days. He feared that an earlier intervention by Italy might provoke a redeployment of French planes. This would in turn hinder or even prevent effective Luftwaffe strikes against the targeted airfields. A threadbare pretext indeed, and yet the Duce swallowed it. Italy’s entry into the war was postponed until June 11, to be preceded by a declaration of war on June 10.

On June 1, Hitler once more set out to document his “magnanimity” in decreeing a general amnesty for all Dutch prisoners of war. The release read:²⁹⁴

The German offer to assume the protection of the Netherlands against the proved intent of the Western Powers to use Holland as a marshaling area against the Ruhr territory met with premeditated rejection by the Dutch Government as a consequence of its secret agreement with the Western Powers. They delivered their people and country to the horrors of war while they themselves escaped to safety abroad.

The German Wehrmacht has conducted the fight thereby made necessary against the Dutch Army with all due and possible consideration for the population and the preservation of the land. This attitude on the part of Germany was complemented by the conduct of the Dutch military as well as of the civilian population. It reflected the cultural and moral heights of the Dutch people, who constitute a tribe related to us Germans. Those individuals responsible for the imprisonment of German parachutists, their treatment as criminals, and their handing over to the British, shall face the consequences of their actions.

The Dutch soldier fought openly and honestly everywhere. Our wounded and prisoners of war were correspondingly well treated. The civilian population did not participate in the fighting and has served the humanitarian needs of our wounded.

I have therefore determined, in the case of Holland as well, to grant the release of all Dutch soldiers taken prisoner.

Half of the Dutch Army is to be released immediately. Primarily this means members of the Dutch Armed Services who work in agriculture, in mines, in the food-processing industry, in the construction industry, and in related

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enterprises. The remaining members of the Dutch Army are to be demobilized gradually, to prevent excessive strain on the economy and employment. These instructions apply equally to those Dutch soldiers who are prisoners of war in Germany. I will determine the fate of the Dutch professional soldiers later.

Adolf Hitler

Cause for this “magnanimity” on his part was the ever-present ambition to integrate the Dutch into his “Germanic Reich of the German nation.” This intention had been apparent in his equally benign treatment of the Norwegians earlier.²⁹⁵ The mainly French-speaking, equally recalcitrant Belgians were less fortunate. Belgian soldiers remained prisoners of war until the Führer died.

On June 2, having transferred his headquarters to Bruly-le-Pêche,²⁹⁶ Hitler visited a series of monuments in the area. First on his list was a memorial at Langemarck, dedicated to the Unknown Soldier.²⁹⁷ He next paid homage to the previous war’s dead at a memorial erected on Mount Vimy for Canadian soldiers and one for the French on Mount Loretto in Artois.

On June 3, Hitler established an oak-leaf category to complement the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.²⁹⁸

Early June witnessed a rapid succession of military advances on Flemish soil. Because of the capitulation of the Belgian Army and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, the remainder of the French troops fighting in the area surrendered. To Hitler’s chagrin, and contrary to his expectations, Great Britain failed to draw what he considered the only proper conclusions from this “hopeless situation.” Instead, the British proudly proclaimed their intention to fight on, an intention most eloquently expressed by Churchill in a speech before the House of Commons on June 4:²⁹⁹

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty’s Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall fight in France, we shall fight in

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the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old.

Churchill's words were as suffused with pathos, pride, and self-confidence as Hitler's. Unlike the German dictator's pronouncements, Churchill's had a concrete base in the might of the British Empire and its ally, the United States of America. Nevertheless, Hitler was not in the least disconcerted by Churchill's determination to fight on, as he held these pronouncements to reflect only the ravings of a "decrepit" and increasingly "senile" British statesman. Britain need not be reckoned with, especially if a major offensive that Hitler's troops were to carry out against the French succeeded in a timely fashion. Moreover, the Führer, as master orator No. 1, believed that he could easily discern whether or not a public pronouncement by someone like Churchill needed to be taken at face value.

In celebrating what he termed the "greatest battle of all time," Hitler issued the following two appeals, one to the German people, another to the soldiers of the Army in the West:³⁰⁰

Führer Headquarters, June 5, 1940

To the German Volk!

Our soldiers have emerged victorious from this greatest battle of all time.

In a few weeks, we have taken over 1.2 million enemies as prisoners of war. Holland and Belgium have capitulated. The British Expeditionary Force has been largely destroyed, the remainder either taken prisoner or driven from the Continent. Three French Armies no longer exist. The danger of enemy penetration into the Ruhr territory has been eliminated for good.

German Volk! Your soldiers have fought bloodily for this most glorious deed in history, at the risk of life and limb and with therefore the greatest of exertions.

I order that flags be posted throughout Germany for eight days. This is to do honor to our soldiers.

I further order, for eight days, the ringing of bells. May their sound be accompanied by the prayers of the German Volk, which shall accompany its sons once more. For on this morning, German divisions and fighter squadrons have once again embarked upon the continuation of the fight for the liberty and future of our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

June 5, 1940

Führer Headquarters, June 5, 1940

Soldiers of the Western Front!

Dunkirk has fallen! 40,000 Frenchmen and Englishmen have been taken prisoner as the remainder of once great armies. Immeasurable amounts of material have been taken. Thus the greatest battle in world history has ended.

Soldiers! My trust in you was a boundless one. You have not disappointed me. The most daring plan in the history of war was realized, thanks to your unequalled valor, your ability to endure the greatest pains, exertions, and efforts.

In a few weeks, you have forced two states to capitulate in a most difficult battle against, in many instances, an enemy of great valor. You have destroyed France's best divisions. You have defeated the British Expeditionary Force, either taking its men prisoner or driving them from the Continent. All units of the Wehrmacht, on land and sea, outdid one another in the most noble competition in the mission for our Volk and the Greater German Reich. The valiant men of our Navy shared in these deeds.

Soldiers! Many of you have sealed their loyalty by giving their lives; others are wounded. The heart of our Volk is filled with profound gratitude, and it is with them and with you.

But the plutocratic rulers of Britain and France, who have conspired to prevent the blossoming of a new, better world with all means at their disposal, wish a continuation of the war. Their wish shall be fulfilled.

Soldiers! As of this day, the Western Front takes its station once again. Countless new divisions shall join you which will meet the enemy for the first time and which will defeat him. The battle for the liberty of our people, for its present and its future, shall be continued until we have destroyed those hostile rulers in London and Paris who still believe they have found in war the best means to realize their plans against other nations. Our victory shall teach them a historic lesson! All of Germany is with you once more in spirit!

Adolf Hitler

Apparently Hitler regarded the attack to be launched along the Somme and Aisne southwards as an opportune occasion to give the Allies, and Churchill in particular, a "historic lesson" of a special kind. The line of defense so laboriously constructed by General Weygand could not hold back the unabated onslaught of the German forces for long. The fast-moving tank columns and motorized units soon forced their way south. An early breakthrough was made in the area of Rethel, and through this gate an avalanche of German troops began to pour into French territory without encountering much resistance.

Despite the easy gains in northern France, Hitler did not forget about Dietl and the plight of his men isolated in northern Norway. On June 5, Hitler issued the supplemental Directive No. 13a, which aimed at the "final settlement of the situation at Narvik" and gave detailed instructions for a renewed German landing north of Narvik.³⁰¹ These

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preparations soon proved superfluous, since the British, under the immediate impression of the Wehrmacht's advances into France, determined to abandon their Norwegian enterprise and to leave Norway to the Germans. King Haakon and his government were taken aboard an English cruiser at Tromsø on June 7. The next day, Dietl's men retook the city of Narvik. Rejoicing, Hitler conferred upon Dietl the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross via radio transmitter.

Also on June 8, Hitler issued Directive No. 14. It included technical details on the further conduct of operations in France: in particular a drive for the Marne River.³⁰² On the same day, Hitler congratulated the Romanian King Carol on the tenth anniversary of his ascent to the throne.³⁰³

On June 9, Hitler airtailed a letter to Mussolini to congratulate him on his decision to enter the war in the near future. He accepted the Duce's "offer of the *Bersaglieri* [Italian light infantry] . . . and, in exchange, [he would send] some regiments of his Alpine troops."³⁰⁴

On June 10, Hitler lent his hand to the formulation of the OKW's final report on Narvik:³⁰⁵

The heroic resistance, which the isolated combat troops of Lieutenant General Dietl mounted for many weeks under the most difficult of circumstances at Narvik in face of overwhelming enemy forces, has today been crowned by complete victory! During two months of persistent fighting, mountain troops from the Ostmark, parts of the Luftwaffe, as well as the crews of our destroyers, have given evidence of the glory of soldiership for all time. Their heroism compelled the allied forces on land, in the air, and at sea, to withdraw from the area around Narvik and Harstad.

Over Narvik the German flag now flies once and for all. The Norwegian Navy ended hostilities during the night of June 9 to June 10. Negotiations for a surrender are presently under way.

On June 10, Italy declared war upon England and France. On the same day, Hitler released the following declaration of the Reich Government:³⁰⁶

Profoundly moved, the Reich Government, and with it the entire German Volk, have just listened to the words of the Duce. In this historic hour, all of Germany echoes with jubilant enthusiasm at the thought of Italy, of its own free accord, siding with Germany in the battle against our common enemies: Britain and France.

German and Italian soldiers will now march side by side and will fight until the rulers of Britain and France are willing to respect the vital rights of our two people.

Only after this victory by young National Socialist Germany and young Fascist Italy will it be possible to secure for our people a prosperous future.

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The boundless strength of the German and Italian peoples and the unalterable friendship of the great leaders Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini will be guarantors of this victory.

Moreover, Hitler addressed the following two telegrams to the Italian King and to the Duce:³⁰⁷

To His Majesty the King of Italy, Emperor of Ethiopia, in Rome

Providence has willed that we should be forced, contrary to our own designs, to defend the liberty and future of our peoples in this battle against England. In this historic hour, in which our armies unite in the true brotherhood of arms, I feel compelled to relay to Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings. I am of the firm conviction that the enormous strength of Italy and Germany will carry the victory over our enemies. The vital rights of our two peoples shall then have been secured for all time.

Adolf Hitler

To His Excellency, the Royal Italian Head of Government, Cav. Benito Mussolini, in Rome

Duce!

The historic decision which you announced today has moved me most profoundly. The whole German Volk is thinking of you and your country at this moment. The German Wehrmacht is glad to be able to stand at the side of its Italian comrades in this battle.

Last September, the rulers of Britain and France declared war on the German Reich without any reason. They turned down every offer of a peaceful settlement. Your proposal for mediation, Duce, was also received at the time with a brusque "No." While we have always been very closely linked ideologically by our two revolutions and politically by treaties, the increasing disregard shown by the rulers in London and Paris for Italy's vital national rights has now finally brought us together in the great struggle for the freedom and future of our peoples.

Duce of Fascist Italy, accept the assurance of the indestructible community of arms between the German and the Italian peoples.

I myself send you as always in loyal comradeship my sincerest greetings.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

On June 13, Hitler issued the following order of the day to the soldiers serving in Norway:³⁰⁸

Führer Headquarters, June 13, 1940

Soldiers!

The campaign in Norway has ended. The British attempt to take hold of this area of vital interest to Germany has failed, thanks to your death-defying courage, your willingness to sacrifice, and your stubborn persistence. I have had to place this highly demanding task before you. You have fulfilled it to the highest degree.

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I express to your leadership my appreciation and gratitude: to Infantry General von Falkenhorst for the organization and management of operations on land; to Admiral General Saalwächter, to Admiral Carls, and to Vice Admiral Lütjens, for the preparation and deployment of the Navy; as well as to Admiral Boehm for the expansion of coastal fortifications; to Colonel General Milch and to Lieutenant General Geissler for the deployment and leadership of the Luftwaffe.

I express my gratitude and appreciation to all soldiers of the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, who through their valor and spirit of sacrifice have preserved the German Reich from a great danger.

I give my thanks especially to all those nameless soldiers whose heroism sadly so often remains concealed from their contemporaries. I transmit this expression of the German Volk's proud admiration to the warriors of Narvik.

All those who stood together in the far North—soldiers of the Ostmark's mountains, crews of our battleships, parachute troops, fighter pilots, and transport pilots—will enter into the annals of history as the best representatives of Germany's highest soldiership.

I express the gratitude of the German Volk to Lieutenant General Dietl for the page of honor he has added to the book of German history.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, the French Premier Reynaud³⁰⁹ sent a “renewed and final appeal for assistance” to the American President. However, at this time, the United States was not yet prepared to enter into a war with Germany on behalf of the French. Hence the French Government resigned itself to the circumstances and declared Paris an “open city.”

On June 14, 1940, German troops rolled into Paris for the first time since the defeat of Napoleon III in 1871. In celebration Hitler ordered church bells to ring throughout Germany and banners to fly for three days straight. The official note read:³¹⁰

On the occasion of the great victory of the German troops in France, crowned today by their entry into Paris, as well as of the victorious conclusion of the heroic struggle in Norway, the Führer orders banners to be hoisted for three days throughout Germany as of today. This is to pay homage to our soldiers. Further, the Führer orders church bells to ring for a quarter of an hour.

4

On June 14, Hitler issued “Directive No. 15 for the Conduct of the War,” which opened on the following note:³¹¹

1) Under the impact of the collapse of his fronts the enemy is evacuating the area around Paris and has also begun the evacuation of the fortified triangle of Épinal-Metz-Verdun behind the Maginot Line. Paris has been declared by means of wall posters to be an open city. A withdrawal of the main forces of the French Army beyond the Loire is not excluded.

2) The relative strength of the forces and the condition of the French Army make it possible from now on to pursue two operational objectives simultaneously:

a) to prevent the enemy forces which are withdrawing from the Paris area or are on the lower Seine from setting up a new front,

b) to destroy the enemy in the area in front of Army Groups A and C and to bring about the collapse of the Maginot Line.

Further, the directive concerned itself with a breakthrough at the Maginot Line later in the day. This signaled the beginning of an offensive along the upper course of the Rhine.

On June 15, Hitler granted the American journalist Karl von Wiegand an interview. This was destined to be the last occasion on which Hitler had the opportunity to explain himself to a representative of the Anglo-Saxon press. In Germany, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following account of the meeting with Wiegand:³¹²

On Germany’s attitude toward America, the Führer declared that Germany is one of the few states which has to the present time refrained from interfering in America’s affairs. “Germany has pursued no territorial or political interests on the American Continent in the past, nor does it at present. Whoever maintains the contrary is lying intentionally, for whatever reasons. Therefore, however the American Continent chooses to fashion its life,” the Führer underlined, “it is of no interest to us. This applies not only to North America, but to South America also.”

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On the Monroe Doctrine, the Führer remarked: "I do not believe that a doctrine such as Monroe proclaimed could or can be interpreted as a unilateral statement of non-intervention. For the aim of the Monroe Doctrine was not to prevent the interference of European States in American affairs—Britain, by the way, continues to involve itself there, as it possesses enormous territorial and political interests in America— but rather that, in turn, America should not involve itself in European matters. The fact that George Washington himself issued a similar warning to the American people affirms the logic and the reasonableness of this interpretation. Therefore I say: America to the Americans, Europe to the Europeans!"

Questioned as to Germany's stance on the armament program announced by President Roosevelt, the Führer replied: "I look to the Monroe Doctrine in answering this question as well. I do not pass judgment on the U.S.A.'s armament program—I am not interested in it. I have been forced to work on the greatest armament program in the world for years now, and thus I can well differentiate fantastic talk from the real opportunities of practical life. There appear to be many fantastic opinions currently in circulation on this point."

To the question of an American intervention by deliveries of planes and war materials, the Führer replied: "An American intervention by mass deliveries of planes and war materials will not change the outcome of the war. There is no need to enumerate reasons. Reality will be the ultimate judge."

The Führer summarized his opinion on the supposed existence of a German Fifth Column, widely propagated in the news and in various reports in America, in the following manner: "I cannot imagine what precisely this so-called Fifth Column is supposed to be, for it appears not to exist other than in the brains of visionaries, or as a bogeyman invented for transparent purposes by an unscrupulous propaganda. When incapable governments first drive their peoples into war and then witness a pitiful collapse, it is only understandable that they should prefer to lay the blame on someone else. The main goal of this slogan is to create nothing other than a catch-all term for the inner opposition which naturally exists in all countries. This opposition has nothing at all to do with Germany. Quite to the contrary! They tend to be radical nationalists, or communists of an internationalist orientation, or pacifists and other opponents of war. Alas, because these politicians seem incapable of dealing with their own opposition in a decent manner, they accuse these elements of high treason. Thus they attempt to hide illegal methods beneath a cloak of patriotic rhetoric and to justify this before the eyes of the world by coining the blood-curdling term 'Fifth Column.'

Our enemies will lose this war not because of some Fifth Column, but because they have corrupt, unscrupulous, and mentally limited politicians. They will lose it because their military organization is bad; their leadership in this war is truly a miserable one. Germany will win this war because the German Volk knows it is fighting for a just cause, because the German military organization and leadership are the better ones, and because we have the best Army and the best equipment.

"It was never my intention or my goal," so the Führer further explained, "to destroy the British Empire. On the contrary, even before the outbreak of

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the war which Britain and France have unleashed, I presented proposals to the British Government in which I went so far as to offer Great Britain the Reich's assistance for [the protection of] the existence of the Empire. I asked nothing more of Britain than to regard and treat Germany as an equal, that Britain protect Germany's coast should we become involved in a war, and that the German colonies be returned. And I will get them back! In London, they declared and wrote publicly that National Socialism must be destroyed, that Germany must be divided and completely disarmed and rendered powerless. Never have I expressed similar goals or intentions with regard to Britain.

Once Britain began to lose battle upon battle, the rulers in Britain pleaded with America, tears in their eyes. They declared that Germany was threatening the British Empire, that it was trying to destroy it. There is one thing that will be destroyed in this war, namely, the capitalist clique which has been ready and is ready, motivated by base personal interests, to have millions of men destroyed. But it will be done—of this I am convinced—not by us, but by their own peoples.”

The fashion in which Hitler chose to interpret the Monroe Doctrine on this occasion was a shrewd one. His mistake was only in believing that such *bons mots* would make an impression on the Anglo-Saxon world. His claim to be working on the “greatest armament program in the world” may have aroused considerable mirth.

Hitler apparently aimed to dissuade America from actively assisting the British in the future. The latter were to be made aware that they stood alone in the world. Should they persist to refuse him their acquiescence and fail to arrive at a peace settlement with Germany, they would be left to the mercy of the dreadful German war machine. Moreover, so Hitler argued, the British statesmen faced the distinct possibility that the populace might well rise up against its leadership to protest involvement in a senseless debacle.

In spite of the great number of interviews Hitler granted Anglo-Saxon journalists in the years 1932 to 1940, he never gained any insight into the English mentality, so engrossed was he in his own ideas during these talks.

On June 15, Verdun fell into German hands, the very fortress fought for with such tenacity in the First World War. Two days later, the French Premier Reynaud resigned in favor of Marshal Pétain.³¹³ The French Government had been forced to retreat first from Paris to Tour, then to Bordeaux.

Pétain addressed the French people in a radio broadcast on that June 17. He insisted that it was imperative to end the fighting.³¹⁴ Through an intermediary—the Spanish Ambassador—Hitler was informed officially of the French request for an armistice. Upon receipt

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of the information, Hitler slapped his knee and danced for joy.³¹⁵ Next he issued this decree to the German troops in France:³¹⁶

The newly formed French Government has imparted to the German Reich Government, through the good offices of Spain, its intention to end the hostilities. It has inquired as to the terms of peace. I shall announce my decision after consultations with the Duce of Fascist Italy. The Wehrmacht shall continue operations and forcefully pursue the vanquished enemy. The Armed Forces shall regard themselves honor-bound to quickly occupy old Reich territory up to the line Verdun-Toul-Belfort, as well as the coastal locations Cherbourg and Brest.

Adolf Hitler

The decree provided ample evidence of Hitler's designs for a vanquished France. The "return of the territories robbed from Germany for over 400 years and other assets"³¹⁷ was not actually the issue at hand. As always with Hitler, questions of power took precedence: Cherbourg and Brest were to serve Germany as outlets to the sea.³¹⁸ For "wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain."³¹⁹

The following official statement notified the German public of the French offer of capitulation:³²⁰

Führer Headquarters, June 17, 1940

The Premier of the newly formed French Government, Marshal Pétain, has declared in a radio address to the French people that France must now lay down its arms. He pointed to the steps he had already undertaken to inform the Reich Government of this decision and to obtain knowledge of the conditions under which the German Reich would be willing to meet the wishes of the French.

The Führer will meet with the Royal Italian Minister-President, Benito Mussolini, in order to discuss the attitude of both states in this matter.

News of the French surrender caused elation in Germany—for the first time since the outbreak of the war. And understandably so, as the horrors of the First World War, especially of the seemingly endless trench warfare, were still all-too vivid in the memories of millions of former soldiers. A swift and easy victory over France and its Army, which had been considered to be the greatest power on the Continent since World War I, promised a quick end to the war in the West. Many veterans of the Battle of Verdun burst into tears at news of the fall of this reputedly invincible fortress. Even the former Kaiser William II sent his congratulations to Hitler in the form of a telegram on June 17.³²¹ This notwithstanding, public enthusiasm at the fall of France soon dissipated

as it became increasingly clear that France's defeat was not the same as Britain's.

June 18 witnessed the long awaited meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at Munich. Hitler arrived in the city at noon, aboard his special train. Reich Governor von Epp greeted him at the gate. After the customary welcome, review of the guards of honor, etc., Hitler's car bore him to his apartment at 16 Prinzregentenplatz. Three hours later, the Führer was back at the station gate to greet the Duce, whose train reached the Bavarian capital punctually at 2:58 p.m. Ciano accompanied Mussolini. Nearly the same ceremony that hours earlier had welcomed Hitler, now greeted the Duce. Then the two dictators drove to the Prince Carl Palace, where Hitler took leave of his guest for the time being.³²²

Beneath the main entrance of the Führerbau, Mussolini rejoined his host at 4:00 p.m. for a conference on the first floor of the same building on the Königlicher Platz which had borne witness to the 1938 accords with Chamberlain.

Ciano reported that Hitler spoke "with a reserve and a perspicacity which, after such a victory, are really astonishing." It was almost exclusively Hitler who spoke during the "conference," which lasted several hours.³²³ This was not out of the ordinary by any means. On this particular occasion, however, Hitler did so for a special purpose. By speaking constantly, he wished to rob Mussolini of the opportunity to voice any inopportune questions regarding his manner of procedure. Hitler wished to leave everyone in the dark as to his precise plans for France in the near future, and this included what he held in store for the Duce as well as for the French negotiators. Of course, he admitted that he planned to disarm France and to press it to yield to certain "reasoned," although vague German demands. What was to happen later to France was hidden beneath a shroud of "implementing regulations." In other words, he reserved all further decisions for himself.

After all, Britain was of far greater importance to him than France. In order not to nettle the British needlessly, he decided to avow a lack of interest in French colonial possessions and the French fleet. In his mind, these two measures would suffice to impress upon the English how great his friendship for them was. Hitler astounded those around him at the "conference," and especially the Italians, by speaking with great caution and restraint, and not indulging in undue elation at the recent victory.

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In spite of all of this, Mussolini would have enjoyed getting in a word edgewise. Italy had claims on French possessions such as Tunis, Corsica, Piedmont, and the like. Hitler never even deigned to inform Mussolini where he intended to meet the French delegation. The only concession Mussolini obtained was Hitler's assurance that the armistice agreement would not enter into force until Italian-French negotiations had been concluded successfully.

The following terse communiqué informed the German public of the 1940 "Munich conference":³²⁴

Munich, June 18, 1940

The Führer and the Duce have achieved agreement today, at the conference in Munich, on the stance of both governments in view of the French armistice request.

Having shown themselves to the public from the balcony of the Führerbau, Hitler accompanied the Duce to the main entrance. Shortly after, he was by his side again as Mussolini made his way from the Prince Carl Palace to the central Munich train station. A few minutes after the Duce's departure, Hitler boarded his special train, which returned him to his wartime headquarters. Upon arrival there, he set out to draft the armistice agreement with France. On the night of June 20 to June 21, Hitler himself ventured to check on the progress made in the translation of the document.³²⁵

On June 20, in a different context, Hitler mentioned the possibility of German landings on the British mainland to Raeder, without, however, committing himself.³²⁶

In the meantime, the French Government had named the members of its delegation: General Huntziger; Ambassador Noël; Vice Admiral LeLuc; and Air Force General Bergeret.³²⁷ Hitler had ordered the old parlor car of Marshal Foch³²⁸ to be remounted on the spot of the 1918 negotiations in the Forest of Compiègne. Since then, the *wagon-salon* had been a museum piece in France. Hitler's intention obviously was to humiliate the French delegates by re-enacting the scene of 1918, with, however, the roles reversed. He had stated as much to the generals on May 20.³²⁹

On June 21, Hitler arrived at the historic site in the Forest of Compiègne at 3:15 p.m. The monument recalling the fateful days of 1918 was still here. It bore the engraved inscription: "Here on November 11, 1918, the criminal pride of the German Empire was defeated, vanquished by the free peoples it presumed to enslave."

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Another memorial, featuring a lifeless eagle as the symbol of the defeated Germany of 1918, was carefully hidden beneath a cloth embroidered with the Third Reich's swastika flag.

Alighting from his car, together with Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, Ribbentrop, and Hess, Hitler briefly viewed the first monument and the circular clearing upon which the famed car stood. Together, the men boarded the train and took their seats. As the French delegates entered, the company rose to greet them with a silent nod. Again in silence, the gentlemen were seated. Then Keitel undertook to read the preamble to Hitler's conditions for an armistice:³³⁰

Trusting in the assurances extended to the German Reich by the American President Wilson and affirmed by the Allied Powers, the German Wehrmacht laid down its arms in November 1918. Thereby the war was brought to an end that neither the German Volk nor its Government had desired—a war in which, in spite of an overwhelming numerical superiority, their enemies had not managed to decisively defeat the German Army, Navy, and the German Luftwaffe.

With the very arrival of the German armistice delegation began the breach of the solemnly given promise. Also, on November 11, 1918, a time of suffering for the German Volk began. From here on, what could be done to a people in terms of degradation and humiliation, of human and material suffering, was done. Broken promises and perjury raised their ugly heads against a people who after a four-year-long heroic resistance, had succumbed to just one weakness: believing in the promises of democratic statesmen.

On September 3, 1939—twenty-five years after the outbreak of the World War—Britain and France once more declared war on Germany without reason. Now the weapons have decided. France is vanquished. The French Government has requested the Reich Government to present it with its terms for an armistice.

When the historic Forest of Compiègne was selected for the presentation of these terms, this happened so that this act of atoning justice would erase a memory—once and for all—which composed no page of glory in the history of France and which the German Volk felt to be the greatest disgrace of all time.

France, in spite of heroic resistance, has been vanquished in a series of bloody battles and has collapsed. Germany does not intend, with so valiant an adversary, to lend the characteristics of disparagement to the terms of the armistice or to the armistice negotiations.

The aims of the German demands are:

1. to prevent renewed fighting,
2. to afford Germany the security necessary for the continuation of the war forced upon it by Britain, as well as
3. to create the prerequisites for a new peace, the essential feature of which shall be atonement for the injustice forced on the German Reich.

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After the reading, which lasted approximately ten minutes, Hitler and his companions left the car. Only Keitel remained behind to explain the further points of the armistice agreement. Outside, Hitler reviewed the guard of honor, against a background of an orchestra thumping out the “Deutschlandlied” and the “Horst-Wessel-Lied.” When everything had gone according to plan, Hitler left the scene. The following announcement informed the German public of the event:³³¹

Forest of Compiègne, June 21

At 3:30 p.m. on June 21, 1940, the Führer and Supreme Commander received the French delegation to accept the armistice conditions in the presence of the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht branches, the Chiefs of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, the Reich Foreign Minister, and the Deputy of the Führer.

The French delegation consisted of: General Huntziger, member of the Supreme French War Council; Air Force General Bergeret; Vice Admiral LeLuc; and Ambassador Noël.

In the Forest of Compiègne, the Führer conducted the state act of the presentation of conditions in the same wagon in which, on November 11, 1918, Marshal Foch dictated the terms of the armistice to the German delegates under the most dishonorable circumstances.

Today’s act in the Forest of Compiègne has erased injustice perpetrated against the German military honor.

The dignity of the behavior toward an honorably defeated adversary stood in striking contrast to the eternal hatred sown by the monuments on this site at which Gallic deceit disparaged the unbeaten German Army.

The sight of these “architectural monuments” had particularly infuriated Hitler. On returning to headquarters, he issued the following order:³³²

Führer Headquarters, June 21, 1940

1. The historic wagon, the memorial stone, and the monument commemorating the Gallic triumph, are to be brought to Berlin.
2. The tracks and stones of both trains are to be destroyed.
3. The monument dedicated to Marshal Foch is to be preserved.

Apparently Hitler had an ingrained respect of anyone who bore the title “Marshal,” regardless of whether his name was Hindenburg, Pilsudski, or Foch.

Germany’s surprisingly swift victory over France had repercussions internationally. Spain thought the moment opportune to seize the international zone around Tangier. The Soviet Union was left ill at ease at these latest developments: after all, now that Hitler had virtually occupied nearly all the Western states on the continent, it was merely

a matter of time before he turned his gaze back to the East. And assuredly, his lust for conquest would flame up once again.

The Soviet Union thought it proper to take steps to counter any such ambitions and so, on June 15 and June 16, Moscow moved to occupy the three Baltic States. In addition, Stalin now began to make claims to the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina, and on June 28, the Red Army marched into them.³³³

Although in the Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, Hitler had acknowledged that the Baltic States lay within Moscow's sphere of interest, he was greatly annoyed by Russia's advances. After all, at the time, Hitler had only reluctantly ceded this territory to the Soviet Union from the necessity of conquering Poland. Warsaw no longer figured in the political landscape, and this had naturally transformed Hitler's outlook radically.

He had long cast an eye on the annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as a first step toward the conquest of further Lebensraum for the German Volk in the East.³³⁴ Romania figured heavily in these plans as well, especially because of its oil riches. Naturally, Hitler considered the Baltic States and Romania to belong to the "German cultural area," and he was gravely upset by the Russian claims to what he already considered his own. He swore to take revenge on the impudent Soviet Union as soon as he had dealt with France and Britain.

Things were going well as far as France was concerned. On June 22, the French delegates signed the armistice at 6:50 p.m., after futile attempts to moderate its terms. By 7:06 p.m., Keitel reported the happy event to his Führer. Thereupon, the Führer Headquarters issued the following official pronouncement:³³⁵

On June 22, at 6:50 p.m. (German summer time),³³⁶ the German-French armistice agreement was signed in the Forest of Compiègne. Parties to the signing were: on the German side, the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General Keitel, as the special authorized representative of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht; and, on the French side, the authorized representative of the French Government, General Huntziger.

A cessation of hostilities is not entailed. They will cease six hours after the Italian Government has informed the German High Command of the Wehrmacht that an Italian-French armistice treaty has been concluded. For the present, the contents of the armistice treaty cannot be revealed.

The terms of the Armistice Treaty, which were not made public in Germany until June 25, read:³³⁷

June 22, 1940

The following Armistice Treaty has been agreed upon by Colonel General Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, appointed by the Führer of the German Reich and Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, on the one hand, and the Plenipotentiaries of the French Government who are vested with full powers, General of the Army Huntziger, chairman of the delegation, M. Noël, Ambassador of France, Vice Admiral LeLuc, General Parisot, Corps Commander, and General of the Air Force Bergeret, on the other:

1. The French Government will order the cessation of hostilities against the German Reich in France, in French possessions, colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories, and at sea. It will order French units, already encircled by German troops, to lay down their arms immediately.

2. In order to safeguard the interests of the German Reich, French territory north and west of the line marked on the attached mapsm will be occupied by German troops. Insofar as the parts to be occupied are not yet under the control of German troops, this occupation will be carried out immediately after the conclusion of this Treaty.

3. In the occupied parts of France the German Reich will exercise all the rights of the occupying power. The French Government undertakes to support by every means orders issued in the exercise of those rights and to carry them out with the assistance of the French administration. The French Government will therefore immediately instruct all French authorities and offices in the occupied territory to comply with the orders of the German military commanders and to collaborate with them correctly.

It is the intention of the German Government to reduce to the extent absolutely necessary the occupation of the western coast after the cessation of hostilities with England.

The French Government is free to choose its seat of government in the unoccupied territory, or, if it so desires, to transfer it to Paris. In the latter case, the German Government promises the French Government and its central authorities every necessary facility to enable it to administer the occupied and unoccupied territory from Paris.

4. The French armed forces on land, at sea, and in the air are to be demobilized and disarmed within a period still to be fixed. Excepted from this are only those units which are necessary for the maintenance of internal order. Their strength and armament will be determined by Germany or Italy respectively. Units of the French armed forces in the territory to be occupied by Germany will be speedily withdrawn to the territory not to be occupied and are to be discharged. Before leaving, the troops will lay down their arms and equipment at the places where they happen to be at the time of the entry into force of this Treaty. They will be responsible for orderly delivery to the German troops.

5. As a guarantee that the armistice will be observed, demand can be made for the surrender intact of all guns, tanks, anti-tank weapons, military aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, small arms, transport material and ammunition of those units of the French armed forces which were fighting against Germany and which at the time of entry into force of this agreement happen to be in territory

not to be occupied by Germany. The extent of these surrenders will be determined by the German Armistice Commission.

The surrender of military aircraft can be dispensed with, if all military aircraft still in the possession of the French armed forces are disarmed and placed in safe custody under German supervision.

6. The remaining arms, stocks of ammunition, and war material of all kinds in the unoccupied part of France—except those permitted for the equipment of the authorized French units—are to be stored or placed in safe custody under German or Italian supervision. In this connection the German High Command reserves the right to order all measures necessary to prevent the unauthorized use of these stores. Further manufacture of war material in unoccupied territory is to be stopped immediately.

7. In the territory to be occupied all land and coastal fortifications are to be surrendered intact with their arms, ammunition, equipment, stores, and installations of every kind. Plans of these fortifications, as well as plans of those already captured by the German troops, are to be surrendered. Exact details of explosive charges placed in position, mine fields on land, time fuses, gas barrages, etc., are to be supplied to the German High Command. These obstacles are to be removed by French troops at the request of the German authorities.

8. The French war fleet, with the exception of the part permitted to the French Government for the protection of French interests in its colonial empire, is to be assembled in ports to be specified and is to be demobilized and disarmed under German or Italian supervision. The choice of these ports will be determined by the peacetime stations of the ships. The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes in the war the French fleet which is in ports under German supervision, with the exception of those units needed for coastal patrol and for mine sweeping. Furthermore they solemnly and expressly declare that they have no intention of raising any claim to the French war fleet at the time of the conclusion of peace. With the exception of that part of the French war fleet, still to be determined, which is to represent French interests in the colonial empire, all war vessels which are outside French territorial waters are to be recalled to France.

9. The French High Command is to supply the German High Command with detailed information about all mines laid by France, as well as all harbor and coastal barriers and installations for defense and protection.

The clearing of mine fields is to be carried out by French forces to the extent required by the German High Command.

10. The French Government undertakes not to engage in any hostile actions with any part of the armed forces left to it, or in any other way, against the German Reich.

The French Government will also prevent members of the French armed forces from leaving the country and arms and war material of any kind, ships, aircraft, etc., from being moved to England or to any other foreign country.

The French Government will forbid French nationals to fight against the German Reich in the service of states with which Germany is still at war.

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French nationals who act contrary to this prohibition will be treated by German troops as francs-tireurs (*Freischärler*).

11. French merchant ships of all kinds including coastal and harbor craft in French hands are to be forbidden to put to sea until further notice. The resumption of merchant shipping will be subject to the approval of the German and Italian Governments respectively.

The French Government will recall French merchant ships which are outside French ports or, if this cannot be done, will order them to proceed to neutral ports.

All German merchant ships which have been captured and which are in French ports will be returned intact on demand.

12. All aircraft on French territory will be immediately prohibited from taking off. Any aircraft taking off without German authority will be regarded by the German Luftwaffe as hostile and treated as such.

Airfields and ground installations of the Air Force in unoccupied territory will be under German and/or Italian supervision as the case may be. Demand may be made that they shall be rendered unusable. The French Government is obligated to make available all foreign aircraft which are in unoccupied territory or to prevent them from continuing their flight. They are to be handed over to the German Wehrmacht.

13. The French Government undertakes to ensure that in the territories to be occupied by German troops all installations, equipment, and stores of the armed forces are surrendered intact to the German troops. It will further ensure that ports, industrial plants, and shipyards are left in their present condition and not damaged or destroyed in any way. The same applies to all means and routes of communication, in particular to railways, highways, and inland waterways, to the whole telecommunication service and to installations for marking channels for navigation and the coastal lighthouse service. It also undertakes to carry out all repairs necessary thereon as required by the German High Command.

The French Government will ensure that there are available in occupied territory the necessary technical personnel, the amount of rolling stock and other means of transport as under normal peacetime conditions.

14. All radio transmitting stations in French territory are forthwith forbidden to transmit. The resumption of transmissions from the unoccupied part of France will be subject to special arrangements.

15. The French Government undertakes to effect the transit of goods through the unoccupied territory between the German Reich and Italy to the extent required by the German Government.

16. The French Government, in agreement with the competent German authorities, will arrange for the return of the population to the occupied territory.

17. The French Government undertakes to prevent any removal of economic assets (*Werte*) and stocks (*Vorräte*) from the territory to be occupied by German troops into unoccupied territory or abroad. Such assets and stocks as are in the occupied territory may only be disposed of in agreement with the German Government.

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In this connection the German Government will take into consideration the vital needs of the population of the unoccupied territories.

18. The costs of maintenance of the German occupation troops on French territory will be borne by the French Government.

19. All German prisoners of war and civilian prisoners in French custody, including detained or convicted persons who have been arrested and sentenced for acts committed in the interests of the German Reich are to be handed over immediately to the German troops.

The French Government undertakes to prevent German prisoners of war or civilian prisoners from being removed from France to French possessions or abroad. Correct lists are to be supplied of prisoners already removed from France as well as of sick and wounded German prisoners of war unfit for travel, with particulars of their whereabouts. The German High Command will take over the care of German sick and wounded prisoners of war.

20. Members of the French armed forces who are prisoners of war in German hands shall remain prisoners of war until the conclusion of peace.

21. The French Government is liable for securing all objects and assets which, according to this Treaty, are to be surrendered intact, or held at German disposal, or the removal of which outside the country is forbidden. The French Government is obligated to make good all the destruction, damage, or removal contrary to this Treaty.

22. The execution of the Armistice Treaty will be regulated and supervised by a German Armistice Commission acting under the instructions of the German High Command. Furthermore the Armistice Commission will be called upon to ensure the necessary conformity between the present Treaty and the Italian-French Armistice Treaty. The French Government will send a delegation to the seat of the German Armistice Commission to represent French wishes and to receive the executive orders of the German Armistice Commission.

23. The present Armistice Treaty will come into force as soon as the French Government has also reached an agreement with the Italian Government on the cessation of hostilities. Hostilities will cease six hours after the Italian Government has notified the Reich Government that this agreement has been reached. The Reich Government will notify the French Government of this time by radio.

24. The Armistice Treaty will remain in force until the conclusion of the peace treaty. It can be renounced by the German Government at any time and with immediate effect, if the French Government does not carry out the obligations assumed by this Treaty:

This Armistice Treaty has been signed in the Forest of Compiègne at 6:50 p.m., German summer time, on June 22, 1940.

Huntziger
Keitel

The third point of the treaty betrayed Hitler's intent to retain the French western coast as a base for the German Navy, even after a conclusion of peace with England. No willingness to cede this territory

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again at a later date was apparent in the often proclaimed slogan: "What we once possess we will never again surrender!"³³⁹ This reflected Hitler's mentality as expressed in *Mein Kampf*. He was not a man to cede conquered territories, although he might at times agree to minor revisions of existing borders if these promised a political advantage. The continued occupation of France satisfied a demand Hitler had voiced early on in his political career.³⁴⁰

The political testament of the German nation's actions abroad should and must always convey the general sense of the following: never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe.

Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in hindering the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, in its destruction.

Given this attitude openly proclaimed in *Mein Kampf*, it was not surprising that the thought of giving up the military occupation of France never even entered Hitler's mind. The "magnanimity" of his character had allowed him little more than conceding that only three fifths of France fall under the German yoke—for the time being. Central and southern France were spared such a fate, to continue their existence in the form of a reservation.

Should the Frenchmen in these regions fail to comply with the Third Reich's demands, then they, too, would lose their privileged status. In this case, German soldiers would move swiftly to accord them special protection.³⁴¹

The terms of the armistice agreement made no mention of the fate of the French prisoners of war taken by the Germans. Apparently, pending conclusion of a "final" peace settlement, which the Third Reich never intended to accord France, these were to remain firmly in German hands. They were to share the fate of their Belgian colleagues, who likewise remained in confinement until 1945.

The remainder of the armistice document concerned itself largely with items regarding the technical implementation of its conditions. Only one further point (number 8) was remarkable in that it contained a "solemn declaration," directed more at England than at France.³⁴²

The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes in the war the French fleet which is in ports under German supervision . . .



XLI June 17, 1940

Hitler dancing for joy after the news of the French offer of capitulation he received at the Führer Headquarters temporarily set up at Bruly-le-Pêche. To the left: the Envoy and later Ambassador Hewel.

Photo: Domarus archives



XLII June 21, 1940 at Compiègne

Standing in front of a French delegation summoned to Marshal Foch's former parlor car, Keitel reads aloud Hitler's conditions for the Armistice Agreement. From left to right: Raeder, Goring, Hitler, Keitel, Brauchitsch (behind him Brückner), Ribbentrop (with his back turned), the interpreter Dr. Schmidt, Hess, the French General Huntziger and the French Vice Admiral Leluc.

Photo: Domarus archives



June 28, 1940 in Paris

XLIII Hitler admires the Eiffel Tower while sight-seeing in Paris. From left to right: a Wehrmacht adjutant, Speer, Hitler.

XLIV Hitler, in a light-colored coat, looking down at Napoleon's tomb in the Dome des Invalides. Next to him: Giesler, Breker, Speer, Keitel, Schaub, and several other members of Hitler's personal entourage.

Photo: Domarus archives

Now, the British Navy need no longer concern itself with the additional naval power at Hitler's command. In the Führer's mind, this renewed gesture of "friendship" was to reinforce the British Government's trust in him and to induce it to finally agree to a peace settlement.

On June 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese State President Carmona on the 800th anniversary of Portugal's independence from Spain.³⁴³ The same day witnessed the signature of the French-Italian armistice agreement at the Villa Incisa outside of Rome.³⁴⁴ The spoils for Italy were meager ones indeed. Italian forces were allowed to continue occupying a small strip of land along the frontier to France which they had conquered in the course of their short-lived involvement in the campaign. Mussolini was kept from a share in the loot in the French heartland and in the French colonies.³⁴⁵ Six hours after the exchange of signatures to the armistice agreement, the guns actually fell silent.

The following official pronouncement from the Führer Headquarters marked the occasion:³⁴⁶

Führer Headquarters, June 24, 1940

Today, on Monday, June 24th, signature of the French-Italian ceasefire accords took place in Rome at 7:15 p.m. The German Reich Government was officially informed thereof at 7:35 p.m. As a consequence, the German-French ceasefire accords have come into force.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht has ordered an end to hostilities against France. Weapons on both sides are to be silenced at 1:35 p.m., German Summer Time, on June 25. With this, the war in the West will end.

Shortly thereafter, Hitler issued a proclamation "to the German Volk," which spoke of the "most glorious victory of all time:"³⁴⁷

German Volk!

Within barely six weeks of heroic struggle, your soldiers have ended the war in the West against a valiant enemy. Their deed will enter into the book of history as the most glorious victory of all time. Fervently, we thank the Lord Almighty for His blessings. I order flags to be hoisted throughout the Reich for ten days, and bells to ring for seven days.

Adolf Hitler

Naturally the "greatest battle of all time" could be succeeded only by the "most glorious victory of all time."³⁴⁸ The German public was puzzled by this announcement. How could Hitler speak of the "most glorious victory of all time" when England had not yet surrendered? Judging by official pronouncements issued in London, the English

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were by no means beaten. As recently as in a speech before the House of Commons on June 18, Churchill had defiantly proclaimed:³⁴⁹

I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made even more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: "This was their finest hour."

The question was whether Hitler now realized that so unyielding a people had to be beaten on its own soil before it lowered its banners. Hardly. He was still convinced that it sufficed to drive the English "back to the Thames" to induce them to capitulate. He acted as if the war was already over. For instance, at this time, he issued the following order affecting the return of the civilian population evacuated from the front before the opening of hostilities:³⁵⁰

Due to the British-French declaration of war in September 1939, it was necessary to evacuate the German civilian population from parts of the territories bordering on the front in the West. Hundreds of thousands of Volksgenossen were affected by this measure.

The evacuation itself went in accordance with a minutely prepared plan. Nevertheless, it must have brought many hardships with it. All those affected have satisfied the demands of war in an exemplary manner. Now the hour of the return home to native cities and villages has come. Instructions for its smooth implementation will be issued shortly. The same authorities who attended to the evacuation in September and October of last year will carry out the transport home.

Insofar as the localities and residences along the front have suffered from artillery fire or from other wartime action, their reconstruction and restoration shall be undertaken immediately. Damage incurred by the individual during his absence shall be compensated. Offices of Party and State are responsible for attending, within the shortest time possible, to the returning population's requests for the assistance to which it is entitled.

Adolf Hitler

On June 28, Hitler visited Paris. In the early morning, he flew to the Le Bourget Airport to tour the city between 5:00 and 6:00.³⁵¹ Ostensibly,

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he was trying to avoid any unpleasant encounters with the civilian population of Paris by choosing to view the city at so early an hour. And, as usual, he may well have been driven to do so by his constant fear of assassination attempts.

If it had been true, as Hitler once claimed,³⁵² that he had the plans of most major European cities in his head at all time, he should have been able to find his way in the French capital without a guide. Naturally, he insisted on making a show of his knowledge. For this purpose, he had ordered his architects, professors Giesler, Speer, and Breker, to accompany him on the sightseeing tour. He wished to impress them with his expertise on architecture and art. Their first stop was the Eiffel Tower, of course. As there was a cool breeze that morning, Hitler wore a gray tunic. Later, as the sun came up, he switched into a light-color trench coat. The Paris Opera House and the Church of St. Madeleine attracted Hitler's special attention. The latter had been built in the form of an ancient Greek temple to commemorate Napoleon's various victories. Its classicist architecture resembled most closely Hitler's own taste in such matters. The visit culminated in a tour of the Dôme des Invalides. Earnestly, Hitler looked down on the marble tomb of Napoleon, surely contemplating how to fashion his own mausoleum one day. By the time the people of Paris sat down at the breakfast table, Hitler was long gone and left them ignorant of who had honored their city with his visit just a few hours before.

On June 29, Hitler wired his condolences to Mussolini on the death of Marshal Balbo:³⁵³

Duce!

News of the pilot's death of your Marshal Italo Balbo has just reached me. For the severe loss you have suffered, and with you the entire Italian people, I wish to offer to you my deeply felt sympathy. The German Volk stands in mourning alongside the Italian people at the bier of the Marshal. Balbo's deeds in the service of the young Roman Empire will remain unforgotten here as well.

By June 29, Hitler had relocated his headquarters to "Tannenberg," situated deep within the Black Forest.³⁵⁴ From there he visited Strasbourg³⁵⁵ on the day which marked the anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. Leaving the city behind, Hitler passed through Schlettstadt on his way to battlefields in the Vosges Mountains. At Breisach, he toured both French and German bunkers located in the Rhine valley. The foray into France had been launched from here.

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Hitler had subordinates explain details of the operation with the help of maps.

On June 30, once again, Hitler set out in his light-color trench coat to visit Mulhouse and the northern Alsace region.³⁵⁶ He viewed remnants of the Maginot Line, especially its tank fortifications, which the German troops had taken. He portrayed himself as a popular leader, stopping to chat with simple, enlisted men. Photographs taken on the occasion show him relaxed and in a happy, confident mood. There could be no talk of Hitler “going through one of his periods of isolation” in times of crises.³⁵⁷

Indeed, there was little for Hitler to be concerned about. Britain had lost the war, or so he thought. It was merely a question of time until the British were ready to admit this publicly and enter into peace negotiations with Germany.

On July 1, at a reception at his headquarters, Hitler imparted to Alfieri that “he could not conceive of anyone in England still seriously believing in victory.”³⁵⁸

On July 2, Hitler decided:³⁵⁹

Given certain prerequisites, the most important one of which is the attainment of air supremacy, a landing in England can be envisioned. For the time being, the exact date remains open. Preparations are to be launched for carrying this out as soon as possible.

On this day, Hitler also edited a voluminous final report on the progress of operations in France from June 5 through June 25, to be issued by the High Command of the Wehrmacht. Hitler added the usual superlatives to the text. He also insisted on providing exact details on the precise number of prisoners of war taken, tonnage of ships sunk, and the like.

By July 3 and July 4, Hitler could no longer indulge himself in contemplating conquest. The “solemn declaration” that he made no claim to the French fleet³⁶⁰ had not had the desired impact in Great Britain. In a speech before the House of Commons, Churchill had already declared on June 25: “Ask half a dozen countries what is the value of such solemn assurances [by the German Government].”³⁶¹

On July 3, the English demonstrated that they were serious in their denunciations of Hitler’s assurances. A contingent of the British fleet appeared in the waters off the coastal city of Oran in Algeria and demanded the immediate release of the French ships held at bay there. When this request was declined, the English ships opened fire. A

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number of French battleships were incinerated, others sunk.³⁶² News of this incident propelled the German News Bureau to issue the following statement:³⁶³

As we have been informed, the Führer has permitted the French Government, after the report on the events given by the French delegation to the armistice talks to the German armistice commission,³⁶⁴ to sink its ships in those locations where they cannot escape from the grasp of British naval forces.

On July 6, Hitler returned to Berlin. There he staged a triumphant entry into the city.³⁶⁵ Now that, in his mind, the war had brought Germany the final victory, he no longer shied away from his people. No more did he feel he needed to avoid public exposure, as he had persistently done ever since September 3, 1939.³⁶⁶

Hitler's special train pulled into the Anhalt Station at 3:00 p.m. The program for this event reflected his entries into Vienna and Prague in the previous two years.³⁶⁷ First Göring was commissioned to extend the proper welcome to the returning Führer; then Hitler's car passed through a corridor formed by curious onlookers and bore him to the Reich Chancellery; and finally he stepped out onto the balcony.

On July 7, Hitler returned to his official duties by issuing a decree pertaining to the Wehrmacht's occupation of France. The decree was still dated "Führer Headquarters" and detailed the following on the Armed Forces' role in occupied France:³⁶⁸

After the victorious conclusion of the campaign in France, I expect of the German Wehrmacht that it should rise, in the same impeccable manner, to its mission as an occupation force. I order all members of the Wehrmacht to exercise caution in their dealings with the population in the occupied enemy territories, as befits the German soldier. Excessive use of alcohol is unworthy of a soldier. Often it is the cause of grave disorder or acts of violence. Drunkenness arising through one's own fault will not be considered sufficient cause for a mitigation of sentence. I expect that all members of the Wehrmacht who have committed acts in breach of the law because of drunkenness—also against the population—shall be held fully accountable. In severe cases, this may require a dishonorable death according to the law. I make it the duty of all superiors to maintain the high standard of the discipline of the German man through example and instruction.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, the Italian Foreign Minister arrived from Rome to see Hitler.³⁶⁹ Ciano had drafted a highly detailed list of the spoils Italy felt entitled to, now that the war had supposedly been won: Tunisia, Corsica, Nice, Malta; possessions in the Near East, in Egypt, in the

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Sudan, and in Somalia. But Hitler was still preoccupied with the question of how to appease the British by extending to them “generous terms of peace.” Demands of the sort Italy was making merely got in the way of this effort. And if anyone was to annex these territories, it was he and not Mussolini. Speedily Hitler resorted to his gifted oratory and delivered a lengthy monologue to Ciano, explaining the victory in the West. At the end, he threatened “to unleash a storm of wrath and steel upon the English.” Even Ciano remarked that apparently Hitler was not all that serious in making this challenge. In his diary, he noted: “But the final decision has not been reached, and it is for this reason that he is delaying his speech, of which, as he himself puts it, he wants to weigh every word.” Closer to the truth was Hitler’s announcement that he intended, “by means of an adroit appeal to the English people, to isolate the British Government.” After the talk, Hitler dismissed his guest, and sent him off to tour the battlefields in the West for the next two days.

Meanwhile, in the presence of Göring, the Führer hosted a few wounded soldiers from the campaign in the West in the Reich Chancellery.³⁷⁰ In addition, he bestowed the Goethe Medal on Hans Johst, the President of the Reich Chamber of Authors (Reichsschrifttumskammer), on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.³⁷¹

On July 10, Hitler rejoined Ciano in Munich. In the morning, at the Führerbau, he held a reception for the Hungarian Minister-President, Count Teleki, and his Foreign Minister, Count Csáky.³⁷² Hungary was now making claims on Transylvania (Siebenbürgen), then part of Romania. Hitler was not pleased by the prospect of unrest in yet another area of continental Europe as he was still busily trying to induce the British to enter into a peaceful settlement with Germany. He made it perfectly clear to his two callers that they could count neither on Germany nor on Italy to support them in this venture. Both countries were “preoccupied elsewhere.”

After his guests had departed, Hitler retired to the Obersalzberg where he wished to recuperate from the exertions of the campaign in the West. Moreover, he wanted to carefully prepare his speech before the Reichstag, one in which he intended to “weigh every word.” Other issues demanded attention as well.

On July 11, in the presence of Keitel and Naval Adjutant von Puttkammer, Hitler conferred with Grand Admiral Raeder on the possibility of an invasion of the British Isles.³⁷³ Raeder delivered an account of the situation and of potential developments. Both Hitler and

Raeder agreed that an invasion of England, or rather the threat of an invasion, should be used “only as a last resort to force peace on England.”

One day later, Hitler issued decrees on construction measures for the cities of Königsberg, Oldenburg, Posen, and Saarbrücken. These decrees still bore the heading “Führer Headquarters,” although they were signed at the Berghof.³⁷⁴ Further, Hitler ordered construction work in the vicinity of Wewelsburg³⁷⁵ and placed his signature beneath a law on the establishment of a free harbor at Danzig.³⁷⁶

At noon on July 13, Hitler received Halder. Halder discussed plans for landings on the English mainland.³⁷⁷ Although Hitler ordered preparatory steps to be taken immediately, Halder noted the following reservations the Führer expressed:

Führer wants to bring Spain into the game, to build up front against the enemy in England reaching from the North Cape all the way to Morocco.

Führer obsessed with question why England does not yet want to follow path to peace. As we do, he sees an answer to this question in England placing its hopes on Russia. He hence counts on having to use force to get peace with England. He does not like to do such a thing, however. Reason: if we beat England militarily, the British Empire will fall apart.

This will not benefit Germany. We would be spilling German blood for something from which only America and others can profit.

Obviously, Hitler’s optimism with regard to a swift conclusion of the war was beginning to wane. These “senile” Englishmen were driving him mad. Had he not proved his friendship for them time and time again? Had he not offered them German divisions for the protection of the Empire? Had he not allowed the escape of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk? Had he not, as a special favor to the British, renounced the French fleet?

As all these attempts had borne no fruit, Hitler felt he had to resort to the threat of an invasion of the British Isles as “a last resort” to force London to finally conclude peace. In a speech scheduled for July 19, he planned to extend yet another “magnanimous” offer to Great Britain, now that he felt he had securely established himself as the undisputed ruler of the European Continent.

On July 14, Hitler forwarded to Rome a draft of a letter to King Carol of Romania on the question of Transylvania.³⁷⁸ The next day, Hitler penned yet another letter to Mussolini. In it, he portrayed the invasion of England as a foregone conclusion. In a polite but determined tone of voice, he rejected the Duce’s offer to contribute an Italian expe-

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ditionary corps to the venture. Hitler claimed that “difficulties” with “reinforcements” for two separate armies would impede progress in the foray.³⁷⁹

On July 16, Hitler issued War Directive No. 16, detailing preparations for an invasion of England. Perhaps he wished to clarify matters for himself prior to delivering his speech before the Reichstag. At any rate, with such a directive behind him, what could go wrong? The English simply had to come to terms. The directive read:³⁸⁰

Since England, despite her militarily hopeless situation, still shows no sign of willingness to come to terms, I have decided to prepare a landing operation against England, and if necessary to carry it out.

The aim of this operation is to eliminate the English homeland as a base for the carrying on of the war against Germany, and if it should become necessary to occupy it completely.

To this end I order the following:

1. The landing must be carried out in the form of a surprise crossing on a broad front approximately from Ramsgate to the area west of the Isle of Wight, in which Luftwaffe units will take on the role of artillery, and units of the Navy the role of the engineers. Whether it is practical before the general landing to undertake subordinate actions, such as the occupation of the Isle of Wight or of County Cornwall, is to be determined from the standpoint of each branch of the Wehrmacht and the result is to be reported to me. I reserve the decision for myself. The preparations for the entire operation must be completed by mid-August.

2. To these preparations also belong the creation of those conditions which make a landing in England possible:

a. The English Air Force must be so beaten down in its morale and in fact that it can no longer display any appreciable aggressive force in opposition to the German crossing.

b. Mine-free channels must be created.

c. By means of a closely concentrated mine-barrier the Straits of Dover must be sealed off on both flanks as well as the western entrance to the Channel at the approximate line Alderney-Portland.

d. The area off the coast must be dominated and given artillery protection by strong coastal artillery.

e. It would be desirable shortly before the crossing to tie down the English naval forces in the North Sea as well as in the Mediterranean (by the Italians), in which connection the attempt should now be made to damage the English naval forces which are in the homeland by air and torpedo attacks in strength.

3. Organization of the command and of the preparations.

Under my command and in accordance with my general directives the Commanders in Chief will command the forces to be used from their branches of the Wehrmacht. The operations staffs of the Commander in Chief of the Army, the Commander in Chief of the Navy, and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe must from August 1 on be located within a radius of at most 50

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km from my headquarters (Ziegenberg). Quartering of the restricted operations staffs of the Commanders in Chief of the Army and Navy together at Giessen appears advisable to me.

Hence for the command of the landing armies the Commander in Chief of the Army will have to employ an Army Group headquarters.

The project will bear the code name *Seelöwe* [Sea Lion].

In the preparation and carrying out of the undertaking the following duties will fall to the various branches of the Wehrmacht: [Technical details follow].

Now that he had dictated the directive for "Operation Sea Lion" and had persuaded himself that an invasion of England was quite possible, Hitler felt strong enough to summon the Reichstag to convene on July 19 at 7:00 in the evening at the Kroll Opera. Before the historic session, he staged a theatrical display of the Third Reich's military might. It seemed as though he wished to remind the world and the people of Berlin just who had claimed the recent victory. With bells ringing in the background, an entire division consisting mostly of troops from Berlin and Brandenburg filed through the Brandenburg Gate on the afternoon of July 18. Carrying flowers, they arrayed themselves at the Paris Square where Goebbels and Artillery General Fromm, the Commander in Chief of the Replacement Army, extended a warm welcome to the victorious soldiers.³⁸¹

A parade of troops then marched down the historic avenue Unter den Linden for two full hours. A similar display of military prowess had not been seen in Berlin since 1871.

Also on July 18, Hitler wired his congratulations to Franco on the Spanish national holiday. He bestowed on him the Golden Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.³⁸² Only Ciano had previously received this distinction.

Ciano was now accorded the additional honor of a personal invitation to attend Hitler's victory speech in the Reichstag on July 19. Though informed of it only on July 18, he managed to reach Berlin in time.³⁸³ The city's streets were richly decorated, as was the conference hall in the Reichstag. Laurel wreaths lay on the seats of the six Reichstag delegates who had fallen in the war to date. A large number of the generals were on hand for the celebration and took their seats. The prominent members of the Third Reich's elite were all elated. The swift victory in the West made peace appear to be within Germany's grasp. As Hitler had earlier indicated, he intended to extend a "generous peace proposal" in his upcoming speech, and assuredly London would eagerly rush forward to accept it.³⁸⁴

July 19, 1940

As President of the Reichstag, Göring opened the session with a tribute to those who had laid down their lives on the battlefield. Then Hitler rose to speak of the “most daring undertaking in the history of German warfare,” of the “most massive sequence of battles in world history,” of the “greatest and most glorious victory of all time,” adding other superlatives to enhance individual aspects of the campaign in the West. It was a lengthy speech he had composed especially for the occasion. Beginning with a scholarly discussion of the Treaty of Versailles and of the Polish Campaign, it led up to a climax consisting of the appointment of no less than twelve Field Marshals. As the press in Germany pointed out without fail, this represented the “most enormous presentation ceremony in the history of Germany.” Hitler concluded his speech on a conciliatory note: an “appeal to reason in England.” Speaking now “as the victor,” he saw “no compelling reason which could force the continuation of war.”

Hitler’s speech of July 19, 1940, had the following content:³⁸⁵

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In the midst of the mighty struggle for the freedom and future of the German nation, I have called on you to gather for this session today. The grounds for it are: to give our Volk insight into the historic uniqueness of the events we have lived through; to express our thanks to the deserving soldiers; and to direct, once again and for the last time, an appeal to general reason.

Whoever contrasts the factors which triggered this historic conflict with the extent, the greatness, and consequence of the military occurrences, must realize that the events and sacrifices of this struggle stand in no relation to the alleged causes, unless these causes themselves were but pretexts for intentions yet concealed.

The program of the National Socialist Revolution, insofar as it concerned the future development of the Reich’s relations with the surrounding world, was an attempt to obtain a revision of the Treaty of Versailles under all circumstances—and as far as this was possible—by peaceful means.

This revision was by nature a necessity. The untenability of the provisions of Versailles lay not only in the humiliating discrimination, the disarmament of the German Volk secured with the result that they lost their rights, but above all in the resultant material destruction of the present and the intended destruction of the future of one of the greatest civilized peoples in the world, in the completely senseless accumulation of vast terrains under the mastery of a few states, in the depriving of the losers of irreplaceable foundations for life and indispensable vital goods.

The fact that insightful men on the side of the adversary, even while this Diktat was being composed, warned against the conclusive realization of the terms of this work of lunacy, is proof of the persuasion prevalent even in these ranks that it would be impossible to maintain this Diktat in the future. Their

misgivings and their protests were silenced by the assurance that the statutes of the newly created League of Nations secured the possibility of a revision of these provisions, indeed that it was authorized for such a revision. At no time was hope for a revision regarded as something improper, but always as something quite natural. Regrettably, contrary to the will of the men responsible for the Versailles Diktat, the institution in Geneva never regarded itself as an agency for procuring sensible revisions, but rather, from the beginning, as the custodian of the ruthless implementation and maintenance of the provisions of Versailles. All endeavors of democratic Germany failed to obtain, by means of revision, an equality of rights for the German Volk.

It lies in the interest of the victor to portray as universally sanctified those conditions that benefit him, while the essence of the instinct of self-preservation compels the vanquished to strive for a restoration of his general human rights. For him this Diktat penned by an arrogant enemy has even less force of law insofar as the victory of this enemy was a dishonest one. It was a rare misfortune that the German Reich was led exceedingly badly in the years 1914–18. To this, and to the not otherwise instructed trust and faith of the German Volk in the word of democratic statesmen, must our fall be ascribed.

It was thus that the joint British-French endeavor to portray the Versailles Treaty as some type of international or higher justice must have appeared to every honest German as nothing other than an insolent usurpation. The supposition that British or French statesmen of all people were custodians of justice itself, or even of human culture, was a stupid effrontery. It was an affront which is sufficiently elucidated by their own inferior performances in these fields. For rarely has this world been governed with a greater deficit of cleverness, morality, and culture than in that part of it which is presently at the mercy of the fury of certain democratic statesmen.

The National Socialist Movement has, besides its delivery from the Jewish-capitalist shackles imposed by a plutocratic-democratic, dwindling class of exploiters at home, pronounced its resolve to free the Reich from the shackles of the Diktat of Versailles abroad. The German demands for a revision were an absolute necessity, a matter of course for the existence and the honor of any great people. Posterity will some day come to regard them as exceedingly modest.

All these demands had to be carried through, in practice against the will of the British-French potentates. Now more than ever we all see it as a success of the leadership of the Third Reich that the realization of these revisions was possible for years without resort to war. This was not the case—as the British and French demagogues would have it—because we were not then in a position to wage war. When it finally appeared as though, thanks to a gradually awakening common sense, a peaceful resolution of the remaining problems could be reached through international cooperation, the agreement concluded in this spirit on September 29, 1938, at Munich by the four great states predominantly involved, was not welcomed by public opinion in London and Paris, but was condemned as a despicable sign of weakness. The Jewish-capitalist warmongers, their hands covered with blood, saw in the

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possible success of such a peaceful revision the vanishing of plausible grounds for the realization of their insane plans.

Once again that conspiracy of pitiful, corrupt political creatures and greedy financial magnates made its appearance, for whom war is a welcome means to bolster business. The international Jewish poison of the peoples began to agitate against and to corrode healthy minds. Men of letters set out to portray decent men who desired peace as weaklings and traitors, to denounce opposition parties as a "fifth column," in order to eliminate internal resistance to their criminal policy of war. Jews and Freemasons, armament industrialists and war profiteers, international traders and stockjobbers, found political blackguards: desperados and glory seekers who represented war as something to be yearned for and hence wished for.

It is to be ascribed to these criminal elements that the Polish State was incited to assume a posture which stood in no relation to the German demands and even less to the consequences that resulted.

The German Reich, in particular with regard to Poland, has shown restraint ever since the National Socialist rise to power. One of the basest and stupidest provisions of the Versailles Diktat, namely the tearing away of an old German province from the Reich, already cried for a revision in and of itself. But what was it that I demanded at the time?

I must in this context refer to my own person. No other statesman could have afforded to propose a solution to the German nation in the way I did. It comprised merely the return of Danzig—that is to say of an ancient, purely German city—to the Reich as well as the creation of a connection of the Reich to its severed province. And this only pursuant to plebiscites conducted, in turn, under the auspices of an international forum. If Mr. Churchill or any other warmongers had but a fraction of the sense of responsibility I felt toward Europe, they could not have played so perfidious a game. For it need be ascribed solely to these vested interests in war, both within Europe and beyond, that Poland rejected the proposals which neither compromised its existence nor its honor, and instead resorted to terror and arms. And it was truly superhuman restraint, without precedent, which for months led us, in spite of persistent assassination attempts on ethnic Germans—yes, indeed, in spite of the slaughter of tens of thousands of German Volksgenossen, to continue to search for a path toward peaceful understanding. For what was the situation like? One of the creations of the Diktat of Versailles, the most divorced from reality, a bogy inflated militarily and politically, insulted a state for many months, threatening to beat it, to fight battles before Berlin, to smash the German Army to pieces, to transfer the border to the Oder or the Elbe; it went on and on. And this other state, Germany, watches the goings-on patiently for months, although one sweeping gesture would have sufficed to wipe this bubble inflated by stupidity and arrogance off the face of the earth.

On September 2, this struggle could yet have been avoided. Mussolini made a proposal to put an immediate end to the hostilities and to negotiate peacefully. Though Germany saw its armies advancing victoriously, I accepted this nonetheless.³⁸⁶ But the Anglo-French warmongers needed war, not peace.

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And they needed a long war, as Mr. Chamberlain put the matter at the time. It was to last for at least three years, since they had in the meantime invested their capital in the armament industry, bought the necessary machinery, and now needed the precondition of time for the thriving of their business and for the amortization of their investments. And besides: what are Poles, Czechs, or other such nationalities to these citizens of the world?

A German soldier found a curious document while rummaging through train wagons at the La Charité station on June 19, 1940.³⁸⁷ He immediately handed over the document—which bore a particular remark—to his superiors at departmental headquarters. From there the paper passed to agencies. It became clear that what had been discovered constituted evidence in a most important investigation. The train station was once more thoroughly searched. And it was thus that the High Command of the Wehrmacht came into possession of a collection of documents of unique historical significance.

What was found were the secret files of the Allied High War Council, including the protocols of all sessions of this illustrious association. And this time it shall not be possible for Mr. Churchill to simply deny or lie about the authenticity of these documents, as he had attempted to do at the time in the case of documents found in Warsaw. For these documents feature handwritten notes in the margins penned by Gamelin, Daladier, Weygand, and so on.³⁸⁸ Hence these gentlemen are free either to admit to these or to disown them at any time. And these documents enlighten us as to the dealings of these gentlemen who have an interest in the war and in its expansion. They will above all demonstrate how these cold-blooded politicians and military men have used all these small peoples as a means to an end; how they tried to subject Finland to their interests; how they determined to make Norway and Sweden the theater of war; how they planned to set fire to the Balkans to procure the assistance of 100 divisions from there; how they prepared to bomb Batum and Baku under the cover of a shrewd as well as unscrupulous reading of the Turkish neutrality in favor of their own interests; how they spun their web around the Netherlands and Belgium, pulling its strings constantly tighter, and finally engaging them in general staff agreements; as well as many other things.

The documents afford us, moreover, a good picture of the entire amateurish method which these policy-making warmongers employed in an attempt to contain the fire they had kindled. These speak of their military pseudo-democracy which is jointly responsible for the gruesome fate which they have inflicted on hundreds of thousands and millions of soldiers of their own countries; of their barbaric lack of conscience which led them to drive their own peoples from their homes in cold blood and deliberately, in a mass evacuation whose military consequences were not necessarily favorable to them, while the general human results were shockingly gruesome. The same criminals are at the same time responsible for whipping up the Poles and inciting them to war. Eighteen days³⁸⁹ later this campaign ended—for all practical purposes.

For a second time in the war, I spoke to the German Volk from this stand on October 6, 1939.³⁹⁰ I was then able to report to it the glorious military defeat

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of the Polish State. I then also directed an appeal to reason to the men responsible in the enemy states and to their peoples. I warned against further pursuit of the war, the consequences of which could only be devastating. I warned the French especially not to start a war which, by necessity, would eat its way inward from the frontier and which, irrespective of its outcome, would have dire consequences.

At this time, I directed an appeal to the rest of the world as well. However, as I said then, I did so with the apprehension that not only might I not be heard, but that thereby I might only elicit the wrath of the warmongers interested. And this is precisely what came to pass.

The responsible elements in England and France smelt a rat, seeing my appeal as a dangerous assault on their lucrative profiteering in the war.

Thus they hurriedly and eagerly declared that any thought of an understanding was a waste of time—yes, that this would even have to be regarded as a crime. The war had to be pursued in the name of culture, humanity, good fortune, progress, civilization, and—Good God!—even in the name of sacred religion, and in subservience to this end Negroes and Bushmen (*Buschmenschen*) had to be mobilized. And then, of course, victory would come about of its own accord, so to speak. It would then be within grasp; one need only reach out for it. And, naturally, so they said, I was very well aware of all this myself, and indeed had known it for a long time, and it was only because of this that I had laid before the world my appeal for peace. For, if I were in a position to believe in victory, I would not have approached England and France with an understanding without any conditions attached. In a few days these agitators succeeded in portraying me as a coward before the eyes of the world.

I was scolded for my peace proposal, even personally insulted. Mr. Chamberlain virtually spat in my face before the world public and declined to even talk of peace, according to the directives of the warmongers and agitators backing him: Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden, Hore-Belisha,³⁹¹ and so on. Not to mention negotiating a peace.

And it was thus that the big capitalist clique of war profiteers cried for a continuation of the war. And this continuation has now begun.

I have already asserted, and all of you, my Volksgenossen, know this: if I do not speak for some time, or nothing much happens, then this does not mean that I am not doing anything. With us it is not necessary to multiply by a factor of five or twelve every airplane built, and then to proclaim it loudly to the world.

Besides, hens would be ill-advised to cry out to the world every egg just laid. It would be all the more ill-considered of statesmen to announce projects barely beyond the planning stage, in nervous chatter, to the surrounding world, so as to inform it in a timely manner. To the excited garrulousness of two of these great democratic state leaders we owe ever-current information on the plans for an expansion of the war by our adversaries, and especially on the concentration of the war effort in Norway and Sweden.

While the Anglo-French clique of warmongers was on the lookout for new opportunities to expand the war, and trying to trap new victims, I have

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labored to bring to a conclusion the organizational buildup of the Wehrmacht, to set up new units, to start up production for the war, to get material to flow, as well as to order training of the entire Wehrmacht for its new missions. Beyond this, however, the bad weather of the late autumn and winter forced a postponement of military operations.

In the course of the month of March, we gained knowledge of British-French ambitions to intervene in the Russo-Finnish conflict; which was less to help the Finns and more to damage Russia, the latter being seen as a power cooperating with Germany. This ambition grew into the determination to intervene actively in Finland itself and, if possible, to gain a base for carrying the war to the Baltic Sea. And, at this time also, suggestions of the Allied High War Council appeared with ever greater insistence either to set afire the Balkans or Asia Minor in an effort to bar the Reich from its Russian and Romanian oil imports, or to gain possession of Swedish iron ore. Landings in Norway were to serve this end with the goal of occupying all ore railroads leading from Narvik across Sweden to the port of Lulea.

The Russo-Finnish peace accords prevented, at the last minute, the carrying out of the already envisioned action in the Nordic States. Yet, merely a few days later, similar ambitions surfaced anew and precipitated a clear decision.

England and France had agreed to move, in one sudden strike, to occupy numerous important locations in Norway under the pretext of preventing further support for the German war effort with Swedish ore.

To secure access completely to the Swedish ore, they intended to march into Sweden themselves and to push aside the few forces Sweden could muster, either, if possible, in a friendly manner or, if necessary, by force.

Of the imminence of this danger we were informed personally by the untameable garrulousness of the First Lord of the British Admiralty.³⁹² Moreover, we received confirmation through a hint made by the French Premier Reynaud in a talk with a foreign diplomat. That the date had been postponed twice before the eighth of April, and that the occupation was scheduled for the eighth, that the eighth, therefore, was the third and final day—of this we gained knowledge only recently. It was conclusively established only with the discovery of the protocols of the High Allied War Council.

I then ordered the Wehrmacht, as soon as the danger of dragging the North into the war was becoming apparent, to take the appropriate measures.

The case of the *Altmark* already demonstrated that the Norwegian Government was not willing to uphold its neutrality. Beyond this, reports of secret agents also revealed that, at least insofar as the leading heads of the Norwegian Government and the Allies were concerned, there was already full agreement. Finally, Norway's reaction to the violation of its territory by British minelayers dispelled all remaining doubts.

The German operation, prepared down to the last detail, was launched.

In fact the situation was a bit different from what we perceived it to be on April 9. While we then believed we had anticipated the British occupation by a few hours, we know today that the landing of the English troops had

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been scheduled for the eighth. The embarkation of the British contingents had already begun on the fifth and sixth. However, the moment the first news reached the British Admiralty of the German steps, i.e. that a German fleet had put to sea, this development so impressed Mr. Churchill that he decided to have the contingents already embarked disembark once again, so that the British fleet would first be able to search for and attack German ships. This attempt ended in failure. Only a single English destroyer came into contact with the German naval forces and was shot out of the water. This vessel could not relay any sort of message to the British Admiralty or to the fleet of the English naval combat contingents. And thus, on the ninth, the landing of German forward units was carried out along a coastal front stretching from Oslo north to Narvik. When news of this reached London, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Churchill, had already been on the lookout for many hours—eagerly awaiting first reports of the successes of his fleet.

And this strike, my Deputies, was the most daring undertaking in the history of German warfare. Its successful implementation was possible only thanks to the leadership and the behavior of all German soldiers involved. What our three arms, the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, have accomplished in the struggle for Norway assures them mention in the records of the highest soldiery.

The Navy conducted its operations, and later handled the troop transports, faced by an enemy who, all in all, possessed an almost tenfold superiority. All units of our young Reich War Navy have covered themselves with eternal glory in this venture. Only after the war will it be appropriate to discuss the difficulties faced especially in this campaign: the numerous unexpected setbacks, losses, and accidents suffered. To have overcome all this in the end goes to the credit of the behavior, the leadership, and the troops.

The Luftwaffe, which often was the only means of transport and communications in so gigantically vast a terrain, outdid itself in all respects. Death-defying attacks on the enemy, on his ships and landing troops, are hardly more impressive than the tenacious heroics of the transport plane pilots, who in spite of unimaginably adverse weather started time and time again on their way to the land of the midnight sun, only to unload soldiers or freight in the midst of a snow storm.

Norway's fjords have become the graveyard of many a British warship. Because of the uninterrupted wild attacks of German bombers and Stukas, the British fleet was forced to retreat from and to evacuate the very arena of which a few weeks earlier an English newspaper had so tastefully stated "that it would be a pleasure for England to oblige the German invitation to do battle there."

The Army. The crossing already constituted a great challenge for the soldiers of the Army. In a few cases, airborne troops had opened up the area where they first set foot. Then division after division flooded the land which, due to its natural characteristics, already possessed considerable defenses, and which—as far as the Norwegian units were concerned—was very valiantly defended. Of the Englishmen who had landed in Norway, one can say that the only remarkable thing was the unscrupulousness with which such

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badly trained, insufficiently equipped, and miserably led soldiers had been put ashore as an expeditionary corps. From the beginning, they were certain to lose. By contrast, what our German infantry, the pioneers, what our artillery, our communications and construction units, have achieved in Norway can only be termed the proud heroism of struggle and labor.

The word Narvik will enter our history as glorious evidence of the spirit of the Wehrmacht of the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

The gentlemen Churchill, Chamberlain, Daladier, and so on, have, until recently, been exceedingly ill-informed as to the essence of the Greater German unification process. At the time, I announced that the future would probably teach them better. And I may well assume that in particular the deployment of mountain troops from the Ostmark at this front furthest north in our battle for freedom has enlightened them sufficiently as far as the Greater German Reich and its sons are concerned.

It is lamentable that the grenadiers of Mr. Chamberlain did not pay sufficient and, above all, persistent attention to this conflict, and instead preferred to be satisfied with the first test of the inner disposition of the tribes of our Volk which have newly come to the Reich.

General von Falkenhorst led operations in Norway. Lieutenant General Dietl was the hero of Narvik.

Operations at sea were conducted under the leadership of Admiral General Saalwächter and the Admirals Carls and Boehm, and Vice Admiral Lütjens. Operations of the Luftwaffe were under the leadership of Colonel General Milch and Lieutenant General Geissler. The High Command of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General Keitel, as the Chief of the High Command, and General Jodl, as the Chief of the Wehrmacht leadership staff, were responsible for implementing my directives for the entire undertaking.

Even before the conclusion of the campaign in Norway, news in the West took on an ever more threatening character.

While, in fact, preparations had been made before the war to break through the Maginot Line in the event of a necessary conflict with France or England, an undertaking for which the German troops had been trained and had been equipped with the weaponry required, the course of events in the first months of the war compelled us to contemplate the possibility of moving against Holland and Belgium. While Germany had positioned hardly any units against Belgium or the Netherlands, other than those necessary for security reasons, as well as beginning to expand upon its fortification system, a visible mass of French units began to array itself along the French-Belgian border. In particular, the concentration of tanks and motorized divisions in this sector revealed that it was intended—at any rate it was possible—for these to be hurled at lightning speed through Belgium at the German border. Decisive in this context was the following observation:

While, in the case of a loyal reading of the Belgian-Dutch neutrality, these two countries would have been forced, by the concentration of strong Anglo-French forces at their border, to focus their attention on the West, both began to reduce their troop strengths along this border to the same degree they began to build up the units stationed along the border with Germany. News

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of ongoing talks at the general staff level also shed a peculiar light on [this interpretation of] Belgian-Dutch neutrality. I need not emphasize that these talks, had they been conducted in the spirit of true neutrality, would have had to be held with both sides. Besides this, such an intensification of signs indicating that a move of the Anglo-French troops across Holland and Belgium against the German industrial area was taking place required that we should regard this threat as a serious danger.

Hence I took the German Wehrmacht into my confidence, informing it of the possibility of such a development and entrusting it with the appropriate, detailed directives. In numerous conferences at the High Command of the Wehrmacht with the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht, the leaders of the Army groups and of the armies, down to the leaders of important, individual undertakings, the tasks facing us were enumerated and thoroughly discussed. Among the troops these were taken up with great understanding, as the basis for a special type of training. Correspondingly, the entire German deployment underwent the necessary adjustments.

The thorough observations which had been conducted everywhere gradually led to the compelling recognition that, from the beginning of May on, an Anglo-French advance had to be expected at any moment.

In the days of May 6 and 7, telephone conversations between London and Paris took place, of which we gained intelligence and which reinforced suspicions that an invasion of the Netherlands and Belgium by the so-called Allies had to be expected at any moment. Thus on the following day, May 8, I ordered an immediate attack for May 10, 5:35 in the morning.

The basic thought behind this operation was to deploy, without worrying about peripheral successes, the entire Wehrmacht—especially the Army and the Luftwaffe—in so decisive a manner that the envisioned operations had to attain the complete annihilation of the Anglo-French forces. In contrast to the Schlieffen Plan of the year 1914, I ordered the main thrust of the operation along the left flank of the breakthrough front, while, however, keeping up appearances of a reversed version. This deception was successful. Conduct of the entire operation was made easy for me by measures our adversaries themselves took. For the concentration of the entire Anglo-French motorized combat forces against Belgium revealed as certain that the High Command of the Allied armies had arrived at the decision to advance most speedily into this area.

We relied on the steadfastness of all German infantry divisions deployed in the thrust against the right flank of the Anglo-French motorized Army Group. Such a drive had to lead to its complete shattering and dissolution—yes, perhaps even to its encirclement.

As a second operation, I had planned the taking of the Seine up to Le Havre, as well as securing bases at the Somme and Aisne for a third assault. This was intended to break through, with strong forces across the plateau at Langres, to the Swiss border. Reaching the coast south of Bordeaux was to conclude operations. Within this framework and in this sequence, operations were in fact carried out.

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The success of this mightiest sequence of battles in world history we owe first and foremost to the German soldier himself. He held his own at all places he was deployed to the highest degree. The German tribes all share equally in this glory.

The soldiers of the young, new Reichsgaus, added only since 1938, also fought in an exemplary fashion and took a heavy toll of lives. The heroic risk of life by all Germans in this war will make the emerging National Socialist Greater German Reich eternally sacred and dear not only to the present generation, but to all that follow.

When I undertake to honor all those forces to whose activities we owe this most glorious of victories, then first mention is due to a leadership which, in particular in this campaign, has met the highest of requirements.

The Army. It has performed the tasks imposed upon it, under the leadership of Colonel General von Brauchitsch and his Chief of Staff Halder, in a truly glorious fashion.

If the leadership of the German Army of long ago was regarded as the best in the world, then it is deserving today of at least equal admiration. Yes, since success is decisive for passing judgment, the leadership of the new German Army must be considered even better.

Subdivided into three Army Groups, the Army in the West was placed under the orders of Colonel Generals Ritter von Leeb, von Rundstedt, and von Bock.

The Army Group of General Ritter von Leeb had the initial mission to maintain the left flank of the German front in the West, stretching from the Swiss border up to the Moselle, in a state of highest defensive readiness. It was anticipated that, in the later course of the operation, this front would also actively intervene in the battle of destruction with two armies under the leadership of Colonel General von Witzleben and General Dollmann.

At 5:35 in the morning of May 10, the two Army Groups under Colonel Generals von Rundstedt and von Bock launched the attack. It was their mission, along the entire front from the river Moselle to the North Sea, to break through the enemy lines along the frontier; to occupy the Netherlands; to move against Antwerp and the troops stationed at Dyle; to take Liège; and, above all, to reach the left flank along the river Meuse with massive forces for the attack, to force a crossing between Namur and Carignan with a main thrust of the tank and motorized divisions at Sedan and, in the further course of operations, to assemble all available tank and motorized divisions to push onward, along the system of canals and rivers between the Aisne and the Somme, to the sea.

To Rundstedt's southern Army Group fell also the important task of preventing a repetition of the Miracle of the Marne of 1914. He was to accomplish this task by securing, according to plan, the cover of the left flank in the course of the breakthrough.

This massive operation, which already decided the further course of the war, led, as planned, to the annihilation of the main mass of the French Army as well as of the entire British Expeditionary Force, and already added luster to the German leadership.

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Besides the two leaders of the Army Groups and their Chiefs of Staff, Lieutenant General von Sodenstern and Lieutenant General von Salmuth, the following leaders of the Army are deserving of the highest of distinctions: Colonel General von Kluge as leader of the Fourth Army; Colonel General List as leader of the Twelfth Army; Colonel General von Reichenau as leader of the Sixth Army; General von Kùchler as leader of the Eighteenth Army; General Busch as leader of the Sixteenth Army; and the Generals von Kleist, Guderian, Hoth, and Hoepfner as leaders of the tank and motorized troops.

Large additional numbers of generals and officers who distinguished themselves in these operations are known to you already, my Deputies, because of the high distinctions granted them.

The further conduct of the operation in the general direction of the Aisne and the Seine was not intended to conquer Paris primarily, but rather to create, or better secure, a basis for a breakthrough to the Swiss border. This massive offensive action, thanks to the outstanding leadership of all grades, also went according to plan.

A change of personnel in the High Command of the French Army, which had meanwhile taken place, was to revive its resistance and to bring about a change, much desired by the Allies, in the fortunes of the battle so unhappily begun.

Indeed it was possible to get the German armies and their offensive actions going, at several locations, only after overcoming the strongest of resistance. Here, not only the courage, but also the training of the German soldier had the opportunity to hold its own to a high degree. Inspired by the zeal of countless officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as of individual men of valor, the infantry itself, time and time again, was compelled onward even in the most difficult of situations.

Paris fell! The breaking of the enemy's resistance at the Aisne opened the way to a breakthrough to the Swiss border. In one gigantic envelopment the armies stormed to the back of the Maginot Line. Now abandoning its reserve, the Army Group Leeb went on the offensive in two locations west of Saarbrücken and Neubreisach. Under orders from Generals von Witzleben and Dollmann, they achieved the breakthrough. And thus it was possible not only to surround the gigantic front of the French resistance, but to dissolve it into little particles and to force it to the well-known capitulation.

These operations were crowned by the now generally beginning advance of the German armies. At their head moved the incomparable Panzer and motor divisions of the Army with the goal of driving a left flank down the Rhône in the direction of Marseilles, and a right flank across the Loire in the direction of Bordeaux and the Spanish border. This was to destroy the dissolving remains of the French Army, or rather to occupy French territory.

I will report in detail at a later point on the intervention of our allies in this war. When Marshal Pétain offered France's laying down of arms, he was not laying down a weapon he still held. Rather he merely put an end to a situation completely untenable in the eyes of every soldier. Only the bloody diletantism of a Mr. Churchill either fails to comprehend as much or lies about it in spite of better knowledge.

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In the second, third, and last phase of this war, the following Army leaders distinguished themselves as did the earlier mentioned generals: Colonel General von Witzleben; the Generals von Weichs, Dollmann, Strauss. The valiant divisions and standards of the Waffen SS also fought within the framework of these armies.

When I express my gratitude and that of the German Volk to the aforementioned generals, in their capacity as leaders of the Army and Army Groups, this applies at the same time to all other officers, all of whom it is not possible to mention by name, and especially to all the nameless workers of the General Staff.

In this battle, my Deputies, the rank and file of Germany has proved itself to be what it has always been: the best infantry in the world.

And with it all other branches of the Army compete: artillery and pioneers, and, above all, the young units of our tanks and motorized troops. The German Panzer weapon, through this war, has made its entry into world history. The men of the Waffen SS share in the glory. Yet the communications units, the construction units of the pioneers, the railroad construction men, etc., are also worthy, in accordance with their performance, of the highest praise we have to offer. In the wake of the armies followed the commandos of the Todt Organization, of the Reich Labor Service, and of the NSKK, and these also helped to repair roads, bridges, as well as to restore order to traffic.

Within the framework of the Army, this time there also fought parts of the Flak artillery of our Luftwaffe. At the foremost front, they helped to break the enemy's power of resistance and attack. A detailed account of their effectiveness can be rendered only at a later date.

The Luftwaffe itself. At dawn on the morning of May 10, thousands of fighter planes and dive bombers, under the cover of fighters and destroyers, descended on enemy airfields. Within a few days uncontested air superiority was assured. And not for one minute in the further course of the battle was it allowed to slip.

Only where temporarily no German airplanes were sighted, could enemy fighters and bombers make short appearances. Besides this, their activities were restricted to night action. The Field Marshal [Göring] had the Luftwaffe under his orders during this mission in the war.

Its tasks were:

1. to destroy the enemy air forces, i.e. to remove these from the skies;
2. to support directly or indirectly the fighting troops by uninterrupted attacks;
3. to destroy the enemy's means of command and movement;
4. to wear down and break the enemy's morale and will to resist;
5. to land parachute troops as advance units.

The manner of their deployment in the operation in general, as well as their adjustment to the tactical demands of the moment, was exceptional. Without the valor of the Army, the successes attained should never have been possible. Equally true is it that, without the heroic mission of the Luftwaffe, the valor of the Army should have been for naught. Both Army and Luftwaffe are deserving of the greatest glory!

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The deployment of the Luftwaffe in the West took place under the personal command of Field Marshal Göring. His Chief of Staff: Major General Jeschonnek.

Both aerial fleets stood under orders of General der Flieger Sperrle and General der Flieger Kesselring. The Aviation Corps subordinate to them stood under orders of Generals der Flieger Grauert and Keller, Lieutenant General Loerzer, and Lieutenant General Ritter von Greim, as well as of Major General Freiherr von Richthofen. Both Flak Corps stood under orders of Flak Artillery General Weise and Major General Dessloch. The Ninth Aerial Division under Major General Coeler deserves special mention. The Commander of the Parachute Troops, General der Flieger Student, was severely wounded. The further conduct of the battle in the air in Norway was orchestrated by General der Flieger Stumpff.

While millions of German soldiers of the Army, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS took part in these battles, others could not be spared at home as they were needed for the buildup of the local reserve formations. Many of the most capable officers—as bitter as this was for them—were forced to conduct and oversee the training of those soldiers who, as reserve units, or perhaps in new formations, were to go to the front only later. Despite my sympathy for the inner sentiments of those who felt at a disadvantage, the greater common interest, as a matter of principle, was decisive. Party and State, Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, and SS sent every man to the front whom they were able to spare somehow. Yet, without securing a Replacement Army, a reserve air force, reserve SS formations, as well as Party and State in general, the war at the front could not have been waged.

As the organizers of the Replacement Army at home and of the armament and supplies for the Luftwaffe, the following have attained special merit: Artillery General Fromm and General der Flieger Udet.

I cannot conclude the enumeration of all these meritorious generals and admirals without paying tribute to those who are my closest co-workers in the Staff of the High Command of the Wehrmacht: Colonel General Keitel as Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, and Major General Jodl as his Chief of Staff. They have made the greatest of contributions to the realization of my plans and ideas throughout long months of many cares and much work.

An appreciation of the accomplishments of our Navy and its leaders will only be possible, to a full extent, at the end of the war. When I now conclude these purely military reflections on events, truth compels me to state the historic fact that none of this would have been possible without the disposition of the home front—or without, at its fore, the foundation, the work, and the activities of the National Socialist Party.

Already in 1919, in the age of great decline, it proclaimed its program for the establishment of a German People's Army and has stood up for it throughout the decades with a zealous determination. Without its activities, the conditions necessary for both the re-emergence of the German Reich and the creation of a German Wehrmacht would not have existed. Above all, it lent the struggle its ideological (*weltanschaulich*) foundation. To the senseless sacrifice of life of our democratic opponents in the interests of their

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plutocracies, it opposes the defense of a Volksgemeinschaft. Its activities have resulted in a solidarity between front and homeland, which regrettably did not exist in the World War. From its ranks, therefore, I should like to name the men, who along with countless others, attained great merit in securing the opportunity to celebrate victory in a new Germany:³⁹⁵

Party comrade Reich Minister Hess, himself an old soldier of the World War, has been one of the most loyal fighters for the erection of the present state and its Wehrmacht ever since the early days of the foundation of the Movement.

Party comrade Chief of Staff of the SA Lutze has organized the mass of millions of SA men, in the sense of supporting the state to the utmost, and has secured its pre- and post-military training. Party comrade Himmler has organized the entire security of our Reich as well as the units of the Waffen SS. Party comrade Hierl has been the founder and leader of the Reich Labor Service. Party comrade Ley is the guarantor of the behavior of the German worker. Party comrade and Reich Minister Major General Todt is the organizer of the production of armament and ammunition and has gained eternal merit as a master builder in the construction of our massive, strategic [!] road network as well as of the fortified front in the West. Party comrade Minister Goebbels is the leader of a propaganda apparatus whose refinement is best ascertained in comparison with that of the World War.

Among the numerous organizations of the home front, there remain to be mentioned the organization of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk, and of the NS Volkswohlfahrt under the leadership of Party comrade Hilgenfeldt, as well as the German Red Cross, and moreover the Reich Air Defense Association under the leadership of Flak Artillery General von Schroeder.

I cannot conclude this tribute without thanking the one man who, for years, has engaged himself in loyal, untiring, self-devouring work to realize my foreign policy directives. The name of Party comrade von Ribbentrop as Reich Foreign Minister shall remain tied for all eternity to the political rise of the German nation.

My Deputies! I have determined, as Führer and Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, to honor the most meritorious generals before the one forum which in truth represents the entire German Volk. I must place at their forefront a man to whom I have difficulty in expressing sufficient gratitude for the services which tie his name to the Movement, to the State, and, above all, to the German Luftwaffe.

Since the days of the foundation of the SA, Party Comrade Göring has been bound up in the development and rise of the Movement. Since we came to power, his capacity for work and willingness to take responsibility have accomplished deeds in numerous fields for the German Volk and the German Reich which cannot be excluded from the history of our Volk and Reich.

Since the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht, he has become the creator of the German Luftwaffe. It is granted to only a few mortals to create in the course of their lives a military instrument practically from nothing and to transform it into the mightiest weapon of its kind in the world. Above all, he has lent it his spirit.

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Field Marshal Göring as creator of the German Luftwaffe, and as an individual man, has made the greatest contribution to the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht. As the leader of the German Luftwaffe he has, in the course of the war up to date, created the prerequisites for victory. His merits are unequalled!

I name him Reichsmarschall³⁹⁴ of the Greater German Reich and award him the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.

For services rendered to the victory of German weaponry in the struggle for the freedom and future of our Greater German Reich, I hereby promote:³⁹⁵

The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Rundstedt, Commander in Chief of Army Group A, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General Ritter von Leeb, Commander in Chief of Army Group C, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Bock, Commander in Chief of Army Group B, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General List, Commander in Chief of the Twelfth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Kluge, Commander in Chief of the Fourth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Witzleben, Commander in Chief of the First Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Reichenau, Commander in Chief of the Sixth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal.³⁹⁶

I promote: General Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General Dollmann, Commander in Chief of the Seventh Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General Freiherr von Weichs, Commander in Chief of the Second Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁷ General von Kuechler, Commander in Chief of the Eighteenth Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁸ General Busch, Commander in Chief of the Sixteenth Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁹ General Strauss, Commander in Chief of the Ninth Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General von Falkenhorst, Military Commander in Norway, to the rank of Colonel General; General von Kleist, Commanding General of the Twenty-Second Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General;⁴⁰⁰ General Ritter von Schobert, Commanding General of the Seventh Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Guderian, Commanding General of the Nineteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Hoth, Commanding General of the Fifteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Haase, Commanding General of the Third Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Hoepfner, Commanding General of the Sixteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Fromm, Chief of Military Armament and Commander in Chief of the Replacement Army, to the rank of Colonel General. In consideration of unequalled services rendered I promote: Lieutenant General Dietl, Commanding General of the Mountain Corps in Norway, to the rank of Infantry General. As the first officer with the German Wehrmacht, I award him the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Pending a later recognition of all the leaders and officers of the Reich Navy, I promote: Admiral Carls, the Commanding Admiral of the Naval Station Baltic Sea and Commander in Chief of the Naval Troops East, to the rank of Admiral General.

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In appreciation of the unequaled accomplishments of the German Luftwaffe, I promote Colonel General Milch to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰¹ General der Flieger Sperrle to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰² General der Flieger Kesselring to the rank of Field Marshal.⁴⁰³ I promote General der Flieger Stumpff to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Grauert to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Keller to the rank of Colonel General; General of the Flak Artillery Weise to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Udet to the rank of Colonel General.

Furthermore, I promote to the rank of General der Flieger: Lieutenant General Geissler; Major General Jeschonnek; Lieutenant General Loerzer; Lieutenant General Ritter von Greim;⁴⁰⁴ and Major General Freiherr von Richthofen.⁴⁰⁵

In my High Command of the Wehrmacht I promote: Colonel General Keitel to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰⁶ Major General Jodl to the rank of Artillery General.

In announcing these promotions on the occasion of the most successful campaign in our history, before this forum and so before the entire nation, I thereby honor the entire Wehrmacht of the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

I cannot conclude my reflections on this battle without thinking of our ally here. Ever since there has been a National Socialist regime, its foreign policy has embraced two goals:

1. bringing about a true understanding and friendship with Italy and,
2. bringing about the same relationship with England.

My Party Comrades, you know that I was as driven by these conceptions twenty years ago as I was later.⁴⁰⁷ I have dealt with and defended these ideas as a journalist and in my speeches countless times, as long as I myself was a mere opposition leader in the democratic republic. I immediately undertook, as soon as the German Volk entrusted me with its leadership, to realize these oldest goals of National Socialist foreign policy in practical terms. It still saddens me today that, in spite of all my endeavors, I have not succeeded in obtaining this friendship with England which, I believe, should have been a blessing for both peoples; and especially because I was not able to do so despite my persistent, sincere efforts.

However, I am all the more happy that at least the first point in this program of my foreign policy was in fact realized. This I owe, above all, to the genius who today stands at the head of the Italian people. For it was possible only owing to his epoch-making activities for the two intellectually related revolutions to find each other, to finally seal in jointly-shed blood the alliance which is destined to procure a new life for Europe. That I myself have the honor to be a friend of this man gladdens me all the more in view of the unique story of his life, which bears evidence of as many similarities to my own as our two revolutions do to each other, and, beyond this, as does the history of the unification and rise of our two nations.

Ever since the resurrection of the German Volk, we have heard many voices of understanding from Italy. On the foundation of this mutual understanding grew a living community of interests. And finally this was set

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down in treaties. And when, last year, contrary to my expressed will and desire, this war was forced on the German Reich, a consultation on the further conduct of our two states involved Mussolini and me. The benefit derived for the Reich from the behavior of Italy was extraordinary. Not only economically did we profit from the situation and the stance of Italy, but also militarily. From the beginning, Italy tied down strong forces of our enemies and curtailed above all their freedom of strategic disposition. And when the Duce determined that the time had come to take a stand with the weapon in his fist against the unbearable and persistent violation of Italy, damage done in particular by French and British transgression, and the King issued the declaration of war, then this was done with complete freedom of decision. All the greater must our gratitude be.

The intercession of Italy has sped up and assisted in opening France's eyes to the utter hopelessness of continued resistance.

And ever since, our ally has fought on the peaks and ridges of the Alps and now on the vast plains encompassed in his sphere of interest. Especially his present air attacks and battles at sea are being led with the spirit peculiar to the Fascist Revolution. Here they elicit the spirit which binds National Socialism to Fascist Italy. Italy's pain is Germany's pain, as we have experienced in recent days in view of the death of Balbo.⁴⁰⁸ Its joy is our joy.

And our cooperation in the political and military fields is a complete one. It will erase the injustice done the German and Italian peoples throughout the centuries. For, at the end of everything, stands the shared victory!

And when I now turn to speak of the future, my Deputies, I do so not to boast or brag. This I can well leave up to others who are in greater need of it, as for example Mr. Churchill. What I want to do is to paint a picture of the present situation, bare of exaggeration, as it is and as I see it.

1. The course of events in the ten months of war now lying behind us has proved my assessments correct and those of our adversaries incorrect.

When the British so-called statesmen assure us that their country emerges strengthened from every defeat and failure, then it surely is no arrogance when I inform them that we emerge at least equally strengthened from our successes.

On September 1 of the year now past, I already explained to you that, come what may, neither the force of weapons nor time shall force Germany to the ground. The Reich today stands stronger militarily than ever before. You have seen the losses, individually surely heavy, though as a total relatively low, which the German Wehrmacht has suffered in battle within the past three months. When you consider that, within this time, we erected a front which reaches from the North Cape to the Spanish border, then our losses are extraordinarily low, especially when compared with those of the World War. The cause lies—besides with the, on an average, excellent leadership—with the outstanding tactical training of the individual soldier and of the units, as well as with the cooperation among the branches of the service.

Another cause is to be found with the quality and efficiency of the new weaponry. A third cause lies with the conscious refusal to pursue what is called prestige. I myself have, on principle, labored to avoid any attack or

operation which was not necessary in the context of the actual annihilation of the adversary, but was instead to be carried out for the sake of what was regarded as prestige.

In spite of all of this, naturally, we had anticipated far higher losses in many instances. The manpower saved will benefit us in the further pursuit of the struggle for freedom forced upon us. At present, many of our divisions in France are being withdrawn and reassigned to their bases at home. Many men are able to take leaves of absence. Weaponry and equipment are being either repaired or replaced by new material. All in all, the Wehrmacht today is stronger than ever before.

2. Weaponry. The loss of weaponry in Norway, especially in the campaigns against Holland, Belgium, and France, is void of any significance. It stands in no relation to production. Army and Luftwaffe possess at this moment—as I am speaking to you—equipment more complete and stronger than before we intervened in the West.

3. Ammunition. Provisions for ammunition were so well executed, the stocks are so vast, that in many areas production must now be curtailed or rerouted since the existing depots and warehouses, even given the greatest of efforts, in part are no longer capable of absorbing further deliveries. As in Poland, the consumption of ammunition was unexpectedly low. It stands in no relation to the stockpiles. The total reserves of the Army and the Luftwaffe are higher at present, for all categories of weapons, than before the attack in the West.

4. Raw materials essential to the war effort. Thanks to the Four-Year Plan, Germany was prepared for the greatest of strains in an exemplary fashion. No armed forces in the world, other than Germany's Wehrmacht, have so benefited from a shift away from imported raw materials essential to the war effort to such as can be found within the country.

Thanks to the work of the Reichsmarschall, this transformation of the German economy into a war economy characterized by self-sufficiency was already achieved in peacetime. [!] We possess reserves of the two most important raw materials, coal and iron, in what I may well term an unlimited quantity. Fuel supplies are more than enough for consumption. The capacities of our production are increasing and, within a short time, they will suffice—even should imports cease—to satisfy demand completely.

Our advance metal collections have so increased our metal reserves that we can face a war of no matter what duration. We shall reign supreme no matter what happens. Added to this are the enormous possibilities that come from a yet immeasurable loot and including the development of the territories we have occupied. Germany and Italy possess, within the confines of the area they regulate and control, an economic potential of about 200 million men, of whom only 130 million are soldiers, with seventy million free to be employed exclusively in different economic activities.

I informed you on September 1, my Deputies, that for the further conduct of the war I had ordered the initial implementation of a new Five-Year Plan.⁴⁰⁹ I can now assure you that all measures to this end have been taken. Come what may, I now no longer regard time as a threatening factor, not even in

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a general sense. This time, the measures taken in a timely fashion have also secured foodstuffs for a war of no matter how long a duration.

5. The attitude of the German Volk. Thanks to National Socialist education, the German Volk has not approached this war with the superficiality of a "hurrah" patriotism, but with the zealous determination of a race which knows the fate awaiting it should it suffer defeat. The endeavors to subvert this unity, launched by the propaganda of our enemies, are as stupid as they are ineffective. Ten months of war have rendered this zealousness all the more profound. And, in general, it is a great misfortune that the world's opinion is not formed by men who see things as they are, but by men who see them as they want them to be.

In the last days, I have seen through and studied countless documents from the Allied Headquarters' "Ark of the Covenant." Among other things, these contain reports on the atmosphere in Germany, or memoranda on the disposition and inner attitude of the German Volk. The authors of these reports were, in part, also diplomats. Reading through these reports, one cannot help wondering whether their authors were blind, stupid, or simply vile scoundrels. I will admit without further ado that, naturally, here in Germany also there have been, and perhaps still are today, certain individuals who have watched the Third Reich's conquests with a feeling akin to regret. Incurable reactionaries or blind nihilists may well be saddened in their hearts that things came out not as they had willed them. But their numbers are ridiculously small and their significance is smaller yet.

Regrettably, this scum of the nation appears to have been chosen by the outside world as a measuring stick by which to assess the German Volk. And from this, the sick minds of failed statesmen derive the last points of orientation to cling to for new hope. As needed, the British warlords designate a "General Hunger" or an "imminent revolution" as their new allies. There is no nonsense that these people would not dish up for their own nation in order to cling to their positions for yet a few more weeks.

The German Volk has proved, above all, its inner attitude through its sons who are fighting on the battlefield. Within weeks they have beaten Germany's strongest military adversary and have destroyed him. Their spirit was and remains the spirit of the German homeland.

6. The surrounding world. In the eyes of English politicians, their last hopes, besides those resting with the loyal and allied nations, lie with a series of propped-up heads of state without thrones; statesmen without subjects; and generals without armies; as well as on renewed complications they believe they can conjure up thanks to their well-proven deftness in such matters. A true Ahasuerus amongst these hopes is the belief in a possible new estrangement to separate Germany and Russia.

German-Russian relations have been established for good.⁴¹⁰ The reason for this was that England and France, with the support of certain smaller states, incessantly attributed to Germany ambitions to conquer terrain which lay completely outside the sphere of German interests. At one time, Germany was eyeing the occupation of the Ukraine; then again it sought to invade Finland; at another time it was claimed that Romania was threatened; then finally even

Turkey was endangered. Given these circumstances, I held it to be proper to undertake, above all, with Russia, a sober delineation of interests, to once and for all clarify what Germany believes it must regard as its sphere of interest in securing its future, and what in turn Russia holds to be vital to its existence.

Based on this clear delineation of mutual spheres of interest, the Russo-German relationship was revised. It is childish to hope that in the course of this revision tensions might arise anew between Germany and Russia. Germany has not stepped outside its sphere of interest, and neither has Russia.⁴¹¹

England is deceived in its hope of bringing about a new European crisis to relieve its own situation, insofar as the relationship of Germany to Russia is concerned. Though the British statesmen are chronically slow in their comprehension of almost everything, they will surely come to understand this in the course of time.⁴¹²

I fancy I correctly forecast the future development of this war in my speech of October 6. I assure you, my Deputies, that not for a moment could I doubt victory. And, unless one feels the need to see signs and guarantees for the final victory exclusively in defeats, then I believe that the course of events up to this point has proved me right. As I was certain of this course of events, I offered my hand to France and England at the time for an understanding. You still recall the answer I received. My arguments against the nonsense of pursuing this war, on the certainty of gaining nothing, even under the most favorable of circumstances, and of losing much, were mocked and scoffed at, or passed over.

I promptly assured you then that I feared, because of my peace proposal, to be decried as a cockerel who no longer wants to fight because he is no longer able to fight. And this is exactly what happened. I now believe that France—less the guilty statesmen than the people—thinks differently about this October 6 today. What nameless misery has befallen this great country and people since then. I shall not even mention the toll of suffering the war has placed on the soldier. For above this stands the suffering caused by the recklessness of those who drove millions of people from their homes without proper cause, who were compelled by the thought that this might somehow hamper the German war effort. This premise defied comprehension: this evacuation was mostly to the detriment of the Allied war effort and, moreover, it was the most cruel experience for the unfortunate afflicted. The injury the gentlemen Churchill and Reynaud have done millions of people, through their advice and commands—this they can neither justify in this world nor in the next.

All of this—as I said—need not have happened. For peace was all I asked of France and England in October. But the gentlemen war profiteers wanted a continuation of this war at all cost. They have it now.

I myself am too much a soldier not to comprehend the tragedy of such a development. Still all I hear from London are cries—not the cries of the masses, but of the politicians—that this war must now, all the more, be pursued. I do not know if these politicians have an inkling of just how this war is in fact to be pursued. They declare that they will continue this war, and

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should England fall, then they will do so from Canada. I do not believe this means that the English people will all emigrate to Canada, but rather that the gentlemen war profiteers will all retreat to Canada by themselves. I fear the people will have to remain behind in England. And, assuredly, they will see the war with different eyes in London than their so-called leaders in Canada.

Believe me, my Deputies, I feel an inner disgust at this type of unscrupulous parliamentarian annihilators of peoples and states. It is almost painful to me to have been chosen by Providence to give a shove to what these men have brought to the point of falling. It was not my ambition to wage wars, but to build up a new social state of the highest culture.⁴¹³

And every year of war takes me away from my work. And the cause of this robbery is those ludicrous zeroes whom one could at best call nature's political run of the mill,⁴¹⁴ insofar as their corrupted vileness does not brand them as something out of the ordinary.

Mr. Churchill has repeated the declaration that he wants war. About six weeks ago now, he launched this war in an arena in which he apparently believes he is quite strong: namely, in the air war against the civilian population, albeit beneath the deceptive slogan of a so-called war against military objectives. Ever since Freiburg,⁴¹⁵ these objectives have turned out to be open cities, markets, villages, residential housing, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, and whatever else happens to be hit.

Up to now I have given little by way of response. This is not intended to signal, however, that this is the only response possible or that it shall remain this way.

I am fully aware that with our response, which one day will come, will also come the nameless suffering and misfortune of many men. Naturally, this does not apply to Mr. Churchill himself since by then he will surely be secure in Canada, where the money and the children of the most distinguished of war profiteers have already been brought. But there will be great tragedy for millions of other men. And Mr. Churchill should make an exception and place trust in me when as a prophet I now proclaim:

A great world empire will be destroyed. A world empire which I never had the ambition to destroy or as much as harm. Alas, I am fully aware that the continuation of this war will end only in the complete shattering of one of the two warring parties. Mr. Churchill may believe this to be Germany. I know it to be England.⁴¹⁶

In this hour I feel compelled, standing before my conscience, to direct yet another appeal to reason in England. I believe I can do this as I am not asking for something as the vanquished, but rather, as the victor, I am speaking in the name of reason. I see no compelling reason which could force the continuation of this war.

I regret the sacrifices it will demand. I would like to spare my Volk. I know the hearts of millions of men and boys aglow at the thought of finally being allowed to wage battle against an enemy who has, without reasonable cause, declared war on us a second time.

But I also know of the women and mothers at home whose hearts, despite their willingness to sacrifice to the last, hang onto this last with all their might.

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Mr. Churchill may well belittle my declaration again, crying that it was nothing other than a symptom of my fear, or my doubts of the final victory. Still I will have an easy conscience in view of things to come.⁴⁷

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In reflecting on the ten months lying behind us, all of us will surely feel overcome by the grace of Providence which allowed us to accomplish so great a task. It has blessed our resolves and stood by us on many a difficult path. I myself am touched in recognition of the calling it imparted to me to restore freedom and honor to my Volk. The disgrace we suffered for twenty-two years and which had its beginnings in the Forest of Compiègne was erased forever at the very same site. Today I have named the men who, before history, enabled me to accomplish this great task. They have done their best, dedicating their talents and their industry to the German Volk.

I now wish to conclude in mentioning all those nameless men who have no less done their duty. Millions of them have risked life and liberty and, as brave German officers and soldiers, have been ready at every hour to make the last sacrifice a man can make. Today many of them rest in the same graves in which their fathers have rested since the Great War. They bear evidence to silent heroism. They stand as a symbol for all those hundreds of thousands of musketeers, anti-tank gunners and tank gunners, pioneers and artillerymen, soldiers of the Navy and the Luftwaffe, men of the Waffen SS, and all those other fighters who stood for the German Wehrmacht in the struggle for the freedom and future of our Volk and for the eternal greatness of the National Socialist Greater German Reich. *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

5

Hitler's "generous peace proposal" consisted of an "appeal to reason" which England was to take to heart: an appeal to end the war. In other words, Hitler desired complete and unquestioning subjection to his will. This meant primarily that Great Britain was to allow him a free hand on the Continent. In turn, he would prove his "generosity" by permitting England to remain unscathed; he would touch neither the British homeland nor its colonies—at least for the time being.

During the war as well as in later years, the conviction was voiced repeatedly that events might well have taken a different turn had only Hitler proved even more "conciliatory" on this July 19, 1940, perhaps making small concessions on the occupied territories in Poland and France. This notion is greatly mistaken in underestimating both the determination of Hitler and of Britain.

Once Hitler had conquered certain lands, he no longer accepted anyone's interference in what he considered his own affairs. He firmly believed that the concessions he made in his speech of July 19, 1940 were "generous" simply because he did not castigate the British for their impudent declaration of war and because he demonstrated his willingness to respect the territorial integrity of the British Empire and mother country.

The English, for their part, were determined to fight on. They were not willing to conclude peace with Hitler's regime, no matter how generous an offer it might put forward. Churchill had made things perfectly clear from the start:⁴¹⁸ "It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end."

Peace had been possible between September 1, 1939, and September 3, 1939, at 11:00 in the morning. Between then and Hitler's death at 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 1945, there was no chance of a peace settlement with

Britain, with the possible exception of his voluntary capitulation. But he could and would “never, never” capitulate, as he proclaimed countless times, for capitulation meant to him only one thing: “submission to the will of another!”⁴¹⁹

On that July 19, 1940, Hitler did not have to wait long for a British response to his peace proposal. Barely one hour after the speech, the BBC aired a categorical rejection of the overture. Hitler’s entourage was at a loss at this unexpected turn of events. Heads were hanging low, for this proved the supposedly omniscient Führer to have been greatly mistaken—and this in a crucial instance. Ciano, who was present when the shocking news reached Berlin, recorded the following in his diary: “In fact, late in the evening, when the first cold English reactions to the speech arrive, a sense of ill-concealed disappointment spreads among the Germans.”⁴²⁰

The most depressed among them was undoubtedly Hitler. He was no more prepared for this rejection of his peace offer than he had been for the British declaration of war. In his mind, he had done everything possible to restore the peace. He was at his wits’ end and had no idea what to do. He had never even contemplated actually having to wage war against England. He had worked against the English with bluffs, threats, and indirect methods of warfare: blockades; submarine war; magnetic mines; air battles; and so on. What is more, even later he would not be able to put anything else into the field against them.

In the late summer months of 1940, Hitler’s insecurity was so apparent that even photographs taken during this period reveal him to be greatly disconcerted. When talking to a visitor either at the Reich Chancellery or at the Berghof, he sat on the edge of his chair, anxiously bent forward, hands pressed together, eyes staring straight ahead. The time had come for what Churchill had prophesied on November 12, 1939:⁴²¹

I have the sensation and also the conviction that that evil man over there and his cluster of confederates are not sure of themselves, as we are sure of ourselves; that they are harassed in their guilty souls by the thought and by the fear of an ever-approaching retribution for their crimes, and for the orgy of destruction in which they have plunged us all.

When Ciano called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery on the day after the speech, he felt this impression confirmed. In fact, Hitler found it difficult to conceal his deep disappointment with England’s negative reaction to his proposal:⁴²²

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He would like an understanding with Great Britain. He knows that war with the English will be hard and bloody, and knows also that people everywhere today are averse to bloodshed.

Also on July 20, Hitler attended to his correspondence with Mussolini. The Duce sent him the following telegram:⁴²³

The wording of your great Reichstag speech went straight to the heart of the Italian people. I thank you, and I repeat to you, that come what may, the Italian people will march alongside yours unto the end, i.e. unto victory.

To this renewed assurance of Mussolini's determination to march at his side until the end,⁴²⁴ Hitler replied:

I thank you, Duce, for your friendly telegram. United in our world views and allied by the force of our weapons, Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany will fight victoriously for the freedom of their peoples!

Moreover, Hitler presented his friend Mussolini with a personal gift to be handed over to the Duce on July 22, just outside of Rome: a train equipped with anti-aircraft guns.⁴²⁵

On July 20, Hitler received Infantry General Dietl at the Reich Chancellery. In front of the cameras, he presented the first officer with the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves.⁴²⁶

On July 21, Hitler apparently still cherished the hope that England was not yet "clear" in its response to his offer, because hitherto only the British press and broadcast had reacted to his speech, while the Cabinet had not yet issued any formal statement. According to Halder's notes, Hitler argued the following in a conference with the generals:⁴²⁷

Führer: Not clear what will develop in England. Preparations for an armed decision must be made as quickly as possible. The Führer does not want the mil. pol. [military and political] initiative to be taken from him. Once clarity, pol. and diplomatic initiatives will be resumed.

Reasons for England continuing the war:

1. Hopes for turn [!] in America: (Roosevelt unsure; industry does not want to invest; England runs into danger [!] of relinquishing position as supreme sea power to America).

2. Hopes on Russia. England's situation hopeless. The war is won by us. Reversal of prospects for success impossible. [—]

Crossing [the Channel] appears too great a risk to the Führer. Crossing only when no other way open of putting an end to England [!].

England perhaps sees the following opportunities: spread unrest in the Balkans through Russia, to take fuel from us and to paralyze our air fleet. Same objective in rallying Russia against us. Air attacks against our hydrogenation plants. [—]

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If England wants to continue to wage war, then efforts to recruit politically against England: Spain, Italy, Russia.

By mid-September England must have been dealt with, i.e. when we step up to the attack. [—]

Take up Russian problem. Make mental preparations. [—]

a) Troop concentration needs four to six weeks.

b) Either defeat Russian Army or, at the least, take hold of Russian soil insofar as necessary to preclude enemy air attacks against Berlin and Silesian industrial area. Desired to penetrate so far that the Luftwaffe can be employed to destroy most important areas in Russia.

c) Political goal: Ukrainian Empire, Baltic States Union, Belorussia-Finland, Balkans—thorn in the flesh.

d) Necessary 80 to 100 div. [divisions]; Russia has 50 to 75 good div.

If we attack Russia this autumn, will relieve England in the air. America can then make deliveries to England and Russia.

These statements revealed in just how confused a state of mind Hitler was during those days. On the one hand, he still harbored the hope of “putting an end” to England without having to resort to war. On the other, he was searching for ways to strike at Britain most effectively in the event of war. To this end, he wished to “recruit politically . . . Spain, Italy, Russia,” while he was likewise considering how to deal the Soviet Union a deadly blow in order to checkmate England.

On July 22, Hitler’s hopes for a peaceful understanding were disappointed for good. In an evening radio address, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, rejected the German “peace proposal.” In an official statement, he proclaimed:⁴²⁸

We will see this fight through, even if it takes everything we have. Nobody entertains any doubts that, if Hitler should succeed, this would signal the end of all that makes life worth living.

On July 23, still under the impression of these sobering developments, Hitler attended a performance of Richard Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* (The Twilight of the Gods) at the Bayreuth Festival—another omen of things to come.⁴²⁹

As much as Hitler hated to admit it, he did realize that his attempt of July 19 had failed. His talented oratory had not opened the way for peace accords with England. Now, to use his own words, it had become imperative to “recruit politically against England,” if possible, “Spain, Italy, Russia.”⁴³⁰

This was easier said than done, of course. For the time being, the Führer had no other choice than to seek the assistance of this “junk

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destined for destruction” from the First World War, those “rotten corpses” of Balkan states,⁴³¹ which he so despised. But beggars can’t be choosers.

And thus it came about that, already on July 26, the Royal Romanian Minister-President, Gigurtu, and his Foreign Minister, Manoilescu, arrived at Salzburg “by invitation by the Reich Government.” Hitler, who had in the meantime returned to the Obersalzberg, received them in the afternoon at the Berghof. There the men entered into a discussion “in the spirit of the existing friendly relations between Germany and Romania.”⁴³²

In early July, Hitler had sent a rather patronizing letter to the Romanian King telling him he “could well cede a little something to Hungary and Bulgaria.”⁴³³ Now, however, Hitler offered not only a more favorable settlement of pending territorial issues, but also an extension of the guarantee to cover the entire state. The only problem with this guarantee was that Hitler’s idea of it did not correspond to that of the Romanians. He desired to use this guarantee to cloak an occupation of Romania by German troops in an effort to gain hold of the vital Romanian oil fields.

On July 27, Hitler received more “junk” politicians from the Balkan states at the Berghof. This time the callers were the Royal Bulgarian Minister-President, Filov, and his Foreign Minister, Popov. Again the meeting took place “in the spirit of the heartfelt, traditional friendship tying Bulgaria and the Reich ever since their days as brothers in arms in the World War.”⁴³⁴ Despite the guarantee extended to Romania the day before, Hitler now whetted the Bulgarians’ appetite for a strip of land located within Romania: the Dobrudja region.

Understandably, Hitler had no time or heart for such tedious responsibilities as giving “culture speeches.” To Rudolf Hess fell the task of speaking at the opening of the “Greater German Art Exhibition” in Munich on July 27. This was the first time Hess served in this capacity, and it was destined to be the last time!

On July 28, the Slovak State President, Tiso, and the Slovak Minister-President, Tuka, visited the Obersalzberg. In their company was Sano Mach, who was awaiting appointment as Slovakia’s next Minister of the Interior and Exterior. This conference was also characterized by “the spirit of heartfelt and friendly agreement.”⁴³⁵ To please the Slovaks, Hitler designated SA Gruppenführer Manfred von Killinger as the new German Envoy in Bratislava.⁴³⁶ This appointment heralded a whole series of similar ones in which SA Gruppenführers

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were named as envoys to a variety of states in the Balkans.⁴³⁷ This was less a sign of appreciation for the SA than of the contempt Hitler felt for these new German satellite states.

On July 29, Hitler hosted another Bulgarian at the Obersalzberg. The German News Bureau reported: "The Generalissimo of the World War, Infantry General Shekov, has heeded the invitation of the Commander in Chief of the Army to tour combat zones and facilities in the West."⁴³⁸

On the same day, Hitler congratulated Mussolini in a telegram on his birthday:⁴³⁹

In comradely attachment, I express to you, Duce, on the occasion of your birthday today my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk. These are for your personal welfare, the success of your state leadership, and the victorious conclusion of the fight we both are leading for the freedom of our peoples.

Adolf Hitler

Also on July 29, Hitler sent out a telegram to the Italian King on the fortieth anniversary of his accession to the throne:⁴⁴⁰

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk on the fortieth anniversary of your accession to the throne. May Your Majesty enjoy, after the victorious conclusion of the fight forced on our two peoples, a long and prosperous reign.

For 11:30 a.m. on July 31, another conference was scheduled at the Berghof with the Third Reich's military leaders. Once more, Halder's notes on the meeting reveal the confusion reigning in Hitler's mind at the time. He grasped at every straw to induce the English to yield. He was still hoping for the submarine and aerial warfare to bear fruits belatedly, only to arrive once more at the idea of attacking Russia. According to his calculations, the British had already felt completely "down" before the idea of turning to Russia had served to uplift them once more. If only Russia were eliminated, the English would go "down" once again and for good. Moreover, Hitler speculated that eliminating the Soviet Union would improve Japan's position in Asia immensely, a fact which would serve to preoccupy and tie down the United States.

Halder's notes on the discussion of a possible landing in England read:⁴⁴¹

Führer: Consider for crossing: a) natural weather conditions, no force possible against (admits to storm flood potential); b) enemy action.

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If enemy action, Army need count only on bad British forces. No advantage has been taken of their combat experience. New formations not possible to date. In 8 to 10 months new formations possible: Equipment for 30 to 35 div [divisions] by spring. On location that means a lot. Perhaps destroy production sites in the war in the air as to hinder new formations. Possibilities for propaganda. This is opposed by possible hopes on Russia and America. Questionable staying power of Italians, namely, East Africa. What can be done in the meantime, besides war in the air? If attack on E. not possible at present, then in May only. How can we bridge gap until May (draw Spain in).

Proposal Army: Support Italians in North Africa. 2 Pz. Div. [Panzer divisions].

Führer: Must investigate these diversions. Repercussions for France? Truly decisive action only through attack on England. [—]

[Here follow details on Raeder's comparison of German-British fleets]

Führer: Hindrance, if things continue. War in the air starts now. It will determine comparative strengths we will get. If result of war in the air unsatisfactory, then halt preparations. If impression that the English are being thrown down and, after some time, effects set in, then attack. Put up with economic difficulties for another ten days. In case of postponement until next year, refurbishing of lighters can continue throughout the winter.

Diplomatic actions: Spain. Question of North Africa being discussed. Führer considering action against enemy harbors. Action against fleet? Stukas against armored decks.

Order: Continue preparations; decision in eight to ten days on actual attack; prepare for date September 15, broad base.

Führer: asks about U-boat action.

[Following Raeder's presentation and departure, Hitler continues:]

Führer: a) Emphasizes skepticism techn. [technical] possibilities]. Even content with accomplishments of the Navy. b) Stresses weather. c) Discusses possibility of enemy action. Our small Navy 15% of enemy; 8% of enemy destroyers; E-boats equal to 10—12% of enemy. Defenses at sea = 0. Remains: mines [not completely reliable]. Coast art. [artillery]—good! Luftwaffe. Decision will take in consideration that we are not risking anything in vain.

d) Exception: England steps down; elimination of hopes which might cause England to anticipate a turn [of events] still. War actually won. France eliminated for British convoy duty; Italy ties down British forces. Submarine warfare and war in the air decisive but will last one to two years.

England's hopes are Russia and America. If hope on Russia is eliminated, then America is eliminated because elimination of Russia will lead to enormous increase in importance of Japan in East Asia. Russia is England's and America's East Asian sword against Japan. Here no smooth sailing for England. Japanese have their own agenda, like the Russians, which is to be carried out before the end of the war.

Russian victory film on Russian war! Russia is factor England counts on the most. Something has happened in London! The English were quite "down" already, now they stand tall again. Tapped conversations. Russia uneasy about swift development of situation in Western Europe.

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Russia need not say more to English than that it never again wants to see Germany great, and already the Englishman, like a man drowning, hopes that things will look differently in six to eight months. Once Russia is defeated, then England will be robbed of its last hope. The master of Europe and the Balkans will then be Germany.

Resolve: An end must be put to Russia in the course of this confrontation. Spring 1941. The quicker we defeat Russia the better. Operation makes sense only if we destroy this state in one strike. A certain amount of territorial gains insufficient as such. Standstill in winter dangerous. Hence better to wait though resolve certain to destroy Russia. Necessary also because of situation in Baltic Sea.

Second great power on Baltic Sea troublesome. May '41. Five months time for completion. Preferably this year still. Not possible to ensure synchronized conduct of operation.

Goal: Destruction of vital power of Russia. Subdivide into:

1. Push through Kiev. Follow Dnieper. Luftwaffe destroys crossings Odessa.
2. Push through border states in the direction of Moscow.

Subsequent concentration to the North and South. Later partial operations oil field Baku. Insofar as Finland and Turkey might take interest remains to be seen. Later: Ukraine, Belorussia, Baltic States, for us. Finland up to the White Sea.

7 Div. [divisions] Norway (autarky) Mun.

50 Div. France

3 Div. Holland, Belgium

60 Div.

120 Div. for East

180 Div.

The more contingents we come with, the better. We have 120 plus 20 div. on leave. Formation by pulling out one battalion from every div. After a few months, pull out another div. in three sections from divisions 1/3.

Cover operations: Spain, North Africa, England, new formations in areas with air cover.

New formations: In the East: 40 div. with combat-tested troops. Details on intended settlement Balkans: Intended settlement Hungary/Romania. Then guarantee Romania.

On August 1, another disillusionment awaited Hitler. A project he had earlier launched to sow discord in England and to force London to its knees proved to be wishful thinking on this day as the Duke of Windsor set sail for the Bahamas. The German Envoy in Lisbon, Baron von Hoyningen-Huene, was forced to report that the Duke had not reacted as hoped for to clandestine German overtures. Instead, the Duke of Windsor had accepted a post as governor in Nassau. Ludicrously, Hitler had truly believed he could, given the Duke's cooperation, oust the British Government from office.⁴⁴²

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In view of these repeated failures, Hitler turned his attention to the Luftwaffe in order “to overcome the English Air Force . . . in the shortest possible time” and “to establish the conditions necessary for the final conquest of England.” On this August 1, Hitler issued Directive No. 17 for the Conduct of Air and Naval Warfare against England:⁴⁴³

In order to establish the conditions necessary for the final conquest of England, I intend to continue the air and naval war against the English homeland more intensively than heretofore.

To this end I issue the following orders:

1. The German air arm is to overcome the English Air Force with all means at its disposal and in the shortest possible time. The attacks are to be directed primarily against the planes themselves, their ground organization, and their supply installations, also against the aircraft industry, including plants producing anti-aircraft material.

2. After gaining temporary or local air superiority, the air war is to be carried on against harbors, especially against establishments connected with food supply, and also against similar establishment in the interior of the country.

Attacks on the harbors of the south coast are to be undertaken on the smallest scale possible, in view of our own intended operations.

3. On the other hand, air attacks on warships and merchantmen of the enemy may be diminished, unless particularly advantageous targets of opportunity offer themselves, unless additional effect would be achieved in connection with actions described in paragraph 2, and unless such attacks are necessary to train crews for future operations.

4. The intensified air war is to be carried out in such a manner that the Luftwaffe can be called upon at any time to support naval operations against advantageous targets of opportunity in sufficient strength. Also, it is to stand by in force for operation *Seelöwe*.

5. I reserve for myself the decision on terror attacks as a means of reprisal.

6. The intensified air war may commence on or after August 5. The exact time is to be selected by the Luftwaffe itself according to the weather, after preparations have been completed.

The Navy is authorized to begin the projected intensified naval warfare at the same time.

Adolf Hitler

The “intensified air war” (*verschärfter Luftkrieg*) that Hitler desired was scheduled to begin on August 5, or a few days later. Special instructions for “terror attacks” he reserved for another time. These measures would find their application only if the Royal Air Force obstinately held on, and no change in the situation became apparent within a few days or weeks.

On August 2, Artillery General Ulex placed a wreath at Hindenburg’s tomb in Hitler’s name.⁴⁴⁴ On the same day, Hitler empowered the

President of the German Reichsbank to appoint permanent representatives.⁴⁴⁵

On August 5, Hitler named “Party Comrade Abetz,” then “Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Ministry with the Military Commander in Chief in France,” Ambassador to that now occupied country.⁴⁴⁶

The next day, Hitler spoke in Berlin-Lichterfelde at an exhibition hosted by the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler*.⁴⁴⁷

On August 7, Hitler distinguished Dr. Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach as “pioneer of labor” on his seventieth birthday and transmitted to him a document and badge to this effect. The award read:⁴⁴⁸

On the basis of my command regarding the distinction “exemplary National Socialist enterprise” of August 29, 1936, I designated the enterprise Friedrich Krupp AG (Essen) as a “National Socialist Musterbetrieb” on May 1, 1940 in recognition of its outstanding achievements in war and peace. The head of this enterprise, Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, through his personal dedication has the greatest share in this distinction. Therefore, on this day, on a proposal by the Reichsleiter of the German Labor Front, I bestow on Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, as the first German head of enterprise, the distinction “Pionier der Arbeit” and the pertinent medal in gold.

Berlin, August 7, 1940

Adolf Hitler

In the morning of that August 7, at the “Villa Hügel” in Essen, Hitler personally presented Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach with the Party Badge in Gold. Thereafter he toured a number of Krupp factories.⁴⁴⁹

On the same day, Hitler filled a series of administrative posts in Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg, which signaled the incorporation of these territories into the Reich. In previous years, Hitler had repeatedly and solemnly renounced Alsace-Lorraine, and declared the Reich’s frontier in the West to be a “final” one. In 1940, however, the French had not been “worthy,” and consequently as a punishment they now had to give up Alsace-Lorraine—just as the Belgians had been compelled to give up Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet. Luxembourg, too, was to vanish from the political map because the Grand Duchess had fled! In installing his “new order” in the West,⁴⁵⁰ Hitler complied with the nationalist slogans of the 1920s.⁴⁵¹ Alsace he entrusted to the Gauleiter of Baden, while he assigned Lorraine to the Gauleiter of the Saarpfalz. Luxembourg fell into the hands of the Gauleiter of Koblenz and Trier.⁴⁵² Bürckel, Hitler’s favorite specialist in questions of annexations, was relieved of his post in Vienna so that he could take care of matters in Lorraine. The previous Reich Youth Leader, Baldur

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von Schirach, was assigned the post of Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Vienna. The official statement on these reassignments read:⁴⁵³

In accordance with two decrees issued by the Führer,⁴⁵⁴ the entire administration in the civilian realm in Alsace and Lorraine, as well as Luxembourg, will, in the future, no longer be conducted by military offices, but by the chiefs of the civilian administration, directly under the Führer. The military commands retain jurisdiction in military affairs.

As heads of the civilian administration, the Führer has appointed Reich Governor and Gauleiter Josef Bürckel in Lorraine; the Reich Governor and Gauleiter Robert Wagner in Alsace; and the Gauleiter Gustav Simon in Luxembourg.⁴⁵⁵

By his request, the Führer has relieved Gauleiter Bürckel of his post as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna with the reservation of determining his further employment as Reich Governor.

The Führer has named the Reichsleiter Baldur von Schirach as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna. He has relieved him of his offices as Reich Youth Leader of the NSDAP and Youth Leader of the German Reich. Retaining his post as Reichsleiter for Youth Education of the NSDAP, Reichsleiter von Schirach was entrusted by the Führer with the inspection of the entire Hitler Youth, inclusive of the state realm.

As Reich Youth Leader of the NSDAP and Youth Leader of the German Reich, the Führer has named the Obergebietsführer Arthur Axmann.⁴⁵⁶ Stabsführer Hartmann Lauterbacher⁴⁵⁷ has been named deputy Gauleiter.

While this reshuffling of personnel affected solely the outlying reaches of the Reich, it nonetheless provided food for speculation in domestic politics. For one thing, this was the first time a graduate of the Hitler Youth was assigned a position of leadership within the Party. Was Hitler about to build up a ‘Crown Prince’ to eventually succeed him? Schirach’s father-in-law, Hitler’s faithful photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, apparently hoped so and, undoubtedly, Hitler was aware of these conjectures, although he had nothing of the sort in mind when he appointed Schirach to the post in Austria. Actually, by removing him from Berlin, he stemmed the former Hitler Youth Leader’s political ambitions. Any thought of a replacement of his “irreplaceable person”⁴⁵⁸ was inconceivable, dangerously linked to a loss of influence.

On August 8, the “intensified air war” against Britain began as ordered with the intent to “overcome the English Air Force.” It never attained this goal. Instead, the aerial battle considerably drained the Luftwaffe’s forces. All the speculations then current in Germany— that once Göring set up shop in the Lüneburg Heath it would be over for the English—proved false. The Battle of Britain is frequently described as having begun on August 13 or August 15, 1940. This claim is usually

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based on Göring's August 12, 1940 order to launch "Operation Eagle" (*Adlerangriffe*), and upon incomplete data found in the war diary of the Navy's leadership.⁴⁵⁹

On August 10, Hitler addressed the following correspondence to Bürckel and Schirach on the change in the Vienna Gauleiter office:⁴⁶⁰

Dear Party Comrade Bürckel,

The development of the situation in the West of the Reich compels me, Reich Governor Bürckel, to entrust you with a new mission. At this hour in which you leave Vienna to occupy your new post, I wish to express to you my great appreciation and my profound gratitude for the excellent fashion in which you have executed the task assigned to you on March 11, 1938, in the Ostmark of the Reich. Your name shall remain eternally tied to the creation of the Greater German Reich.

I know how dear the Ostmark and in particular the Gau Vienna have become to you in the two and a half years now past. When I must remove you from your previous sphere of activity, I do so precisely in recognition of your exceptional aptitude for the new task now assigned to you.

Please accept once more my sincere gratitude.

In heartfelt solidarity,

Your Adolf Hitler

Dear Party Comrade Schirach,

Reich Governor and Gauleiter Bürckel must leave his present sphere of activity to assume a new mission of supreme importance to the Reich. I have appointed you, Party Comrade Schirach, as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna. As you requested to be discharged from your regiment only after the conclusion of the battle in the West, you shall take over your new position as of this day. My confidence in the new social and cultural-political mission now assigned to you springs from my appreciation of your unique achievements as creator and leader of the Youth Movement of the German Reich. Your name shall remain tied to this work for all time.

Hence, in the future as well, you shall remain exclusively responsible, in your capacity as Reichsleiter, for the German Youth Movement as before. Please accept once more my sincere gratitude.

In heartfelt solidarity,

Your Adolf Hitler

On August 11, the twenty-eighth German East Fair began. Hitler greeted the organizers in the following wire:⁴⁶¹

In this year also, I wish good success to the German East Fair (*Ostmesse*) which is called on to promote the exchange of goods between the German Reich and the territories in the East.

Adolf Hitler

On the afternoon of August 13, Hitler summoned Raeder for a renewed discussion of the possibility of a landing in England.⁴⁶² Once

again the two men concurred that “the execution of a landing, in view of limited naval transport capabilities, could serve only as a last resort should England not declare herself ready for peace otherwise.” Hitler added to this: “An abortive venture would mean a great gain in prestige for England. One would have to wait and see precisely what effect intensive battles in the air would have on England.” These statements once more revealed that Hitler was not at all serious about a landing in England. He was searching for excuses to cancel the undertaking while still preparing for it.

On August 14, Hitler conferred the marshal’s baton on the newly appointed Field Marshals and on the one Reichsmarschall. For the ceremony, the generals had to journey to the Reich Chancellery where they were made to line up in the courtyard like young recruits. They were lucky that Hitler did not go so far as to have them parade by in front of him as he once forced Blomberg, Fritsch, Göring, and Raeder to do on a similar occasion.⁴⁶³ The German News Bureau published the following communiqué on the event:⁴⁶⁴

In his office at the new Reich Chancellery on Wednesday [August 14], the Führer and Supreme Commander presented the Reichsmarschall and the Field Marshals, promoted by him during the Reichstag session on July 19, with the insignia of their new rank, the marshal’s baton. The Führer prefaced the festive presentation with words of gratitude for the services rendered by the marshals to the victory of German arms. He spoke of the duties toward Volk and Reich which the marshal’s rank entailed. The Field Marshals of the Luftwaffe (Milch, Sperrle, and Kesselring) could not attend the presentation because combat engagement by the Luftwaffe precluded their absence from their respective headquarters.⁴⁶⁵

After the ceremony, Hitler commented on “Operation Sea Lion” in an evasive fashion to the Commander in Chief of the Army, von Brauchitsch.⁴⁶⁶ He was trying to avoid committing himself on the subject. He ordered “preparations for a landing at Lyme Bay” to be abandoned⁴⁶⁷ because of “insufficient means of securing the area.” In addition, he detailed the following:

He would not execute any operation that was too risky. The goal—the defeat of England—was not solely dependent upon a landing. It could be achieved in another way. [!] The threat of an invasion should be maintained at any rate, even if it was no longer to take place. [!]

Hitler was obviously cautious lest he needlessly anger the English whom he still conceived as future allies. A landing on the British Isles or an aggression against the colonies would annoy his future friends,

the English. He thought he would obtain their capitulation “in another way,” i.e. by means such as “intensified air war.”⁴⁶⁸

On August 17, Hitler pronounced a “total blockade of the British Isles,” a measure which served this end also. His intent in so doing was to frighten the British into acquiescence to his demands. The document he penned contained the following passage:⁴⁶⁹

Today the fortress besieged is no longer Germany, but the British Isles. The failed British hunger blockade against German women and children is now opposed by Germany’s total blockade of the British Isles which is herewith announced.

Germany is convinced that the announcement of a total blockade of the British Isles represents a further decisive step towards ending the war and eliminating the British rulers responsible for it. [—]

In the waters off England, the war at sea has now begun in full violence. The entire area is infested with mines. Planes attack every ship. Every neutral ship sailing in these waters in the future takes upon itself the risk of destruction. The Reich Government declines responsibility, in the future, for any damages incurred by ships of any make or by individuals within these waters, and this without exception. [—]

Germany is convinced that the final elimination of present day British piracy will render a service of historic significance not only to Europe, but also to all neutral states throughout the world.

Hitler’s grandiose proclamations stood in striking contrast to the actual military situation. He in no way had the power to implement such a total blockade either by sea or in the air. The Luftwaffe neither controlled the skies over the Channel nor the remaining British coast lines.

It was on August 17 also that Hitler began to extend feelers towards Finland. In contrast to the contempt he had displayed for the Finns in the Winter War of 1939–40,⁴⁷⁰ he was now all the more attentive to their concerns as he sought to “recruit politically against England” and to rally their support for an aggression against Russia. And the Finns fell for Hitler’s siren-song in their desire to regain the territories lost to the Soviet Union that spring.⁴⁷¹

Mussolini had in the meantime launched a renewed “campaign” in East Africa. In one swift strike, Italian forces had occupied Somaliland, a small British colony located at the Gulf of Aden. Fascist propaganda made much of this “conquest,” although the situation was obviously such that Rome would not be in a position to secure this territory for long. To rule a world empire, as Churchill once aptly put it, is not equivalent to having forces of equal strength stationed throughout the

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world. Imperative rather is the ability to rally sufficient forces at every corner of the world within a reasonable time. And Britain had the necessary means at its disposal to do, as the further course of events was to show. Soon Mussolini would find himself forced not only to give up the most recent spoils in his dubious series of conquests, but to withdraw from the whole of Italian East Africa as well as from Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, on August 19, Hitler sent the following telegram of congratulation to his friend Mussolini:⁴⁷²

Duce!

May you and your Armed Forces accept my and the entire German Volk's heartfelt congratulations on your great victory in East Africa.

Your Adolf Hitler

Also on August 19, Hitler established the "Shield of Narvik," a distinction reserved for General Dietl's men. He also founded a Knight's Cross category for the War Service Cross award.⁴⁷³

On August 24, Hitler ordered a state funeral for Paul Nipkow. The inventor of modern day television had died at the age of eighty.⁴⁷⁴ The following day, Hitler relayed his greetings to the Leipzig Autumn Fair by telegram on the opening of the annual exhibition.⁴⁷⁵

On August 26, the Führer instructed those of his staff concerned with preparations for "Operation Sea Lion" to bear in mind the transport capacities of the Navy in their planning.⁴⁷⁶

Two days later, Ciano once more was Hitler's guest at the Berghof. The topic discussed was the settlement of territorial disputes between Hungary and Romania. Hitler was under pressure to resolve the situation as he envisioned occupying Romania militarily shortly, the measure cloaked as a territorial guarantee. He declared that "the only thing he has at heart is that peace be preserved there, and that Romanian oil continue to flow into his reservoirs."⁴⁷⁷ Swiftly he turned to summon the Foreign Ministers of the two states to Vienna. Count Csáky was to represent Hungary while Manoilescu would be allowed to voice Romania's concerns.

On August 29, Hitler sent greetings to Reich Youth Leader Axmann on the opening of the Hitler Youth's athletic competitions in Breslau.⁴⁷⁸

On August 30, at Hitler's bidding, Ribbentrop and Ciano jointly undertook to "solve" the problem of the Southeast in a final manner: they pronounced a so-called "Second Viennese Sentence" in the round hall of the Belvedere Castle.⁴⁷⁹ The Romanian Foreign Minister swooned at the sight of his state carved up on the map indicating the

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cession of half of Transylvania to Hungary. He had barely recovered from the shock when he was made to sign his acquiescence to the ominous guarantee to be extended to Romania by Germany and Italy jointly. Ribbentrop had earlier informed him of the matter in the following correspondence:⁴⁸⁰

In the name and on behalf of the German Government, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency:

Germany and Italy as of this day take on the guarantee of the integrity and inviolability of Romanian state territory.

In addition, Romania had to pledge itself to secure an equality of rights for “members of the ethnic German population in Romania as compared to members of the Romanian population.” Romania equally was forced to take upon itself the “fostering of German Volkstum.” Without guns ever having spoken, it was as though Romania was accepting the terms of an armistice after a badly lost military engagement.

Hungary was no more pleased with the conditions dictated by Berlin. It had counted on receiving all of Transylvania, and not merely half the territory. Not once did Horthy send a telegram of thanks to Hitler, although the latter had wangled a considerable piece of Romania for Hungary.

The atmosphere in Vienna in those days was anything but pleasant. Nevertheless, Hitler returned Schirach’s greetings in the following telegram:⁴⁸¹

I thank you for the greetings relayed to me at the opening of the Autumn Fair. I wish the best success to this fair which is to demonstrate to the world the unabated economic power of Greater Germany.

Adolf Hitler

On September 2, a reception took place at the Reich Chancellery.⁴⁸² Several newly appointed foreign diplomats presented the Reich Chancellor with their credentials: the new Spanish Ambassador, General Eugenio Espinosa de Los Monteros; the new Envoy from Iran, Moussa Noury-Esfandiary;⁴⁸³ and from Portugal, Nobre Guedes.

On September 4, Hitler issued the following appeal for the benefit of the Winterhilfswerk:⁴⁸⁴

For the eighth time, I appeal to the German Volk for voluntary contributions to the Winterhilfswerk. This great social institution is a tangible expression of the German Volksgemeinschaft. May every Volksgenosse at home retain the realization of how small his contribution is in light of the sacrifices our

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soldiers have made at the front and will have to continue to make until the conclusive securing of the freedom and future of our Volk. Through its behavior and sense of sacrifice, the homeland has proved in the past year of war that it is worthy of the sacrifices of its sons. I am convinced that it shall once more do its duty in the coming Kriegswinterhilfswerk effort of 1940–41 to reinforce further in our Volk the consciousness of the inseparable bonds of social community.

Berlin, September 4, 1940

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler received the newly appointed Field Marshals serving with the Luftwaffe. The communiqué published on this occasion read:⁴⁸⁵

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, in the presence of the Reichsmarschall, presented on Wednesday [September 4] at his study in the new Reich Chancellery the Luftwaffe Field Marshals: Field Marshal Milch; Field Marshal Sperrle; Field Marshal Kesselring; with the marshal's batons as insignia of the rank of marshal awarded to them on July 19 before the Reichstag. In a short address, the Führer acknowledged the services rendered by the Luftwaffe marshals and gave an exposition of the duties towards Volk and Reich which the marshalcy entailed.

As mentioned earlier, the three Luftwaffe marshals had not been able to attend the prior ceremony “because combat engagement by the Luftwaffe precluded their absence from their respective headquarters.” Given the presentation of the marshal's batons to the newly promoted Field Marshals in early September, the casual observer might well have inquired whether this signified an end to the “combat engagement” in the skies above the Channel. Perhaps the Luftwaffe had gained mastery over British airspace? Hardly. According to the official reports issued by the OKW for the period between August 8 and September 3, the Luftwaffe had lost 407 planes in battle. While the Royal Air Force allegedly had over three times as many losses, namely, 1,593 aircraft shot down or destroyed, there could be no talk of German supremacy in the air, irrespective of whether or not these figures were indeed correct. The situation was surely not a good one when the OKW saw itself forced to admit to such a great number of German losses. It was equally clear that the Luftwaffe was not in a position to sustain daily losses of twenty planes, including personnel, for an extended length of time. The Royal Air Force, which during the Western campaign had really only distinguished itself at Dunkirk, appeared now with ever new squadrons over the Channel; not only this, but its airplanes flew by night, completely undisturbed, into the Reich's territory and carried bombs as far as Hanover and Berlin. To Hitler it was clear that this

situation was intolerable. Things could not go on in this way, or the Luftwaffe's severely damaged reputation would suffer further. Hence, on September 4, Hitler finally determined to allow the German Luftwaffe to fly the "terror attacks"⁴⁸⁶ on British population centers for "retribution."⁴⁸⁷

Before resorting to such drastic means, he wanted to launch yet another tirade against Great Britain to weaken its resistance and to rhetorically prepare the German public for the terror attacks the Luftwaffe was to fly on British cities.

On September 4, Hitler staged a "Volk rally" at the Berlin Sportpalast on the opening of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. He appeared greatly agitated, nervous, and edgy. He was furious with the British who, despite his repeated proclamations to the contrary, were not about to surrender. He taunted the "blabbering" of their leaders Churchill and Eden; Duff Cooper he ridiculed as "*Krampfhenne*" (nervous old hen). He poured scorn on the plutocracies and a "very small clique of capitalists" which he perceived to rule them. He threatened to bring these financiers to their knees by dropping "one million kilograms of bombs every night" and thereby "erasing" most of England's cities from the map. He went as far as to announce his own arrival on the British Isles, i.e. the Third Reich's military occupation of England, by exclaiming: "Calm yourselves: he is coming!"

The speech of September 4, 1940, was the first in a series of similar addresses the warlord would deliver through the coming years. Hitler's diatribe, the raging, the ill-concealed feeling of impotence which only augmented his fury, the false prophecies of pending victories—all these features were characteristic of the later speeches. Shortly before this particular address, news that Roosevelt had leased fifty American destroyers to Great Britain had reached Germany. This was a bad omen indeed. Not surprisingly, it greatly nettled the Third Reich's Chancellor.

Hitler began his address on the following note:⁴⁸⁸

The first year of the war ended in these last days. The second began and with it the new Kriegswinterhilfswerk. The successes of the first year, my Volksgenossen, are unique—so unique in fact that not only our enemies had not envisioned the course of history in this manner, but many in the German Volk were hardly able to comprehend the greatness of the occurrences and the rapidity of events.

We cannot compare the first year of the war to the World War: for in it, despite the greatest of valor, despite the unheard-of, greatest of sacrifices, only partial results were obtained and no one, final solution. This time we need only look at the enormous triangle which is protected by the Wehrmacht

today: in the East the Bug; in the North the North Cape, Kirkenes, and Narvik; in the South the border of Spain. A number of our adversaries have been eliminated. And the English owe it only to their fortuitous geographic position and to the enormous rapidity of their escape that they were spared a similar fate until now.

For matters are not standing as several British politicians attempt to portray the situation: that the British Army, tearing at its reins like a wild horse, is aflame with the desire to finally be unleashed, to hurl itself at the German enemy. It was surely close enough to us to satisfy this "desire" without much ado. It withdrew from our vicinity, and thus it is its lot to portray these pitiful retreats as great victories. And this is what all its "successes" look like!

Besides the vast area already controlled by German troops at this time, our ally Italy has for its part taken the offensive in East Africa, strengthened its position there, and has beaten England back.⁴⁸ Naturally, this is opposed by English "successes." These are successes which defy comprehension by the normal, healthy human brain. We see time and time again how the English propaganda falls from one extreme to the next, from highs to lows, only to return to even greater highs a few days later.

Thus, one day, we read: "The die has been cast in this war. If the Germans fail to reach Paris—and in this they cannot succeed—then they will have lost the war. Should they still reach Paris, then England will still win the war."

England surely has fought through to many a success of this kind since that September 3. The most glorious of these victories was—although a disgraceful fiasco in our eyes—the flight from Dunkirk. Any port in a storm.

We need only read a British war bulletin to know what all these "successes" amount to. For instance, it says: "We were told that . . ." or "one gains the following information from well-informed circles . . ." or "one hears from knowledgeable officials . . ." or "from expert statements one can infer . . ." One bulletin even read: "We believe we have cause to be permitted to believe that . . ."

In this way any defeat can be transformed into a success!

We were just moving into Poland when English propagandists declared that "well-informed circles" had related that the Germans had already suffered a number of grave setbacks: the Poles were victoriously advancing upon Berlin. Only a few days later, these "well-informed circles" assured us that the tide had turned in the East for good.

Then came equally "well-informed experts" who remarked that, even if Germany should have gained a victory, which was not the case, then this victory was actually a defeat—as seen, naturally, from the viewpoint of higher strategic considerations. When we finally stood before Warsaw, they promptly changed their minds: ". . . it would be correct to assume that the Allied attack in the West has achieved its first great victory, a breakthrough." And thus matters went on until there was no more Poland.

And they said: "A great burden has been lifted from our shoulders. This Poland in the East was always a weak point for us. Now we can finally concentrate our efforts on a theater of war where we are superior to the Germans, as they will shortly realize."

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Then there was calm for some time. This calm by itself naturally already constituted a consistent success of the British Armed Forces and an equally persistent failure for Germany. While the English worked throughout these months, we apparently slept through them! In this time, the English politicians saw it all, realized it all, and, above all, they grasped everything just in time. In the meanwhile, we missed out on everything.

This was until Norway. When operations began, English war reporters rejoiced at the "colossal mistake" we Germans had supposedly committed. "Finally the Germans have made a mistake, and now they will have to pay for it," so they wrote. And they were happy in England that finally they had been afforded the chance to measure themselves with the Germans.

They could have measured themselves with us at any hour, since in the West we lay but a few hundred meters apart. Still they pretended they could not possibly have seen us. And then, for the first time, good fortune afforded them the opportunity, thanks to our foolishness and in particular my own, to oppose us in armed conflict. And the conflict indeed came. It was truly an irony of fate that England owes perhaps the heaviest blow which it was dealt at the time to its very own propaganda.

Namely, as we had beaten the Norwegians back beyond Hamar and Lillehammer, a simple-minded British brigade marched unsuspectingly along the same road to Hamar. They had no connection with the rear, for this rear had been destroyed by our Stukas and fighters. They listened exclusively to British radio. And from the British radio, the commander of the brigade heard that we were far off still, far in front of Lillehammer, or rather, from his point of view, far behind Lillehammer. And that we had suffered a severe defeat. And thus the British brigade commander marched into Lillehammer at the head of his brigade. There he laid his head to rest, with a chest at his side, filled with documents which read: "Top secret" and "Do not allow to fall into enemy hands." And that very night, our troops rounded him up, along with his precious Ark of the Covenant. That's what you get when you rely on Mr. Churchill the war reporter.

And the story was the same all over: they lied and they lied again. They were thrown back into the sea, and this was a "complete and great victory." When they succeeded in salvaging a bit of rubble from Andalsnes or Namsos, they declared this, before the world, the most mighty success in the modern British history of war. We cannot measure ourselves with something like that, naturally! Still all this is opposed by hard facts: a few weeks later,⁹⁰ there was no more Norway and the British Armed Forces were forced to withdraw from this country also.

Then came the hour of the confrontation in the West. And here, too, we did not come too late. For in particular in this campaign, the Allied coalition suffered nothing other than defeat.

The facts—the historic facts—bear witness to this. In spite of this, the campaign also ended in the obligatory great British victory, namely, the magnificent, the glorious feat of arms at Dunkirk. The traces of this glorious military achievement I have seen with my very eyes—it looked rather confused.

Now France has fallen, too. And what rationale has been contrived this time? When Norway had finally been cleansed of the Allies, they had declared: "This was precisely what we wanted. We only wanted to lure the Germans up here. This was a victory, an unequaled victory for us." After France had been knocked to the ground for good, they had declared: "Now England, for the first time, can concentrate its forces. We are no longer forced to squander our troops and to dissipate our energies. We have now reached the strategic position we have always longed for and hoped for. We are now rid of the burden of France. It only cost us precious British blood. And now we are in a position to confront the Germans quite differently."

Right at the beginning of the war, they had concerned themselves with certain prophecies regarding the length of the war. They had said: "The war will last three years; Britain will prepare itself for three years." And rightly so, for these folk, who are immensely rich owners of war production shares, are clever enough to know that their new acquisitions cannot bear interest or be amortized within half a year, or even a year.

Therefore things had to take a bit longer. But I was equally careful and immediately said to the Reichsmarschall at the time: Göring, let us prepare everything for five years! Not because I believe that the war will last five years, but, come what may, England will break down! In one way or another! And I do not know of any deadline other than this one!

Of course I will prepare everything in a prudent, cautious, and careful manner. You will understand that.

And when people in England today nosily inquire: "Well, why isn't he coming?" Calm yourselves: he is coming! Curiosity killed the cat.

The world will be free! The nonsense that it will be possible for one nation to blockade a continent arbitrarily must be done away with. It must be made impossible in the future that such a pirate state, according to disposition and mood, can undertake from time to time to more or less subject 450 million human beings to poverty and misery. We as Germans, for all time, are fed up with having England tell us if we can perhaps do this or that; in the end, if a German is allowed to drink his coffee or not. If England does not like it, then it simply blockades coffee imports. Personally, I am not affected. I do not drink anything. But I am nettled that others should not be able to drink it.

At any rate, I find it insupportable that a nation of eighty-five million⁹¹ should be at the mercy of another people at any time—whenever it suits the plutocrats in London. So often have I extended my hand for an understanding with the English people. You know it yourselves: it was my foreign policy program. I have recently done so for the very last time.⁹² I now prefer to fight to finally arrive at a clear decision.

This clear decision can consist only in the removal of this regime of pitiful and base warmongers and in a situation being established in which it will be impossible for one nation to tyrannically run all of Europe in the future.

Here Germany and Italy will take care that history does not repeat itself a second time. And here nothing will help England and its allies: no Emperor Haile Sellassie, no Herr Bene —nor anyone else: no King Haakon, no Queen Wilhelmina, and no French General de Gaulle. All these allies will be of no

help. And whatever other designs they may entertain, or whatever else they may envision in the depth of their hearts—we will be on the lookout, we are ready for anything, determined in everything, and willing to take action at any time.

Nothing frightens us. We German National Socialists have graduated from the toughest school conceivable. First we were soldiers in the Great War, and then we were fighters in the resurgence of Germany. What we had to suffer in these years made us hard. Thus we cannot be intimidated by anything and nothing can surprise us.

When the English entered the war one year ago, they said: “We have an ally.” We were curious to see who that might be. They said: “It is a general, this ally, and his name is General Revolution.” Ha-ha! They have not an inkling of the new National Socialist German *Volksstaat*. And now London is waiting for this general to commence activities. On September 6, on September 7, nothing happened, and by September 8, there was great disappointment. For, according to their forecasts, this General Revolution was to rise up within a week’s time. He was nowhere to be found.

Then they said: “We have another allied general; his name is General Hunger.” We had already anticipated that these great friends of humanity would undertake, as in the World War, to starve women and children. And we prepared ourselves. And this general, too, turned out to be a false speculation, a ghost, a jack-o’-lantern in the brain of Mr. Churchill.

Now they have traced a third ally. His name is General Winter. We made his acquaintance once before. And back then he failed, and he will fail and is destined to fail again this time.⁴⁹³

The English should not forget, if they insist on resorting to such obscure, foreign generals, to promote their own most important General to the rank perhaps of a British Field Marshal: namely, General Bluff. He is their only ally who actually merits so high a distinction. However, this general lacks his former bite.⁴⁹⁴ With him you might succeed in deluding the British people, but the German Volk knows England sufficiently well not to be deceived.

The blabbering of a Mr. Churchill or a Mr. Eden—to speak of the old Chamberlain good taste forbids—this blabbering leaves the German Volk cold, and, at best, elicits laughter. In standard German there is no appropriate term for a phenomenon like Duff Cooper. Here you must resort to dialect, and the Bavarian has coined a term which fittingly characterizes the man: *Krampfhenne* (nervous old hen)! The gentlemen ought to calm down as they cannot win the war with such weapons. The means for this, thank God, lie in our hands and will remain in our hands.

For when the bell tolls, we shall replace the Generals Hunger, Revolution, Winter, or Bluff, with General Action—and then we shall see who will hold his own better!

I have already expressed the German Volk’s gratitude to its soldiers before the Reichstag. In these days, we all are moved by gratitude to our Luftwaffe, our valiant heroes, who fly to England day after day, to give our answer there to what the ingenious Mr. Churchill so recently invented. I will speak of this later.

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Today I would like to address my thanks to the homeland for the year lying behind us; my thanks to the entire German Volk for the attitude it displayed during the many, not so easy events of this year. For perhaps many do not realize precisely what it means to evacuate, within a few weeks, over 700,000 people. Everything went according to plan. Then, however, everything was well prepared on our side—in contrast to the other side. But what the mass took upon itself in certain instances was often daunting. How it bore up under this truly inspires awe! We are happy that these people can now return to their homeland.

We must also thank those who have taken the most crucial precautions in this homeland, those who were responsible for all of this: the air-raid protection personnel; and, in particular, the colossal organization of the Red Cross, its doctors, its medical personnel, and its nurses. They have accomplished incredible things. Above all, we wish to think of the German woman, of the crowd of millions of German women, German mothers, and also German girls, who had to replace the men working in the cities and in the countryside. They took care of the provision of daily bread and saw to it that the soldier received the necessary weapons and ammunition.

At their side stood the millions of German workers in the ammunition factories, who placed themselves at the disposal of the fighting front, whether young or old, so that it should not be missing any of those items the lack of which led in the end to the breakdown of the year 1918.

It is truly magnificent to see our Volk at war and its total discipline. We realize this all the more in a time when Mr. Churchill is demonstrating to us the use of his invention: the nightly air raid. He does not do this because air raids at night are particularly effective, but because his Air Force cannot penetrate German airspace during the day. While the German pilots, the German planes, fly over English land day by day, no Englishman has yet managed to as much as cross the North Sea by daylight. That is why they come at night and drop their bombs—you know it well—indiscriminately and without plan on civilian residential centers, on farmsteads, and villages. Wherever they see a light, they drop a bomb.

I did not answer for three months because I was of the opinion that they would ultimately stop this nonsense. Mr. Churchill perceived this as a sign of our weakness. You will surely understand that now we are giving our answers night after night, and this at an increasing rate.

And should the Royal Air Force drop two thousand, or three thousand, or four thousand kilograms of bombs, then we will now drop 150,000; 180,000; 230,000; 300,000; 400,000; yes, one million kilograms in a single night.⁴⁹⁵ And should they declare they will greatly increase their attacks on our cities, then we will erase their cities!

We will put these nighttime pirates out of business, God help us! The hour will come that one of us will crack, and it will not be National Socialist Germany! In my life, I have once already waged such a fight unto the last. And then the enemy cracked who now has his seat in England as the last available island in Europe.⁴⁹⁶ It is precisely in view of this battle that it is all the more necessary to comprehend how important the fashioning and formation of our

German Volksgemeinschaft is. We could not have achieved a single thing, if the German soldier had stood at the front, forlorn and on his own, without any connection to kindred souls at home. What makes the German soldier strong at the front is the awareness and knowledge that behind him stands an entire Volk united in iron determination and a fanatical will! And indeed, a Volk in the pursuit of loftier objectives. And these objectives go far beyond the mere winning of this war.

We want to build up a new state! That is why the others hate us so much today. They have often said as much. They said: "Yes, their social experiment is very dangerous! If it takes hold, and our own workers come to see this too, then this will be highly disquieting. It costs billions and does not bring any results. It cannot be expressed in terms of profit, nor of dividends. What is the point?! We are not interested in such a development. We welcome everything which serves the material progress of mankind insofar as this progress translates into economic profit. But social experiments, all they are doing there, this can only lead to the awakening of greed in the masses. Then we will have to descend from our pedestal. They cannot expect this of us."

And we were seen as setting a bad example. Any institution we conceived was rejected, as it served social purposes. They already regarded this as a concession on the way to social legislation and thereby to the type of social development these states loathe. They are, after all, plutocracies in which a tiny clique of capitalists dominate the masses, and this, naturally, in close cooperation with international Jews and Freemasons.

We know these enemies from our inner struggle, our dear old coalition of the *System-Deutschland*, a part of which has saved itself by swimming ashore. They hate us because of our social attitude, and everything which we plan and implement based on this appears threatening. They are of the conviction that this development must be eradicated.

I am convinced, however, that the future belongs to this development, and that those states that do not follow suit will, sooner or later, break apart. If they do not find a reasonable solution, the states with unresolved social problems will, sooner or later, arrive at an insane solution. National Socialism has prevented this in the German Volk. They are now aware of our objectives. They know how persistently and decisively we defend and will reach this goal.

Hence the hatred of all the international plutocrats, the Jewish newspapers, the world stock markets, and hence the sympathy for these democrats in all the countries of a like cast of mind. Because we, however, know that what is at stake in this war is the entire social structure of our Volk, and that this war is being waged against the substance of our life, we must, time and time again in this war of ideals, avow these ideals. And, in this sense, the Winterhilfswerk, this greatest social relief fund there is on this earth, is a mighty demonstration of this spirit.

Any person will judge me quite capable of having gone about the resolution of the financial aspect of this problem in a different manner. We could have generated the income, without much ado, by means of taxation. It would not have been necessary to build up this gigantic organization. We

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could have accomplished the same through the good offices of civil servants. But while the result might well have been as financially rewarding—perhaps even greater still—in terms of ideals, nothing comparable to what we possess could have been attained.

Thus, the value of this voluntary association of the German Volksgemeinschaft lies in its practical application: for one, the education of the one who gives, but also the education of the other who now voluntarily does the work. For there are two making sacrifices. The one makes a sacrifice in donating, the other in administering this donation and in doing so voluntarily. They all experience the practical education of the Volksgemeinschaft: every small girl who collects on the streets; and all those professionals who take turns lending their support, all the way up to the representatives of the state, of the economy, of the arts, and so on. And this is what is decisive, my Volksgenossen.

For all of us, in one way or another, are burdened with the heritage of the past, our descent, our social standing, our profession, and so on. We have the choice of making do without millions of men, who are irreplaceable in their national work and economic activities, because they are not yet mature enough for membership in such a community. From the start, National Socialism has maintained that man's behavior is merely a product of education, habit, and heritage; it can thus be relearned. For the child who is reared by our Volk is not born with any prejudices of standing or class; these are instilled in him. Only in the course of his life is this differentiation artificially forced upon him. And to remove this is our mission if we are not willing to renounce the building of a truly organic, sustainable, human community. And this mission we have taken upon ourselves and are beginning to implement in all spheres of life. At the age at which a child formerly was judged old enough to be taught the differences in human existence, we begin with his education towards the community and we do not let go again.

And when this man or another comes to inquire about results—well, my dear friend, we began only a few years ago. First we did so with the Party as the community and then, for nearly eight years now, with the German Volk. This was but a short time, but the results are already overwhelming when you consider how many centuries before sought the opposite. For this, the colossal demonstrations of our community speak. Only twenty years ago this would have been impossible; thirty years ago inconceivable; and forty years ago no one would have wanted this; but today it is a virtual reality. We educate man to a single conception of life, to a single, balanced conception of duty. And we are convinced that, after a certain period of such an education, men will emerge as products of this education who then will, to the same extent, represent the new ideas as today they still embody, in part, the old ones.

It was a laborious process of polishing and educating. But in the Winterhilfswerk already we can see: it is making progress. When the first Winterhilfswerk was called to life, many still went about Germany—you know what I mean, according to Ludwig Schmitz⁴⁹⁷—and said: “Who is

coming along there? A man with a collection tin! About face right or left, march!” Or some other stupid comment.

That the situation has improved is evident already in the growing amount of donations. Persistence here, too, has led to success. And slowly, even the most thickheaded representative of the old order has to acknowledge: first, it is of no use anyway, the collectors come time and time again; and second, it is better to donate something; and third, everything considered, something is truly being achieved. And what is happening?

The wounds we have healed in Germany! In how many instances did we help others out! In how many instances did we give people a leg-up! What gigantic social institutions have we created! Believe me, many people are against such reforms simply because of apathy or mental sluggishness! But once they do finally see results, they say: “Well, naturally one can contribute to this. I did not think, I could not imagine, either something so colossal coming of it, or it having such consequences. These are truly deeds of greatness which are being accomplished here.” And when these men then come to reflect upon themselves as representatives of the old stubborn opinions, then they are already on the way towards a new Germany.

By contrast, if thirty years ago we had told someone: “Sir, here take this collection tin. Now go stand at the street corner and ask people to donate something for their Volksgenossen”—then that someone would surely have said: “What for? I myself will give you something. But more you cannot ask of me. I am Mister So and So. Never would I think of doing anything of the kind. And what’s more: What will people think of me? What should I do if someone comes up to me and says something stupid?” Well, this man obviously is not all that much more intelligent than the person whom he considers to be stupid. You have to educate people to be considerate to one another. It is good if they see how ill-considered, how stupid some people are. And precisely this great work has shown within a few years’ time how open to influence a Volkskörper is; how a great idea can lay hold of people in the end. This is true also of a great work, of a great achievement. And we are in fact laying hold of them from all sides. Everywhere this education is being conducted.

I do not know how often, in former times, people remarked on the Napoleonic phrase that every soldier carries the marshal’s baton in his knapsack. This was not meant literally, of course. For then it was simply inconceivable that a regular soldier set out on such a path. All this has changed today, top to bottom.

Whereas once the highest distinction was accorded only to officers, today a valiant non-commissioned officer or private may equally well earn it. The walls of a world of prejudice have been torn down. A world of prejudice is gone and, you may believe me, in the course of the decades it will become ever the more beautiful to live in this state. All the greater will be the tasks to be faced. They will draw our Volk ever closer together, will transform it into a closer community of even greater depths. And if there should still remain some who are not willing, under any circumstances, then we will just have to accord them an honorable funeral. For they are the representatives of a

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bygone era and, perhaps, of great interest in this respect. But the future belongs to the young nations who will solve this question. And we have undertaken its solution and we shall see to it.

In this context, the Winterhilfswerk constitutes a colossal demonstration of the community of the homeland in view of the colossal demonstrations of the community of our front. As a gigantic organism there fulfills its duty in a well-organized manner, so the homeland does here and is prepared to undertake the same, willing to make any sacrifice this struggle for existence, for our future, will impose upon us. And when I pay tribute here once more to all those who have contributed to the first Kriegswinterhilfswerk or who were otherwise active as helpers, then, at the same time, I ask all of you:

Fulfill anew your mission in this second Kriegswinterhilfswerk. May some of you become voluntary helpers while the others become voluntary contributors. And take care that this project should once more demonstrate to the world our indivisible sense of community, that it should finally recognize all speculations connected to "General Revolution" to be idiotic. Another general has taken the place of this general: the general of a common fulfillment of duty!

It is the spirit of our Volksgemeinschaft which allows us to bear all this and which makes our Volk strong for all confrontations and decisions of the future!

With this the individual contributes to breaking the will of our enemies, to robbing them of their illusions, and thereby does his part in the dissemination of correct information about our Volk. The more the other world sees this great Volk to be a single unit, the more it will recognize the hopelessness of its undertaking.

People who set forth on paths separate from one another could be broken. But eighty-five million men who have one will, one resolve, and who are prepared to act—no power on earth can break them!

6

On September 5, Hitler wired his congratulations to Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia on his birthday. On the same day, a German-Soviet agreement was signed, affecting the resettlement of 115,000 ethnic Germans previously residing in Bessarabia and Bucovina.⁴⁹⁸

The night of September 6 to September 7 marked the launching of Hitler's terror campaign against London and other major English cities. "One million kilograms of bombs" did indeed rain down on the civilian population. Göring personally directed this mission from northern France.⁴⁹⁹ For weeks he remained there without being able to report decisive successes to his Führer. While the English losses were heavy as far as men and material were concerned, their determination to resist the Nazi dictator did not yield in the least.

In Rumania in the meanwhile, a coup had taken place. The Second Viennese Sentence had caused a storm of indignation. The Government of Gigurtu began to totter, and King Carol II was forced to abdicate in favor of his son Michael on September 6.⁵⁰⁰ The main power, however, now lay in the hands of General Antonescu,⁵⁰¹ who formed the new cabinet and soon appropriated the titles "Head of State" and "Marshal."

On September 7, Antonescu subserviently penned this telegram to Hitler:⁵⁰²

Excellency!

On this historic day on which the Rumanian people has regained its health and strength, its first thought is of its duty to express to Your Excellency its loyal faith in the great German Volk and in its great Führer, along with its trust in the securing of its present and hope for its future.

To this, Hitler replied:

I sincerely thank Your Excellency for the friendly message relayed to me on the occasion of taking over the Rumanian Government. I am convinced

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that the future of the Rumanian people is assured within the framework of the reorganization of Europe in its close relationship to the Axis Powers Germany and Italy. With sincere sympathy the German Volk and I shall always follow your work of reconstruction in the new Rumania.

Adolf Hitler

For the time being this “new Rumania” would have to cede further lands in compliance with Hitler’s grand design. Already on September 7, Rumania was forced to sign a treaty with Bulgaria at Craiova. As a result, southern Dobruja became a Bulgarian domain. To King Boris, who had wired his thanks, Hitler sent the following reply:⁵⁰³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for your friendly telegram. With me the entire German Volk welcomes the understanding between Bulgaria and Rumania, attained at Craiova, in the conviction that this will herald the beginning of a new phase of peaceful development in the Danube region.

A further exchange of telegrams on the occasion involved Hitler and the Bulgarian Minister-President Filov.⁵⁰⁴

On September 10, Hitler hosted the Hungarian Envoy, Sztójay,⁵⁰⁵ at the Reich Chancellery. A handwritten note penned by Horthy on the Transylvanian issue had prompted this call at the Wilhelmstrasse.

On that day also, Hitler sent out two telegrams of condolence, both due to the demise of Estigarribias, the State President of Paraguay.⁵⁰⁶ During this time, Hitler repeatedly fawned on the small states of South and Central America in an effort to elicit support for Germany there. On September 14, he was again wiring Latin America to congratulate the State President of El Salvador and his colleague in Guatemala on the anniversary of their respective declarations of independence, and two days later, the President of Mexico.⁵⁰⁷

In the meantime, the terror attacks on London had continued. Hitler placed great stock in their effects on the mental state of the British population. On the afternoon of September 14, he conferred with the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht.⁵⁰⁸ He seized the opportunity to point out that there was “a chance of conquering Great Britain from the air.” Only four to five days of good weather were necessary to deal a decisive blow to the enemy.

Hitler’s confidence stood in striking contrast to the official reactions of the British Government to the German aerial warfare. Yet Hitler paid little attention to what he considered “babbling”: such statements as the following one by Churchill which the BBC broadcast on September 11:⁵⁰⁹

These cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London are, of course, a part of Hitler's invasion plans. He hopes, by killing large numbers of civilians, and women and children, that he will terrorize and cow the people of this mighty imperial city, and make them a burden and an anxiety to the Government and thus distract our attention unduly from the ferocious onslaught he is preparing. Little does he know the spirit of the British nation, or the tough fiber of the Londoners, whose forbears played a leading part in the establishment of Parliamentary institutions and who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives. This wicked man, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred, this monstrous product of former wrongs and shame, has now resolved to try to break our famous Island race by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction. What he has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts, here and all over the world, which will glow long after all traces of the conflagration he has caused in London have been removed. He has lighted a fire which will burn with a steady and consuming flame until the last vestiges of Nazi tyranny have been burnt out in Europe, and until the Old World—and the New—can join hands to rebuild the temples of man's freedom and man's honor, upon foundations which will not soon or easily be overthrown.

Much has been written about the so-called "Battle of Britain" in August and September 1940.⁵¹⁰ It is a fact that Hitler lost this battle. The Luftwaffe recorded heavy losses and was soon forced to abandon daytime terror strikes against England altogether. Subsequently, the Luftwaffe turned to sorties at night as a means of lowering the costs of this risky enterprise.

The Royal Air Force's pilots were not the only ones to repel the German onslaught; the extraordinarily strong British anti-aircraft defenses also did. In a meeting with his generals in August of the previous year, Hitler had claimed: "At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns."⁵¹¹ That this boast was simply untrue was proved at the most decisive moment. Instead Britain appeared to have at its command vast numbers of these guns and endless supplies of ammunition. The anti-aircraft units in England affixed a theoretical grid to the skies above. The minute an alarm was sounded and German planes appeared above, anti-aircraft artillery aimed at the square in question and began firing indiscriminately without taking sight. This method was so effective that the OKW was forced to admit to losses of 182 planes for the period between September 4 and September 15. On the latter day, the British downed a record of forty-three fighters. Given the tendency to underestimate real losses in the files of the High Command, one can imagine how high the actual numbers must have been.

These losses were all the more painful as the launch of “Operation Sea Lion” had been scheduled for September 15. By this date, Hitler had counted on a complete collapse of Britain. All measures in preparation for a landing on the British mainland were regarded as a mere “bluff” by the generals themselves.⁵¹²

Hence their lack of effort to keep the matter secret. Along the Channel coast, large signs showed the way to ports of embarkation. Landing maneuvers took place in full view of the public.

It was truly a curious armada Hitler had assembled in the ports of Boulogne, Dunkirk, Ostend, Antwerp, and Rotterdam. About 2,000 flat barges (called *Prähme*) were requisitioned for the crossing of the Channel. Most of these had previously run along such rivers as the Rhine, Oder, or the Elbe. On the High Seas, these vessels were doomed to take in water due to their low draft.⁵¹³ Engineers had cut off the bows and had affixed ramps which had to be folded down in an effort to facilitate landing operations.

It represents one of the most striking parallels in their careers that in the year 1805, Napoleon had likewise halfheartedly resolved to give the British a good fright by assembling a similar fleet poised to cross the Channel to invade England; that the French Emperor had chosen the same kind of ships—flatboats, then called *Prabmen*—and almost precisely the same number of ships;⁵¹⁴ and that, furthermore, Napoleon had chosen the same points of departure for his strange fleet as Hitler did so many years later (Boulogne, Dunkirk, and Ostend).⁵¹⁵

The vessels Napoleon—and Hitler—had requisitioned were built for inland waterways and completely inadequate for an offshore military undertaking. In the years since, many of Napoleon’s contemporaries and historians in general have speculated that Napoleon was not serious about this attempted invasion of England in 1805. Years later, Napoleon still relished the thought of how great a fright he had given the English: “Fear overcame London and all reasonable men acknowledged that England was never so close to the abyss.”⁵¹⁷ And Napoleon was obviously greatly relieved when he found an excuse for abandoning Boulogne and taking the land route to the East. He blamed the less-than-fortunate episode on Admiral Villeneuve who had sailed to Cadiz instead of Brest. The admiral’s failure to perform was largely due, to complement this series of conspicuous parallels, to the vague and nebulous nature of the orders he had received from Napoleon. These led him to infer that his presence in Boulogne was no longer desired.

The Corsican heaved a sigh of relief when the failure of the French Navy allowed him to save face while withdrawing from the battle scene. And Hitler seemed equally relieved when the Luftwaffe's disastrous performance, not to mention the Navy's haphazard undertakings, made it possible for him, on September 17, 1940, first to postpone "Operation Sea Lion" for several days and then indefinitely.⁵¹⁸

Also on September 17, Hitler received the Italian Minister for the Colonies General Terruzzi at the Reich Chancellery.⁵¹⁹

Of greater consequence, however, was the reception of Spain's Minister of the Interior and designated Foreign Minister, Serrano Suñer, on the same day.⁵²⁰ Since neither bluffing nor terror had brought England to its knees, Hitler now adhered to a plan he had earlier announced. It was his intention to "recruit politically against England: Spain, Italy, Russia."⁵²¹ In the meeting of September 17,⁵²² as during a later encounter on September 25, Hitler sought to convince Suñer in a wordy fashion that it was in Spain's own best interest to share in erecting a "front reaching from the North Cape to Morocco."⁵²³ The proud Spaniard, who was also anti-German, failed to comprehend this point and was annoyed that only Hitler was apparently allowed to speak on such occasions. Encountering Mussolini and Ciano a few days later, he would complain how badly he had been treated during his visit in Germany.⁵²⁴

Hitler was none too satisfied with Serrano Suñer's visit either.⁵²⁵ At any rate, he judged it cautious to direct a supplementary correspondence to Franco to clarify his position. The "partly political, partly military" document greatly impressed Ciano with the "convincing logic which the Führer's writings frequently contain."⁵²⁶

On September 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the King of Thailand on his birthday.⁵²⁷ On the same day, he took provision to form a military mission to be sent to Rumania. The secret order read:⁵²⁸

The Army and Luftwaffe will send Military Missions to Rumania. To the world their tasks will be to guide friendly Rumania in organizing and instructing her forces. The real tasks—which must not become apparent either to the Rumanians nor to our own troops—will be:

(a) To protect the oil district against seizure by third Powers or destruction.⁵²⁹

(b) To enable the Rumanian forces to fulfil certain tasks according to a systematic plan worked out with special regard to German interests.

(c) To prepare for deployment, from Rumanian bases, of German and Rumanian forces in case a war with Soviet Russia is forced on us.

September 20, 1940

The phrase, “a war forced on us,” had figured as heavily in German propaganda in 1939 as it had in 1914. It now re-emerged as a theme in the Third Reich’s dealings with the Soviet Union.

On September 21, Hitler sent the telegram below to Luftwaffe Major Mölders:⁵³⁰

In grateful appreciation of your heroic behavior in the struggle for the future of our Volk, I award you as the second officer of the German Wehrmacht, on your fortieth air victory, the Oak Leaf of the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On September 22, Hitler received Mölders at the Reich Chancellery to present him with the Oak Leaf distinction and to have his photograph taken with him.⁵³¹

On September 24, Luftwaffe Major Adolf Galland was awarded the same medal on his fortieth air victory, along with a telegram of identical content.⁵³² September 24 marked the day on which British forces, together with the French General de Gaulle, launched a full-scale attack on Dakar. This engagement gave a foretaste of the eventual Allied occupation of all of French West Africa.⁵³³

On September 26, Hitler promoted Dönitz to the rank of Vice Admiral on the fifth anniversary of the creation of the submarine fleet.⁵³⁴ Raeder was Hitler’s guest on this day at the Reich Chancellery. They discussed the political and strategic options still open to Germany in light of the aborted invasion of the British Isles: whether, in addition to Spain, one could also “harness” France and Russia, or whether perhaps one could make an expansion in the direction of Iran and India appetizing to the Russians.⁵³⁵

This topic was merely peripheral to the envisioned new alliance with Japan, an idea Hitler actively pursued in this conversation. Miraculous salvation of the precarious present situation appeared to Hitler to lie in a resurrection of the former Anti-Comintern Pact, spiced with a new military component. To rally the Italians to this cause, he had already sent Ribbentrop to Rome. The German Foreign Minister carried with him precise instructions on how to lure Mussolini with the advantages such an alliance allegedly entailed. This applied both to the Soviet Union, of course, and to America “which, under the threat of the Japanese fleet, will not dare move.”⁵³⁶

Already by September 27, the pertinent document was ready and awaited signature. Summoned, in precisely the same way as for the ratification of the Pact of Steel,⁵³⁷ Ciano explicitly came to Berlin that

day to attend to the matter. Sunk low in an armchair, Hitler listened to the reading of the treaty's text:⁵³⁸

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Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan

The Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan, considering it as the condition precedent of any lasting peace that all nations of the world be given each its own proper place, have decided to stand by and cooperate with one another in regard to their efforts in Greater East Asia and the regions of Europe respectively wherein it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things calculated to promote mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned.

Furthermore it is the desire of the three Governments to extend cooperation to such nations in other spheres of the world as may be inclined to put forth endeavors along lines similar to our own, in order that their ultimate aspirations for world peace may thus be realized. Accordingly the Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan have agreed as follows:

Article 1

Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe.

Article 2

Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.

Article 3

Germany, Italy, and Japan agree to cooperate in their efforts on the aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three Contracting Parties is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European War or in the Sino-Japanese Conflict.

Article 4

With a view to implementing the present Pact, Joint Technical Commissions the members of which are to be appointed by the respective Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan will meet without delay.

Article 5

Germany, Italy, and Japan affirm that the aforesaid terms do not in any way affect the political status which exists at present as between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia.

Article 6

The present Pact shall come into effect immediately upon signature and shall remain in force for ten years from the date of its coming into force.

At the proper time before the expiration of the said term the High Contracting Parties shall, at the request of any one of them, enter into negotiations for its renewal.

In faith whereof, the Undersigned, duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed this Pact and have affixed hereto their Seals.

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Done in triplicate at Berlin, the 27th day of September 1940—in the XVIIIth year of the Fascist Era—, corresponding to the 27th day of the 9th month of the 15th year of Syowa.

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Ciano
Kurusu

Ribbentrop, Ciano, and Kurusu, the Japanese Ambassador, lent their hands to the solemn signature of the treaty. After the official ceremony, Hitler invited his guests to a state reception. With studied politeness, he paid special attention to the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan.

Ciano was more impressed with the somber atmosphere prevalent in Berlin at the time than with the official ceremonies surrounding the signature of the Pact. The man on the street appeared to Ciano more depressed and resigned than ever before. In his diary, he recorded his impressions of Berlin that September:⁵³⁹

Even the Berlin street crowd, a comparatively small one, composed mostly of school children, cheers with regularity but without conviction. Japan is far away. Its help is doubtful. One thing alone is certain: that the war will be long.

The autumn came to an end, and even the uninitiated comprehended that there would be no landing in England. The English obviously were too much for Hitler. The so-called Tripartite Pact commanded no respect with the Germans even though the *Völkischer Beobachter* celebrated it as “the alliance pact of 250 million.” It was obvious that the latest developments were forcing Hitler to resort to improvisation. The Pact was a sign of weakness rather than of strength. It was all too transparent that this pact would bring Germany into renewed opposition to Russia, if it was not in itself a symptom of an already existing and widening gulf between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The favor of the Russians was being exchanged for that of the Japanese in an operation that recalled the undertakings of the character Hans in the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Hans im Glück*.⁵⁴⁰ Even the most anxious of Hitler’s followers in the Party could not comprehend his reasoning that the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Triangle would so frighten the United States as to induce it to abandon England. One element figuring heavily in Hitler’s arguments in favor of the Pact was the belief that the United States would refrain from rushing to the aid of Great Britain by declaring war on Germany in view of the repercussions of a possible conflict with Japan. And what happened in actuality? The Japanese

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opened hostilities against the United States in December 1941, and, ironically, it was Hitler who now had to return the passport of the American Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin. Thus, in the end, the agreement backfired on Hitler.

Nonetheless, the Tripartite Pact bore fruit in giving Hitler the opportunity to exchange lengthy and frequent telegrams with his partners. For public relations purposes, he wrote a flood of telegrams, addressed to the Emperor of Japan, the King of Italy, and numerous other Heads of State or Minister-Presidents in satellite states as these became party to the Treaty, one by one. No matter what the occasion—a birthday, an anniversary, a national holiday, or the naming of an unknown minister to a high post—a telegram issued forth from Wilhelmstrasse to convey the appropriate sentiments to the partner state.

On September 27, Hitler mailed the first in a series of such telegrams:⁵⁴¹

To his Majesty the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia!

I request Your Majesty to accept, at this hour in which Italy, Germany, and Japan have reaffirmed their unity in the conclusion of the Three-Power Pact and have thus lent it world-encompassing expression, my heartfelt best wishes for the welfare of Your Majesty and for the happiness and prosperity of the Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

At this moment the Three-Power Pact has been signed between Fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany, and heroic Japan. The Pact once again expresses the profound inner unity of our countries and the agreement on their objectives. In this historic moment I think of you, Duce, with most friendly feelings and in most sincere comradeship.

Adolf Hitler

To his Majesty the Emperor of Japan!

The historic significance of the Three-Power Pact just signed between Japan, Germany, and Italy causes my thoughts to turn to Your Majesty and the entire Japanese people in sincere solidarity.

Adolf Hitler

To the Japanese Minister-President Prince Konoye!⁵⁴²

I thank you very much for the friendly greetings related to me by telegraph today on the occasion of the conclusion of the Pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy. In the conviction that this Three-Power Pact frustrates all plans for an expansion of this war and hence warrants the fulfillment of the justified

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claims of our peoples, I include my sincere best wishes for a prosperous future for Japan.

Adolf Hitler

On September 28, Ciano called once more at the Reich Chancellery where Hitler had summoned him for a “lengthy discussion.”⁵⁴³ Ciano’s notes on the ensuing conversation read as follows:⁵⁴⁴

He did not speak of the current situation. He spoke rather of Spanish intervention, to which he is opposed because it would cost more than it is worth. He proposed a meeting with the Duce at the Brenner Pass, and I immediately accepted. No more invasion of England. No more blitz destruction of England. From Hitler’s speech now emerges worry about a long war. He wishes to conserve his armed power. He speaks with his usual decision, with less impetuosity, but with as much determination as ever.

On October 1, Hitler hosted the Italian State Minister, Farinacci, at the Chancellery.⁵⁴⁵

The next day, Hitler exhaustively expounded the future treatment of Poland in a conference with Bormann, Frank, and Schirach. The meeting took place in Hitler’s suite at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁴⁶ First Hitler rendered a detailed account, replete with long citations of numbers, of the productivity of the German laborer in comparison to that of the Pole who was “born for lowly labor.” Towards the end of the conversation, Hitler summed up his convictions in the following revealing manner:

It must absolutely be taken into account that there must be no “Polish masters;” where such masters do exist, they should, as harsh as it may sound, be killed.

Naturally, we must not mix ourselves by blood with the Poles; hence it would only be right if next to the male Polish harvesters, female Polish harvesters came to the Reich. Whatever the Poles then do with one another in the camps is none of our business. No Protestant zealot is to interfere in these things.

Once more the Führer underlined that there must be but one master for the Poles, and this is the German: two masters could not and must not exist next to each other, hence all representatives of the Polish intelligentsia are to be killed. This may sound harsh, but it is the law of life.

The Government General is a reservation for the Poles, one vast Polish labor camp. The Poles also profit for we keep them in good health, take care that they do not starve, and so on. Never must we elevate them to greater heights, or they will simply become anarchists and communists. It is most appropriate therefore if the Poles retain their Catholicism; Polish priests will be fed by us, and in turn they will direct their herd in the direction we desire. The priests will be paid by us, and in turn they will preach what we desire.

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If a priest goes against the grain, then he will be dealt with mercilessly. The priests are to keep the Poles mute and stupid; this is essentially in our interest. Once the Poles are elevated to greater heights, then they will no longer serve as the labor source we need. Besides, it will suffice if every Pole in the General-Government possesses a small garden. Extensive farming is not necessary; the money the Pole needs for his livelihood he must earn by working in Germany. After all, we need these cheap laborers: their low costs will benefit every German, even every German worker. In the General-Government, strict German administration is necessary to maintain order in the labor reservation. This labor reservation means for us the maintenance of agricultural enterprises, in particular of our vast estates; moreover it means a reservoir of laborers.

In summary, the Führer wished to underline the following:

1. Even the last German worker and the last German peasant has to be at least ten percent better off economically than any Pole.

2. A method has to be searched for and found so that a Pole living in Germany does not directly receive his earnings, but instead part of these earnings are sent to the families back in the General-Government.

3. I do not want, the Führer stressed, a German worker to work more than eight hours in general once the situation has normalized again; even if the Pole works fourteen hours, he must still earn less than the German worker.

4. The ideal picture is: The Pole may possess only small plots in the General-Government to secure to some degree his own sustenance and that of his family. Whatever additional money he needs for clothes, additional foodstuffs, and so on, he has to earn through work in Germany. The General-Government is a central issuing department for unskilled workers, in particular for agricultural workers. The existence of these workers will be secured, as cheap laborers will always be needed.

On October 3, Hitler congratulated King Boris of Bulgaria on the anniversary of his accession to the throne in a telegram.⁵⁴⁷

October 4 witnessed a "historic" encounter by Hitler and Mussolini at the Brenner Pass. The official communiqué issued on the occasion clearly revealed that few tangible results were obtained:⁵⁴⁸

The Brenner Pass, October 4, 1940

In the framework of regular German-Italian exchanges, the Führer and the Duce met at the Brenner Pass today. All questions pertaining to the interests of both countries were discussed in the course of the three-hour-long conversation which was held in the heartfelt spirit of the Axis Agreement. The talk took place in the absence of both Foreign Ministers, whereas Field Marshal Keitel was present during the later part of the conversation. Talks were continued in a small circle during a breakfast meeting.

According to Schmidt's recollections, it was Hitler who spoke for three hours while an impotent Mussolini was forced to listen in silence

to the endless monologue. The main part of Hitler's harangue focused on how to use France "somehow against England." The issue of Spain had clearly retreated to the background. Ciano summarized the conversation in the following manner:

(1) There is no longer any talk about a landing in the British Isles and preparations already made remain where they are;

(2) it is hoped to attract France into the orbit of the anti-British coalition, since it is now realized that the Anglo-Saxon world is still a hard nut to crack;

(3) greater importance is given to the Mediterranean sector, which is good for us.

Hitler was full of energy and again extremely anti-Bolshevist. "Bolshevism," he said, "is the doctrine of people who are lowest on the scale of civilization."

This was a repeat of Hitler's old primitivism theory.⁵⁴⁹ No wonder that Hitler sought first to deal summarily with the "inferior" Russians instead of focusing his attention on the British. Like a child, Mussolini rejoiced in finally having been made party to the Führer's plans. Soon, however, his joy would give way to sincere disillusionment as German troops overran Rumania. To this secret he had not been made party, though Italy was as much a guarantor of Rumania's territorial integrity as Germany supposedly was.

On October 6, Hitler bestowed the Oak Leaves award on Luftwaffe Captain Wick who had scored his fortieth air victory. Wick received the customary telegram on the occasion.⁵⁵⁰

On October 7, Hitler's adjutant hurried to present the Führer's autographed picture, bearing a special dedication, to Himmler on his fortieth birthday, together with a congratulatory telegram.⁵⁵¹

On the same day, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a photograph of Göring. Beneath it, a revealing subtitle described Göring as the man who "for four weeks has led the mission against England."⁵⁵²

On October 11, Hitler conveyed his condolences to the widow of Admiral von Trotha. He also ordered a state funeral for the deceased.⁵⁵³

On October 12, Hitler hosted the bearer of the Oak Leaves medal, Luftwaffe Captain Wick, at the Berghof.⁵⁵⁴ On this day also, an official pronouncement informed the German public of the despatch of troops to Rumania. The communiqué read:⁵⁵⁵

In connection with the guarantee extended to Rumania at Vienna, the Reich Government, in accordance with the wishes of the Rumanians, has delegated a German military mission in addition to the necessary training formations to Rumania. At the same time, it has deployed German fighter units for the additional protection of the Rumanian oil fields. The German

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Wehrmacht units will assist the Rumanian Armed Forces as training and instruction groups in the rebuilding of the Rumanian Armed Forces undertaken by the Head of the Rumanian Government General Antonescu. After their mission, the German units will return to Germany. Those governments friendly to Germany, which might have a political interest in the deployment of a German military mission in Rumania, have been informed.

The fact that the “governments friendly to Germany” were not informed of the German decision until after the military deployment left Mussolini especially furious. News of the latest of Hitler’s coups of which he once again had no prior warning led him to exclaim defiantly, in Ciano’s presence:⁵⁵⁶

Hitler always faces me with a *fait accompli*. This time I am going to pay him back in his own coin. He will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece. In this way the equilibrium will be re-established.

Mussolini’s yearning for revenge served him ill. Italy’s disastrous foray into Greece made him even more dependent upon Hitler.

On October 13, Hitler congratulated Tiso on his birthday.⁵⁵⁷ The next day, he hosted the Italian Minister for Trade, Riccardi, at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁵⁸

In the morning on October 15, Hitler attended the state ceremony at the Unter den Linden memorial, where he placed a wreath in honor of the late Admiral von Trotha.⁵⁵⁹ Later the same day, Hitler hosted an honorary delegation of German farmers at the Ambassadors’ Hall in the new Reich Chancellery.⁵⁶⁰ There he congratulated them on the 1940 wartime harvest. Its successful conclusion led him to deliver a short address, summarized as follows by the *Völkischer Beobachter*:

The Führer thanked the millions of German peasants and land laborers for the outstanding and admirable attainments of the German peasantry to secure the feeding of the German Volk in this war. They have destroyed the criminal plans for blockade by the enemy for the future. In words going to the heart, he expressed his appreciation for the successful, often self-sacrificing and hard work which the German peasantry rendered in spite of the drafting of so many of their husbands and sons. Faced with the miracle of courage and the unique soldierly achievements of the German Volk, the Führer concluded by expressing his absolute certainty of victory. This victory was assured if only every German continued to perform his duty at his post to the height of his capabilities: the peasant in the field, the laborer in his factory, and foremost the soldier at the front!

The next item on Hitler’s list was the joint problem of France and Spain. Before journeying to the South of France to resolve these two

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outstanding issues, Hitler retreated to the Obersalzberg to rally his forces. On October 18, he issued orders from the Berghof for Göring to continue the now expiring second Four-Year Plan.⁵⁶¹

As from Berchtesgaden, October 18, 1940

My dear Reichsmarschall,

Four years ago I charged you with the implementation of a plan which I announced at the Party Congress of Honor. Now that you have dedicated yourself to this mission with the vigor peculiar to you and have brought it to great success, it is your task as the commissioner for the second Four-Year Plan to continue the work begun and, in particular, to adapt it to the demands of the war. All powers granted you at the time shall remain at your disposal in the future.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

On October 19, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Commander Prien the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves on the occasion of the latter's having sunk a total of 200,000 tons of enemy ships.⁵⁶²

Two days later, Hitler boarded his special train for the journey south. Personal encounters with Franco and Pétain were to secure the united front in Europe "from the North Cape to Morocco." Hitler trusted his own powers of persuasion to recruit at least Franco for this undertaking. A few hours should suffice to this end, so Hitler thought. Filled with confidence, he had already sent Himmler to Spain on October 21 to oversee what he considered a ripe new satellite state and to prepare the appropriate measures to be taken later.⁵⁶³

Late in the afternoon of October 22, Hitler's train pulled into the small Montoire station,⁵⁶⁴ located in the occupied section of central France. There Ribbentrop awaited him. In his special train compartment, Hitler received Pierre Laval to discuss the envisioned meeting with Pétain. The following official statement was issued on the encounter:⁵⁶⁵

France, October 22, 1940

During a stay in France, the Führer received the Vice President of the French Ministerial Council, Laval. The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, was present at the conference.

The curt nature of the report reflected Hitler's disdain for Laval: this vain Frenchman apparently believed in all earnest that he could outmaneuver the Führer of the Greater German Reich with petty deceptions in order to steer what was left of his ship "France" along the cliffs of Hitlerian politics.

On the afternoon of October 23, Hitler alighted from his train at Hendaye, a French railroad station in the vicinity of the Spanish

frontier. With him were: Ribbentrop, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Bormann, Dietrich, Colonel General Dollmann, Lieutenant General Bodenschatz, and Undersecretary of State Gauss.⁵⁶⁶ The Spanish Caudillo, however, made the assembled elite of the Third Reich wait, as he was one hour late for the engagement. This tardiness was undoubtedly deliberate, since Spain was only a few kilometers away, and he could assuredly have managed to arrive on time had he so desired. Hitler used the time spent waiting for Franco to give Ribbentrop some last-minute instructions:

We can no longer make any written commitments to the Spaniards regarding territories in the French colonial possessions. If they get hold of anything written on this delicate matter, then surely, given the garrulous nature of the Latins, the French will get wind of it sooner or later.

In the talks with Pétain, I will try to move the French to participate actively in the war against England. Therefore I cannot burden them with such territorial concessions now. Besides, if such an agreement with the Spaniards became public, then the entire French colonial empire would probably close ranks with de Gaulle.

To get Spain, Italy, and France to bow to one single command—Hitler’s—was indeed not an easy undertaking. The first two parties undoubtedly would not have been averse to joining in the loot of France’s former colonial possessions. And France in turn might not have rejected some of the spoils gathered after the “pending” collapse of the British Empire. Still Hitler was reluctant to go “this far” with the English. After all, he could not possibly “burden them with such territorial concessions now.”

Franco finally arrived around 3:00 p.m. A customary display of mutual respect followed: shaking hands, reviewing guards of honor, and the like. Then Hitler asked his guest inside the special train compartment. There he resorted to his rhetorical gifts and gave a wordy, highly detailed account of his previous military conquests. There were no terms too grandiose to convey to his visitor just how splendid Germany’s present situation was. Victory had already been achieved, the principal opponents stricken down. A series of similar exaggerations climaxed in the following statement: “England has already been beaten for good. It is simply not yet ready to admit this fact.”

Towards the end of the encounter, Hitler challenged Franco to enter the war on the Third Reich’s side in January, 1941. As recompense, Spain could count on a Gibraltar conquered by German troops.

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Furthermore there was the prospect, though vaguely formulated, of obtaining "colonial possessions in Africa."

Had Hitler expected the Spaniard to display the same naive enthusiasm Mussolini generally professed, then he was sorely disappointed. His face motionless, Franco had listened to Hitler in silence. As a man at home in a nation that had once been a world and sea power, he knew better than Hitler and Mussolini what this meant. He did not share Hitler's and Mussolini's ignorance in such matters. And the Battle of Britain, the debacle of the Luftwaffe the month before, had sobered him up. The conflict between Germany and England was far from over; this he realized. For him, the challenge of the moment was to dissociate himself from an ill-fated undertaking without losing face. Franco was not about to allow Hitler to embroil Spain in the fall of the Third Reich.

To gain time, Franco first gave a lengthy account of the food shortages plaguing his country. Not unlike Mussolini towards the end of August 1939, he demanded increased deliveries of grain—several thousands of tons—and a great number of additional heavy artillery guns, anti-aircraft guns, and the like. And if anyone was to take Gibraltar, then this was to be Spain. Its national pride precluded acceptance of a fortress conquered by foreign soldiers.

He rejected Hitler's idea of establishing a land bridge from Gibraltar to the North African continent. In his mind, this was to serve predominantly the transfer of tanks to desert battlefields. Franco held heavily armored vehicles to be ill-suited to desert warfare. Slyly referring to the disastrous attempt to take the British Isles, Franco likened the desert to an island which constituted a similarly formidable barrier. Moreover, even if the English lost out in such an engagement, the British Empire could pursue the war from bases in America and Canada if all else failed.

Franco dealt blow upon blow to a prostrate Hitler. Unlike the Spaniard who continued to speak in a soft, monotonous voice, Hitler grew increasingly agitated. Never yet had Hitler been presented with such a bold rebuff to a well-studied speech.

As in his discussion with the Englishman Sir Horace Wilson in September 1938,⁵⁶⁷ Hitler finally could no longer restrain himself. He jumped up to declare that, under these circumstances, there was no sense in pursuing the matter any further. It would be best to discontinue the talks. But he regained his composure, took a seat once again, and persisted in his fruitless efforts to turn the stubborn Spaniard

around. Ultimately, Franco yielded and agreed to enter into an agreement with Germany. However, he attached such powerful strings to this concession, in the form of demands for delivery of foodstuffs and war material, that the envisioned treaty was reduced to, as Schmidt put it, “a mere facade with nothing left behind it.”

There was a break in the talks, and the two Foreign Ministers were left behind to negotiate the particulars. According to the protocol established, the two Heads of State were first to have dinner together in Hitler’s wagon before departing. However, Hitler sought to draw Franco over to his side once again, and so engaged him in conversation that departure was delayed for an additional two hours. In spite of all the rhetoric, Hitler made no decisive advances with the recalcitrant Spaniard. Five days later, Hitler was to comment colorfully to Mussolini that the conversation with Franco was of such a kind that “rather than go through it again [he] would prefer to have three or four teeth taken out.”⁵⁶⁸

In Hitler’s mind, what had come to pass between him and Franco was truly unbelievable. Franco owed everything to him. And now, in his hour of need, Franco refused to heed his summons. In fact, the Spanish dictator’s behavior imperiled the entire concept of a front reaching from the North Cape to Morocco! On the German side, a short, nebulous communiqué reported on the meeting at Hendaye.⁵⁶⁹

On Monday [October 23], the Führer met with the Spanish Generalissimo Franco at the Franco-Spanish frontier. The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and the Spanish Foreign Minister, Serrano Suñer, participated in the discussions characterized by a spirit of heartfelt, comradely relations.

Hendaye gave Hitler a foretaste of the numerous further diplomatic defeats he was destined to suffer in the course of the next two to three weeks. His powerful oratory proved of no avail in these instances.

On the late afternoon of October 24, the planned meeting with Pétain took place at Montoire. Ribbentrop rushed to join up with Hitler by plane.⁵⁷⁰ As mentioned before, Hitler had a certain weakness for old Marshals. Despite his perfunctory dealings with men such as Hindenburg, Pilsudski, Foch, he had always shown respect for them. And in Hitler’s mind, it was a tribute that he, the victor, should condescend to come to Montoire and meet with the representative of vanquished France. Hitler even stepped down from the train to greet the Marshal, who was clad in dress uniform on the occasion. A further gesture was the fact that Hitler, after the meeting, accompanied the elderly Frenchman

back to his car. However, this concession was about the only one Pétain was to be accorded by Hitler at this meeting.

This was indeed pitifully little. If Hitler sought to “move the French to participate actively in the war against England,”⁵⁷¹ then he would have to make more substantial concessions, for instance, granting France a peace treaty—or anything else in writing. And this he wished to avoid at all cost.

Moreover, Hitler’s general set of mind proved another hindrance. Given his persuasion that “wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain,”⁵⁷² he could not well release the French prisoners of war already taken, do without the future “German” seaports Brest and Le Havre, or return terrain to prostrate France.

Still, something had to be done, as even Hitler realized. Instead of taking action, he once more resorted to words and enumerated his own successes and achievements in great detail, the generosity of his peace proposals, and so on. Then he spoke of the many mistakes France had made, once more stressing: “England has already been beaten for good. It is simply not yet ready to admit this fact.” In concluding, Hitler appealed to Pétain to array France along the general European front against England. He mentioned the fierce British attacks on Oran and Dakar, two French cities in North Africa.

The aging Marshal, on whom destiny had bestowed the far-from-enviable role of defending his country against Hitler and the Nazi regime, said little on this occasion. The last thing France could afford to do was to take part in an assault on Great Britain, its ally against Germany. The era of Napoleon was gone for good, not to mention the time of Joan of Arc. And even had France been tempted to ally itself with other powers once more against England, it would barely have accepted a German leadership. Pétain fully realized that the British attacks on Oran and Dakar were not directed against France, but against Germany. Should France move closer to Germany, then this would undoubtedly result in even greater ferocity in the assaults on French property.

The issue at Montoire, as far as Pétain was concerned, was to win time, while not provoking Hitler. At the same time, Pétain hoped to secure concessions to ease the plight of the French people under the German yoke. Hence, with the connivance of Laval, he cleverly introduced the question of a peace treaty and the release of approximately two million French prisoners of war. This was to no avail, as Hitler was not inclined to make any political concessions.

Certain token gestures, such as the transfer of the corpse of the Duke von Reichstadt from its resting place at Vienna to Paris, should suffice to heal the wounded pride of the French.⁵⁷³

As Hitler refused to take up the topic introduced by Pétain, the two statesmen likewise did not pursue the subject of a French alliance with Germany against England any further. Nevertheless, it was officially agreed that the Axis Powers and France shared a common interest in the defeat of England “as soon as possible.”⁵⁷⁴ The French Government would do all within its might to promote this cause. Obviously, these were but empty phrases. No concrete results were obtained at Montoire. The following pronouncement informed the public of the meeting:⁵⁷⁵

The talks between the Führer and the French Head of State Marshal Pétain, in the presence of the Vice-President of the French Ministerial Council Laval and the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, took place late Thursday [October 24] afternoon in the special train of the Führer at a small station in the occupied part of France.

Marshal Pétain, whom Ambassador Abetz had been expecting at the line of demarcation, arrived at the place of the talks with Vice-President Laval. An Army battalion paid tribute to the French Marshal by presenting arms. At the entry to the station, the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop greeted him. The Chief of the OKW, Field Marshal Keitel, and the Chief of Protocol, Envoy von Dörnberg, greeted the French statesmen also and led them to the special train where the Führer was awaiting the French Head of State in his compartment. The talks thereupon began in the parlor car of the Führer. After the talks concluded, the Führer accompanied the French Head of State to his car. Military honors were paid Marshal Pétain on departure as well.

October 24 was truly a black Thursday for Hitler. First Franco, then Pétain refused to array their countries alongside Hitler’s Third Reich. Neither had the potential and the willingness to become a reliable satellite state or to play the role Hitler envisioned for him. Further, on this same day, a letter from Rome reached Hitler which did nothing to improve his mood of dejection. Mussolini had not had the courage not to inform the master of his venture into Greece beforehand and—as he had relished—to have Hitler “find out from the papers” that Italy had invaded Greece.⁵⁷⁶

Thus he had revealed his intention to invade Greece in a late letter to Hitler on October 22. Undoubtedly, Mussolini was seeking revenge for Hitler’s unannounced coup in Rumania. This ludicrous reaction was in keeping with his response to Hitler’s invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, which had led the Duce to occupy Albania in 1939.

The two statesmen's attitude veritably resembled sand-table exercises in a kindergarten! Characteristically, Mussolini pursued his *mare nostrum* policy on a small country which he felt was easy prey for the Italian Empire. He did not anticipate encountering any significant resistance in Greece or in public opinion abroad, as reflected in an earlier statement to Ciano: "I shall send in my resignation as an Italian if anyone objects to our fighting the Greeks."⁵⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Mussolini had not informed Hitler of the precise date he wished to launch this undertaking. Undoubtedly, he feared the strict Führer would forbid anything of the kind. And indeed, Hitler was not at all pleased by the Duce's ill-considered step. Hitler summarized his assessment of Italy's prospects in Greece in the following statement, as Ribbentrop later remembered it: "Never will the Italians be able to do much against the Greeks in the Balkans during the autumn rains and the winter snows."⁵⁷⁸ Hitler immediately instructed Ribbentrop to establish a telephone connection with Rome to ask Mussolini to a meeting the following week in northern Italy.⁵⁷⁹ Obviously, Hitler did not consider an invasion a possibility.

On October 25, Hitler's train reached the Belgian border. There news that the Italian invasion of Greece was immediately imminent caught up with Hitler and his entourage. Instantly, Ribbentrop received orders to phone Mussolini to arrange for a meeting at Florence.⁵⁸⁰ Hitler's special train turned south. At 2:00 a.m. on October 28, it passed the Brenner Pass. At 8:00 a.m., nearly three hours north of Florence, en route, news of the Italian invasion of Greece earlier that morning was picked up by the train's crew on Italian radio. Hitler had come too late.⁵⁸¹ Now the invasion of Greece was an accomplished fact. Orders for it could no longer be rescinded. Hitler was furious, but not because of Greece or the Balkans. Rather he was nettled because he had to play Mussolini's game now, or else he would openly have to avow a rift in German-Italian relations, which would have been contrary to his well-known thesis of 1919 as expounded in *Mein Kampf*.⁵⁸²

By the time the special train finally pulled into Florence, at 11:00 p.m., Hitler had had sufficient time to adjust to the changing circumstances. To the great surprise of those close to him,⁵⁸³ he managed to play convincingly the role of a benevolent friend, concerned, but not necessarily upset, by Mussolini's rash action. In a hearty manner, he greeted the Duce and remained most congenial throughout the day. Mussolini heaved a sigh of relief, as fear and guilt

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had begun to gnaw at him. The strict master apparently did not wish to reprimand him as severely as expected. To the contrary, he was most obliging and reaffirmed Germany's solidarity with Italy, come what might. Ciano noted that he felt the conference was "of the greatest interest and proves that German solidarity has not failed us."⁵⁸⁴

According to the German News Bureau, the resulting two-hour discussion was conducted in a "warm fashion" and ended in "complete agreement of opinion."⁵⁸⁵ Mussolini was in the best of spirits. A most congenial host on this day, he even accompanied his guest, after a lunch at the Palazzo Medici, to a concert at the Palazzo Pitti. As a favor to Hitler, Mussolini even endured a performance by the municipal orchestra of Florence that day. In general, concerts bored him stiff. When the music ended, Hitler was the first to rise from his seat and enthusiastically applaud the orchestra. To further oblige his caller, Mussolini even deigned to show Hitler the rooms at the Palazzo Vecchio, something he would not have done willingly under different circumstances, as he loathed museums.

The two dictators behaved as though peace reigned throughout the European lands. Together they appeared on the balcony before a crowd assembled in front of the Palazzo. A row of Fascists formed a cordon through which the cars of the two passed on their way to the train station at 6:00 p.m. After warm farewells, Hitler departed.

On October 30, having returned to Berlin, Hitler thanked Mussolini for his hospitality in a telegram which was to prove to the world the bonds of friendship and solidarity still tying Italy to Germany:⁵⁸⁶

On my return to Germany, I express to you once more, Duce, my heartfelt thanks for the reception and hospitality I was accorded in Florence. The stormy jubilation of the citizens of Florence affords proof again that the politics of the Italo-German alliance, the complete agreement which we were able to establish anew in these talks, is anchored deep within the hearts of your people. The weaponry of our armies and the faiths of our peoples will never allow the victory to be taken from us. In comradely solidarity, I greet you, Duce.

Adolf Hitler

On October 31, Hitler personally handed Lieutenant Commander Prien the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves at a reception at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁸⁷ On November 4, Hitler awarded Captain Kretschmar the same medal, distinguishing him for the sinking of 200,000 tons of enemy ships. Kretschmar received the customary telegram on this occasion.⁵⁸⁸

On November 6, a landslide election secured a third term for Roosevelt as President of the United States. While this re-election had been anticipated, Hitler nevertheless behaved as though the re-election of “Churchill’s accomplice”⁵⁸⁹ was due solely to Mussolini and his Greek adventure.⁵⁹⁰ This was symptomatic of Hitler’s increased nervousness. Things had not gone his way of late. His worst fears had come true: he had proved incapable of coming to terms with Franco and Pétain; Mussolini had strayed and engaged himself in a costly and useless enterprise; the Tripartite Pact had not intimidated the Americans; Roosevelt had been re-elected.

Hitler’s predicament was great. Either he would have to “use” the Russians against England somehow, or barring this, he would have to destroy Russia, as it constituted England’s “last hope.” Only then would the British resign themselves to his mastery of the Continent.

The second option was all the more appealing to Hitler as it opened the way for the conquest of Lebensraum in the East. In the latter case, Hitler realized he would have to do his utmost to prove that all other alternatives for coming to terms with Russia had been exhausted. To come to a final decision and keep things going in the meantime, he invited the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to Berlin.

Announcing such news to the public came at a most opportune moment in Hitler’s eyes, as he believed it would uplift the generally dampened mood among Germans. Spirits were low especially among his old Party comrades. Propaganda thus quickly publicized the imminent arrival of the Soviet Commissar as the commemorative festivities for the Beer Hall Putsch were scheduled to commence shortly.

After all, it was Hitler’s old Party comrades who were the most dissatisfied with his present performance. They had grown increasingly skeptical because of his false prophecies and because of the discrepancy between his words and his deeds. They realized that his decline was inevitable and that it had already begun. They were fully aware of just how tragically mistaken their Führer had been when he proclaimed first that, should the Third Reich invade Poland, the senile British statesmen would never dare declare war on Germany; and even should they do so, then he would drive them “back to the Thames” where they would gladly accept the terms of peace he dictated. Once he had failed on both accounts, he bombastically announced that the destruction of the Royal Air Force would precede the “razing” (*Ausradierung*) of England’s cities. No tangible results had yet been

obtained, with the possible exception of Royal Air Force bomb raids on German cities. And though he had threatened to come to the British Isles, he had swiftly abandoned this undertaking once it had become clear that landings there were simply not possible. Not much had been heard of Hitler after his meetings with Franco and Pétain. And now the war, which supposedly had already ended in the “greatest victory of all time” in July, was still dragging on while winter was rapidly approaching. To whip up enthusiasm, especially within the Party, propaganda portrayed the pending visit by Molotov as a positive sign of light at the end of the tunnel. What could it signify other than the Soviet Union’s assent to entering into the war on the side of Germany?

On November 8, the annual commemorative festivities began in the Löwenbräukeller in Munich. The usual site for the celebrations, the Bürgerbräukeller, destroyed in the mysterious explosion of the previous year, had not yet been completely restored. Though not invited to attend the 1940 festivities, the Royal Air Force nonetheless called at Munich to contribute a special fireworks display in the skies above the Bavarian capital.

With Molotov’s visit strengthening his back, Hitler felt he could afford to call Churchill “insane,” and to proclaim the Royal Air Force England’s “weakest weapon.” Once more he announced Britain’s imminent defeat. He boasted: “One day there will be no more Churchill, but more and more German U-boats.” He was certain of victory as he believed he was fighting the same kind of enemies abroad whom he had once vanquished internally: “I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally.”

Hitler’s speech began on the following note:⁵⁹¹

Party Comrades!

We now celebrate once more the 9th of November, and as back then a rally unites us on the eve of this day. For us the year 1923 was a high-point in the struggle for power in Germany. This struggle, and hence the significance of the day which we are celebrating, can be comprehended only by those who reflect on the age in which we found ourselves then and who, above all, bring back before their eyes the historic events leading up to this gigantic struggle.

Having embarked on a lengthy “party narrative,” Hitler now undertook to conjure up these “historic events.” Once more he spoke of the causes for the collapse of 1918 as he understood them. The ensuing tirade climaxed in the following statement:

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As a former soldier of the World War and present Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, I can say: they [the Allies] would never have carried the victory over Germany back then, had not their allies broken us internally!

Four years they labored. It was even necessary to summon an American sorcerer-priest⁵⁹² (*Zauberpriester*) who found the formula which made it possible for the German Volk to fall for the word of honor of a foreign president.

Once Hitler felt he had indulged in reminiscences of the past for long enough, he reaffirmed his faith in the following notion: "I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally."

Providence had spared him many a "trial" to allow him "to lead this struggle for the German Volk." He stated:

I took the same stand in our struggle abroad. Any such new intrigue, any new attempt to mobilize states against us through treaties and agreements, only led to my accelerating armament. I was firmly determined to risk it all. Without interruption the struggle went on with the objective of eliminating the Versailles Treaty. For, my Party Comrades, this I had to do if I were not to be a liar. After all, what did we fight for? When we made our first appearances in the years 1920-21 and 1922, our program was the elimination of Versailles. I could not all of a sudden say: forget about it.

I was determined to make Germany free once again. I led this struggle step by step. And, honestly, I had the ambition of maintaining the peace. From a multitude of rallies and publications, you know of the foreign policy conception I embraced at the time: I wished to establish close bonds of friendship with England. I thought the Germanic races had to come together. I wanted the same relationship to Italy. And further I thought of Japan as a power with interests parallel to our own.⁵⁹³ As far as Italy was concerned, this attempt succeeded thanks to the ingenious actions of the man who founded Fascism and who was victorious in the same struggle in his country which we National Socialists were confronted with in Germany. And, in the last instance, we succeeded with Japan also.

However, we met with failure regarding England, in striking contrast to our own desires. It was not our fault. To the contrary, I attempted, up to the last minute, until a few days prior to the outbreak of war, to realize my original foreign policy objective. At the time, I made the British Ambassador the greatest offers. I was willing to cooperate with England. But it was in vain. I had already realized at the time that certain war profiteers had been agitating for years without anyone putting an end to this business. There could be no doubt that one day they would bring the British people to hate and to be furious with Germany. And meanwhile, the German Volk would harbor no hatred for England. And thus, one fine day, Germany would have stumbled into a war without any psychological preparation. I already warned of this in the years 1938 and 1939, and most notably, in my speech at Saarbrücken,⁵⁹⁴

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I emphasized that things could not go on in this manner. If England persisted in this campaign of hatred, then I would be forced to put German propaganda to use.

And thus came the day when it was no longer a question whether war could be avoided, but rather whether it could be postponed for one, two, or three years. This would have been possible only through the most severe humiliation of Germany. And one thing you must understand here, my Party Comrades: on the day I realized that England was only stalling for time, that they were determined to wage war under any circumstance, which was openly revealed in the statements of British statesmen, on that day, I had but one desire: if they were determined to declare war on us, then at least, so I hoped, they should do this during my lifetime. For I knew this would be the toughest of all struggles ever forced on the German Volk. Now not only do I imagine myself to be the toughest man the German Volk has possessed for decades, perhaps even centuries, but I also possess the greatest authority. Above all, I believe in my success, and I believe in it without reserve!

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally.

I am convinced that Providence has led me up to this point and has held all trials at a distance, so that I could wage this battle for the German Volk. And finally, I did go through the Great War myself, and I belong to those who were cheated of the victory back then. And therefore it is my unshakeable resolve that this battle shall end differently from the battle back then.

When I spoke to you in the past year, the first phase of this battle lay behind us. In eighteen days,⁵⁹⁵ our Wehrmacht crushed Poland. Others had imagined things would develop quite differently. They had been convinced that the battle would last six, eight, or ten months. They said to themselves: "Wars with decisive results are no longer possible. Under the best of circumstances, trench warfare will ensue. A front will be erected in the East, and this will slowly bleed Germany to death. Meanwhile, the West will arm. Then the summer of 1940 will come, and then one will move up through Belgium and the Netherlands to the Ruhr territory frontier. And, then slowly one will master Germany." That is how they imagined things. And besides this, they believed that only a few weeks later—we have heard as much from all sides—a revolution would break out in Germany. This, moreover, would lead to destitution. They had not an inkling of the extent of our armament and believed that I was bluffing just as they have been trying to bluff us for years. They did not think anyone would really do what he said he would. Therefore they were convinced that this war would be a relatively easy one for them.

A year ago, as I mentioned earlier, Poland was eliminated. And thus we thwarted their plans a first time. I was able to refer to this great success on November 8, 1939. Today, one year later, I have further successes to report! This, first and foremost, only he who himself served as a soldier in the Great War, can appreciate fully as he knows what it means not only to crush the entire West within a few weeks, but also to take possession of Norway up to the North Cape, from where a front is drawn today from Kirkenes down to the Spanish border.

All the hopes of the British warmongers were then torn asunder. For they had intended to wage war on the periphery, to cut off the German vital lines, and slowly strangle us. The reverse has come true! This continent is slowly mobilizing, in reflecting upon itself, against the enemy of the continent. Within a few months, Germany has given actual freedom to this continent. The British attempt to "Balkanize" Europe—and of this the British statesmen should take note—has been thwarted and has ended! England wanted to disorganize Europe. Germany and Italy will organize Europe.

Now in England they may declare that the war is going on, but I am completely indifferent to this. It will go on until we end it! And we will end it, of this they can be sure! And it will end in our victory! That you can believe!⁵⁹⁶ I realize one thing. If I had stepped up as a prophet on January 1 of this year to explain to the English: by the spring of this year, we will have ruined your plan in Norway, and it will not be you in Norway, but Germany; in the summer of this same year you will no longer be in the Netherlands or come to the Netherlands, but we will have occupied it; in the same summer you will not have advanced through Belgium to the German borders, but we will be at yours; and if I had said: by this summer, there will be no more France; then, all would have said: "The man is insane." And so I shall cease from making any further prophecies today.⁵⁹⁷

I would merely like to give a few explanations to the German Volk. The struggle up to now has led to results of an unequalled nature:

1. In terms of personnel. As bitter as it was for the individual family which had to make the sacrifice, it has cost the German Volk practically no sacrifices.⁵⁹⁸ In sum, the sacrifices we made in this war are not as big as those which the War of 1870–71 cost us. Indeed, they are barely half of this number. In terms of personnel our calculations were upset insofar as we did not have to touch the earmarked, gigantic reserve armies, which we had counted on as replacements for losses. Many men with long service records could thus be dismissed. And still, mostly through the younger grades, we were in a position to strengthen the Wehrmacht at the same time. In terms of personnel the German Army looks completely different today from how it looked in the World War. Only a few days ago, I drove through Belgium and France, and as an old soldier of the World War, I must say our Wehrmacht looks magnificent today, irrespective of whether we are talking about the Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, or Waffen SS. All look equally handsome. They cannot be compared to those of the years 1914 or 1915.⁵⁹⁹

2. In material terms, I prepared for this war as no other war has been prepared for. It was well worth it. The material sacrifices of this war are of no consequence. The ammunition we have used up in battle up to now is the equivalent of barely a month's production. The reserves are so enormous, that in many areas I had to halt production because there is no further storage room available. I have redirected production into other areas where I believe it to be important that we be especially strong. You have heard the others' threats of what they all will produce: Australia has six or seven million inhabitants, including Bushmen. And in spite of this, they want to produce eight times as many airplanes as Germany. Canada has nine million inhabi-

tants. Now they want to build twelve times as many airplanes as Germany. As far as American production is concerned, astronomical figures do not suffice to describe it. In this realm, I do not want to enter into the competition. But one thing I can assure you of: we can mobilize all of Europe's forces.

German productive capacities are the highest in the world. And we will not leave matters at that, since we are in a position today to mobilize the forces of nearly all of Europe—and that I am doing this in the industrial sphere you can take for granted! Our material armament therefore is enormous, and it is just beginning to grow. Even though we have prepared this industrial mobilization for years, as you know, the initial push—in terms of greater figures—will only come about in another one to one and a half years. And this is the case now.

And, summing up, I may say one thing: we are better prepared for the future than ever before. We are prepared in terms of material, and we are prepared in terms of personnel. And that the Wehrmacht makes the most of every day, this anyone who himself served as a soldier knows well. Not a day is lost. This foremost military instrument of the world is being attended to and improved without a moment's interruption. And when the hour of large-scale operations comes once again, then I hope we shall achieve exactly the same results we have in the past. We have prepared everything in the most thorough manner in order to act quickly and daringly!

And the hour will come in which those gentlemen, whose mouths have already conquered the world once again, will have to take up arms. And then we will see who has put these months to better use: we or the others!

Germany with its allies, at any rate, is strong enough to face off any combination in the world. There is no coalition of powers which is militarily equal to ours!⁶⁰⁰

Economically speaking, the long preparations of peacetime have proved well worth the effort: the Four-Year Plan, which we recently prolonged for another four years, has created large reserves for us. The Englishmen know this quite well; otherwise they would not have cursed us so vividly because of it. It was to render us invulnerable to attempts at isolation or blockade. Besides this, it remains to be seen who will be blockaded a few months hence: we or the others!

I believe that in some spheres, the English have been dissuaded from lying. Mr. Churchill, who only eight and six months ago declared, "Within one month, we will have destroyed fifty percent of their U-boats," was not able to say as much the next month, i.e. another fifty percent, because then none of them would have been left. So the next month, the hits accounted for only thirty percent. A month later he could not say twenty percent, but had to content himself with ten percent. And now this General Liar of World History (*Generallügner der Weltgeschichte*) is beginning to admit that there appear to be more of our U-boats than there were in the beginning.

He can believe me: there are more now! He has no idea how many more there are! We will yet challenge them, these international, capitalist liars. And we will live to see it: one day there will be no more Churchill, but more and more German U-boats.

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And now that he could no longer disclaim the gist of this, this most ingenious strategist ever born has fastened on the war in the air. For this has been quite an ingenious idea of Mr. Churchill's—of all places in a weapons category in which England is the weakest in comparison to us—to launch the war in the air. You know that for years I made proposals to the world to forsake bombing in warfare especially against civilian populations.

England has declined this, perhaps in anticipation of the ensuing development. Be that as it may! In spite of this, I did not allow battles to be waged against civilian populations in this war. In the war with Poland, I did not order nightly raids on Polish cities, since at night you cannot really hit your target with much accuracy. I allowed attacks to be carried out mostly during the day and only against military targets. I did the same in Norway. I did the same in the Netherlands, in Belgium, and in France. And then Mr. Churchill suddenly had the idea, since the Royal Air Force could not penetrate German air space during the day, to terrorize the German civilian population with attacks by night.

You know that I am a patient man, my Party Comrades! I stood by for eight days. They dropped bombs on the civilian population along the Rhine. They dropped bombs on the civilian population in Westphalia. And I stood by for fourteen days and thought to myself: the man is insane! He is introducing a type of warfare here which can lead only to England's destruction. When the war in the West came to an end, I extended my hand once more to England. Once again I was chided in the most despicable fashion and spat on. Mr. Halifax behaved like a man gone mad. Well! They stepped up the bomb attacks. Again I waited. I must say it was becoming increasingly difficult for me. For many came to me who said: "How long do you still intend to wait, Führer? They are not going to stop by themselves."

I waited three months altogether, and then one day I issued the order: alas, I am taking up this battle, and I am taking it up with the determination with which I always step up to do battle. That means: to fight to the last from now on!

They wanted a fight; they shall have a fight! They wanted to destroy Germany in the war in the air. I will show them who shall be destroyed.

The English people, whom I can only pity, can thank the common criminal Churchill for this. Mr. Churchill has produced the greatest military nonsense in this fight for which a statesman or warlord ever was responsible!⁶⁰¹ He fought with the weapon which is his weakest. He fought from a position which has been geographically disadvantageous to England ever since we have held Trondheim and Brest. It was the weakest position which England could possibly maintain. We will persevere in this fight. I regret that it will demand sacrifices on our part as well. But I do know National Socialist Germany. Only Mr. Churchill does not know it. There is a big difference. He believed he could weary the German Volk. He completely forgot that now a different Germany has come into being. This Germany becomes all the more zealous with every bomb that is dropped. Its resolve is merely strengthened. Above all, it knows: this nonsense must be done away with once and for all. And in this, we are determined.

When Mr. Chamberlain was here in Munich in 1938 and hypocritically presented his peace proposals to me, this man had already decided for himself to proclaim immediately after his return: "I have been granted a postponement, and now let us arm until we can attack Germany." We are quite aware that any ceasefire agreement today would be just that: a ceasefire agreement. They would hope that in a few years I would no longer stand at the helm of this Reich and that then the fight could begin anew.

Hence it is my unalterable resolve to see this conflict through to a clear decision. Just as I rejected compromise in my struggle for Germany as a National Socialist,⁶⁰² so I reject compromise here as well.

I extended my hand often—in vain. They wanted this fight; now they shall have it! The German Volk will see this fight through to the end! The danger that it might erupt again within one or two or three years, after a period of heightened tension, must be removed. The German Volk wants to have peace finally. It wants a peace that allows it to work and which does not allow international scoundrels to agitate among other peoples against us. These are the folks who make their fortunes through war.⁶⁰³ I have no reason to wage war for material considerations. For us, it is but a sad enterprise: it robs us, the German Volk and the whole community, of so much time and manpower. I do not possess any stocks in the armament industry; I do not earn anything in this war. I would be happy if we could work again as I used to work for my Volk. But these international war criminals are at the same time the armament industry's greatest black marketeers. They own the factories, they make business. They are the same people we had here in Germany earlier. There can be but one confrontation with these people: one of us must break. And this one will not be, under any circumstances, Germany!⁶⁰⁴

And if this Germany today possesses a different attitude, this is because National Socialism has pulled the German Volk up by its bootstraps again. It has created the mental, psychological, moral, and also material conditions for the enormous victories by the Wehrmacht of our young Reich. Every soldier knows it and must know that the armies which today march beneath our banner are the revolutionary armies of the Third Reich!

They carry in their hearts not only faith in a Germany as it once was, but they carry in their hearts the faith in a Germany as we all imagine it will be in the future, for which we have fought so long, the faith in a better Reich, in which the great goals of our national and social Movement shall be realized.

And that we possess such a Germany today, this we owe to those who marched in the year 1923 and, above all, to those who then, as the first, shed their blood for the Movement. These sixteen dead are more than simply sixteen dead! They became the crown witnesses for a new resurrection of our Volk. Their sacrifice was all the greater, for back then they could yet barely perceive in their faintest fantasies what has come into being since. Then they acted out of a boundless love for Germany. When someone came to join the Movement then, one could only say to him: "You can give up everything else, since you will be laughed at and ridiculed and persecuted. You must be aware that you will be without bread, that they will throw you out of everywhere. You will have nothing of which you can be certain, other than death perhaps.

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But you see before you something for which we all fight. It is a new Germany of honor which we will resurrect and which will secure for its sons their daily bread. And it will take a place once more in this world which it deserves, based on the number of its people, its historical past, and our former, present, and future worth.”

And all these men came to take their places. Many of them felt this but subconsciously. There were so many common folk in this Movement. We were avoided like the plague by those who held themselves to belong to the intelligentsia or the upper middle classes. We were avoided like the plague by them, so that the greater number of those who joined our ranks were mostly mere common people. Perhaps they had not so clear a vision of what was to come. They only knew: one day things will be better.

Things will be better one day, because we will build up a new Reich. And in this Reich much will be realized that our foes actually yearn for deep inside themselves, without realizing that following along the path on which they have set out, they shall never be able to achieve it.

For this these men stood up, and for this sixteen of them gave their lives back then.

They were sixteen, although they might equally well have been five hundred or five thousand, and not one of them uttered a complaint. Not even the wounded betrayed the cause. To the contrary, the wounded all the more eagerly became Party comrades once again, all the more zealous than before! And in the footsteps of these sixteen many hundred followed, here and beyond the borders of the Reich. They followed along the path of martyrs for years, for nearly a decade. Their numbers were the greatest in the Ostmark and the Sudetenland perhaps—all the stronger was their belief because the battle seemed the most hopeless there. How could all these common folk surmise the course of history as it has now truly come to pass? How could they foresee the miracle which would return them home gloriously to a great Reich one and a half or two decades later? Still they fought, with a faithful heart, without knowing precisely if this would come to pass during their own lives.

And all this took its beginning from this November 8, and November 9, 1923. And so we celebrate the commemoration of these men, all the more profoundly moved today than even then, since all of them bore in their hearts the disgrace of the collapse of the year 1918–19. And this disgrace gnawed at their hearts and upset them. How often did we sit together, aglow with the one thought: this must be repaired in our history: this cannot last and this cannot remain! Otherwise the German Volk would be burdened with this blemish for all time! We will erase this from the book of our history! We will wash it away again! We will resurrect a Germany of might, power, and magnificence. Germany must be resurrected, one way or another! And in this spirit we fought.

In this spirit they fell. In this spirit the battle continued to be waged. And in this spirit we face the outside world today, and we will complete that for which they fell back then. They [the World Powers] believe they are destroying Germany. They will be proved mistaken! Germany will rise from the battle all the more!

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The commemorative march customarily held on November 9 was canceled this year as in the previous one. Neither did Hitler attend the placing of wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and the monuments at the Königlischer Platz. On the same day, Sir Neville Chamberlain died at Heckfield. The victor of Munich was not allowed to witness the end of the Nazi regime he had so longed to see. To that extent, this was a success for Hitler.

On November 10, Hitler congratulated the Emperor of Japan in a telegram on the 2,600-year anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Empire.⁶⁰⁵

In view of the close bonds between Germany and Japan which have found their global expression in the Three-Power Pact, I ask Your Majesty to accept once more, on the occasion of today's principal celebration of the 2,600-year anniversary of the Japanese Empire, my heartfelt best wishes for Your Majesty, the Imperial House, and the Japanese people.

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, Hitler wired Victor Emmanuel on his birthday.⁶⁰⁶ He also sent his condolences to King Michael of Rumania in a telegram occasioned by an earthquake in the vicinity of Bucharest which had cost several hundreds of lives.⁶⁰⁷

On November 12, Molotov was scheduled to arrive in Berlin. Before entering into negotiations with this "primitive" Russian, Hitler wanted to take the steps he had already determined on. These he set down in yet another directive for the further conduct of the war. The invasion of Russia was a foregone conclusion of the talks, irrespective of their immediate outcome.

Once Hitler made up his mind, he doggedly pursued his objective. In the case of the Soviet Union, Hitler foresaw only two alternative courses of action: either the Russians fell for his ploy or they did not. In the first instance, Russia would launch a drive for British colonial possessions, e.g. in India. This would afford Hitler the choice opportunity of demonstrating his "loyalty" to the English by attacking Russia. In the second case, the Soviets would reject his proposals and thereby prove that they deserved no better than to be thrown back behind the Urals.

So, not surprisingly, the directive dated November 12, 1940, contained this significant passage:

Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the coming period. Regardless of what results these discussions

will have, all preparations for the East which already have been orally ordered, are to be continued.

The directive further dealt with issues connected with France, Spain, Egypt, and the Balkans. In spite of the fruitless talk with Franco, Hitler could still not accept that Spain could no longer be counted on as a pawn in the Third Reich's foreign policy goals. He still thought it possible to sway the Spaniards and to take Gibraltar from the English. Operation "Felix" was to provide for the latter. France was to be promoted from the status of a "non-belligerent" to a "belligerent" power, once a land bridge linking Gibraltar and North Africa had been set up.

The situation in the Balkans was far from favorable to the Third Reich. The Italians had suffered severe setbacks. The English had gained footholds along the Greek coast and had occupied Crete. Berlin saw itself forced to move into Bulgaria to attempt to restore "order" in the Balkans from this base.

"Directive No. 18 for the Conduct of the War" read:⁶⁰⁸

The measures of the High Commands which are being prepared for the conduct of the war in the near future are to be in accordance with the following guiding principles:

1. Relations with France

The aim of my policy toward France is to cooperate with this country in the most effective way for the future prosecution of the war against England. For the time being France will have the role of a "non-belligerent power" which will have to tolerate German military measures on her territory, in the African colonies especially, and to give support, as far as possible, even by using her own means of defense. The most pressing task of the French is the defensive and offensive protection of their African possessions (West and Equatorial Africa) against England and the de Gaulle movement. From this task the participation of France in the war against England can develop in full force.

Except for the current work of the Armistice Commission, the discussions with France, tied in with my meeting with Marshal Pétain, will initially be conducted exclusively by the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

More detailed directives will follow after the conclusion of these discussions.

2. Spain and Portugal

Political measures to induce the prompt entry of Spain into the war have been initiated. The aim of German intervention in the Iberian Peninsula (code name Felix) will be to drive the English out of the Western Mediterranean.

For this purpose:

- a) Gibraltar should be taken and the Straits closed.

b) The English should be prevented from gaining a foothold at another point of the Iberian Peninsula or of the Atlantic islands.

For the preparation and execution of the undertaking the following is intended:

Section I:

a) Reconnaissance parties (officers in civilian clothes) will conclude the requisite preparations for the operation against Gibraltar and for the taking over of airfields. As regards camouflage and cooperation with the Spaniards they are bound by the security measures of the Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Department.

b) Special units of the Foreign Intelligence Department in disguised cooperation with the Spaniards are to take over the protection of the Gibraltar area against English attempts to extend the outpost area or prematurely to discover and disturb the preparations.

c) The units designated for the action will assemble in readiness far back of the Franco-Spanish border and without premature explanation being given to the troops. A preliminary alert for beginning the operation will be issued 3 weeks before the troops cross the Franco-Spanish border (but only after conclusion of the preparations regarding the Atlantic islands).

In view of the limited capacity of the Spanish railroads the Army will mainly designate motorized units for the operations so that railways remain available for supply.

Section II:

a) Directed by observation near Algeciras, Luftwaffe units at a favorable moment will conduct an aerial attack from French soil against the units of the English fleet lying in the harbor of Gibraltar and after the attack they will land at Spanish airports.

b) Shortly thereafter the units designated for commitment in Spain will cross the Franco-Spanish border by land or by air.

Section III:

a) The attack for the seizure of Gibraltar is to be by German troops.

b) Troops are to be assembled to march into Portugal in case the English should gain a foothold there. The units designated for this will march into Spain immediately after the forces designated for Gibraltar.

Section IV:

Support of the Spaniards in closing the Strait after seizure of the Rock, if necessary, from the Spanish-Moroccan side as well.

The following will apply regarding the strength of the units to be committed for Operation Felix:

Army:

The units designated for Gibraltar must be strong enough to take the Rock even without Spanish help. Along with this a smaller group must be available to support the Spaniards in the unlikely event of an English attempt at a landing on another part of the coast. For the possible march into Portugal mobile units are mainly to be designated.

Luftwaffe:

For the aerial attack on the harbor of Gibraltar forces are to be designated

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which will guarantee abundant success. For the subsequent operations against naval objectives and for support of the attack on the Rock mainly dive bomber units are to be transferred to Spain. Sufficient anti-aircraft artillery is to be allocated to the army units including its use against ground targets.

Navy:

U-boats are to be provided to combat the English Gibraltar squadron, and particularly in its evacuation of the harbor which is to be expected after the aerial attack. For support of the Spaniards in closing the Strait the transfer of individual coastal batteries is to be prepared in cooperation with the Army.

Italian participation is not envisaged.

The Atlantic islands (particularly the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands) will, as a result of the Gibraltar operation, gain increased importance for the English conduct of the war at sea as well as for our own naval operations. The Commanders in Chief of the Navy and of the Luftwaffe are to study how the Spanish defense of the Canaries can be supported and how the Cape Verde Islands can be occupied.

I likewise request examination of the question of occupation of Madeira and of the Azores as well as of the question of the advantages and disadvantages which would ensue for the naval and for the aerial conduct of the war. The results of this examination are to be presented to me as soon as possible.

3. Italian Offensive against Egypt

If at all, the commitment of German forces comes into consideration only when the Italians have reached Mersa Matrúh [port in North Africa]. Even then the commitment initially of German air forces is envisaged only if the Italians make available the requisite air bases. The preparations of the branches of the armed forces for commitment in this or in any other North African theater of war are to be continued within the following framework:

Army:

Holding in readiness of an armored division (composition as previously prepared for) for commitment in North Africa.

Navy:

Fitting out of such German ships lying in Italian ports as are suitable as transports for the transfer of the strongest possible units either to Libya or to North Africa.

Luftwaffe:

Preparations for offensive operations against Alexandria and the Suez Canal in order to close the latter against use by the English High Command.

4. Balkans

The Commander in Chief of the Army will make preparations in order, in case of necessity, to occupy the Greek mainland north of the Aegean Sea, entering from Bulgaria, and thereby make possible the commitment of German air force units against targets in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially against those English air bases which threaten the Rumanian oil area.

In order to be equal to all possible missions and to hold Turkey in check, the commitment of an army group of an approximate strength of 10 divisions is to be the basis for the planning and the calculations for strategic

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concentration. It will not be possible to count on the railway leading through Yugoslavia for the strategic concentration of these forces. In order to shorten the time needed for the concentration, a prompt reinforcement of the German Army mission in Rumania is to be prepared on a scale which is to be proposed to me.

The Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe will, in harmony with the intended Army operations, prepare for the employment of German Luftwaffe units in the southeast Balkans and for establishment of an aircraft warning service on the southern border of Bulgaria. The German Luftwaffe mission in Rumania will be reinforced to an extent to be proposed to me.

The wishes of the Bulgarians for equipping their Army (deliveries of weapons and munitions) are to be given favorable treatment.

5. Russia

Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the coming period. Regardless of what results these discussions will have, all preparations for the East which already have been orally ordered are to be continued. Directives on this will follow as soon as the outline of the Army's plan of operations is submitted to and approved by me.

6. Landing in England

Because, with changes in the over-all situation, the possibility or necessity may arise to return in the spring of 1941 to Operation *Seelöwe*, the three branches of the armed forces must earnestly try in every way to improve the groundwork for such an operation.

7. Reports of the Commanders in Chief

Will be expected by me regarding the measures envisaged in this directive. I shall then issue orders regarding the methods of execution and the synchronization of the individual actions.

In order to guard secrecy, special measures are to be taken for restricting the numbers of the working staffs. This applies particularly for the operations in Spain and for the plans regarding the Atlantic islands.

Adolf Hitler

Molotov had arrived in Berlin on the morning of November 12, where an elaborate ceremonial greeted him. The first official meeting was scheduled for the afternoon of that day at the Reich Chancellery. Hitler had prepared for an impressive rhetorical feat. As usual, it was his ambition to weary this particular guest through a lengthy exposition of his achievements. But in this he failed with the Russian. Molotov maintained a stony countenance during the entire meeting. Instead of being overwhelmed by Hitler's wordy elaboration, Molotov confronted his host with numerous concrete questions of his own. He had brought with him several proposals to be negotiated, the majority of which seemed inopportune to Hitler. Most concerned Finland and the Balkans. The Soviet Union, after all, was not ignorant of Hitler's new "friendship" with the Finns. The Führer had taken advantage of the

prevalent anti-Russian sentiments in Finland to procure permission for the landing of German troops at Finnish ports.

Hitler was aware that his dealings with Finland would serve only to provoke the Soviets. The Balkans were a different story entirely. Hitler could not conceive of any reason why the Russians should have a vested interest in the Balkans, or why for that matter Germany's activities in the Balkans should be of particular concern to the Soviet Union. Hitler was simply ignorant of the long historic ties existing between this region of the world and Moscow. The Balkan peoples regarded first Tsarist Russia, and later the Soviet Union, as successor states to the Byzantine Empire. In centuries past, Russia had functioned as the protector of the Orthodox Church, and had been held in great esteem. It had even been seen as the liberator of the Balkans from Turkish tyranny.

Bulgaria especially retained close ties to the Soviet Union throughout the Second World War. Despite his good personal relations with King Boris, Hitler proved unable to draw Bulgaria into a war against Russia. To his great chagrin, he soon found Bulgaria figuring heavily in his talks with Molotov.⁶⁰⁹

When the state reception for the Russian began at the Reich Chancellery on the afternoon of November 12, Hitler had no inkling of what awaited him. As was his custom, he prefaced the meeting with a flood of words, focusing primarily on Germany's development after his entry into office, its economic interests, and its raw material needs. In one sweeping gesture, he acknowledged Russia's drive to the open sea as legitimate. America and England also figured in his reflections. As soon as the weather improved, "Germany would be poised for the great and final blow against England." The United States was not in a position "in 1945 to threaten the freedom of other nations." This was possible "at the earliest in 1970 or 1980."

Barely had Hitler ended this harangue, when Molotov commented that the Führer's declarations had been of a very general nature. He, however, carried with him precise instructions as to the questions to be discussed. Molotov asked about the Three-Power Pact. What was the meaning of the New Order in Europe and Asia, and what role would the USSR be given in it? These issues must be discussed during the Berlin conversations and during the contemplated visit of the Reich Foreign Minister to Moscow, on which the Russians were definitely counting. Moreover, there were issues to be clarified regarding Russia's Balkan and Black Sea interests, about Bulgaria, Rumania, and Turkey.

It would be easier for the Russian Government to give specific replies to the questions raised by the Führer if it could obtain the explanations just requested. The Soviet Union would be interested in the New Order in Europe, and particularly in the tempo and the form of this New Order. It would also like to have an idea of the boundaries of the so-called Greater East Asian Sphere.

The questions rained down rapidly on Hitler. Schmidt later recalled: "In my presence, no other foreign visitor had ever spoken to him like this." Hitler felt cornered. Searching to avoid having to make direct replies, he muddled pretexts and platitudes:

. . . the Three-Power Pact was intended to regulate conditions in Europe as to the natural interests of the European countries, and consequently Germany was now approaching the Soviet Union in order that she might express herself regarding the areas of interest to her. [—]

Germany's task in this case was that of a mediator. Russia by no means was to be confronted with a *fait accompli*. [—]

It was a matter of opposing any attempt on the part of America to "make money on Europe." The United States had no business in Europe, in Africa, or in Asia.

Molotov quickly retorted that:

. . . the participation of Russia in the Three-Power Pact appeared to him entirely acceptable in principle, provided that Russia was to cooperate as a partner and not be merely an object. In that case he saw no difficulties in the matter of participation of the Soviet Union in the common effort. But the aim and the significance of the Pact must first be more closely defined, particularly with regard to the delimitation of the Greater East Asian Sphere.

In view of the tenacity of his opponent, Hitler could think of nothing better than to excuse himself momentarily with the following remarkable statement: "I believe we must cut short our present discussion, or else we shall be caught in the middle of an air-raid alert."

The nightly alarms and attacks launched by the Royal Air Force added a special pertinence to the talks. The irony of the situation did not escape Molotov as, on the following day, he sat down to negotiate with Hitler and Ribbentrop, who constantly claimed that England had, in fact, been beaten. Turning to Ribbentrop, Molotov inquired: "If that is so, why are we in this shelter, and whose are these bombs which fall?"⁶¹⁰ The air raids on Berlin at this time were not coincidental by any means, as Churchill himself revealed later: ". . . though not invited to join the discussion we did not wish to be entirely left out of the proceedings."⁶¹¹

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On the German side, the following communiqué was published on the Hitler-Molotov talks of November 12:⁶¹²

On Tuesday afternoon [November 12], the Führer received the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, at the new Reich Chancellery in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, for an extended discussion. Herr Molotov was in the company of the Deputy People's Foreign Commissar, Dekanazov.⁶¹³ A delegation of the SS Leibstandarte paid the guests military respects on arrival and departure.

In honor of his guest, Ribbentrop hosted a dinner party at the Kaiserhof Hotel that evening. Hitler was as conspicuously absent on this occasion as he was the following day at a reception Molotov gave at the Russian Embassy.

For the morning of November 13, Göring had invited Molotov to come see him. The Reichsmarschall was assuredly relieved that for this reason he could finally abandon his command post in Normandy. From there he had conducted the "retaliation attacks against England" without success for two months.

On this day, Hitler in the meanwhile received Lieutenant Commander Kretschmar at the Reich Chancellery to award him the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves.⁶¹⁴

At noon, Molotov was Hitler's guest once more. The following communiqué was published on the occasion:⁶¹⁵

The President of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, was the guest of the Führer in a small circle on Wednesday afternoon [November 13]. Subsequently the political discussions were continued in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Deputy People's Foreign Commissar Dekanazov.

In the interim, in view of the pending "continuation of political discussions," Hitler had prepared several replies to Molotov's insistent questions. First of all, Hitler attempted to discredit the Soviet Union's charges against Germany's behavior towards Finland. He stressed the Reich's economic interests in the area. Moreover, its actions were due to the persistent threat of a renewed war setting the region afire at British instigation. Such a conflict might well engulf Sweden and pull the United States into the confrontation. According to Schmidt, Molotov was not at all impressed by these claims and retorted: "If relations between Germany and Russia are good, then the Finnish question can be resolved without recourse to war. But in this case,

there should neither be German troops in Finland, nor may there be any political demonstrations against the Soviet Government.”

This led Hitler to claim that German troops in Finland were merely “traversing the land en route to northern Norway.” This should in no way be interpreted as a demonstration against the Soviets. Molotov’s reply to this was a cunning one, as Schmidt noted: “With demonstrations I was actually referring to the sending of Finnish delegations to Germany and the receptions of prominent Finns here in Germany.”

Heated words of a similar nature were exchanged later. For some time it appeared as though relations would be ruptured and the meeting would end before Hitler had a chance to deliver his carefully studied address on the bankruptcy of the British Empire. Finally, Ribbentrop interrupted the disputants to remind them of the purpose of the meeting. This afforded Hitler the opportunity to expound his deluded views on the imminent collapse of Great Britain and the future division of the spoils.⁶¹⁶

After the conquest of England the British Empire would be apportioned as a gigantic worldwide estate in bankruptcy of forty million square kilometers. In this bankrupt estate there would be for Russia access to the ice-free and really open ocean. Thus far a minority of forty-five million Englishmen had ruled six hundred million inhabitants of the British Empire. He was about to crush this minority. Even the United States was actually doing nothing but picking out of this bankrupt estate a few items particularly suitable to the United States.⁶¹⁷ Germany of course would like to avoid any conflict that would divert her from her struggle against the heart of the Empire, the British Isles.

For that reason, he [the Führer] did not like Italy’s war against Greece, as it diverted forces to the periphery instead of concentrating them against England at one point. The same would occur during a Baltic war. The conflict with England would be fought to the last ditch, and he had no doubt that the defeat of the British Isles would lead to the dissolution of the Empire. It was a chimera to believe that the Empire could possibly be ruled and held together from Canada.

Under those circumstances, there arose worldwide perspectives. During the next few weeks they would have to be settled in joint diplomatic negotiations with Russia, and Russia’s participation in the solution of these problems would have to be arranged. All the countries which could possibly be interested in the bankrupt estate would have to stop all controversies among themselves and concern themselves exclusively with the partition of the British Empire. This applied to Germany, France, Italy, Russia, and Japan.

Molotov, however, was not moved by Hitler's rhetoric. Instead, he calmly stated that he had followed the Führer's thoughts with great interest and that he was in agreement with the gist of this exposition. He had little to add as, assuredly, the Führer had given much thought to these problems and had a concrete vision. It was crucial, however, first of all to clarify Soviet-German cooperation, to which then Italy and Japan could be linked. The task was to continue building on the foundations already constructed, not for these to undergo revision.

Hitler immediately took up this line of thought in an effort to dominate the conversation once more.⁶¹⁸

Germany wished to create a world coalition of interested parties, consisting of Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan, which would constitute, in a sense, a community of interest stretching from North Africa to East Asia and which would obtain satisfaction from the bankrupt estate of the British. [—]

It was a question of delineating the borders of the activities of peoples and of distributing to nations vast areas in which they could find their field of activity in the next fifty to one hundred years.

His Russian guest was not pleased with the global, yet elusive, vision Hitler was propagating. Objecting that more immediate problems demanded attention, he began to discuss the Soviet Union's point of view. For one, Russia placed great stock on its position at the Black Sea. The guarantee extended by Germany and Italy to Rumania ran contrary to the Soviet Union's interests. Moscow had said as much on two previous occasions, if he was "allowed to put it so bluntly." Addressing the issue even more directly, Molotov inquired: "What would you say if we extended a similar guarantee to Bulgaria as that which you have extended to Rumania and this under the same conditions, namely, the commissioning of a strong military delegation?"

This outrageous comparison infuriated Hitler. It truly took nerve on the part of the Russian to put such a question to him, as Hitler regarded the Balkans as his particular field of interest and activity. Barely a day before, he had decided to occupy Bulgaria.⁶¹⁹ Still, the Führer did not allow his displeasure to show and countered evasively:

If you wish to extend this guarantee under the same conditions under which we extended ours to Rumania, then I must ask you if Bulgaria has requested a like guarantee from you as Rumania has of us?

Molotov said that, no, it had not. Nonetheless, he continued to express his conviction that Russia would ultimately arrive at an

understanding with Bulgaria. Why should Bulgaria deny Russia a request similar to the one Germany had already gotten out of Rumania? Again, Molotov repeated his question regarding a Soviet guarantee. As the People's Commissar was careful to underline, the Soviet Union desired to consult Germany on such issues. Unmistakably, this was a stab at Hitler who had failed to check with Russia before extending the guarantee to Rumania—in blatant defiance of the Reich's contractual obligation to the Soviet Union. Again, Hitler dodged a reply by exclaiming: "I must talk it over with the Duce first."

As if it were not well known that Hitler never consulted with anybody, least of all with Mussolini! Hitler might as well have claimed it would be necessary to put the matter before the generals for final arbitration.⁶²⁰ Having discussed Bulgaria, Molotov brought up the Dardanelles which he described as "historic gate of entry for a British attack upon Russia" in reference to the Crimean War and the events of 1918–19.⁶²¹ Hitler saw the matter differently:

The decisive question was whether Russia conceived of the possibility, through a revision of the Treaty of Montreux,⁶²² to obtain sufficient security for its interests in the Black Sea. He did not expect an immediate answer to this question, since he knew Molotov would first have to discuss this question with Stalin.

To this Molotov replied that it lay in the Soviet Union's immediate interest to secure the straits to preclude an assault on its position in the Black Sea. It sought to resolve this issue in negotiations with Greece. A potential guarantee to Bulgaria would greatly promote its cause. As a power figuring heavily in Black Sea politics, Russia had a right to secure its interests in the region. The Foreign Commissar was confident of arriving at an understanding with Turkey.

Hitler retorted:

. . . this corresponded approximately to the German train of thought. The Dardanelles were to be traversed freely only by Russian battleships, while the straits were to be closed to other battleships.

Adding to his previous statements, Molotov expressed his country's desire to see a like guarantee realized in practice, not only in theory. At this point, Hitler brought up the subject of the "bankruptcy proceeds" to be anticipated from the dissolution of the British Empire.

He pointed out:

. . . that, naturally, he was indeed not completely certain whether these plans could be realized. Should this not be possible, then, at any rate, a "great

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historic opportunity would have been missed." All these questions would have to be examined closely anew at Moscow by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Italy, Japan, and Mr. Molotov, after being prepared in the diplomatic channels.

At this stage in the conversation, Hitler pointed to the late hour and stated that, in view of the possibility of British air raids, it would probably be best to discontinue the talks now, since the main points appeared to have been dealt with sufficiently.

And on this equally disappointing note, the second round of consultations with Molotov ended. Hitler's gifted oratory had completely failed to impress the sober Russian. The Soviet Union was no closer to intervening against England than it had been before the talks. Rather than negotiate with Molotov once again, Hitler would assuredly have preferred to have even more teeth pulled out than the three or four he had suggested after his abortive negotiations with Franco.

On November 14, Molotov departed for Moscow. From the border station Malkinia, he sent two telegrams to Hitler and Ribbentrop. While they differed in tone, they left little doubt that Molotov felt provoked by Hitler's conduct of the negotiations. Evidently he had gotten on better with Ribbentrop. This was not surprising, since the Reich Foreign Minister had felt quite at home in Moscow during his last visit, as though among "old Party comrades."⁶²³ Molotov's telegrams read, respectively:⁶²⁴

As I am about to leave behind me the German frontier, I ask you, Herr Reich Chancellor, to accept my thanks for the friendly welcome shown to me in Germany.

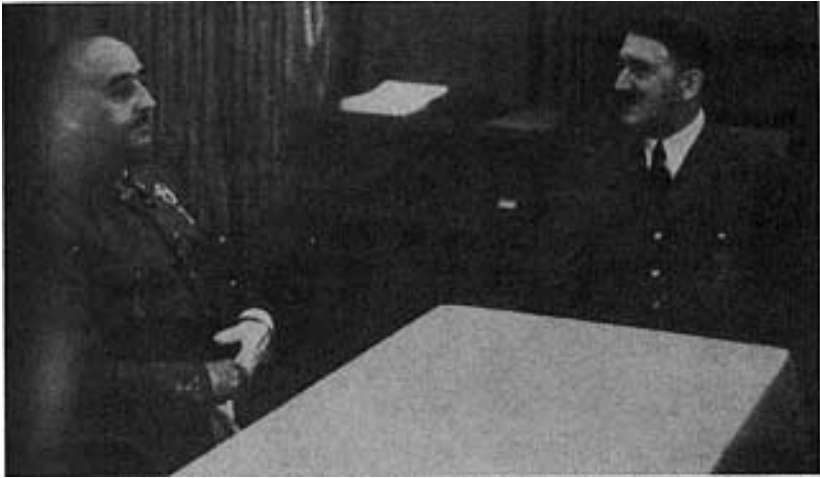
Molotov

Please accept my sincere thanks, Herr Reich Minister, for the open and warmhearted welcome shown to me and my traveling companions during the memorable days of our stay in Germany.

Molotov

These two telegrams showed more clearly than the German communiqué that the talks had borne no fruit. The official German statement on the occasion read:⁶²⁵

During his presence in Berlin on November 12 and November 13 of this year, the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, conferred with the Führer and the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop. The exchange was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and led to mutual agreement on all important questions of interest to Germany and the Soviet Union.



XLV October 23, 1940 at Hendaye

The Spanish Head of State Franco calmly maintaining his reserve despite Hitler's persuasive powers.



XLVI October 24, 1940 at Montoire

A personal meeting with the French Marshal Petain ends without substantive results. From left to right: Petain, Schmidt, Hitler, and Ribbentrop. Photos. Domarus archives

Photo: Domarus archives



XLVII November 13, 1940

The Russian Foreign Minister Molotov as Hitler's guest at the Reich Chancellory. The talks prove futile. From left to right: Molotov, an interpreter, Keitel, Hitler.

Photo: Domarus archives

7

Before undertaking any further steps against Russia, Hitler longed to avenge himself for the British bombings which had so embarrassingly disrupted his conference with Molotov at Berlin and his November 8 commemorative speech at Munich. Before November 14 had passed, he ordered 500 German bombers to strike the English city of Coventry that night—a “retaliation attack.” As a result of this first “Blitz,” 250 persons were killed and 800 wounded on the night of November 14, according to English reports. Moreover, a large part of the inner city, together with the old Cathedral, was shattered. The German radio propaganda announced other English cities would be “Coventrated” (*coventriert*), too, in the future.

Also on November 14, Hitler hosted 125 laborers of the armament industry at the Reich Chancellery. Participants from all over the Reich had been especially selected for the occasion. Ley and Todt introduced the guests individually to the Führer. The host then delivered an address, which the *Völkischer Beobachter* reproduced as follows:⁶²⁶

In his preliminary statements, the Führer explained the true reasons for the war. He explained to the armament and front laborers why plutocratic, capitalist England, with its antisocial disposition, sounded the battle against the German social state. Not only was this battle being fought by the German soldiers who are the best in the world and who are outdoing themselves. No, as decisive were the struggles of the home front, of the gigantic army of the millions who worked in German factories and for German armament.

“All those workers who have given our soldiers the best weapons in the world; who have delivered the endless [!] amounts of ammunition which are at our disposal; who have erected the West Wall of steel; who made it possible that for every broken machinegun and for every grenade fired there are ten new ones available; who have labored with the result that we possess today in Germany anti-aircraft defenses the likes of which no other state in the world owns⁶²⁷—all of them have decisively contributed to winning these great

successes with so little sacrifice of blood. And for this I would like to thank you today, not only in the name of the German Volk, but also in the name of the German soldier.”

Victory would be attained all the more swiftly, the more united and determined the German Volk was, and the more its opponents realized that thoughts of a Germany like that of 1918 were useless. Today’s German State was erected on the firmest and strongest foundation conceivable: the broad mass of the working Volk. With this united front of labor, Germany would survive the battle. And, after the victory, it would strive all the more to transform this German social state into an exemplary world. The crucial role played by German labor in this battle was building the foundations for an enormous peace project—“our great mission after the victory.” At the conclusion of his address, the Führer asked the laborers assembled to convey his thanks to the millions of their comrades in the factories and in the armament industry, as well as at the front.

On November 15, Hitler’s attention turned to the post-war period once again. He named Ley “Reichskommissar for Social Housing Construction.” This move reflected his weakness for buildings, for one thing. Beyond this, it was intended to raise the general mood and draw attention to the magnificent post-war period that was coming. The first and most important part of the decree read:⁶²⁸

A successful outcome of the war will give the German Reich tasks it shall be able to fulfill only through an increase in its population. It is therefore necessary to close the gaps which the war inflicted on the *Volkskörper* with an increase in the birthrate. Therefore, in the future, the construction of new housing in Germany must satisfy the demands of a healthy life for large families. In order to guarantee the immediate start of a building project in compliance with these principles after the war, preparatory measures are to be taken now. I order:

Article I

Fulfillment of the tasks I set is the mission of the Reich. To carry out this mission, I appoint a Reich Commissar for Social Housing Construction who shall be directly responsible to me.

Article II

(1) Construction of housing shall be conducted in accordance with an annual housing construction plan.

(2) The amount of total units of housing to be constructed in a given year shall be determined by me. [!]

[Technical details follow.]

Now that the most “immediate” domestic problems had been dealt with, Hitler turned to foreign policy once again.

In the wake of the Molotov state visit, Hitler resolved to deal severely with the impertinent Russians.⁶²⁹ In spite of his perfunctory

alliance with the Soviet Union, he had always upheld his earlier conviction that Bolshevism was based on a “cowardly, anxious acquiescence.”⁶³⁰ Striking the Bolsheviks to the ground would assuredly be child’s play. After all, the Russians deserved no better. He had tempted them with the loot of the “bankrupt” estate of the British Empire, and they had imperiously declined his “generous” offer.

The “heroic” Japanese were of a different mettle. He had to do an about-face and make it public knowledge that in the future he would no longer deal with the Russians, but with the Japanese

On November 15, Hitler once again congratulated in a pronouncedly warm manner the Japanese Emperor Hirohito on the anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Imperial House. Only five days before, he had wired his congratulations to Tokyo. This previous telegram had been considerably cooler. The new telegram was worded as follows:⁶³¹

I extend Germany’s greetings to the friendly Japanese nation on the 2,600-year anniversary of the existence of the Imperial House. With the German Volk, I reflect in admiration on the achievements attained in building up the Japanese Empire over so long a time. With pride the Japanese people may recall that no enemy was ever able to set foot upon the island as its master. And for just this reason the Japanese race remained pure throughout the millennia.

May Japan regard with satisfaction the constant growth of its influence in the East Asian region and of its importance in the world. Today it is the leading power in East Asia and as such may rightly demand to take part, alongside the leading powers of other continents, in the fashioning of a new order, of a better and more just world.

With sincere joy, I convey my best wishes to the allied Japanese people today. Japan, now in the midst of a difficult struggle for its vital rights, in which it stands at the side of the German and Italian peoples, will achieve the goal Fate has assigned it: a fruitful peace in a secure Lebensraum.

Adolf Hitler

And still this unequivocal telegram, sent only a day after Molotov’s departure, did not satisfy Hitler. While it was still November 15, Hitler and a large entourage suddenly appeared at the Japanese Embassy in Berlin at noon. In this curious manner, Hitler obviously sought to affirm his good intentions towards Tokyo. Indeed, his behavior stood in striking contrast to his curt treatment of Molotov. Neither had Hitler gone to Ribbentrop’s dinner party in honor of the Russian guest nor had he attended the official reception at the Soviet Embassy.⁶³²

So that the public might be informed of Hitler’s sudden change of heart, the following communiqué was published:⁶³³

On Friday afternoon [November 15], the Führer attended a reception at the Japanese Embassy organized by the Imperial Japanese Ambassador to Berlin Kurusu in honor of the 2,600-year anniversary of the existence of the Japanese Imperial House.

The reception was also attended by Reich Minister von Ribbentrop; the Deputy of the Führer Rudolf Hess; Grand Admiral Raeder; Field Marshal Milch; the Reich Ministers Dr. Goebbels and Lammers; Reichsorganisationsleiter Dr. Ley; Reichsführer SS Himmler; Reich Press Chief Dr. Dietrich; State Minister Dr. Meissner; the State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry von Weizsäcker; and the Royal Italian Chargé d'Affaires Zamboni.

For those who had decried the lamentable result of the talks with Molotov, this most courteous treatment of the Japanese served as an eye opener. There could no longer be any doubt as to a turn in the tide: Japan was in, Russia out. Carousing with the Bolsheviks was now a thing of the past.

On November 16, Hitler retreated to the Obersalzberg, perhaps to “think more clearly” in the mountain air. The case of Bulgaria haunted him above all. If the Russians, as Molotov had suggested, moved to extend a guarantee to Sofia, this would undoubtedly frustrate German territorial ambitions in the region. Plans for a military occupation of the country would be jeopardized. Steps had to be taken to counter any Russian moves. Immediately, King Boris was summoned by Hitler to the Obersalzberg. The following conspicuously short note made public the meeting with the King: “During a private stay in Germany, King Boris visited the Führer.”⁶³⁴

As much as King Boris admired the German Head of State, he was less than thrilled with Hitler's plan to station German troops in Bulgaria, especially if this should happen against the will of Russia. And public opinion in his homeland was decidedly more in favor of the Soviet Union than of the Third Reich. Siding with Germany in a war against Russia was completely out of the question. The King even harbored misgivings about his country's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Much to Hitler's displeasure, it was not until March 1941 that Bulgaria joined the pro-German pact and a German military occupation became permissible.⁶³⁵ For Hitler, the meeting of November 16, 1940 with the Bulgarian King proved another frustration. In a letter to the Duce two days later, Hitler expressed his disillusionment with the King, whom he had considered subservient to the National Socialist cause: “Bulgaria, which has always shown little enthusiasm for joining the Three-Power Pact, is now completely disinclined to even contemplate such a step.”⁶³⁶

On the afternoon of November 18, Ciano called on Hitler during one of his increasingly frequent visits to Germany. Nearly every month, the Italian Foreign Minister traveled north once or twice.⁶³⁷

Hitler also received Serrano Suñer on this day.⁶³⁸ He had summoned the Spanish Foreign Minister to emphasize the necessity of taking Gibraltar soon. But this “insidious Jesuit,” as Hitler once titled him,⁶³⁹ was stalling for time and declared that Spain was not ready for such a military feat. Hitler would have to wait. After tea, Suñer took his leave. Hitler once more sent for Ciano, whom he chastised in case he was still unaware of the inopportune consequences of Mussolini’s Greek adventure for the Axis. Indeed, three weeks after the offensive began, the Italians were not in Greece, but the Greeks in Albania; and English troops had landed on Greek soil.

On November 19, Hitler hosted the Belgian King Leopold at his mountain residence.⁶⁴⁰ The meeting had come about by the personal intervention of the Italian Crown Princess.⁶⁴¹ Hitler, who had trouble refusing the requests of charming lady visitors, had finally consented to receive Leopold. For the King had proved to be a “reasonable” man by ordering resistance to the invading German troops to cease after two and a half weeks.

Hitler at first behaved as a most congenial host. He inquired whether the King had any personal wishes. Personal wishes were for Hitler perhaps requests for more money; a more beautiful castle; a radio such as he had generously granted Schuschnigg’s family for its stay in a concentration camp; or maybe a girlfriend, as Mussolini later demanded. However, all the Belgian King asked for was alleviation for his people and not for himself. He requested assurances of a broader independence for Belgium and the prompt release of its prisoners of war.

Well, this little King wanted to influence him in his political decisions and pose shameless questions. Coolly, he addressed the King with a list of the crimes Belgium had supposedly perpetrated, beginning with the alleged repeated violations of its neutrality in the conflict. As a consequence, Belgium would have to follow Germany’s lead politically and militarily in the future. Independence was out of the question. On the topic of the prisoners of war, Hitler could only say: “We need the manpower ourselves. Naturally, the officers will remain prisoners until the end of the war.” And as naturally, Belgium’s enlisted men would share the fate of their officers. His hopes thus frustrated, King Leopold made a last effort to gain something at least for the food

situation in Belgium or for its internal administration. Hitler declined all further requests. The conversation could have ended on this note, but Hitler deigned to employ his oratory at greater length. At tea, he sought to make up for the opportunity missed earlier and began to reiterate his ideas of a new order for Europe, on the role Belgium could play in such a Europe. Should the country follow Germany's lead, then the Third Reich would guarantee full military protection. [!] There would be hardly any need for the Belgians to maintain armed forces of their own. If Belgium acquiesced in complete German control, then it could expand in the North, as far as Calais and Dunkirk. The Balkans' potentates had always risen to the bait of territorial expansion.⁶⁴² But King Leopold did not, which led Hitler to remark with annoyance later: "He is no better than those other kings and princes."

All in all, Hitler's vacation at the Berghof in November 1940 was not a pleasant one: Boris had shown himself to be obstinate, Serrano Suñer twisted like an eel, and Leopold had not accepted his "generous" offer.

At this time, Hitler was not yet willing to blame the Jews for everything, as he would later in the war. Instead, there was Mussolini. The pitiful performance of the Duce's troops afforded Hitler ample opportunity to seek revenge for Mussolini's impertinent letter of January 3, in which the Italian had faulted him for his treatment of Poland and his increasingly close relations to Russia.⁶⁴³

On November 20, Hitler sat down at his desk to write Mussolini a letter, a virtual indictment of the Italian's venture into Greece. This ill-considered move lay at the root of the reversals the Axis had suffered in the weeks past, Hitler claimed. So grave was the Italian's miscalculation, that it had resulted in all the following:

1. The re-election of Roosevelt.
2. British troops gaining a foothold in Greece.
3. Bulgaria's refusal to join the Three-Power Pact.
4. The threat of British air strikes against Rumania's oilfields.
5. Russia's "increased interest in the Balkans."
6. The strengthening of general tendencies, evident with many states, "not to make any premature commitment in the Axis' favor in the conflict but to await further developments."⁶⁴⁴

Hitler lamented how much better the present situation would be if only Italy had listened to him. He declared that Germany would have lent its ally, in a selfless gesture, "a German parachute division and an additional air landing division." These could have secured Crete in "a lightning-like (*blitzartig*) occupation."

After this slap on the ear, Mussolini received from Hitler a list of political and military measures that he had to take. It touched, among other things, on the withdrawal of Italian fighter squadrons then stationed along the Channel coast. These had become a liability after the embarrassing beating the Luftwaffe had taken in the Battle of Britain. Further, Italy was to renounce its territorial ambitions in Yugoslavia. This later demand was connected with Hitler's intention to recruit this state for "positive cooperation" within the Tripartite Pact.

Moreover, the Italian was instructed to immediately give up plans to conquer the Nile delta, while he was further ordered to "gain a position near Mersa Matrúh."⁶⁴⁵ The eastern part of the Mediterranean was to become an exclusively German hunting ground for long range bombers. In this way, "the Mediterranean will in three or four months become the grave of the British fleet." Beyond these bombastic proclamations, Hitler was ready "with all fanaticism to help to overcome the crisis in the shortest time." Naturally, this was impossible before March. Hitler's letter to Mussolini closed on the following note:⁶⁴⁶

The Mediterranean question must be settled this winter, since German forces can also be employed most advantageously during that time, whereas, conversely, any employment of Italian forces in western or northern Europe at this time of the year appears impractical for climatic reasons alone.

In the spring, by the beginning of May at the latest, I should like, however, to get back my German forces, so that this alone indicates the suitable time for our action.

For this collaboration of our air forces in the Mediterranean I should like especially to detail a wing of Ju 88s, as well as the requisite reconnaissance planes, long-range fighters, etc.

I have not yet discussed this question in detail with the Reichsmarschall and would therefore let him make the final decision as to the forces which he considers necessary. There would then, Duce, be mainly two large air-operation areas in the Mediterranean region: the Italian, which would in general dominate the air in the Italian-Albanian-Greek, as well as the Egyptian, area, and a German operational area, which in view of our long-range bombers would include principally the eastern Mediterranean. If we commit our air force properly, the Mediterranean will in three or four months become the grave of the British fleet, and this is the decisive prerequisite for the military operations, which in my opinion cannot set in before the beginning of March, so far as Greece herself is concerned. But I consider this period necessary also because it would not be possible for me before then to concentrate such forces in Rumania as would in all circumstances assure a clear success. The concentration of sufficient Italian forces in Albania also requires at least three months. Only then can a speedy success be expected.

November 20, 1940

The question of Egypt may for the time being be left entirely open, for after mature consideration I have come to the conclusion that an attack on the Nile delta before next autumn is quite impossible. It seems to me that the most important thing now is to gain a position near Mersa Matrúh, or thereabouts, from which the British fleet in Alexandria may be attacked by dive bombers with fighter escort.

But also from the psychological point of view, these are the measures which are likely to relieve pressure and again create a positive attitude toward the Axis.

These, Duce, are the thoughts I wish to convey to you from the passionate heart of a friend, who is willing with all fanaticism to help to overcome this crisis in the shortest time, and from an apparent failure all the more force a final defeat of the enemy.

With the most cordial greetings in faithful comradeship,

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini grasped the unpleasant realities disguised in Hitler's wordy exposition immediately. His headmaster had dealt with him severely, as he confided to Ciano: "He really smacked my fingers."⁶⁴⁷ In spite of his rancor, Mussolini had no choice but to do the Führer's bidding.

Later on November 20, Hitler journeyed to Vienna, where he stayed at the Imperial Hotel as was his custom. The reason for his visit was the addition of Hungary to the Tripartite Pact. Though Hitler was not a great friend of the Hungarians, he now had use, personal feelings aside, for any country willing to ally itself with Germany. Spain, France, Russia, and Belgium had scorned the Third Reich. Hitler was now forced to turn to what he had once derided as that "rubbish" left over from the First World War, those "rotten state corpses" of the Balkans.⁶⁴⁸

With mixed feelings, the Hungarian Minister-President, Count Teleki,⁶⁴⁹ and his Foreign Minister, Count Csáky, assented to Hungary's joining the Tripartite Pact. Obviously, a German military occupation of the country and the drawing of Hungary into a war against the Soviet Union would remain the only tangible outcomes of such an agreement.

German propaganda celebrated Hungary's accession to the Pact as a "world-historic" event. Festivities took place in the Belvedere Castle of Prince Eugene.⁶⁵⁰ Hungary was the first in a series of small Balkan states to join Germany, Italy, and Japan. The press in Germany praised each new member, and disproportionately evaluated its contribution to the alliance.

Hitler himself did not take part in the signing by Hungary. Nevertheless, he appeared at the banquet in honor of the event held

in the rooms of the Belvedere Castle. He thought it necessary to stage an even more sentimental scene for the benefit of Ciano. Perhaps the Führer had dealt too harshly with Mussolini in his letter. Surely the subservient Foreign Minister would impress upon Mussolini how true a friend Hitler was. Speaking to Ciano at the dinner, the Führer exclaimed ecstatically:⁶⁵¹

From this city of Vienna, on the day of the Anschluss, I sent Mussolini a telegram⁶⁵² to assure him that I would never forget his help. I confirm this today, and I am at his side with all my strength.

With these words, Hitler almost began to weep. Ciano later recalled, not without astonishment, that he observed “two big tears in his eyes.”

The problem of Yugoslavia already preoccupied Hitler on this day. In speaking to Ciano, he divulged how he sought to use Prince Regent Paul and his “ambitious wife” to bind Yugoslavia to Germany. Perhaps it would be possible to advance the cause of Paul’s ascension to the throne!

Naturally, on November 20, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Horthy:⁶⁵³

I ask Your Highness accept, at this hour in which Hungary has lent renewed expression to its bonding to Germany, Italy, and Japan, through its accession to the Three-Power Pact, my heartfelt best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Highness and a prosperous future for Hungary.

Adolf Hitler

November 22 was a “Rumanian day” in Berlin. At noon, Hitler hosted the new Rumanian Envoy, Constantine Grecianu, at the Reich Chancellery. There Grecianu presented Hitler with his credentials. Later, Hitler also received the Rumanian Envoy on Special Mission Valer Pop.⁶⁵⁴ The day climaxed in a reception for Antonescu in the afternoon.⁶⁵⁵ The Rumanian Head of Government, who of late had taken to styling himself “Conducator,” came to the meeting well-warned not to utter resentment about the Second Viennese Sentence.⁶⁵⁶ Defying these instructions, Antonescu spoke for two hours on the shortcomings of this award. In his lengthy monologue, he gave a detailed overview of Rumanian history, and persistently grumbled about the Hungarians he so loathed. Hitler was “impressed” by Antonescu’s forwardness, as he later put it. This was all the more the case as he liked the Hungarians least of all Balkan nations. In this regard, Hitler’s preferences resembled those of Marshal Foch.⁶⁵⁷

Although Hitler had hailed Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact two days earlier, he nevertheless revealed to Antonescu that the last word had not been spoken on the issue of the Second Viennese Sentence. His words implied Rumania could well confidently anticipate a revision of the Transylvanian settlement. At the same time, however, Hitler also pointed to the possibility of a German move against the Soviet Union in the near future. The Third Reich counted on Rumania's support in such an event.

Antonescu eagerly agreed, tempted no doubt by a potential reconquest of Bessarabia. In this instance, Rumania rose to the bait of territorial acquisition just as Finland had earlier.

On November 23, with much pomp and circumstance, Rumania was initiated into the community of states united under the auspices of the Tripartite Pact. The state ceremony was held in the Ambassadors' Hall of the new Reich Chancellery on this occasion. After the official act, Hitler received Antonescu once again.⁶⁵⁸ Naturally Hitler exchanged telegrams with the official Rumanian Head of State, King Michael, on the occasion:⁶⁵⁹

On the occasion of Rumania's accession to the Three-Power Pact, I relay to Your Majesty my best wishes for Your Majesty's personal welfare and a prosperous future for Rumania.

Adolf Hitler

On November 24, the Slovak Minister-President, Tuka, appeared in Berlin to follow in Tiso's footsteps. The same pomp accompanied Slovakia's initiation as that of Rumania. Slovakia followed Hungary and Rumania and bowed to Hitler's will in joining the coalition created by the Tripartite Pact. The Slovak State President, Tiso, promptly received the following correspondence:⁶⁶⁰

I relay to Your Excellency, on the occasion of Slovakia's accession to the Three-Power Pact, my heartfelt wishes for the personal welfare of Your Excellency and a prosperous future for the friendly Slovak nation.

Adolf Hitler

Bulgaria and Yugoslavia did not yet follow the other Balkan states, which now stood united within the Tripartite Pact. Several months would pass before Hitler attained his goal of hegemony in this region.

On November 25, he received the Italian Minister of Justice and President of the Cabinet, Dino Grandi, at the Reich Chancellery.⁶⁶¹

Two days later, Hitler spent time in Munich. Taking advantage of his presence in the Bavarian capital, he called on the Reich Treasurer,

Schwarz, at the latter's apartment. There he congratulated him in person on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁶⁶²

On November 30, an announcement made public that a newly assembled flotilla of destroyers had been christened *Narvik* on the Führer's order.⁶⁶³

December 3 marked the sixtieth birthday of Field Marshal von Bock. Hitler visited the Field Marshal at his flat to congratulate him on the occasion.⁶⁶⁴ On the following day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco, who was celebrating his birthday.⁶⁶⁵ At the same time, the wire below, addressed to the concert singer Heinrich Knote, was made public in the German media.⁶⁶⁶

On your seventieth birthday, Herr Kammersänger, I express to you, in grateful remembrance of your great artistic work, especially in Munich, my heartfelt congratulations.

On December 5, Sven Hedin, who was then on a lecture tour in Germany, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.⁶⁶⁷ This time the Swedish explorer was far more content with the course of his conversation with the German Head of State than he had been on his two earlier visits.⁶⁶⁸ Then, Hitler had lamented the ill-considered steps of the "poor Finns" and had mercilessly abandoned them to their fate in the Winter War against Russia. Now that he himself entertained aggressive designs against the Soviet Union, Hitler all of a sudden felt great compassion for the Finnish people.

In spite of improved relations with Finland, Hitler failed to draw Spain closer to Germany. On December 7, Franco spoke the final word on the issue of a potential Spanish involvement in a move on Gibraltar. He summarily declined the tantalizing German offer. And this in spite of the fact that Hitler had sent Admiral Canaris on a special mission to Madrid to proffer the assistance of German troops. These were to have marched into Spain on January 10 to stabilize the situation while Franco's soldiers set out to conquer Gibraltar on that day. While Franco had previously stalled, his rejection of the German proposal was unequivocal. He stated that his confidence in the operation was not complete. Franco feared it might lead to an occupation of islands in the Atlantic by either Britain or America.⁶⁶⁹ Hitler had no recourse other than to cancel "Operation Felix."⁶⁷⁰ Again he was forced to acknowledge defeat.

It was still December 7 when the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following decree penned by Hitler:⁶⁷¹

December 7, 1940

I decree that the Gau Saarpfalz of the NSDAP carry the name "Gau Westmark of the NSDAP" as of this day.

Berlin, December 7, 1940

Adolf Hitler

This merely served to cloak the incorporation of Lorraine into the former Saarpfalz. Hitler had proceeded in a similar manner two months earlier when he had renamed the Gau Koblenz-Trier the "Moselland" after the incorporation of Luxembourg.⁶⁷²

Franco's opposition notwithstanding, Hitler still held one trump card in his dealings with Spain: the threat of a military occupation of the previously unoccupied section of southern France. He had long toyed with the thought which Directive No. 19 was to deal with in greater detail. The martial code name "Operation Attila" had obviously been chosen in remembrance of the King of the Huns, called the "scourge of God," and his campaign into the land of the Gauls in the year 451. The directive of December 10 provided for the following:⁶⁷³

1. In the event that a secession movement should get under way in the portions of the French colonial empire now dominated by General Weygand,⁶⁷⁴ preparations are to be made for the speedy occupation of the still unoccupied area of metropolitan France (Operation Attila). At the same time it will then be necessary to secure the French home fleet and the portions of the French Air Force that are in home airports, or at least to prevent their defection to the enemy's side.

The preparations are to be camouflaged in order to avoid alarming the French, both in the military and political interest.

2. The entry should, in the given case, take place so that:

a) Strong motorized groups, whose adequate aerial protection is to be assured, push through along the line of the Garonne or the Rhone as speedily as possible to the Mediterranean, take possession as soon as possible of the seaports (above all, the important naval port of Toulon), and seal France off from the sea;

b) The units stationed at the demarcation line move in along the entire front.

The time between the order for execution of the operation and the entry of the troops must be as short as possible. For this reason individual units may even now be brought up closer, but without the purpose of their employment becoming apparent.

It is unlikely that the French armed forces will put up a firm resistance to the invasion. Should resistance be offered locally, it is to be ruthlessly crushed. For this purpose, as well as for use against possible trouble spots, bomber formations (chiefly dive bombers) of the Luftwaffe are to be provided.

3. In the case of every unit of the fleet, the berth, condition, opportunity for seizure, etc., will in the future have to be watched in order to prepare

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measures against the French fleet's sailing out and going over to the enemy. The Commander in Chief of the Navy will, in conjunction with the Foreign Intelligence Department [Awls./Abw.], issue appropriate orders, availing himself in this connection of the opportunities offered through the Armistice Commission.

The Commanders in Chief of the Navy and of the Luftwaffe are to examine how, in cooperation with the invading portions of the Army, they can best lay their hands on the French fleet. There enter into consideration particularly:

Blockades of the mouths of the harbors (above all, Toulon);

Airborne operations;

Acts of sabotage;

U-boat and air attacks on the escaping ships.

The Commander in Chief of the Navy is to give an opinion on whether and to what extent the parts of the French fleet are to be withdrawn in return for a liberalization of the terms of the Armistice Treaty.

I reserve a decision concerning the manner of the implementation. Offensive action will be ordered only if the French armed forces offer resistance or parts of the fleet move out in spite of German counterorders.

4. Seizure of the French airports and of the units of the Air Force which are there is to be settled directly between the Luftwaffe and the Army. Other possibilities (for example, airborne landings) are to be exploited.

5. The Commanders in Chief will report to me—in the case of the Army this has already been done—concerning their intentions for Operation Attila (in writing through the High Command of the Wehrmacht). At the same time, the length of time required between the giving of the order and the measures themselves is to be indicated.

6. The preparations for Operation Attila require the utmost secrecy.

The Italians may not receive information of any kind concerning the preparations and intentions.

Adolf Hitler

Frustrated by the setbacks recently suffered and by the blows they had dealt his ego, Hitler rose to vent his spleen in a speech before faithful listeners. He could no longer bear the ill-concealed skepticism of his old Party comrades, the intellectuals' glances full of contempt, and the doubts so evident on the faces of the generals. He sought to dispel these misgivings once more by his powerful oratory. And the most receptive audience for this type of rhetoric remained the German workers, who always had been easily impressed by nationalist slogans and prophecies of Germany's future greatness.

Portraying himself as an unappreciated "have-not," he sought to curry their favor. This afforded him the opportunity to scold, to his heart's content, intellectuals, lawyers, impertinent capitalists, and antisocial reactionaries, who so often had frustrated his ambitions. Time and time again he had to waste his time dealing with these

cliques, now agitating against him abroad, in the form of the English—just as the equally arrogant German Nationalists once had sought to incite the public against him before falling on their knees.

In this spirit, Hitler addressed the workers of a Berlin armament plant at noon on December 10. All German radio stations carried the address. Laborers at all military industrial plants had been ordered to cease working and to assemble to listen “collectively” to the Führer’s words. Hitler began his speech on the following note:⁶⁷⁵

My German Volksgenossen! My German Workers!

It is not often that I speak now because [for one thing] I have little time for speaking and, for another, because I believe that it is more important to act than to speak at the moment.

Why did Hitler speak then?! He did it only for himself, as there was actually no event which could have justified the tirade, lasting for hours, upon which he now embarked.

We find ourselves in the midst of a confrontation in which there is more at stake than simply the victory of this or that country. It is the struggle of two worlds against one another. I will attempt—time permitting [!]⁶⁷⁶—to afford you insight into the underlying causes of this confrontation. I will limit my reflection to the Western European arena.

The peoples concerned are first and foremost eighty-five million Germans, forty-six million Englishmen, forty-five million Italians, and about thirty-seven million Frenchmen—form the core of those states which waged war against one another or are still doing so today. When I compare the foundations for life of these peoples, then the following facts become clear: forty-six million Englishmen rule and govern a total complex of approximately forty million square kilometers on this earth. Thirty-seven million Frenchmen rule and govern a complex of approximately ten million square kilometers. Forty-five million Italians have an area, insofar as this consists of usable land, of barely half a million square kilometers at their disposal. Eighty-five million Germans possess, as a foundation for life, barely 600,000 square kilometers—and this only due to our intervention—on which they must fashion their lives, and forty-six million Englishmen have forty million square kilometers!

Well, my Volksgenossen, neither Providence nor the Good Lord has undertaken this division of the earth. Man himself has undertaken this division, and this essentially within the past 300 years, that is, in a period during which our German Volk, regrettably, was impotent internally and stood divided. After the Thirty Years’ War was concluded with the Treaty of Münster,⁶⁷⁶ our Volk was finally subdivided into hundreds of small states which used up all their strength in struggles against one another. Princes and principalities, kings and clerical dignitaries, upheld the divisiveness within our Volk. And finally when it appeared as though this purely dynastic dissolution of our *Volkskörper* could find an end, then the parties came, then

came the *Weltanschauungen*, to carry on, for their part, what had once been started. In this period the most hardworking people of Western Europe used up its strength exclusively internally, while the outside world was being carved up.

After these preliminary statements, full of figures which Hitler had calculated to impress his audience, he embarked on an extensive "party narrative." In a winding and interminable account, he described his trials and tribulations in the struggle against social injustice, against the Treaty of Versailles, against unemployment, against the gold standard, against the resistance of those people who had not wanted to acknowledge him, and so on. The quintessence of his tirade was this: today he had to fight against the same forces, for the English were the same as his domestic enemies. These are some of the stylistic gems in this first part of the speech:

Throughout my life I have been a have-not. At home I was a have-not, I count myself among the have-nots, and I have always fought for them. For them I stood up, and I stand up to the world as a representative of the have-nots! [—]

It is understandable when an Englishman says: "We do not want our world to perish in any way at all." And rightly so. They know all too well: we are no threat to their empire. But they also say to themselves, and rightly so: "If these ideas which are popular in Germany are not eliminated and eradicated, they will come to our people, and this is most dangerous. This we do not want." And if it did come this way it would do no harm. But they are as narrow-minded as others used to be here with us once. [—]

These English capitalists have the opportunity, to give just one example, to make dividends of seventy-six, eighty, ninety-five, 140, 160 percent. Yes naturally, they say: "If these German methods gain currency or are victorious, this will end." And this is completely correct. This I would not tolerate. I think that six percent suffices, but we must take half of this six percent away again, and from the rest we must have documented proof that it was reinvested in the interest of the Volksgemeinschaft. [—]

I do not believe that one can maintain a situation in which a man toils and works a whole year, only to get a ludicrous salary, and another just sits down in a leather seat and gets enormous sums for it. This is a condition unworthy of man. [—]

After all, there are two worlds which confront each other. And they are right when they say: "We can never reconcile ourselves to the National Socialist world." For how could a narrow-minded capitalist possibly declare his agreement with my principles? It would be easier for the devil to go to church and take holy water. [—]

This is the first state in our German history which, as a matter of principle, eliminated all social prejudice in the assignment of social positions, and this not only in civilian life. I myself am the best proof of that. I am not even an

advocate; just think of what this means! And still I am your Führer! [—] What was it that I asked of the outside world? Nothing but the right of Germans to unite, and second, that what was taken away from them be restored. I asked for nothing which might have implied a loss for another people.

How often have I offered my hand to them? Immediately after my rise to power. For what does armament mean? It gobbles up so much manpower. And especially I who regard work as the decisive factor, I had wished to employ German manpower for other plans.

And, my Volksgenossen, I believe it became common knowledge that I have plans of some substance, beautiful and great plans for my Volk. I have the ambition to make the German Volk rich, the German lands beautiful. I wish the standard of living of the individual to increase. I wish us to develop the most beautiful and best culture. I wish theater to be an enjoyment affordable for the entire Volk and not only for the upper ten-thousand as in England. Beyond this, I wish the entirety of German culture to benefit the Volk. These were enormous plans which we possessed, and for their realization I needed manpower. Armament just takes men away. I made proposals to restrict armament. But all they did was laugh at me. [—]

For it was quite clear: what was I before the World War? An unknown, nameless man. What was I during the War? A small, common soldier. I bore no responsibility for the World War. But who are the folk who lead England once again today? The very same people who were already agitating before the World War. It is the same Churchill, who was already the vilest warmonger in the World War, and the late Chamberlain who agitated just as much then. And the whole audience (*Korona*) that belongs there, and naturally that people which always believes that with the trumpets of Jericho it can destroy the peoples: these are the old specters which have arisen once more!

Before reaching the main part of his exposition, Hitler revealed the actual objective of this speech: he wished to pull himself up again, to regain his own faith by focusing on Germany's "little proles," the only ones among the Germans who had not yet begun to doubt their Führer. Hitler declared:

Back then I derived my entire faith in the German Volk and its future from my knowledge of the German soldier, of the small musketeer. In my eyes, he was a great hero. Naturally, other sections of the Volk did their best also. But still there was a difference. For him who lived at a wealthy home and lived in luxury, for him Germany looked quite beautiful back then. He could take part in everything: culture, the easy life, and so on. He could enjoy German art and so many things more. He could travel through the German lands, tour German cities, and so on. Everything was beautiful to him. That he stood up for it was understandable. But on the other side stood the small musketeer. This little prole, who barely had enough to eat, who slaved away simply to exist, and who, in spite of all of this, fought like a hero out there for four years: on him I stacked my hopes, on him I pulled myself up again. And when all the others in Germany despaired, I looked to this small man and regained my

faith in Germany. I knew: naturally, Germany would not perish, not as long as it has such men.

These words were the main argument in Hitler's speech. If he had the "little proles" on his side, what could the English have on him?

But I also had to experience how these fighters, these soldiers, found themselves at a disadvantage time and time again because the others could simply overwhelm them in terms of material. I was never of the conviction then, even one single time, that the English were superior to us personally. Only a madman can claim I had an inferiority complex about the English. They must be out of their minds! I have never ever had an inferiority complex!

But no matter how loudly Hitler shouted and protested that he had no inferiority complex about the English, he had it all the same. And it was not the last time that he spoke on this theme.⁶⁷⁷

Later on December 10, Hitler summoned all his powers to dispel the public's misgivings and, most important, to intimidate the British. He now used threats rather than entreaties. At one point, he claimed, "a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!" He also said, "no power on earth can drive us from these conquered territories against our will." Hitler declared:

And now it has come to war. I have done everything within my power here, too, everything a man could possibly do, almost to the point of self-abasement, to avoid it. I made offer upon offer to the English. I consulted with their diplomats here and pleaded with them to be reasonable. But nothing could be done. They wanted war, and they made no effort to disguise it. For seven years, Churchill has been declaring: "I want war." Now he has it!

I regret that these peoples must fight each other, whom I wanted so much to bring together. In my eyes, they could only have wrought good by working with each other. But if these gentlemen have the goal of eliminating the National Socialist State, of dissolving the German Volk, and once more tearing it asunder into its particles, and so on, as their war aims stated and meant, then they shall have a surprise this time. And I believe they are already getting a surprise.⁶⁷⁸

Among you, my Volksgenossen, there are many old soldiers of the World War. And they know well what time and distance mean. Many of you were in the East back then. All those names which you were able to read in the year 1939 were known to you from back then. Perhaps many of you marched in bad weather, or beneath a scorching sun, back then. The roads were endless. And how hard was all this fought for back then. How much it cost in blood to advance kilometer by kilometer! And this time, my Volksgenossen, we took the distance at a run! Eighteen days⁶⁷⁹ and the state, which wanted to hack us to pieces in front of Berlin, was conquered!

And then came the British attack [!] on Norway. Still I had to hear from those Englishmen, who know it all, that we slept through the winter. A great

statesman even assured me that I had missed the bus.⁶⁸⁰ Still we made it just in time to get aboard before the English could.

At any rate, we woke up all of a sudden. And within a few days we secured our position all the way to Kirkenes, and I need not tell you: a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!

Then they decided to proceed more cleverly and more swiftly in the West, in the Netherlands and Belgium, and this led to the launch of that offensive which many looked on apprehensively, especially among our older men.

I know quite well what many thought back then. They had lived through the World War in the West, its battles in Flanders, in the Artois and for Verdun. And all lived with the thought: today we have a Maginot Line here. How are we to surmount this? How much will it cost, above all, in blood, in sacrifice, and how slowly will it go? And in six weeks this campaign was also brought to an end!

Belgium, the Netherlands, and France were thrown down, the Channel Coast occupied, and our batteries there built up, our bases established, and here also I can say: no power on earth can drive us from these conquered territories against our will!

And now, my Volksgenossen: these sacrifices are hard for the individual; for the wife who lost her husband and with him the dearest thing she possesses; and it is the same for the child who has lost the father. And the mother who sacrificed her child, or the bride or the lover who had to let her own go, never to see him again; all of them have made great sacrifices. But when we add all of these losses up, and compare them to the sacrifices of the World War, as difficult as they may be for the individual—how incomparably low are they!⁶⁸¹

Just think: we did not suffer nearly as many dead as did Germany in the fight against France in 1870–71. And through these sacrifices we have burst the ring around Germany. The number of wounded is likewise an immensely modest one, only a fraction of what was to be expected. And now, my German Armament Workers, we owe this to our magnificent Wehrmacht, suffused by a new spirit in which the spirit of our Volksgemeinschaft has been taken up. Now it knows what it is actually fighting for. And for this we thank our soldiers who have made vast achievements. And the German soldier in turn thanks you, my Armament Workers, for the weapons you have given him! For he has stood up this time, for the first time, not with a feeling of being outnumbered or having the inferior weapon. In all realms, our weapons were the better ones!

This is your achievement! It is the result of your craftsmanship, your diligence, your expertise, and your dedication! And when millions of German families still have their provider today, and will have him in the future, when countless fathers, countless mothers, have their sons, then they owe this to you, my Armament Workers! You have given them the weapons with which they were able to secure such a victory. Weapons which allow them to be so self-confident that every soldier knows: we are not only the best soldiers in the world, we also have the best weapons in the world, and this not only today, but all the more so in the future!

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And this is the difference from the World War. But not only this, but above all: the German soldier has his ammunition this time. I do not know, my Volksgenossen, but should someone undertake to balance the accounts after the war, he may well say to me: "Sir, you wasted money. You had ammunition produced which was not used! Everything is still lying around." Yes, my Volksgenossen, I had ammunition made because I experienced this in the World War myself, and because I wished to avoid what then came to pass. And because I said: "Grenades can be replaced, bombs can be replaced, but men never!"⁶⁸²

And thus in this fight the problem with ammunition was not generally a problem, except perhaps when it came to replacement. And when the fight was over, we had in no location even as much as used up a month's supply of our production. Today we are well prepared for any event. England can do as it pleases. With every week, it will be dealt yet more deafening blows, and should it seek to gain a foothold on the Continent, then it will have to make our acquaintance again.

These latter statements came as quite a surprise to the reflective public. As recently as September 4, 1940, Hitler had confidently spoken of his imminent personal arrival on the British Isles.⁶⁸³ Now he had to consider himself fortunate if the British did not undertake landings on the Continent: ". . . and should it [England] seek to gain a foothold on the Continent, then it will have to make our acquaintance again." This was a pitiful declaration. Within the past three months the situation had undergone such drastic change that Hitler could no longer conceal his weakness, not even in a speech.

And I know: we have not forgotten anything! I hope the English have not forgotten anything either.

And the battle in the air: I did not want it, we took it up, we waged it to the end! I did not want it. I always fought against it. During the entire campaign in Poland we did not resort to it. I had no night attacks flown. In London they said: "Yes, because they cannot fly by night."

Well, whether or not we can fly by night, they have probably determined in the meantime. But at night you cannot aim properly. And I wanted to attack objects of military significance only. I wanted to attack at the front, fight only against soldiers, not against women and children. That is why we did not do it. We did not even do it in France. We did not fly any night attacks.

When we attacked Paris, we selected only armament industry sites for the attack. Our pilots aim wonderfully well. Anyone who saw it can attest to this.

Then this great strategist Churchill had the brilliant idea to launch unrestricted warfare in the air. He began with Freiburg-im-Breisgau.⁶⁸⁴ He has kept it up. Not a single armament factory was shattered, but, according to English news, all this here is just a moon landscape.

And not a single armament factory did they put out of commission. However, they did manage to hit many an unfortunate family: women and

children. One of their favorite objectives was hospitals. Why? There seems to be no explanation. You yourselves know it here in Berlin, how often they dropped bombs on our hospitals.

Well! I waited for one month in the conviction that, after the campaign in France, the English would abandon this method of warfare. It was in vain. I waited a second, a third month. Well, now, if there are bombs being thrown around anyway, then I can naturally not answer to the German Volk for my own Volksgenossen perishing while I spare others. Rather, war has to be waged. And it is now being waged, with the determination, the material, the means, and the valor at our disposal. When the hour of the final conflict comes, then this conflict too will come. But one thing I would like to say to the gentlemen: we will determine the hour!⁶⁸⁵

And I will be careful. We could well have attacked in the West in the autumn of last year. But I wanted to wait for better weather. And I believe it was well worth it. We are so convinced of the success of our weapons that we can permit ourselves to act like this. The German Volk will unconditionally come through. I believe it will be grateful to me for preferring to wait on occasion, and thereby sparing it many a sacrifice. And this too belongs to the essence of the National Socialist Volk State, that even in war, where it is not absolutely necessary, it saves men and spares them—they are our Volksgenossen, after all.

And thus, already in the Polish campaign, we refrained from launching many an attack, advancing too speedily, because we were convinced that eight or fourteen days later the problem would have solved itself.

We have often scored great successes without having to sacrifice a single man.

And this was so in the West also. And thus it shall remain in the future as well. We do not aim to score successes for the sake of prestige, nor do we launch attacks for the sake of prestige, but rather we wish to be guided solely by somber, military reflections. What must be done, must be done. The rest we wish to avoid. And beyond this, we all cherish the hope that the hour will come someday when reason shall again reign supreme and peace return.⁶⁸⁶

And the world should realize one thing: there will not be a defeat of Germany, either militarily, or in terms of time or economy! Whatever will come to pass, Germany will emerge victorious from this battle!

I am not a man to abandon a fight once begun to his own detriment. I have proved this in my life, and I will prove to the gentlemen, who know of my life up to now only through the emigrants' press, that I am still the same in this respect!

At the time I entered political life, I explained to my followers—and it was a tiny assembly of soldiers and workers—that in our dictionary and in mine, one word does not exist and this word is: capitulation!⁶⁸⁷ I do not desire to wage war, but if it is forced on me, then I will wage it to my last breath. And I can wage it today because I know the entire German Volk stands behind me.

Today I am the preserver of its coming life, and I act accordingly. I could have led a far more comfortable life. I have been fighting for twenty years.

And I have taken upon myself all these cares and the never-ending work in the realization that this must be done for our German Volk. My own life and my health are of no importance here. I know, above all, that the German Wehrmacht stands behind me in this spirit today, man for man, officer for officer. All these fools who thought there could be rifts among us⁶⁸⁸ have forgotten that the Third Reich is no longer the Second. And united the German Volk stands behind me today.

Here I would like to thank, above all, the German worker and the German peasant. These two have made it feasible for me to prepare for this battle, and in terms of armament have created the prerequisites for holding firm. And these two groups have made it possible for me to wage this war for as long as it may last.

I thank the German woman here especially, all those countless women, who in part had to do the hard work of men, and who have immersed themselves in their new profession with love and zeal, and, in so many places, have come to replace the men. I thank all those, above all, who make sacrifices of a personal kind, who bear up under all the restrictions which are necessary. I thank them in the name of all those who today represent the German Volk and who will be the German Volk in the future.

For this struggle is not one for the present, but first and foremost one for the future! I announced it on September 3 [1], 1939 that time will not conquer us, that no economic difficulties will wear us down, and that still less can weapons conquer us. That is impossible! This realization is guaranteed by the attitude of the German Volk.

And this realization will bear rich fruits for the German Volk in the future, too. Once we have won this war, then it was not won by a few industrialists or millionaires, or a few capitalists, or a few aristocrats, or—I know not what—bourgeois or something like that.

My Workers: you must see in me your guarantor. I have emerged from the Volk. For this German Volk I have fought throughout my life. Once this most difficult struggle of my life has come to an end, it can finally find its conclusion only in renewed work for the German Volk!

We all have great plans, now already, great plans which aim at one thing only: to erect the German Volksstaat all the more and to fashion it all the more; to lead the German Volk further into the great history of our life. And to afford it all those things which make life worth living.

We have now determined to tear down all the constraints which hinder the individual in striving for the fulfillment of his potential, to take the place rightfully his. We have the firm will to erect a social state which must serve, and will serve, as an example for all walks of life.

Therein we conceive our final victory! For we have seen what it leads to with the others. Twenty years ago they secured an apparent victory. And what has come of this victory? Nothing but misery and despair. Unemployment has come of it. They fought their war only for the damned plutocracy, for a few financier dynasties which administer their capital markets, for a few hundred who in the end control these peoples. That should serve as a lesson for all of us!

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When this war is over, then Germany will begin a great undertaking; a cry of "Arise" shall echo through the German lands. Then the German Volk will abandon the production of cannons and will begin the labors of peace and a new reconstruction work for the mass of millions! Then we shall show the world all the more clearly what is the master and who is the master: capital or labor! And then from this labor will arise the great German Reich of which a great German poet once dreamt.⁶⁸⁹ It will be a Germany to which every son clings in zealous love because it will be home to even the most wretched. It will open life up to him.

When somebody says to me: "That is a utopia, a hope!"—my Volksgenossen, when I set out on my path in the year 1919, as an unknown, nameless soldier, then I too had to construct for myself a utopia with the greatest of hope. It was realized!

What I am planning and regard as my goal today pales in comparison to what lies behind us in terms of achievement and success. And it will be achieved more quickly and more surely than what has been achieved up to now. The path from the nameless, unknown man to the Führer of the German nation was more difficult than the way from the Führer of the German nation to the designer of a later peace will be!⁶⁹⁰

Once I had to fight and struggle for your confidence for a decade and a half. Today I can fight and struggle for Germany thanks to this confidence.

And one day there will come a time when all of us will join the fight for this Reich with confidence, for this Reich of peace, of work, of welfare, of culture, which we want to erect and which we will erect.

I thank you.

On that same December 10, Lieutenant General Bodenschatz celebrated his fiftieth birthday. Hitler awarded Göring's liaison officer the Golden Party Badge on the occasion.⁶⁹¹

The next day in the Reich Chancellery's Great Hall, Hitler received Todt, the Reich Minister for Armament and Ammunition, and his "co-workers in the economy and Party."⁶⁹² Todt reported on the progress made by his ministry. Then Hitler spoke briefly to thank the armament industrialists, leaders of the economy, and other prominent persons assembled, for their services. He paid tribute in particular to the "talents of inventors, technicians, and chemists." He declared: "German armament has rendered justice to all the tasks placed before it to the highest possible degree." Compared to the praise Hitler had showered on armament workers the day before, his laudation of their superiors was meager indeed. Later on the same day, acting on Hitler's instructions, Todt presented the general directors Borbet, Kessler, and Wirtz with the War Service Medal First Class.⁶⁹³

On December 12, von Rundstedt received the following telegram congratulating him on his sixty-fifth birthday:⁶⁹⁴

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Accept my sincere and heartfelt congratulations, Herr Feldmarschall, on your birthday today. In wishing you well as you set forth on the path towards your future life, I recall with gratitude the services you rendered the German Army and nation.

Adolf Hitler

On December 13, Hitler focused exclusively on military matters once more. He issued "Directive No. 20 for the Conduct of the War." This heralded the launch of "Operation Marita," the planned military occupation of Bulgaria and the conquest of the Greek mainland. The directive detailed:⁶⁹⁵

1. The outcome of the fighting in Albania cannot yet be foreseen. In view of the threatening situation in Albania, it is doubly important that English attempts to create, under the protection of a Balkan front, an air base which is dangerous chiefly for Italy, but also for the Rumanian oil region, should be frustrated.

2. My intention is, therefore:

a) In the next few months to organize in southern Rumania a force which will gradually be increased;

b) after favorable weather conditions set in—probably in March—to employ this force via Bulgaria for the taking of the northern coast of the Aegean and—should this be necessary—the entire Greek mainland (Operation Marita).

Support from Bulgaria can be counted on.

3. For the assembling of the forces in Rumania:

a) The 16th Armored Division, arriving in December, is assigned to the Army mission, whose duties remain unchanged.

b) Next a force of about 7 divisions (1. concentration echelon) is to be brought to southern Rumania.

Engineer forces for the preparation of the Danube crossing may, to the extent necessary, be incorporated in the transportation of the 16th Armored Division (as an "instruction unit"). Concerning their employment at the Danube, the Commander in Chief of the Army will request my decision at the proper time.

c) Preparations are to be made for the transportation of additional troops up to the maximum allowed (total 24 divisions).

d) For the Luftwaffe, it is a matter of assuring the aerial protection of the assembly, as well as preparing the necessary command post and supply installations on Rumanian soil.

4. Operation Marita itself is to be prepared on the following basis:

a) The first goal of the operation is the seizure of the Aegean coast and the Salonika basin. Continuation of the attack via Larissa and the Isthmus of Corinth may be necessary.

b) Flank protection against Turkey will be assigned to the Bulgarian Army, but it is, in addition, to be strengthened and secured by the placing in readiness of German units.

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c) Whether or not Bulgarian units will in addition participate in the attack is uncertain. Likewise the Yugoslav attitude cannot yet be clearly anticipated.

d) It will be the task of the Luftwaffe to give effective support to the advance of the Army in all sectors; to eliminate the enemy's air force and—so far as possible—to take possession of English bases on Greek islands through airborne operations.

e) The question as to how Operation Marita is to be supported by the Italian Armed Forces and how the coordination of the operations is to be effected, remains reserved for later decision.

5. The particularly great political consequences in the Balkans of the military preparations require meticulous direction in the execution of all measures of the High Commands taken in this connection.

The bringing up of transports through Hungary and their arrival in Rumania are to be announced step by step by the High Command of the Wehrmacht and are to be explained for the time being on the grounds that they are necessary for the strengthening of the Wehrmacht mission in Rumania.

Conversations with Rumanians or Bulgarians which hint at our intentions, as well as the informing of the Italians, are subject in the individual case to my approval; so, also, is the sending of reconnaissance units and advance detachments.

6. After Operation Marita is carried out, it is the intention to withdraw the mass of the units employed in it, for further use.⁶⁹⁶

7. I look forward to receiving reports of the Commanders in Chief concerning their intentions—in the case of the Army, this has already been done. Accurate schedules of the projected preparations are to be submitted to me; also of the necessary redrafting of munitions workers (reconstitution of furloughed divisions).

Adolf Hitler

By December 16, Hitler had already busily turned his attention to yet another operation, dubbed "Case Barbarossa."⁶⁹⁷ This was the code name for Directive No. 21, the attack on the Soviet Union. It was true that he had envisioned an assault under different circumstances originally. In his mind, he had conceived of himself, under the cover of England, as taking as many pieces of the pie as he liked. The vast expanses of Russia would surely satisfy his appetite for additional Lebensraum. Circumstances now forced him to proceed on a different premise.

Russia's subjugation had in the meanwhile become a prerequisite, so Hitler thought, for England's friendship. Only if he robbed the English of their "last hope," namely, their former ally Russia, would he be able to force their acquiescence to his expansionist designs in Eastern Europe. The directive for "Case Barbarossa" of December 16 read:

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The German Wehrmacht must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign (*Fall Barbarossa*) even before the conclusion of the war against England.

For this purpose the Army will have to employ all available units, with the reservation that the occupied territories must be secured against surprises.

For the Luftwaffe it will be a matter of releasing such strong forces for the eastern campaign in support of the Army that a quick completion of the ground operations can be counted on and that damage to eastern German territory by enemy air attacks will be as slight as possible. This concentration of the main effort in the East is limited by the requirement that the entire combat and armament area dominated by us must remain adequately protected against enemy air attacks and that the offensive operations against England, particularly her supply lines, must not be permitted to break down.

The main effort of the Navy will remain unequivocally directed against England even during an eastern campaign.

I shall order the concentration against Soviet Russia possibly 8 weeks before the intended beginning of operations. Preparations requiring more time to get under way are to be started now—if this has not yet been done—and are to be completed by May 15, 1941.⁶⁹⁸

It is of decisive importance, however, that the intention to attack does not become discernible.

The preparations of the High Commands are to be made on the following basis:

I. General Purpose:

The mass of the Russian Army in western Russia is to be destroyed in daring operations, by driving forward deep armored wedges, and the retreat of units capable of combat into the vastness of Russian territory is to be prevented.

In quick pursuit a line is then to be reached from which the Russian Air Force will no longer be able to attack the territory of the German Reich. The ultimate objective of the operation is to establish a cover against Asiatic Russia from the general line Volga-Archangel. Then, in case of necessity, the last industrial area left to Russia in the Urals can be eliminated by the Luftwaffe.

In the course of these operations the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet will quickly lose its bases and thus will no longer be able to fight.

Effective intervention by the Russian Air Force is to be prevented by powerful blows at the very beginning of the operation.

II. Probable Allies and their Tasks:

1. On the wings of our operation the active participation of Rumania and Finland in the war against Soviet Russia is to be expected.

The High Command will in due time arrange and determine in what form the armed forces of the two countries will be placed under German command at the time of their intervention.

2. It will be the task of Rumania to support with selected forces the attack of the German southern wing, at least in its beginnings; to pin the enemy down where German forces are not committed; and otherwise to render auxiliary service in the rear area.

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3. Finland will cover the concentration of the German North Group (parts of the XXI Group) withdrawn from Norway and will operate jointly with it. Besides, Finland will be assigned the task of eliminating Hangö.

4. It may be expected that Swedish railroads and highways will be available for the concentration of the German North Group, from the start of operations at the latest.

III. Direction of Operations:

A. Army (hereby approving the plans presented to me):

In the zone of operations divided by the Pripet Marshes into a southern and northern sector, the main effort will be made north of this area. Two Army Groups will be provided here.

The southern group of these two Army Groups—the center of the entire front—will be given the task of annihilating the forces of the enemy in White Russia by advancing from the region around and north of Warsaw with especially strong armored and motorized units. The possibility of switching strong mobile units to the north must thereby be created in order, in cooperation with the Northern Army Group operating from East Prussia in the general direction of Leningrad, to annihilate the enemy forces fighting in the Baltic area. Only after having accomplished this most important task, which must be followed by the occupation of Leningrad and Kronstadt, are the offensive operations aimed at the occupation of the important traffic and armament center of Moscow to be pursued.

Only a surprisingly fast collapse of Russian resistance could justify aiming at both objectives simultaneously.

The most important assignment of the XXI Group, even during the eastern operations, will still be the protection of Norway. The additional forces available are to be employed in the north (mountain corps), first to protect the Petsamo region and its ore mines as well as the Arctic Highway, and then to advance jointly with Finnish forces against the Murmansk railroad and stop the supply of the Murmansk region by land.

Whether such an operation with rather strong German forces (two or three divisions) can be conducted from the area of and south of Rovaniemi depends upon Sweden's willingness to make the railroads available for such a concentration.

The main body of the Finnish Army will be assigned the task, in coordination with the advance of the German northern wing, of pinning down as strong Russian forces as possible by attacking west of or on both sides of Lake Ladoga, and of seizing Hangö.

By converging operations with strong wings, the Army Group committed south of the Pripet Marshes is to aim at the complete destruction west of the Dnieper of the Russian forces standing in the Ukraine. The main effort for this is to be made from the area of Lublin in the general direction of Kiev, while the forces in Rumania, crossing the lower Prut, form a widely separated enveloping arm. The Rumanian Army will have the task of pinning down the Russian forces in between.

Once the battles south and north of the Pripet Marshes have been fought, we should aim to achieve as part of the pursuit operation: in the south, the

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prompt seizure of the economically important Donets Basin; in the north, rapid arrival at Moscow.

The capture of this city means a decisive success politically and economically and, beyond that, the elimination of the most important railway center.

B. Luftwaffe:

Its task will be to paralyze and to eliminate as far as possible the intervention of the Russian Air Force and also to support the Army at its main points of effort, particularly those of Army Group Center and, on the main wing, of Army Group South. The Russian railroads, depending on their importance for the operations, will be cut or, as the case may be, their most important near-by installations (river crossings!) seized by the bold employment of parachute and airborne troops.

In order to concentrate all forces against the enemy Air Force and to give direct support to the Army, the armament industry will not be attacked during the main operations. Only after the completion of the mobile operations may such attacks be considered—primarily against the Ural region.

C. Navy:

The Navy's role against Soviet Russia is, while safeguarding our own coast, to prevent an escape of enemy naval units from the Baltic Sea. As the Russian Baltic Sea fleet, once we have reached Leningrad, will be deprived of its last base and will then be in a hopeless situation, any larger naval operations are to be avoided before that time.

After the elimination of the Russian fleet it will be a question of protecting all the traffic in the Baltic Sea, including the supply by sea of the northern wing of the Army (mine clearance!).

IV. All orders to be issued by the Commanders in Chief on the basis of this directive must clearly indicate that they are precautionary measures for the possibility that Russia should change her present attitude toward us. The number of officers to be assigned to the preparatory work at an early date is to be kept as small as possible; additional personnel should be briefed as late as possible and only to the extent required for the activity of each individual. Otherwise, through the discovery of our preparations—the date of their execution has not even been fixed—there is danger that most serious political and military disadvantages may arise.

V. I expect reports from the Commanders in Chief concerning their further plans based on this directive.

The contemplated preparations of all branches of the armed forces, including their progress, are to be reported to me through the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

Thus Hitler conceived of his conquest of Russia! Things turned out differently than planned as early as in the first few weeks of the campaign. Nothing went according to plan, not to mention the problem of England. 1940 would not let Hitler off the hook easily. He was destined to suffer yet another blunt rejection by Pétain of all

people. In a more “generous” mood than usual, Hitler had ordered the remains of Napoleon’s son, the Duke of Reichstadt, to be transferred from Vienna to Paris. The Duke was to be laid to rest beside his father at the Dôme des Invalides in a state ceremony on December 15 which marked the 100th anniversary of Napoleon’s burial there. Pétain declined to make his official appearance at the event as scheduled. Instead, he requested that Admiral Darlan take his place. Apparently, Pétain was reluctant to join in a celebration of Napoleonic France staged by the Germans.

Moreover, the anti-British connotation of such an event seemed inopportune for France at the time. Pétain’s “ungratefulness” infuriated Hitler, especially since he considered himself to have acted “with complete sincerity.”⁶⁹⁹

On December 18, Hitler spoke at the annual rally of young officer cadets at the Berlin Sportpalast.⁷⁰⁰

As was customary in these addresses, Hitler gave as theme no. 1: the inevitability of struggle in life. The principle behind this was, so he claimed: “Beat or be beaten! Kill or be killed!” Naturally, theme no. 2 also had to be dealt with at great length: the relationship between population and Lebensraum. There also recurred Hitler’s idea of the “trophy cup,” which the Earth awards and which again and again is assigned to the most valiant nation. This led Hitler to the exposition of theme no. 3: the Germans as not only the best, but the numerically strongest people.

Before Hitler spoke, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, as Commander in Chief of the Army, prefaced the address to 5,000 officer cadets, who would later serve with the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Waffen SS:

Offiziersanwärter!

It is a great joy for all of us, a profound happiness, to be able to greet among us on this day the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. He is and shall remain for us at all time the first soldier; the man whose experiences as an infantryman led him onward to greatness in leadership; the soldier who restored to Germany the belief in itself and built up the Wehrmacht to the proud greatness of today.

The Führer led our Volk to freedom, to strength, and to greatness; his words are listened to carefully not only in Germany, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. On your behalf, my Cadets, I greet our Führer, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. He will speak to you now. I know that your hearts will beat faster and that every one of his words will have a special meaning for you.

The Führer speaks.

Hitler began his speech with the following appeal:

My Young Comrades!

Behind many of you already lie arduous battles. All will have to fight such battles in the future. Those of you who have already emerged from battle know well the strenuous psychological consequences of these hours. At such moments, all phrases, all theories, die. All that remains is the harsh realization: Defend yourself! Beat or be beaten! Kill or be killed! We can emerge victorious from this arduous battle, if only we realize its unchangeable, necessary, and inevitable nature. The individual cannot shrink from it, it is the fate of the entire Volk. Hence, at this hour, I would like to speak to you on the inevitability not only of this [battle], but of struggle as such: of the struggle which takes the life of the individual to give life to the community.

War and politics have always existed interdependently. I need only mention here two historic persons who were not only close to each other in age, but also in ideology. Clausewitz: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with the admixture of different means." Clemenceau: "For us, peace is the continuation of war." Beyond this, we can say that politics is history in the making, while history can grant us no more than a glimpse at the course of events in the struggle for life of a people. Now, the reason why this struggle of peoples with one another is necessary in the first place has two elements: Providence or nature has placed man on this earth. Man begins to multiply on this earth. This does not take place in a vacuum: his struggle begins as he encounters the other beings who populated this earth before him and who live there besides him. To the degree to which men now begin to associate with one another, to form families, and finally tribes, to this degree the struggle of men amongst themselves begins. For as they begin to occupy a part of this Lebensraum, the fact remains that while the Volk's numbers are variable, the Lebensraum to be occupied remains a given. It will remain the same unless man somehow succeeds in expanding it.

In other words: life naturally makes a Volk multiply, provided it is healthy, while it is not as natural that the necessary Lebensraum also will expand or be enlarged. Sooner or later, there will be a discrepancy between the increase in the Volk's numbers and the available Lebensraum. There are only two ways to overcome this discrepancy. Either the Volk's numbers are adjusted to the available Lebensraum—by repressing or reducing it somehow, depending on the circumstances—or the Lebensraum is adjusted to accommodate the increase in the Volk. This first path has been chosen in the past. Nature by itself advocates this path. Through hunger, it decimates a people whose Lebensraum no longer affords it the means necessary to its existence. At this point, man himself begins to undertake this decimation—i.e. by adjusting his numbers to the available area. Either alone or in groups, he leaves it, insofar as it is possible for him to emigrate. The biological consequences are grave: this takes the most active elements away from a people. The alternative is man restricting his natural fertility—i.e. he adopts a two or one child system. Again, the biological consequences are grave: this undermines the process of natural selection, the breeding of the fittest.

Germany has already followed both paths; it has tried both alternatives. Poverty has decimated the Volk throughout many a century. When the age of emigration set in, German blood opened up foreign continents. And when we today follow certain developments in foreign policy with concern, we should not forget that the majority of these tall men are the descendants, the sons of our own Volk. And we also followed the latter path, namely, that of voluntary self-restriction. This voluntary restriction of our Volk through a reduction in the birthrate has already adversely affected our Volk, though this path has opened up to us only of late. Through it, the Volk loses its natural vitality. Thus, it will no longer be in a position to successfully hold its own; it will not even be able to maintain what earlier generations have secured.

There is another way yet. It stands in opposition to this latter path leading to the adaptation of the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. It is the natural way and the one willed by Providence: namely, that man should adjust the Lebensraum to his numbers. In other words: that he should partake in the struggle for this earth. For it is nature which places man on this earth and leaves it to him. Truly, this earth is a trophy cup for the industrious man. And this rightly so, in the service of natural selection. He who does not possess the force to secure his Lebensraum in this world and, if necessary, to enlarge it, does not deserve to possess the necessities of life. He must step aside and allow stronger peoples to pass him by. This was so at all times. The world will not be an empty one because one Volk renounces its life. Rather the Lebensraum will be filled up by other peoples, other beings. There is no vacuum in nature.

Now that we acknowledge that this eternal variable of the Volk's numbers on the one hand, and the constant given of the surface of the earth, which in sum remains the same, constitute the causes for this eternal struggle for life, there arises the question of whether a Volk is willing to take part in this struggle or wishes to step aside, to eliminate itself and thereby to give up its own future in the end. Now that we look at the present strength of the German Volk, we arrive at a figure of around 85 million people—85 million people who have less than 600,000 square kilometers of Lebensraum. The numbers of this Volk are enormous. Most Germans do not even realize this. How often was I forced to listen to the following in my political struggle: "You are striving for the impossible. Do we Germans even have the right to presume that we could achieve accomplishments equal to those of other great nations which, after all, rule world empires?"

This question can only be answered in view of two aspects. First: is this German Volk, in terms of its value, equal to these other nations, to these truly leading peoples of this world, or is this German Volk inferior to them? It is always a sign of bad state leadership if it seeks to excuse its own Volk by devaluating its inner value, that it consciously seeks to breed an inferiority complex out of fear that its own weak and bad politics will otherwise receive the deserved criticism. We all have the right not only to presume that the German Volk is equal to other nations in relation to the first aspect. Rather, the opposite: history shows us that this [German] Volk even today has at its core the best in terms of value on this earth. We must not forget that what we

refer to with the term Anglo-Saxon is nothing other than a branch [!] of our German Volk. Englishmen did not in time past migrate to Germany to cultivate it. Rather a tiny Anglo-Saxon tribe set out from Europe, conquered England, and later helped to develop the American continent. The wealth and the blood of this Volk are still today of equal value. In terms of numbers, there is no world empire which possesses at its core as great, as unified a race as the German Volk and the German Reich.

There are approximately 85 million Germans in Germany. I do not even include in this figure our Low German Volksgenossen. England, the British Empire, has barely 46 million Englishmen at home. The French Empire has barely 37 million Frenchmen at home. Even the American Union, minus Negroes and Jews and Latinos and Germans, has barely 60 million true Anglo-Saxons. Russia has barely 60 million Great Russians. And even today the unified racial core in Germany remains the largest by far; not only in value, in itself highly significant, but also in numbers, it is the greatest. By contrast, if we compare the percentage of Lebensraum occupied by the German Volk to that of the earth as such, then we must remark that our Volk is one of the most disadvantaged peoples of the world. Barely 600,000 square kilometers, in fact about 140 persons per square kilometer. 46 million Englishmen rule, control, and organize about 40 million square kilometers. Barely 60 million Great Russians rule an area of about 19 million square kilometers. About 60 million Anglo-Saxons within the American Union determine life within an area which encompasses about nine and a half million square kilometers. 37 million Frenchmen rule over life in an area of nearly ten million square kilometers. In other words: the German Volk, in terms of the space it occupies, is by far the most modest there is on this earth.

Now Hitler undertook an overview of history. Beginning with the foundation of the Reich, he passed over to feudalism in France; the Thirty Years' War; and the "establishment of Germany's impotence" through the Peace of Westphalia:

How did this situation come about? In the few centuries after our entry into history, we cultivated and civilized the European lands. The English did this and the French . . . rather it is the result of the labor of the old German Reich. So gigantic was the importance of the German state formation then that it rightly claimed the right to succeed the Roman Empire. Throughout the centuries, [the term] "Reich" was a standard expression, and even today we evoke memories of the Germany of back then by simply referring to it as the "Reich"—the "Reich" as such. This Reich had the means and the potential to secure for the German Volk its piece of the pie in the exploitation of this world. We may not doubt the ability not only of German statesmen, but also of German economists, to follow along the path of the Hanseatic League in securing for the German Volk, the German Reich, the position which is rightly that of Volk and Reich.

It was during this time that a most unfortunate development set in. Parallel to the development in France, but diametrically opposed in tendency,

Germany slowly began to disintegrate into individual states, while, in France, the overcoming of feudalism made possible the organization of a centralized kingdom. Then there was the Thirty Years' War. In the course of this unfortunate war, fought for purely fictitious, religious reasons, our Volk and our Reich were torn asunder for good. This led to the establishment of Germany's impotence and hence to the impossibility of taking part in the division of the goods of the world which set in at this time. And during these 300 years, which now lie behind us, the face of the world as we know it was fashioned. And on the face of it, a few well-organized peoples made themselves masters of this earth, while the Volk, the most important in number and value, did not only get too little, but in fact got nothing.

Then the rise of our Volk began. Prussia, at the core of the new Reich, began to strive for unity. As it began to see this unity through, in the process of this unification, it began to encounter a term, in the interim fashioned in Europe, a term called "balance of power in Europe."

What is this "balance of power in Europe?" This "balance of power in Europe" is the order of states in Europe. In it, Germany represents a certain factor of greatness in accordance with the place occupied by Germany throughout the centuries. That means: a place of lesser significance. As I already mentioned in my introduction, there is no such thing as a vacuum. This means: a Volk which falls cannot presume that its former significance will somehow be silently recognized in the future, so that one day it can once more occupy this place. Once a Volk begins to lose its significance, other peoples will take its place. And this is how things came to pass. Germany, which once organized Europe, which once was the strongest power on the Continent, this Germany is now a power among powers. Still others, in particular England, are keen on preventing the European continent's ever again being dominated by one power and thus being organized by it. But it is not this problem alone which has made the rise of Germany difficult. There are others, as well.

For the Germany which suffered the collapse of 1918, it was possible only to secure its resurrection under certain conditions. As I returned home from the World War, I found a picture of divisiveness which had elevated itself from the level of the former dynasties to that of an ideology (*Weltanschauung*). While in former times counts and Länder had meant division for the nation, ideologies and parties had in the meanwhile developed from this. Here the bourgeoisie—there the proletariat; here Nationalism—there Socialism. At the time, both were frames of reference which could no longer be reconciled with each other. Neither of the two, in my opinion, was strong enough to secure final victory even after overcoming the other, since, in the life of a nation, there is no such thing as sentimentality. Once a certain standpoint prevails and reigns victorious in a Volk, then it is of no consequence—it is not even interesting to know—whether it obtained this victory rightly or not. What is decisive is that it manages to obtain unity of will on its own level. If this is possible, then the question of right or wrong is no longer relevant. If this is not possible, then the Volk will fail. For it is self-evident that it is difficult enough for a nation to maintain a position already obtained, but it is even

more difficult to fight for a position which must yet be secured. There is hope for success in such a fight only if it is led with the complete dedication of the entire strength of a Volk.

It makes a difference whether a world empire such as Great Britain seeks to maintain its position, or whether a “Reich” such as Germany must first set out to secure its position in battle.

Next followed the obligatory “party narrative.” In the course of this exposition, Hitler claimed that National Socialism attracted a following worldwide, not unlike the French Revolution:

That life was impossible under the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles is something that I need not tell you about. New conditions for life had to be created. This was opposed by a divided nation and two ideologies, which already at the time appeared to be in the process of disintegration, since a large number of parties represented both the bourgeois and the Marxist ideology, which included groups from Social Democracy to the most radical syndicalism, namely, anarchism. It was clear that, in the year 1919, an exclusive, clear victory by one of these two ideas could no longer be expected. Just as Germany had once before disintegrated into countless small dynastic structures, there again was the threat of the German nation disintegrating into countless small ideological or party political groups. There was a time when a maximum of forty-six such “pocket parties” (*Parteichen*) stepped up to compete for the favor and approval of the German Volk. It was utopian to expect a resurrection under these conditions, not to mention bringing about such a resurrection.

No people can project strength abroad which it is unable to free it at home. This means: the more a nation uses up its strength internally, the more it will lack external strength. A people has only one strength. The strength needed within the system of the assertion of life is either applied at home or abroad—one of the two.

When I returned at the time, I realized that, as long as the two definitions of socialism and nationalism remained what they had been, a resurrection of the German nation was inconceivable. On the other hand, I realized that no ideals existed outside the two worlds of socialism and nationalism. They were the only two concepts for which people were ready to die if necessary. At the time, I therefore undertook to form one common world out of these torn nationalist and socialist worlds—founded on a new definition of the two concepts. I did so in the realization that it was no longer a question of preserving what was old, but eliminating the impossible, and creating a new world in which it would be possible to concentrate and redirect the total strength of the nation from the inside to the outside. Of course, this change had to occur not within the state, but within the Volksgemeinschaft. This means: the new state had to begin to form within a new Movement. After about fifteen years, this new Movement had the strength to take over power and realize its ideas in practice. This not only brought about the creation of a new empire in Europe, but also—as we can confidently state—a new world.

It is a world which is naturally more modern than the world of those who need only preserve what they acquired over 300 years.

Today's Germany stands for several ideas which can claim to be truly revolutionary—ideas which managed to mobilize the strength of the Volk for one goal and to concentrate it in the direction of this goal. Other peoples and their state leaders are frightened by the thought of what has formed here. They realize that this state has arrived at a lasting synthesis of nationalism and socialism and that, in the long run, this state will develop a powerful attraction, similar to that of the ideas of the French Revolution at the time. This is also the case today: when they speak of a so-called "fifth column," they are not referring to people who sympathize with Germany politically, but people who have *weltanschaulich* been inspired by us and who now form an opposition in their nations; an opposition based on the realization that the German example is essentially correct and that it should be copied elsewhere. This does not mean that they wish to join Germany or subjugate themselves to it. When this is claimed in the other states, it is a dying world that makes the claim, in the hope of compromising these new movements by portraying them as unpatriotic, conspiring, or sympathizing with the enemy. Actually, it is much better for us if democracy continues to exist there than if movements organize themselves, which are in the final instance similar to those we possess.

Anyhow, all these ideas about race, blood, and soil, the idea of labor as the only creative force, the idea of the social community are the prerequisites for preserving a nation. After all, these ideas are today in the process of attracting more and more people. And this is where the fight against Germany sets in, not only because we are disrupting the European balance of power by our claim to life, but also because we are disrupting the European order by new ideas, which we made public in Europe and which are now gaining in popularity. In addition, there is the realization that suddenly there came about what the others tried to prevent for many centuries, especially by the Peace Treaty of Münster, namely, the mobilization of the strength of a Volk which is the most important race in Europe in terms of number and value. It was a historic formation of strength which took place here, and whose consequences are now being felt in its opposition to the perseverance or apathy of the others.

Before the year 1933, it was already evident in practice how much strength this new ideology lent to Germany. Only a few years earlier, there was a quite pitiful subservience to an outside world, a willingness to renounce everything. Now, suddenly, there was a resurrection of the nation, step by step, a mobilization of incredible strength parallel to an elimination of the internal strife, a building up of the German Wehrmacht as the most powerful expression of the determination to assert the German right to life abroad. This Wehrmacht does not exist in a vacuum, but is instead supported by the fanatical will of the organized community. Behind this Wehrmacht, there is an army of millions of working Germans. They work with dedication each day; the substratum of their discipline is not based on a vacuum, but supported by the realization of this discipline by the entire Volkskörper. The

Wehrmacht no longer stands alone in its belief in authority, but is supported by a shared belief in the political sphere. It is a Wehrmacht, whose principle of authority top to bottom no longer stands in opposition to the democratic idea of the state, but which sees that this principle has become common knowledge. It sees that these democratic principles of authority bottom to top have been eliminated from the organism of the Volk, that they have yielded to the life of the state, that the only possible definition has been arrived at: authority can only be exercised from the top. Authority from the top and accountability from below. This is the reverse of the democratic principle that accountability should come from the top and authority from the bottom, and which regards the voter as the supreme authority.

By these means, the Reich has since 1933 risen anew with surprising speed. Of course, this was conceivable only because the value of the Volk is a given and because, whenever the strength of our Volk is mobilized, we are numerically in a position to claim our rights and successfully see them through.

When war against Germany broke out in 1914, England was the organizer of this war, its driving force, and the actual instigator—the same England which centuries before had undertaken to subjugate the Spanish world power with the help of the Dutch; which had fought the Dutch world power with the help of the French; which then finally had fought the French world power with the help of Germany; and which, in 1914, began to fight against the power of Germany with the help of Europe. Exhausted at the end of the Great War, this England was no longer able to draw the last consequence of the struggle. In its attempt to restore the balance of power in Europe after the war, it was not able to obtain the complete elimination of Germany. Still, it held Germany to be so weakened that this nation could no longer make its claim to life heard successfully. Then suddenly, after '33, this German nation began to organize itself to an extent which allowed us to realize how England immediately undertook once more its policy of encirclement and isolation, and finally of hostile suppression. Ever since the years 1936–37, I slowly became aware that there exists a standpoint in England which precludes reconciliation. To this came our international enemy of the world, international Jewry, which perceived Germany as an element which, by setting a bad example, might open the eyes of other nations.

Finally Hitler did speak of the present war:

The rise of the German Volk began to have its repercussions politically abroad in the year 1938. The Greater German Reich was born. In the autumn of that year, the Sudetenland returned home. As of this moment, it was clear that England had decided to step up against Germany once again at any rate. And now, my young Comrades, you must understand one thing: in the year 1919, I took up a struggle which appeared nearly hopeless at the time. An unknown man who undertook to rid a world of resistance, to tear down walls of prejudice. Prejudice at times is worse than divine force.

A man took a stand against all the bearers of public life back then, against the parties, against their press, against the whole system of capitalist

fabrication of public opinion. I led this struggle until the final seizure of power.

You must understand one thing: that at this moment I could have only one wish, namely, that if this war is indeed inevitable, that it still be fought during my lifetime, because I am the man who possesses the greatest authority with the German Volk. And moreover, because I believe that based on the experiences of my life, I am the most able to strengthen the nation in this battle and to lead it into this battle. Thus, once I became aware that England was determined to fight this battle, I did not capitulate, but in an instant determined to do everything to prepare Germany to hold its own in this most difficult struggle for its existence. And my appeal to the German nation was not in vain. I labored in these years to build up armament for the German Volk. I subordinated everything to the one thought: how can Germany be made strong? How can its armament be made powerful? I was determined to do nothing by half-measures, but to stake everything on one throw. I knew that this struggle would determine whether Germany will be or will not be. It is not a question of a system. It is a question of whether these 85 million people, in their national unity, can carry through on their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk shall perish, shall sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live in this Volk.

Faced with this alternative, I was determined to employ all means—down to the last—in this struggle. The nation understood this. Millions of men never spoke of it. Still all thought the same. And throughout this period, nobody ever reproached me for this enormous mobilization of public means for the one goal: national armament. I also wished that, if the hour was to come and come it would, the German soldier should not set out against the enemy as, regrettably, this has been the case far too often in Germany's past. This phrase, "the best weapons for the best soldier in the world," has profound meaning. The best soldier must and will despair once it dawns on him that, in spite of his valor, the effectiveness of his arms does not suffice to force the victory. Therefore, I was determined to do my utmost to secure for us the best arms. And, before German history, I may be faulted on many a thing, but on one topic assuredly not: that I had not done my utmost, what was humanly possible, to prepare the German Volk better for this struggle than, regrettably, it was prepared in the year 1914. In this, I found the support of countless people, men of the state, the Party, and in particular the Wehrmacht. They walked by my side. And thus we were able, in barely seven years, to make the German Wehrmacht once more the world's best. And, for my person, I have always been convinced that for us Germans there are only two possibilities: either we are no soldiers or we are the world's best. There is no in-between.

In fighting, politics employ not only changing means, but also changing methods. It is the task of the political leadership to constantly and carefully reevaluate the situation and make its decisions in accordance with the changing circumstances. And it is the task of the soldier to implement these decisions with lightning speed. It is therefore necessary that the individual be

profoundly suffused by the realization and the conviction that the fight in which he is involved is a fight which will determine the fate of the nation for centuries—perhaps forever. I know that there are hours when it is necessary to hold on to this harsh realization, hours in which the individual is threatened by death, when fear and worry clutch at his heart. Then duty alone must serve as his guide. Then the individual must fight his way through to this realization: “Here I stand so that later generations will be spared this fate. Here I stand so that the regrettable sins of earlier generations will be atoned for. Here I stand so that my Volk can live.”

As difficult as my struggle might be, it cannot be any more difficult than the struggle of the generations before us.

Hitler openly entreated the young officer cadets to be ready to die. This destiny was nothing special, for:

As much as the individual has to suffer in the fighting, he must always keep one thing in mind: In just this way suffered the soldiers of the World War, in just this way suffered the soldiers of the German War of Unification⁷⁰¹ as did the soldiers of the age of Frederick and going back into the past all the way to Herman the Cheruscan. For no one has death been easier. It is hard, but it is the same for everyone. And if a generation no longer wants to bring this sacrifice, then with that generation end a people’s chain of destiny. That is hard for the individual, but it must not be avoided.⁷⁰²

Moreover, peace can be enforced only by the sword. Shield and spear—in this world, there exists no other formula for the preservation of peace and for the securing of peace. To date, peace has been possible only when protected by the shield and entrusted to the spear. And it will be no different in the future.

Today, we stand in the midst of the most decisive battle for our Volk. You yourselves are not only future officers in the German Wehrmacht, but also part of this great instrument of leadership and the entire German Volk—this German Volksgemeinschaft. You must completely identify yourselves mentally with the ideas which move this Volk today. Its hopes for the future must be your own. Its present feelings must be met with understanding on your part. The sons whom the Volk will entrust to you for leadership in the future must be led in such a manner that, on returning, they all the more form part of this National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, just as this Army forms the sword of this community.

In this struggle, the German Wehrmacht yet faces enormous tasks. Still, there can be no doubt that this struggle will end in victory for us, not only, because our weapons are the best, our organization is the best, and we can call the best soldiers and the best leadership our own, but also because behind these soldiers today stands truly the best Volk. It is the best to a degree which surpasses what we possessed in the past, because now millions and millions of laborers of the mind and of the fist stand behind the German soldier, because behind him stands an army of millions of German women, because a German youth is being reared filled with the one thought, because never before in Germany’s history have we had such an intense identification

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between the will of the political leadership, the thoughts of the Volk, and the Wehrmacht, as we do this time, and because no state on the side of our enemies can point to similar complete unity.

At the close of the speech, Hitler turned to the social tensions that were allegedly disturbing the other, that is, enemy nations, and declared:

They all live with their tensions. For some time, they might be able to deny these tensions or temporarily relieve them by some measures. However, this does not eliminate them. On the contrary! They will resurface worse than before. In this world, you cannot get out of resolving these internal social problems of today. One state uses reason to resolve them, as we do, another state will have them resolved by its lack of reason. In the one case, a buildup will set in; in the other case, nihilistic and anarchical destruction will follow. Nobody can get around these problems. They must be solved. We are presently in the process of resolving these problems in a reasonable manner and, therefore, we already have the most united Volk. Others have up to now rejected this resolution. Therefore, there are tensions in their nations—a profound unrest and the nervousness of an age in transformation is taxing their strength.

Victory can fall to no other nation than ours! Another thing also is decisive: not only must you be strong in your faith in the necessity of this struggle, you must pass this faith on to your men. There is a biblical story in which a city is destroyed because, in the end, no one there deserved that it should any longer exist. One can put it in another way yet: as long as someone keeps the faith, the community is not yet lost. And this applies also to the tiniest entity, not only to large ones. As long as in a regiment, in a battalion, in a company, there is one man who keeps and cherishes the faith and as a leader passes this faith on, no one will falter. And for this long, this body will not break.

If somebody characterizes the morale of a company as bad, then the company leader is responsible for this. If somebody characterizes the morale of a regiment as bad, then the regiment's commander is responsible for this. A leader is always responsible for his followers. He passes his own spirit on to his followers. If he shows signs of weakness, then his followers will also become weak. If he shows signs of resistance and valor, then his followers will resist and will be valiant. If he shows signs of heroism, then his followers will die heroically. If he shows signs of cowardly capitulation, then his followers will capitulate. The leader of any organization is not only the bearer of its shield. He also fashions its character, its valor. And, in turn, in this sense, he is also responsible for its defeatism. You must hence pass on the faith and insights which you possess to your followers. They must believe in you. And you must always and at all times be the banner, the living banner, behind which they march, an example in all things to the soldier. If this idea continues to suffuse the entire Wehrmacht to the extent which we are already witnessing today—to our great joy and pride—then this Wehrmacht will be

invincible. And then this age in which we live will not only be a great age for all of us now, but it will also be regarded as an age of enlightenment by future generations. Just as we think with shame of the years 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, and so on, so posterity will think with pride and joy of the age we are fashioning at present. Then, we will have done our duty. A man cannot expect more from life. Everyone will die sooner or later. Thus, there is only one question: how did he live his life? Did he live decently? Did he live courageously? Did he live faithfully and did he fulfill his duties? Or did he live like a drone among his Volk? Did he live as one of those who go with the flow of lethargy or apathy? That is the question.

And if there is one reason for living, then it is to be able to say in one's old age: "For my part, I did my duty. I always was indifferent to what the others did." When one day you look back to this age, I wish that you will be able to do one thing: to look back with a feeling of pride: "Back then, when the Greater German Reich was fighting for its destiny, I was a soldier. I was an officer back then and I did my duty for this eternal Germany!"

After Hitler had spoken, von Brauchitsch added:

Mein Führer!

You have given us this hour of your life filled with hard work. You have passed on to thousands of cadets the experiences of your life. The thousands of cadets of this class are bound to you in life and in death. What you order, they will execute. And you, my Cadets, now have the duty to step forth. You have to pass on to your units the ideas of which the Führer spoke—the general guidelines, problems and tasks—what each one of you must do. Out there, you are to strengthen the faith, to maintain it, and to carry always in your hearts the belief that what has been ordered must be done for the sake of Germany; that what has been ordered by the Führer will lead to success, just as it has in the past by bringing us to where we are today. And thus old and young soldiers close ranks. And thus everything stands.

On December 19 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler received the new Russian Ambassador, Vladimir Dekanazov, who presented his credentials.⁷⁰³

December 21 marked Stalin's birthday. Still, in German papers, the reader searched in vain for the customary congratulatory telegram by Hitler. The previous year, Hitler had extended warm words of congratulation to Stalin on this occasion,⁷⁰⁴ under the immediate impression of the signature of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. This year he had just given the command for preparation of the attack on the Soviet Union, and so spared himself the telegram.

That times had changed was evident in other respects, too. On December 23, General Oshima took over as Japanese Ambassador to

Germany and thereby relieved Kurusu. Oshima had served in Berlin in this function previously, but the Tokyo Government had recalled him after the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact. This change in personnel meant only one thing: friendship for Japan. Again this new trend was underlined when the Japanese Government sent a military mission to Berlin.

On December 23, Hitler left Berlin for the Western front.⁷⁰⁵ There he intended to visit with soldiers and spread holiday cheer. Since his travel to Saarbrücken the previous year, Hitler had not trod upon French soil. During his visit with combat batteries equipped with long range guns, a joint undertaking of the Army and Navy in the vicinity of Calais, he behaved as the victorious warlord in control of the situation. At a luncheon at the local field kitchen of the Todt Organization, Hitler underlined his unperturbed confidence in victory in the end. At one point in the address, he stated:

Before us lie the freedom and the future of our Volk. Behind us lie bitter experiences. In us lives the unalterable resolve that from this war a better and more beautiful German Reich shall spring forth.

Hitler continued his tour in the afternoon and passed by Boulogne. The naval units stationed there paid their Führer the tribute due.

On December 24, Hitler spent time with two of the Luftwaffe's fighter squadrons. He delivered several short addresses, at one of which he stated: "What you accomplished last year was something even old soldiers barely thought possible." In the afternoon, Hitler passed through Abbéville.

On December 25, Hitler lunched at the cafeteria of a bomber squadron, addressing a few words to the soldiers assembled there. That afternoon, Hitler's special train halted north of Paris. Admiral Darlan, the French Deputy Head of State, was summoned. He had replaced Laval on December 13.⁷⁰⁶ Schmidt, the chief interpreter, was brought from Berlin to France especially for the occasion. For half an hour Hitler scolded Darlan, crying: "Why was Laval dismissed? This is the work of anti-German intrigues among the associates of Marshal Pétain."

With great bitterness, Hitler then complained about Pétain. He was nettled by the Marshal's failure to appear at the ceremony at the Dôme des Invalides. Hitler had heard a rumor that Pétain had refused to attend because he feared the Germans might use the occasion to kidnap him. Hitler exclaimed in outrage: "It is shabby to think me

capable of something of the sort, especially since I made this gesture towards France with complete sincerity.”

Darlan barely had time to respond to this outburst before Hitler abruptly ended the conversation.

On December 26, Hitler spent part of the day with the Leibstandarte as he had done the previous year. His address to the SS men was uncharacteristically gloomy and contained the following passage:

What your fate will be,⁷⁰⁷ my Men of the Leibstandarte, I do not know. But I know one thing: you will be in the front row at every engagement. As long as I have the honor to stand at the fore of the Reich to lead this struggle, you who bear my name shall consider it an honor to stand at the fore of the struggle!

Speaking to a different crowd, namely, to the members of the infantry regiment which had clocked the greatest number of hours engaged and had earned the most distinctions in battle (and probably recorded the heaviest losses), Hitler exclaimed: “You must understand that my heart beats for you and that I am delighted to spend the holidays among soldiers.”

By December 27, Hitler found himself back in Berlin. Visiting his Chief of Staff at his flat, he congratulated Viktor Lutze on his fiftieth birthday.⁷⁰⁸

On this day, Hitler also spoke with Raeder.⁷⁰⁹ The main topic for discussion, as far as Raeder was concerned, was the voicing of “grave concerns about campaign against Russia before defeat of England.” Hitler did not want to hear of it. Cutting Raeder short, Hitler stated that:

In general, given the current political developments (Russia’s inclination to get herself involved in Balkan affairs), it is necessary to eliminate, under all circumstances, the last adversary on the Continent, before he [Hitler] could get together with England. [!] Because of this the Army must maintain the necessary strength. Subsequently one can fully concentrate on the Luftwaffe and Navy.

Hence a spirit of defiance characterized the end of 1940 in the German Reich.

At the same time in the United States, Roosevelt delivered an “Address on National Security” on December 29, in which he stated:⁷¹⁰

... on September 27, 1940, by an agreement signed in Berlin, three powerful nations, two in Europe and one in Asia, joined themselves together in the threat that if the United States interfered with or blocked the expansion program of these three nations—a program aimed at world control—they would unite in ultimate action against the United States.

The Nazi masters of Germany have made it clear that they intend not only to dominate all life and thought in their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use their resources to dominate the rest of the world. [—]

In view of the nature of this undeniable threat, it can be asserted, properly and categorically, that the United States has no right or reason to encourage talk of peace, until the day shall come when there is a clear intention on the part of the aggressor nations to abandon all thought of dominating or conquering the world. [—]

Does anyone seriously believe that we need to fear attack while a free Britain remains our most powerful naval neighbor in the Atlantic? Does anyone seriously believe, on the other hand, that we could rest easy if the Axis powers were our neighbor there? If Great Britain goes down, the Axis Powers will control the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the high seas—and they will be in a position to bring enormous military and naval resources against this hemisphere. [—]

The history of recent years proves that shootings and chains and concentration camps are not simply the transient tools but the very altars of modern dictatorships. They may talk of a “new order” in the world, but what they have in mind is but a revival of the oldest and the worst tyranny. [—]

The British people are conducting an active war against this unholy alliance. Our own future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of that fight. Our ability to “keep out of war” is going to be affected by that outcome.

Thinking in terms of today and tomorrow, I make the direct statement to the American people that there is far less chance of the United States getting into war, if we do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis than if we acquiesce in their defeat, submit tamely to an Axis victory, and wait our turn to be the object of attack in another war later on. [—]

There will be no “bottlenecks” in our determination to aid Great Britain. No dictator, no combination of dictators, will weaken that determination by threats of how they will construe that determination. [—]

In this radio speech—which was also broadcast by long- and short-wave throughout the world in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish—Roosevelt had made unequivocally clear where the United States as a loyal ally stood in the new world war: at the side of Britain, of course.

The year 1940 is generally regarded, even today, as a year of great successes for Hitler both militarily and politically. The notion is a mistaken one, however. 1940 can with equal justification be seen as a year of many defeats.

Admittedly, France fell that year and German troops moved to occupy five small states. Still these measures served the attainment of a goal which completely eluded Hitler: the subjugation or “friendship”

of England. On the contrary, against his original intent, Hitler had had to commit himself to an aerial battle for England, and lost. He had threatened the English with German troops landing on the British Isles, but had not been strong enough to move from words to deeds.

And the debacle in the skies above had its repercussions on foreign policy as well. Spain, France, Belgium, and Russia refused to follow his lead against England. He had suffered one diplomatic defeat after the other, while his prestige within Germany was equally harmed.

Hitler found himself forced to improvise. The Tripartite Pact with Italy and Japan was concluded. The Balkan states' reluctance, however, to join the Pact was sufficient proof of the perceived ever-increasing weakness of the Third Reich.

And, to make matters worse, Italy's entry into the war disappointed Hitler's hopes. The Italian troops required air support by the Luftwaffe. Squadrons had to be transferred to the Mediterranean to rush to the aid of the ally who faced grave difficulties in Greece.

Things were not going well in North Africa either. Spain had refused Hitler's persistent clamoring for a conquest of Gibraltar and the subsequent erection of a "land bridge" to northern Africa. The Italian campaign in Egypt had come to a standstill in the desert sand at Sidi Barani.⁷¹¹ The English had launched a powerful counter-offensive on December 9. Italian troops had to retreat behind the border. The British soldiers stood a good chance of conquering all of Cyrenaica soon.

And this was where matters stood at the end of 1940.

A career with an air of unreality, mystery, and extremity unprecedented in world history had led the casual laborer Adolf Hitler from a hostel for the homeless in Vienna to the top of the German Reich. Immediately before the outbreak of the war, he was completely blunt about the impetus behind his activities: "I have played *Vabanque* all my life."⁷¹² In this context, it was only consequent that Hitler—after the build-up of the Wehrmacht and the creation of Greater Germany—bid for world power. In spite of his conquests on the Continent, Britain did not give way. The offensive against Russia was the last trump card Hitler held in the most dangerous game of chance mankind had ever experienced. Should this maneuver fail, he knew all his efforts were doomed. Then his warped mind would see but one desperate recourse: a gradual massacre of the Jews, his "hostages," as the only means left to bring England to its knees.

Prologue

Notes

1. See above, p. 1258, speech of December 2, 1938.
2. See above, Introduction, p. 54. See also below, speech of November 8, 1940.
3. See *Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939* (London, 1939), no. 9, p. 10 (hereafter referred to as the *British Blue Book*). Cf. also Friedrich Berber, *Deutschland-England 1933-1939* (Essen, 1943), p. 184.
4. *Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges*, II, (edited by the Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, 1939), p. 289. (Hereafter referred to as the *Deutsches Weissbuch*.)
5. See below, statement of March 31, 1939.
6. See below, 1939, note 999.
7. See below, September 3, 1939.
8. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 73. See above, p. 28.
9. For verbatim reproduction of Churchill's radio address of October 1, 1939, see Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
10. See above, speech of March 14, 1936. "I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker."
11. See above, Introduction, p. 70.
12. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.
13. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
14. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
15. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
16. *Ibid.* In 356 BC, Herostratus set fire to the temple of the Goddess Artemis at Ephesus in order to become famous.
17. *Ibid.*
18. See below, speech of November 8, 1942.
19. See below, speech of September 30, 1942.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
22. See below, speech of July 19, 1940.
23. See above, pp. 125 f., speech of March 15, 1932; see below, speech of July 19, 1940, and 1940, note 414.
24. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. See above, p. 57.
25. Subhas Chandra Bose, born 1897 in Cuttack; President of the Congress Party of India from 1938 to 1939. In 1941, he visited Germany to recruit volunteers for an Indian national army among Indian prisoners of war. In 1943, he ventured to Japan with a similar aim.
26. Mohammed Emin el Huseini, born 1895 in Jerusalem; appointed Grand Mufti and President of the High Islamic Council by the English in 1926; deposed by officials of the British Mandate Government there in 1937; appeared 1941 in Germany; took refuge in Egypt in 1946. Cf. Reinhard

- Hüber, *Arabische Führergestalten* (1944).
27. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745.
 28. See above, Vol. I, Introduction, p. 30; see also p. 388, statement of November 6, 1933: “But for me and for us all, setbacks have never been anything but lashes of the whip driving us onwards all the more.”
 29. “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.” See above, p. 686, speech of August 11, 1935.
“There are times when Providence demonstrates the deepest love it has for its creatures in an act of punishment!” *Ibid.*, p. 937, speech of September 13, 1937.
“He [the Lord God] 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.” *Ibid.*, p. 953, speech of October 3, 1937.
 30. Before the Second World War, Eva Braun had made this statement in conversation with an English journalist, then the *Daily Telegraph*’s Berlin correspondent. Back in London after the war as commentator for the BBC, he related Eva Braun’s remark to his listeners in a broadcast on June 21, 1945. The author’s notes. See also below, April 28, 1945.

The Year 1939

Notes

1. See above, instructions issued October 21, 1938 and November 24, 1938.
2. Dr. Josef Tiso, Minister-President of Slovakia in 1938; State President from 1938 to 1945, hanged in Bratislava in 1947; Dr. Adalbert (Béla) Vojtech Tuka, born 1880, Minister-President of Slovakia from 1939 to 1945, leader of the Slovak National Party, hanged 1946 in Bratislava; Alexander (Sano) Mach, Slovak Minister of the Interior from 1939 to 1945; Ferdinand Durcansky, Slovak Foreign Minister from 1939 to 1944.
3. See above, October 14, 1938.
4. Augustin Vološin, born 1874; died 1945 in Galicia (allegedly murdered).
5. Petrovich Skoropadskyi, born 1873; killed 1945 in an air raid at Murnau.
6. As early as their February 12, 1939 meeting in the Chancellery, Hitler had suggested such steps to Béla Tuka. See IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 172.
7. Dr. Emil Hácha, born 1872 in Schweinitz, Southern Bohemia; President of the Czechoslovak Republic from November 30, 1938 to March 15, 1939; President of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 1939-1945; died June 27, 1945 in a Prague prison. Josef Sivak served as Minister of Education in Tiso's Cabinet. On March 6, 1939, Hácha dismissed the Carpatho-Ukrainian autonomous government in a similar manner, a dismissal that was not recognized in its capital city Chust. See below, March 11, 1939.
8. See above, p. 1265.
9. The units in question were contingents from the Eighth Army and the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.
10. See above, p. 384, interview of October 18, 1933.
11. See above, p. 385, speech of October 24, 1933.
12. See above, p. 387, speech of November 2, 1933.
13. See above, p. 642, speech of February 24, 1935.
14. See above, p. 676, speech of May 21, 1935.
15. See above, p. 801, speech of March 28, 1936.
16. See above, p. 335, speech of May 27, 1933.
17. See above, p. 778, speech of March 7, 1936.
18. See above, p. 676, speech of May 21, 1935.
19. See above, pp. 1187 and 1192, speech of September 26, 1938.
20. See above, p. 1192.
21. Cf. *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany* (London, 1939), no. 9, pp. 5 ff. (Hereafter referred to as the *British Blue Book*.) See also Neville Chamberlain, *The Struggle for Peace* (London, 1939), pp. 413 ff.
22. *British Blue Book*, no. 17, pp. 36 ff.. Cf. *Parliamentary Debates, House*

- of *Commons*, Vol. 345, col. 2421, and Chamberlain, pp. 421 ff.
23. See below, speech of September 19, 1939. Cf. statements made by Ribbentrop and Göring in their 1946 defense before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. See also below, August 23, 1939.
 24. See above, Introduction, p. 53. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
 25. See below, March 31, 1939.
 26. “. . . 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.” See above, p. 767, speech of March 7, 1936. “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.” See above, p. 869, speech of January 30, 1937.
 27. Hitler ridiculed the British as “my Hugenbergers” in reference to Legation Counselor Hugenberg, the former German Nationalist politician whom he held to epitomize senility. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
 28. Alfred von Tirpitz, born 1849 in Küstrin; died 1930 in Ebenhausen near Munich; Grand Admiral in 1911; as Secretary for the Imperial Navy from 1897–1916, he had created the modern German Navy and planned the World War I U-boat campaign; advocate of an active marine policy, but reluctant to engage Navy during the First World War; his only major battle at sea took place in the Skagerrak on the night of May 31 to June 1, 1916 and was inconclusive.
 29. See above, broadcast of September 27, 1938.
 30. Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6149 f.
 31. See above, broadcast of September 27, 1938.
 32. RGrBl. 1939, II, pp. 968 f.
 33. At the beginning of the First World War, Great Britain had declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, three days after the outbreak of hostilities. It was not until March 17, 1939 that Chamberlain reacted to Hitler’s March 15, 1939 entry into Prague.
 34. See below, speech of September 3, 1939.
 35. For the term *Blitzkrieg* see below, Hitler’s statement in his speech of November 8, 1941; for the principles of blitzkrieg cf. also John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander* (London, 1971), pp. 80 ff.
 36. See below, September 19, 1939.
 37. Cf. Goerdeler’s peace proposal of May 30, 1941, which was to be transmitted to the British Government, printed in Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1954),

- p. 569.
38. See Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI., p. 6163.
 39. See below, speech of November 8, 1939. Hitler declared: "Should . . . [one] . . . Englishman say 'for us the frontier runs along the Rhine' and the next comes up to say 'for us the frontier runs along the Vistula river,' then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we shall have to help matters along!" Hitler was alluding to statements by Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister in the years 1923 to 1929 and 1935 to 1937, who had maintained that the Rhine constituted the first line of defense for Great Britain.
 40. See below, directive of October 9, 1939.
 41. See below, speech of October 10, 1939.
 42. See below, August 22, 1939. Hitler declared: "I shall give a propagandist reason for starting the war, no matter whether plausible or not." Indeed, a staged assault on a German radio station located in Gleiwitz on the border with Poland served Hitler as an excuse for retaliation based on the alleged transgression of the frontier. SS Führer Alfred Naujocks led German soldiers disguised in Polish army uniforms in the August 31, 1939 raid.
 43. See above, p. 458 and 1934, note 92.
 44. The British agents in question were Captain S. Payne Best and Major R. H. Stevens. Walter Schellenberg, a young SS Gruppenführer under cover as a resistance fighter, induced the Englishmen to agree to a meeting in Venlo (small town in the Netherlands near the German border) on November 7. At another meeting the following day, Schellenberg persuaded the English to come to a small café for another meeting on November 9. On entering the café, an SS Kommando in disguise opened fire on them. Once more Alfred Naujocks had been commissioned to carry out this particular operation, reminiscent of the Gleiwitz raid he had also headed. As a result of the new operation, one Dutch Lieutenant was severely injured. The British agents were abducted across the border into Germany. See also below, November 9, 1939 and note 1216.
 45. Original quotation: "*Wie man in den Wald hineinruft, so schallt es auch wieder hinaus.*" Corresponds to the proverb: "As you give, so you receive."
 46. The relative calm along the Western front during the winter months 1939-40 was mockingly referred to as "Phony War." Both armies took up positions opposite each other while little actual fighting occurred, with the exception of sporadic artillery exchanges and occasional skirmishes. See also below, note 1043.
 47. In 1936, Hitler had declared: "I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker." See above, p. 790, address of March 14, 1936.
 48. "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!" See above, p. 1258, speech of December 2, 1938.
 49. Printed in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1939.

50. Ibid.
51. DNB text, January 2, 1939.
52. DNB text, January 6, 1939.
53. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.
54. Report on the meeting and notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, no. 200, pp. 127 f. See also Schmidt, pp. 433 ff. For Beck's notes see *Polish White Book*, no. 48.
55. In Hitler's eyes, a "reasonable" solution implied the unconditional acceptance of his proposals. As early as January 1939, it was clear that the Memel question would be "resolved in the interest of Germany." The Lithuanian Government eagerly strove to fulfill all of the Memel Germans' wishes in order to appease Hitler. On January 13, it entrusted Willy Bertuleit with the creation of an autonomous government for the Memel Germans called the *Memel Direktorium*. Bertuleit had previously served as deputy to the National Socialist leader of the Memel Germans, Dr. Neumann. On January 23, addressing an assembly of civil servants in his capacity as president of the newly formed directorate, Bertuleit openly avowed that he and his government pledged themselves to the National Socialist Weltanschauung. The middle of January witnessed the establishment of a separate SA unit (called "*Ordnungsdienst*," an organization for the maintenance of public order) made up of 1,800 young Memel Germans supplied with new uniforms. German became the official language and was taught in the schools. While this satisfied the demands of the Memel Germans, it was not enough for Hitler. He insisted on German military sovereignty in the region and occupation by German Armed Forces. On March 22, 1939, the Lithuanian Government also yielded to this last of Hitler's requests.
56. See Beck's October 31, 1938 memorandum to Ambassador Lipski in the *Polish White Book*, 1938, no. 49.
57. Hitler had assured various Polish statesmen of this. For example, he had done so in a meeting with the Polish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count Szembeck, on August 12, 1936 and in a similar January 14, 1938 meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister Colonel Beck. Hitler had avowed the limited nature of his demands in public as well. In 1938, he had proclaimed that Danzig, "this very spot that presented the greatest threat to European peace, lost its dangerous significance" as a direct result of the German-Polish Alliance of 1934 which had supposedly resolved the differences between the two states. Hitler maintained that "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 attempts of troublemakers here and there." See above, speech of February 20, 1938.
58. DNB text, January 6, 1939.
59. The previous residence of the Reich Chancellor, the Reichskanzlerpalais

at 78 Wilhelmstrasse, dated back to the 18th century. Originally it had belonged to Count Radziwill from whom Bismarck obtained the mansion in 1871 and furnished it to house the Reich Chancellery. In the days of the Weimar Republic, a more modern, sturdy annex was added onto the building at the corner of Voss Strasse, facing the Wilhelmsplatz. The structure was a simple and sober one, built of shell limestone pleasing to the eye.

Also facing Wilhelmsplatz, the office of the Reich Chancellor was located on the second floor. From the office's window, Hitler had watched the crowds rallying to him on the evening of January 30, 1933. Following the 'successful conclusion' of the Röhm Purge, Hitler posted himself at the office window on July 1, 1934 and accepted the tribute paid to him by the Reichswehr. Later that year, Hitler had a balcony added onto the office and, on special occasions, he would greet the crowds below paying homage to him. In 1939, the building was refurbished with a big entrance way with bronze doors. They allowed for passage directly into the courtyard and from there into the new Reich Chancellery.

On January 11, 1938, Hitler had commissioned the architect Albert Speer to construct a new Chancellery building within a year's time. The 422 meter long structure faced Voss Strasse. It was shaped like a horseshoe with two wings and a main section to the rear. The new Chancellery had three levels and was constructed in the same classicist style to which Hitler had given preference for the new structures built in Munich. The main entrance continued to face the Wilhelmsplatz. Classicist pillars surrounded a courtyard of 26 meters width and 48 meters depth. The interior of the building contained numerous ball rooms and halls. First among these was the 46 meter long "Mosaic Hall" named after the numerous mosaics on the walls there. Another hall had a dome of sixteen meters in height. Moreover, there was the so-called "Long Hall" 12 meters in width and 146 meters in length. Hitler's office was 27 meters by 14.5 meters and its ceiling was ten meters high. Hitler's initials AH were engraved above the office doors. Further, there was a hall for receptions 24.5 meters in length and 16.5 meters in width, and naturally there was also a hall in which the cabinet met. Thousands of workers had labored night and day to raise the structure. The marble for the interior of the new Chancellery came from various regions within Germany. No costs were spared in furnishing and constructing the building. By erecting the most expensive and luxurious of structures in the Reich, Hitler sought to lend visible expression to the power and might he commanded. Moreover, he also strove to impress the public with the thought of the permanence and invincibility of his regime, National Socialism's eternal reign. Nonetheless, his efforts were doomed. A few months after the completion of construction work on the building, Hitler became entangled in a war that spelt ruin not only for the Third Reich and him personally, but also for the new Reich Chancellery that was reduced to ashes and flames due to Allied

bombardment in the closing days of World War II. The bunker beneath the Chancellery became Hitler's last safe haven and also the site where he committed suicide. Russian, American, and British soldiers had their picture taken in front of the remainder of the Führer's marble desk. The Allies recycled the building material used in the construction of the Chancellery to erect their war memorials, as the Russians did for instance in the case of the Russian war memorial in Berlin-Treptow.

60. Excerpts of the speech printed in VB, No. 10, January 10, 1939.
61. Hitler is referring to his Munich apartment at 16 Prinzregentenplatz which he had purchased in 1929. For details on his private quarters see above, 1933, note 80.
62. On the 1939 Day of German Art, the article was published in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1939.
63. Bismarck presided over the so-called "Congress of Berlin" which he convoked on June 13, 1878. Representatives of Germany, Austria, Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey met to discuss the future of statehood in the Balkan region after the Russian-Turkish War. The result of the conference became known as the so-called "Peace of Berlin" or "Berlin Pact" of July 13, 1878. The distribution of territory in the area failed to satisfy the states concerned and aroused their enmity toward Germany.
64. Houthulst was a Flemish village in the province of western Belgium, located nine kilometers to the Southeast of Dixmuiden. A forest south of Houthulst was held for years by German troops in the course of the First World War, despite numerous assault waves by British, French, and Belgian forces. The overpowering nature of the attacks finally forced the German Fourth Army to retreat on September 28, 1918. Hitler's idea of comparing the park near the Reich Chancellery with the blood-drenched Houthulst forest was both inappropriate and tasteless. However, the so-called irony of history would have it that, due to the 1945 bombardment by Allied forces both by air and on land, the Reich Chancellery park indeed strongly resembled the landscape at the Western Front in the First World War with one crater next to the other.
65. See below, April 13, 1939.
66. Looped plaits in either gold or silver which were popularly called *Affenschaukeln* ("monkey's swings").
67. The addresses given at the New Year's reception are published in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1939.
68. Report in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1939.
69. DNB note, January 12, 1939.
70. NSK note, January 15, 1939.
71. Stefan (István) Count Csáky of Körösszegh and Adorjan, born 1894 in Uncsukfalva; Foreign Minister from 1938 to 1941; died 1941 in Ofenpest.
72. "Today, in a very offhand way, he declared that it was his conviction that Hitler is crazy. He based this observation on the look of the Führer's eyes." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 68.

73. Speaking with Ciano in Rome on March 24, 1940, the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki asserted that 95 percent of the Hungarians “detest Germany.” *Ibid.*, p. 226.
Before the Second World War, according to Ciano’s notes, von Horthy, the Regent of Hungary so buttered up by Hitler, called the Germans “buffoons and brigands.” Having accompanied her husband on his 1938 trip to Germany and, in the presence of Hitler, having christened the ironclad *Prinz Eugen*, the Regent’s wife proclaimed that she herself “would take up arms if they had to fight the Germans.” See Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 123.
74. DNB text, January 16/18, 1939.
75. DNB text, January 18, 1939.
76. These gatherings always took place in the Berlin Sportpalast. Hitler issued the last of these appeals in the Breslau (Wrocław) Jahrhunderthalle in 1943.
77. See above, Prologue, note 29.
78. Two days before the reintroduction of general conscription, Hitler issued an ordinance on the SA’s mission as a training ground for athletics and defense. See above, March 14, 1935. This ordinance later gained prominence as the “February 15, 1935 ordinance,” as it was referred to on March 18, 1937 and on January 19, 1939. Either there was a mistake made regarding the date of issue or, Hitler had indeed signed the ordinance four weeks before issuing it.
79. DNB text, January 21, 1939.
80. NSK note, January 29, 1939.
81. This reserve status applied to all men up to the age of 45; during the war, the age restriction was extended to 60 years.
82. Mob.=short for mobilization.
83. See above, 1937, note 1.
84. Hitler’s correspondence addressed to Schacht and Funk was published in VB, No. 21, January 21, 1939.
85. Neither Schacht nor Neurath had the courage to stand up for their ideals, to draw the consequences and to resign from the Cabinet, as Eltz von Rübenach and Hugenberg had. See above, p. 340 (Hugenberg) and Vol. II, pp. 876 f. (Eltz von Rübenach). Schacht and Neurath preferred to retain their posts. On ceremonial occasions, they would make their token appearances. In the name of the entire Cabinet, Schacht welcomed Hitler back to Berlin upon the successful completion of the campaign in France. After the events of July 20, 1944, however, Hitler had Schacht incarcerated in a concentration camp.
86. The stability of prices and earnings was no guarantee of the stability of the currency, of course. For instance, once the relation of production and money circulation is disturbed by the exigencies of a war time economy, a devaluation of the currency is inevitable sooner or later regardless of the artificial stability of prices and earnings. There are not sufficient products available to satisfy demand and the currency loses in value as it no longer serves as a means of exchange.

87. Charles Gates Dawes, born 1865 in Marietta, Ohio; died 1951 in Chicago; Vice President of the United States from 1925 to 1929; presided over the expert commission that dealt with the question of Germany's reparation payments in 1924; devised the payment plan named after him which was accepted at the London Conference. The August 16, 1924 London Agreement established an independent banking system in Germany and converted the Reichsbank into an institution separate from the Reich Government. See above, January 30, 1937.
88. DNB note, January 21, 1939.
89. Hitler signed the "law pertaining to the Reichsbank" in Berchtesgaden on June 15, 1939. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1015 f.
90. See below, January 30, 1939.
91. Hitler had announced this "decision" in his January 30, 1937 speech before the Reichstag. According to his estimates, this dealt a final blow to the alleged pressure from the international high finance. The fact that he reiterated this decision two years later indicates his attempt to find a pretext for the dismissal of Schacht. See above, January 30, 1937.
92. František Chvalkovsky, Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister from October 4, 1938 to March 15, 1939. DNB note, January 22, 1939.
94. RGBl. 1938, II, pp. 909 f.
95. A listing of the thirty thoroughfares was published on January 30. RGBl. 1939, II, p. 19.
96. Demands for an extraterritorial autobahn through the Polish Corridor and for the simultaneous restoration of Danzig to the Reich were broached on October 21, 1938. The issue arose once more during the January 5 meeting of Hitler and Beck. The demands by Germany were voiced again in March. See January 5 and March 21, 1939.
97. Roberto Farinacci, journalist by profession; General Secretary of the Italian Fascist Party; shot in April 1945.
98. Report in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1939.
99. Illustrated DNB reports, January 26, 1939.
100. DNB text, January 27, 1939.
101. Reports on the festivities in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1939.
102. For details on the significance of the National Prize see above, January 30, 1937.
103. Willy Messerschmitt, born 1898 in Frankfurt am Main; aircraft designer. The most famous of Messerschmitt's planes engaged in combat during the Second World War were the 'Me 109' and the 'Me 110.'
Ernst Heinrich Heinkel, born 1888 in Grumbach, Württemberg; aircraft designer. The best known of Heinkel's planes was the two engine long distance bomber 'He 111.'
Dr. h. c. Ferdinand Porsche, born 1875 in Maffersdorf, Bohemia; died 1951 in Stuttgart; engineer and manufacturer of automobiles; designer of the Volkswagen.
Dr. Fritz Todt, born 1891 in Pforzheim; died 1942 in a plane crash near Rastenburg in East Prussia; Inspector General for railroad construction

- in Germany; head of the “Organization Todt” (OT) responsible for the construction of roads and fortifications; Reich Minister for Ammunition and Weaponry from 1940 to 1942.
104. In 1938, Hitler had announced renaming the Volkswagen the “KdF-Wagen” (Strength through Joy car). See above, pp. 1111 f., May 26, 1938.
105. The famous Wehrmacht’s car open at the side was called “Kübelwagen.”
106. See above, January 30, 1938.
107. Hermann Esser, member of Hitler’s Old Guard; State Minister of Bavaria and President of the Landtag in 1933; Vice President of the Reichstag in 1934.
108. In accordance to Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution, a newly elected Reichstag had to convene within thirty days of its election.
109. Per 60,000 votes cast one delegate was assigned a seat. 41 additional seats were created in the Reichstag elected on April 10, 1938 as a result of the December 4, 1938 supplementary election in the Sudetenland. It was the last Reichstag to be elected in the Third Reich. This Reichstag was in session eight times. In 1939, it convened on January 30, April 28, September 1, and October 6. In 1940, it was called into session only on July 19. It met twice in 1941, on May 4 and December 11 and convened one last time on April 26, 1942. On August 27, 1939, one unofficial meeting, at which Hitler was also present, took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Chancellery.
110. Dr. Emil Georg von Stauss, born 1877; banker; Prussian State Counselor.
111. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1939. See also the Eher pamphlet, *Der Führer vor dem ersten Reichstag Grossdeutschlands—Reichstagsrede vom 30. Januar 1939* (Munich, 1939).
112. According to Hitler’s own assertions on March 24, 1936, there had been 47 parties and not only 35. See above, March 24, 1936.
113. See above, pp. 1061 ff., speech of March 18, 1938.
114. Allusion to the English.
115. “Reasonable resolutions” in Hitler’s mind always implied solutions that completely satisfied his demands. For instance, the annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, as well as the return of the Memel territory, the demand for Danzig and the Polish Corridor, were “reasonable resolutions” in his eyes.
116. Hitler loved to employ imagery connected with bananas which is evident already in *Mein Kampf*, p. 157. Probably he did so because of the song “Ausgerechnet Bananen!” which was popular in the Twenties and Thirties.
117. Alfred Duff Cooper, born 1890 in London; knighted Lord Nordwich in 1952; Secretary of War from 1935 to 1937; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1937 to 1938; Minister of Information from 1939 to 1940; Chancellor of the Duchy Lancaster from 1941 to 1943.
118. Sir Anthony Eden, 1st Earl of Avon; born 1897 in Windlestone; died 1977; married Clarissa Churchill, niece of Winston Churchill; repeatedly served as Minister in the British Government in various prominent

positions; Lord Privy Seal 1934–35; Foreign Secretary from 1935 to 1938; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1939 to 1940; Secretary of State for War in 1940; Foreign Secretary from 1940 to 1945; Foreign Secretary from 1951 to 1955; Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957.

119. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, born 1874 at Blenheim Palace (lineage Dukes of Marlborough); died 1965; knighted in 1953; Member of Parliament (House of Commons) since 1900; Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1905 to 1908; Minister for Commerce from 1908 to 1910; Minister of the Interior from 1910 to 1911; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915; Secretary for Ammunition from 1917 to 1919; Secretary of War from 1919 to 1921; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1921 to 1922; Finance Minister from 1924 to 1929; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1939 to 1940; Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of Defense from 1940 to 1945; served second term as Prime Minister from 1951 to 1955; Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953.

Churchill was Hitler's primary and most challenging adversary. He not only prevailed militarily and politically, but also outdid Hitler with a likewise powerful, but more sophisticated rhetoric. Great Britain afforded Churchill a royal burial at his death in 1965.

120. Harold Le Claire Ickes, born 1874 in Frankstown; died 1952 in Washington; Secretary of the Interior from 1933 to 1946.
121. The United States did not ally itself with Great Britain in both world wars because of "capitalistic motives," as Hitler would have it, but because of a feeling of solidarity prevalent in all English-speaking countries in times of war and strong ties between their respective leaderships and upper classes.
122. Inflation in Germany resulted not from "Jewish agitation and activities," but rather came about as a natural consequence of the First World War.
123. The actual figures were 140,000 dairy cows; 90,000 cows went to France and 50,000 were accorded to Belgium. See Treaty of Versailles, supplement IV, paragraph 6 in RGBL. 1919, p. 1033.
124. See above, pp. 689 ff., 703.
125. This was Hitler's personal interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.
126. Later Hitler would claim that he had voiced this threat on September 1, 1939. He maintained this in two speeches; one speech on January 30, 1941 and the other precisely one year later. Actually this threat dated back to his January 30, 1939 speech while he remained silent on the topic in his September address before the Reichstag. See above, Introduction, p. 41.
127. It is no easy task to differentiate between political activism and religious conviction in authoritarian and totalitarian states. On the one hand, religious congregations and the Church in general cannot always remain silent in face of certain measures by these governments. Silence might be construed as indirect approval. On the other hand, it is only natural that an authoritarian government would survey with great suspicion any religious activities outside the confines of the church

and beyond religious instruction. This was especially true in the case of the creation of youth groups or any other social and charitable undertaking that might conceivably lead to the defiance of the state later in life.

In the days of the Third Reich, no citizen was prohibited from attending church services and as a result no one had to fear any discrimination of his person or in the pursuit of his career. While eager churchgoers might be ridiculed by their contemporaries this was no different from the disdain for those involved in religion that had already existed in the Weimar Republic and even earlier in Imperial Germany.

There was no systematic, brutal, or bloody persecution of the Church during the Third Reich. The members of the hierarchy of church leaders, such as cardinals or bishops, hardly ever were curtailed in exercising the rights of their person. One exception to this rule was Bishop Sproll who was prohibited from visiting his own diocese.

However, some religious orders were treated more severely. In southern Germany, numerous monasteries of the Benedictine order were disbanded especially during the Second World War. Clergy members of lesser standing, whether Catholic or Protestant, who were involved in opposition movements were arrested, incarcerated, and tortured in concentration camps. Several German clergymen died as martyrs in the camps. In reality, however, the percentage of foreign clerics who suffered this fate was far greater than that of the Germans. Polish priests in particular were disproportionately persecuted and died in the camps. Nevertheless, the Church in the Third Reich was not restricted in the exercise of its freedom of instruction, liturgy, and teaching of dogma. Indeed, it seems as though the Church's activities in 19th century Bavaria, for instance, were more significantly curtailed by the kings who intervened in the Catholic Church's affairs far more frequently than Hitler ever did. In return for his generosity, he expected obliging behavior. As the Church was well aware, Hitler could pressure it by withholding tax revenues, if it failed to perform in accordance to his desires.

128. As usual, the figures given are greatly exaggerated and inaccurate. For example, the government is only indirectly rendering a service to the taxpayer by collecting the compulsory church tax. As is well known, Hitler was most generous in distributing funds, and the Church also received its fill. It is no accident that a great number of new churches and monasteries were constructed during the Third Reich period.
129. This turn of phrase was a rhetorical masterpiece by Hitler. It was obvious that the various denominations would oppose any curtailing of their incomes. They would not be pleased if the state's assistance in collecting church taxes were suddenly withdrawn. Undoubtedly the Church was thus prepared for any extreme in accommodating Hitler, accepting him as the "lesser evil." A number of pastors involved in the Protestant *Bekennniskirche* (Confessional Church) formed one notable exception to this general rule. As a result, they did not obtain any tax-

- based income and hence had to rely on donations.
130. Hitler had the nerve to insist the June 30, 1934 murder of numerous SA members had been justified as they all had been homosexuals. In 1934, he had alleged high treason as a reason for the killings and claimed that there had been an assassination plot directed against him. See above, pp. 486 ff., speech of July 13, 1934.
 131. Reference to the archbishops Marahrens of Hanover, Meiser of Bavaria, and Wurm of Württemberg.
 132. See above, pp. 878 f.; law dated February 18, 1937. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 241.
 133. Reference is made to the Pact concluded by Italy and Prussia on April 8, 1866, on the basis of which both assaulted Austria and divided the spoils.
 134. Evidently, Hitler still remained convinced that Italy would be bold enough to risk war with the Western Powers because of such trivial issues as Tunis, Corsica, or Nice. He had expressed this conviction on November 5, 1937 in his secret address. See above, p. 970. Whether Hitler truly would have rushed to Italy's rescue is highly questionable, despite all forceful and "cold-blooded" declarations to the contrary. For one thing, Hitler placed little stock in upholding contractual obligations. In *Mein Kampf*, moreover, he had condemned Imperial Germany for supporting Austria's cause simply because of legal obligations. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 155. Furthermore, Hitler would greatly have preferred an alliance with Great Britain in particular if such a friendship entailed *carte blanche* for Germany's conquest of the East. As he openly declared in August 1939, he would readily have sacrificed friendship with Italy, Japan, or Russia for an understanding with Britain. See below, August 27 and August 28, 1939.
 135. The fact that no change in regime influenced the fighting morale of troops to any significant extent was amply proved in the course of the Second World War. The Italians under Mussolini were in no sense superior to those who had fought in the First World War. The fervent opposition encountered by the invading troops as they marched into Bolshevik Russia was no different from that encountered by Charles XII of Sweden or Napoleon I in the course of the invasion of Tsarist Russia. Neither did Hitler inspire the German soldier sufficiently to change his performance on the battlefield.
 136. This "truly frightening" threat uttered by Hitler could never have been carried out and most certainly not at that particular point in time. Neither the Foreign Ministry nor the Propaganda Ministry possessed the experts necessary to respond to the radio broadcasts swamping Germany. Neither of the agencies had specialists sufficiently versed in the conditions in the Anglo-Saxon countries to effectively counter the radio shows from abroad. There were hardly any foreign-language radio shows in existence at the time. It was not until late March 1939 that the Reich broadcasting companies in Cologne and Hamburg began airing 45-minute news broadcasts in English. Once war broke out, these stations received additional attention, their shows were

- expanded upon and restructured. It was greatly ironic that this demanded recruiting Englishmen who volunteered their services, supposedly because of their opposition to the British Government. A prominent member of this propaganda team was the son of the British Minister Amery.
137. One such anti-Semitic film was *Jud Süß*, directed by Veit Harlan in 1939. Its anti-Semitic currents were very subdued and most certainly did not fulfill Hitler's expectations. On a side note, the production of anti-Semitic films was not very successful, lacking suitable screenwriters.
 138. Reference to the Polish Marshal Pilsudski.
 139. For the precise nature of this "profound appreciation" see above, January 14, 1939.
 140. Hitler was implying that Germany had no peaceful border to its East. This would have to be changed by means of the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East. Hitler was convinced that the British would ultimately resign themselves to this plan.
 141. As was known, Hitler desired that the smaller states in particular withdraw from the League of Nations and subjugate themselves to his reign.
 142. The new Czechoslovakian Government did its utmost to accommodate Hitler's demands in search for a "path toward inner calm and order." Nonetheless, whenever it pleased him, Hitler would reprimand it for "falling back upon the methods employed by the former State President Beneš."
 143. Hungary and Manchukuo joined the Anti-Comintern Pact on February 24, 1939 officially. RGeBl. 1939, II, pp. 745-749.
 144. Hitler would greatly have preferred had the Anglo-Saxon Powers occupied themselves solely with domestic matters.
 145. With this turn of the phrase, Hitler implied that while it was "almost" impossible for one single man to solve the world's problems, this did not apply to a genius such as the Führer.
 146. See above, pp. 274 f.
 147. This law is printed in RGeBl. 1939, I, p. 95.
 148. See above, January 30, 1937.
 149. Printed in RGeBl. 1939, I, pp. 95 f.
 150. See above, p. 875, January 30, 1939.
 151. Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution read as follows: "The Reichstag shall serve a four-year term. A new election shall be held within 60 days after the expiration of the term of service. The Reichstag shall convene within 30 days of its election." RGeBl. 1919, p. 1388.
 152. See above, p. 275.
 153. Before a gathering of Kreisleiters, Hitler had declared on April 29, 1937: "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!" See above, p. 890.

154. See above, pp. 738 ff., January 15, 1936.
155. See above, pp. 486 ff.
156. See above, picture XII.
157. See above, pp. 1244 ff., speech of November 10, 1938 and Introduction, pp. 26 f.
158. See above, June 30 and July 3, 1934.
159. See above, pp. 287 ff., March 23, 1933.
160. Four years earlier, Hitler had declared: "If I lose Germany, I can win it back again." See above, p. 649, March 5, 1935.
161. Bürckel shot himself in September 1944 after the Allies' conquest of the Lorraine forced his premature retreat from Metz. From the author's notes, information obtained from Helmut Heiber, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich. See below, September 29, 1944.
162. Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorff, born 1896 in Merseburg; placed Berlin's police forces at the disposal of the new Reich Government prematurely formed after erroneous reports of Hitler's death on July 20, 1944; subsequently arrested, sentenced to death, and hanged.
163. However, the verbatim content of the electoral law was easily accessible since it was printed in RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 95 f.
164. On every January 30 in the years 1934, 1937 and 1939, the Reichstag was called in session. In the war years 1940 through 1942, Hitler had Goebbels stage a "Volk's rally" before a carefully selected audience in the Berlin Sportpalast. From 1943 on, Hitler no longer graced these rallies with his presence. Especially the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad kept Hitler from attending in 1943. Instead, he assigned Goebbels the task of reading aloud the Führer's January 30 proclamation. Goebbels also had to speak before the Wehrmacht in Hitler's name. Over the next two years, Hitler would broadcast his address in commemoration of the Enabling Act from the confines of his headquarters.
165. See above, pp. 1093 f., April 23, 1938.
166. DNB text, January 31, 1939.
167. Odilo Globocnik, born 1904; Chief of Staff with the Landesleitung Austria before the Anschluss; Gauleiter of Vienna in 1938.
168. DNB text, January 30, 1939.
169. DNB report, January 31, 1939.
170. For details on the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* see above, p. 1091, and 1938, note 227.
171. DNB report and *Weltbild* report, February 1, 1939.
172. The trophy in question consisted of a silver, galvanized bowl balanced on four cloven feet. The German team secured the trophy on February 4, 1939 as Major Momm and the two cavalry captains Hesse and Brinkmann won the tournament.
173. Report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1939.
174. Alfred Kesselring, born 1884 in Marktsteft (Lower Franconia) died 1960; Field Marshal in 1940; Commander in Chief of the Western Front in March 1945; sentenced to death in Nuremberg in 1947, commuted to life imprisonment; released in 1952.

175. Helmut Felmy, General der Flieger 1938; played a central role in 1941 in the attempted uprising in Iraq.
176. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg; died 1953 in Munich; Field Marshal in 1940.
177. Erhard Milch; born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven; Field Marshal in 1940.
178. Hans-Jürgen Stumpff, Colonel General in 1940.
179. Ernst Udet, born 1896 in Frankfurt am Main; suicide in 1941; Colonel General in 1940.
180. This was one of Hitler's favorite expressions, one he used frequently in reference to military measures. See above, February 4, 1938.
181. Adolf Friedrich Graf von Schack, born 1815 in Brüsewitz; died 1894 in Rome; poet and literary historian; lived in Munich from 1855 on and bequeathed his extremely valuable collection of paintings to the Emperor.
182. DNB note, February 9, 1939. The new Schack gallery was to find a permanent home in the exhibition halls at the Königlicher Platz in Munich.
183. DNB text, February 4, 1939.
184. Emperor Pu Yi, born 1906; Emperor of China from 1908 to 1912; crowned as puppet emperor of Manchukuo by the Japanese in 1934; incarcerated by the Russians in 1945.
185. DNB note, February 2, 1939.
186. DNB note, February 9, 1939.
187. Sir Henry Deterding, director of Royal Dutch Shell; advocated a revision of the Treaty of Versailles favorable to Germany.
188. DNB note, February 10, 1939.
189. DNB text, February 10, 1939. Meissner attended a requiem for Pope Pius XI in Berlin's St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Hitler's stead as well.
190. Reports on the February 10, 1939 diplomatic receptions in VB, No. 44, February 13, 1939.
191. Prior to the March 27, 1941 Putsch in Belgrade, Aleksander Cincar-Markovich served as Foreign Minister.
192. DNB report, February 10, 1939. Also printed in VB, No. 42, February 11, 1939.
193. DNB note, February 12, 1939.
194. DNB text, February 12, 1939.
195. Tuka had spent several years in Czechoslovakian jails.
196. For the report on the meeting at which Ribbentrop and Karmasin, head of the ethnic German movement in Slovakia, were also present see IMT, 2790-PS, and IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 172. Once the meeting had ended, Tuka turned to Hitler and said: "I place the fate of my people in your hands."
197. Hitler's intent was particularly transparent when, at the April launching of the second battleship, he christened it the *Tirpitz* and held a most aggressive speech aimed at Great Britain. In fact, the two battleships had an actual tonnage of 42,900 ton and 41,700 tons, respectively. See below, April 1, 1939.

198. On May 26, 1932, Hitler had already entered the following dedication into the cruiser *Cologne*'s visitor's book: "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich. Adolf Hitler." See above, p. 135.
199. Despite the accelerated pace of battleship construction from 1935 to 1938, the German Navy had not at all reached a supposed parity of 1:3 with that of Great Britain. Even presupposing the greatest of efforts, it would have taken several additional years to reach such a level of parity.
200. Otto Eduard Leopold Prince von Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, born 1815 in Schönhausen; died July 30, 1898 in Friedrichsruh where, on his own request, he was interred in a neo-Romanesque mausoleum in a local park; Reich Chancellor from 1871 to 1890.
201. DNB text, February 13, 1939.
202. Otto Christian Archibald Prince von Bismarck, born 1897 in Schönhausen; Deputy Director of the Political Department of the German Foreign Ministry from 1936 to 1940; Counselor with rank of Minister in the German Embassy in Rome from April 1, 1940 on; married to Ann-Marie Tengbom (born 1907 in Stockholm) in 1928.
203. The battleship had an actual tonnage of 42,900 tons; a length of 241 meters; eight 38 cm cannons; twelve 15 cm cannons. During the Second World War, the *Bismarck* sank the British battleship *Hood* in the Atlantic Ocean. Subsequently, the *Bismarck* was made the subject of a pursuit by British battleships and fighter airplanes which disabled it. The British sank the *Bismarck* on May 27, 1941 with the entire crew aboard, numbering well over 2,000 men. For the so-called "pocket battleships" see below, notes 330 and 1276.
204. Printed in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1939.
205. Hitler is referring to the June 21, 1916 self-destruction of the main components of the German High Seas Fleet, confined to the Scapa Flow harbor. Under Admiral von Reuter's command, the crews sank their own ships, namely: five big cruisers, five small cruisers, ten liners, and 46 torpedo boats. Nine sailors were killed and thirty injured due to British machine gun fire.
206. The battleships in question were the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*. Both vessels had a tonnage supposedly not in excess of 26,000 tons. Their actual tonnage was 31,800 tons. While Hitler had attended the launching of the *Scharnhorst* in October of 1936, he had chosen not to speak on the occasion. See above, October 3, 1936.
207. The armored cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* in service with the Imperial Fleet had both been launched in 1906. Each had a tonnage of 11,600 tons. The British sank both ships during an engagement near the Falkland Islands in the great sea battle of December 8, 1914. See also below, note 1276.
208. This statement revealed Hitler's true assessment of Bismarck: he held the Iron Chancellor to have been a high priest of the advent of National Socialism in Germany.

209. Reference is made to the War of 1864 against Denmark, the 1866 battles against Austria and the German states Bavaria, Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse, Nassau etc., and to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.
210. Dorothee von Loewenfeld, born 1892 in Hanover as Countess von Bismarck; daughter of Bismarck's second son Wilhelm Otto (1852–1901).
211. Hitler's ordinance is printed in R^GBl. 1939, I, p. 785. He had already introduced similar emblems to the Wehrmacht, police, fire-department, anti-aircraft units, and the SS Verfügungstruppe.
212. Published in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1939.
213. Adolf von Schell, born 1893 in Magdeburg; Plenipotentiary for Motor Vehicles and Deputy State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Transportation as of November 1, 1938; Major General in 1940; Lieutenant General in 1942; Commander of the Twenty-Fifth Panzer Division in 1943; retired 1944.
214. Due to the onset of war, this was in fact the last automobile exhibition to take place in the Third Reich.
215. On the subject of Hitler 'secret speeches' to workers see above, pp. 685 and 712.
216. DNB report, February 17, 1939.
217. R^GBl. 1939, I, pp. 263–265.
218. Karl Wahl, born 1892 in Aalen; Gauleiter (1928) and District President (1934) of Swabia; SS Gruppenführer 1935, SS Obergruppenführer 1944; imprisoned 1945–1948.
219. Fritz Wächtler, born 1891; teacher by profession; Gauleiter of the Bavarian Ostmark consisting of Upper Franconia and Upper Palatinate; succeeded Hans Schemm as leader of the NS teachers' association; Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture from 1935 to 1938. For details on Hans Schemm see above, 1935, note 61.
220. Josef Wagner, born 1899 in Algringen; teacher by profession; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Southern Palatinate; of Silesia from 1940 to 1945; murdered 1945 on Hitler's orders.
221. Martin Mutschmann, born 1879 in Hirschberg; industrialist by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Saxony.
222. Dr. Siegfried Uiberreither, born 1908; attorney by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Styria.
223. Karl Kaufmann, born 1900 in Krefeld; farmer by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Hamburg.
224. Dr. Otto Hellmuth, born 1896 in Marktbreit; dentist by profession; Gauleiter and District President of Würzburg (Gau Mainfranken); went underground after the war; arrested and sentenced to death in an American court martial; later pardoned.
225. Nevertheless, Hitler continued issuing decrees also during the war to remodel German cities. See also below, ordinances of July 12, 1940.
226. Hubert Klausner, born 1892; died February 12, 1939 in Vienna; retired Major; NSDAP Landesleiter in Austria before the Anschluss; thereafter Minister in the Seyss-Inquart Cabinet; Gauleiter of Carinthia. See

- above, pp. 1042 and 1122.
227. DNB report, February 18, 1939.
228. Hermann Burte (actual surname: Strübe), born 1879; National Socialist; Alemannic poet and painter; well-known for his two novels *Wiltfeber der ewige Deutsche* and *Katte*.
229. Josef Cerny (pen name: Stolzing), born 1869 in Vienna; National Socialist author.
230. DNB note, February 21, 1939.
231. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Franco quoted from DNB text, February 23, 1939.
232. Report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1939.
233. National Socialists interpreted the “black-red-gold” coalition in the following manner: The “black” International (consisting of the Catholic Church and the Center Party), the “red” International (constituted by Marxists, Social Democrats, and Communists), both allied with the “golden” International (based on banking circles, capitalists, and plutocrats). In the days of the Weimar Republic, this coalition was allegedly made up of Center Party, SPD, and German State Party (German Democratic Party).
234. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1939.
235. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 322.
236. Up to this point, the *Heldengedenktag* (Heroes’ Memorial Day) had been celebrated on a different Sunday. Before 1934, this national holiday had been entitled *Volkstrauertag* (Day of National Mourning).
237. See the German Ambassador’s report, February 25, 1939. Printed in *Deutsches Weisbuch*, 1939, II, no. 146, p. 95.
238. DNB report, February 28, 1939.
239. Ibid.
240. Sir Nevile Henderson, born 1882 in Sedgwick Park; died 1942 in London; British Ambassador in Berlin from 1937 to 1939; on home leave from October 18, 1938 to February 13, 1939; seriously ill with cancer. See above, May 11, 1937. On his diplomatic activities see Rudi Strauch, *Sir Nevile Henderson* (Bonn, 1959).
241. For an account of Henderson’s meeting with Hitler see DBrFP, IV, no. 163, p. 165. Printed in Strauch, p. 190.
242. Eugenio Pacelli, born 1876 in Rome as son of an Italian aristocrat; died 1958 in Castel Gandolfo; Nuncio in Munich in 1917; Nuncio in Berlin from 1920 to 1929; Cardinal in 1929; Cardinal State Secretary in 1930.
243. On March 5, 1939, Pope Pius XII received Hitler’s congratulations conveyed to him by the German Ambassador von Bergen. DNB report, March 6, 1939.
244. While Pope Pius XI had signed a concordat with Hitler, he nonetheless developed a certain dislike for the Third Reich in the following years. This disenchantment was the result of religious misgivings on the policies espoused by it, and in particular his displeasure with Rosenberg’s and Himmler’s activities directed against the established church. The encyclical entitled *Vigilanti cura* (with grave concern)—which the

- Pope published on this account on March 14, 1937—created great consternation in Germany. It reinforced the loyalty of Germany's Catholics and of the clergy in general. The encyclical had little impact on the politics of the Third Reich, however. Hitler did not concern himself with religious matters in general. Questions of power politics had primacy over any other issues and, for this reason, the Concordat binding the Reich and the Vatican was extremely important to him. Had the Vatican indeed sought to curtail Hitler's excesses in foreign policy effectively, it would have had to annul the Concordat and sever diplomatic ties to the Third Reich. Rome could not persuade itself to take this final, decisive step, in particular because of financial considerations.
245. Franz Josef II, Prince of Liechtenstein, born 1906 in Frauenthal, Styria; succeeded his great-uncle Franz de Paula as head of the principality in 1938; ruled until 1989.
 246. Report in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1939.
 247. DNB report, March 6, 1939.
 248. DNB text, March 5, 1939.
 249. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1939.
 250. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1939.
 251. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1939. The principals' telegram had the following content: "The force of the National Socialist Movement has restored German science to the well-springs of its knowledge. By means of this deed, the Movement applied itself once more for the greater good of the German Volk. Everyone active in education and research pledges himself and dedicates his efforts to you loyally, deeply grateful for the great blessing bestowed upon him in allowing him to partake in the pursuit of this mission."
 252. DNB report, March 10, 1939.
 253. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 12, 1939.
 254. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary. Prague announced the assignment of General Leo Prchala to the post of Minister of the Interior of the Carpatho-Ukrainian Government on March 6, 1939. Vološin refused to recognize this appointment.
 255. See above, February 12, 1939.
 256. Nikolaus Prucinsky, Slovak Finance Minister from 1939 to 1945.
 257. Karol Sidor, Slovak Minister-President from March 12 to March 14, 1939.
 258. The events were the following: The swastika flag is pronounced Reich flag along with the former official, black-white-red flag (1933); introduction of the sovereign symbol of the Party to the Reichswehr (1934); reintroduction of general conscription to Germany (1935); military occupation of the Rhineland (1936); Anschluss of Austria (1938).
 259. According to the information disseminated, Göring was to remain in San Remo until after Easter 1939, i.e. until April 9. Göring's presence there was to underline Germany's peaceful intent which would be

- crudely disrupted by the Czech “provocations.” Actually Göring was well aware of the situation and merely awaited Hitler’s summons. He made his timely appearance in Berlin on March 14, 1939.
260. DNB text, March 12, 1939.
261. In retaliation for the bombing of the German armored ship *Deutschland*, the Spanish harbor Almeria was fired upon by German naval units on May 31, 1937. See above, pp. 899 ff.
262. Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf, born 1852 in Penzing; died 1925 and interred at the Hietzinger cemetery in Vienna; Field Marshal in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Austrian Chief of Staff 1912–17.
263. For details on Keppler’s and Bürckel’s activities in the course of the Anschluss see above, March 11, 1938.
264. Cf. DNB notes, March 12 and March 13, 1939.
265. DNB text, March 13, 1939.
266. Cf. Photo report by Hoffmann in *Bild*, March 13, 1939.
267. For details on the meeting see above, February 12, 1938.
268. For details on Tiso’s meeting with Hitler on March 3, 1939 see DGFP, D, IV, no. 202, pp. 243 ff.
269. In all likelihood, Hitler is referring to his meeting with Tuka a month earlier. See above, February 12, 1939.
270. See above, pp. 1229 and 1265.
271. See below, March 15, 1939.
272. Cf. Strauch, p. 196, Bullock, pp. 487 ff. and DGFP, D, IV, no. 202, pp. 243 ff.
273. See above, pp. 1244 ff., speech of November 10, 1938 and p. 1212, Brauchitsch’s statements of October 1, 1938.
274. Numerous sources claim that Hácha and his retinue did not arrive until 10:30 p.m., possibly not until 10:40 p.m.; see for example Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen*, Vol. I (Bern, 1940), p. 51. However, photographs of the honor guard welcoming Hácha at the Anhalt train station were taken in daylight so that he must have arrived before 7:00 p.m.
275. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 437 ff. For minutes of Hácha’s meeting with Hitler see DGFP, D, IV, no. 228, pp. 263 ff. and IMT, 2798-PS.
276. See above, February 12, 1938.
277. In his own defense at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, Göring stated that he had never contemplated actually carrying out his threat of bombing Prague and that such a step had not been necessary. This threat was to expedite matters by intimidating the Czechs. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. IX, p. 371.
278. Dr. Theodor Morell, an obscure *Modearzt* (fashionable doctor) served as Hitler’s private physician from 1938 to 1945. See above, Introduction, p. 32, and note 75.
279. DGFP, D, IV, no. 229, p. 270.
280. Cf. Zoller, p. 84.
281. The SS leveled the Czech village Lidice, located near Prague, in retribution for the June 1942 assassination of SS Obergruppenführer

- Heydrich. He had been Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and Chief of the Security Police in the area. All male residents of the village older than sixteen years and several female residents were shot on site. The remaining women were incarcerated in the Ravensbrück concentration camp while the children were distributed to various other camps. See below, June 18, 1942.
282. DNB text, March 15, 1939.
283. Ibid.
284. Ibid.
285. The Second Panzer Division in Vienna was placed on alert at 3:00 p.m. on March 13, 1939. Cf. report in *Mainfränkische Zeitung*, March 25, 1939.
286. See above, p. 1265.
287. DNB text, March 15, 1939.
288. Erich Hoepfner, born 1886; hanged August 8, 1944; Commander of the First Light Division in 1938; Colonel General in 1941; Commander in Chief of the Fourth Panzer Division; dismissed from his post; arrested in connection with the July 20, 1944 attempt on Hitler's life.
289. On the significance of the so-called "Hitler weather" for the Third Reich, see above, 1935, note 50.
290. Wilhelm List, born 1880 in Oberkirch; Field Marshal in 1940. Johannes Blaskowitz, Infantry General; Commander in Chief of the Third Army Division at Dresden; Colonel General in 1940; committed suicide in a Nuremberg prison in 1946.
291. Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, born 1902; State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of the Interior.
292. Published in DGFP, D, IV, no. 246, pp. 283 ff. Original in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 485 ff.
293. Jan Sirovy, born 1888 in Trebitsch; two times Minister-President in 1938 (September–October and October–December); President of the Republic *ad interim* October 5–November 30, 1938; Minister of Defense December 1938–March 1939.
294. DNB text, March 16, 1939.
295. DNB text March 20, 1939.
296. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Tiso in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1939.
297. DNB text, March 16, 1939.
298. DNB report, March 17, 1939.
299. Ibid.
300. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 471.
301. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 549. Hitler's ordinance concerning the administrative position to be occupied by the Reich Protectorate was published on March 22, 1939 and read as follows:

Article I

(1) The Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia shall be the sole representative of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, and of the Reich Government in the Protectorate.

(2) He shall be directly responsible to the Führer and shall accept instructions from the Führer exclusively.

Article II

(1) The central agency responsible for the implementation of the Führer and Reich Chancellor's ordinance pertaining to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia shall be the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

(2) All administrative offices shall secure the central agency's approval of any and all measures concerning the Protectorate, in particular with regard to the promulgation of laws and the implementation of organizational measures.

Article III

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor reserves for himself final decision on all regulations pertaining to Article I.

(2) The Reich Ministry of the Interior issues all regulations pertaining to Article II.

Hitler appointed the Sudeten German Karl Hermann Frank as Deputy to the Reich Protector. This appointment revealed once again Hitler's reluctance to appoint natives to crucial positions in the newly acquired territories, as had been equally evident in the case of the Saar, Austria, Danzig, and the Memel territory.

Karl Hermann Frank, born 1898 in Karlsbad; publicly hanged 1945 by the Czechs in Prague; Deputy Gauleiter; State Secretary and Deputy Reich Protector in 1939; State Minister in 1943.

302. RGBL. 1939, II, p. 607.

303. The combine "Hermann-Göring-Werke" was created in the years 1938 and 1939, and consisted of various armament factories located in the Old Reich (e.g. Brunswick, Salzgitter, Wolfenbüttel) and Austria (e.g. Steyr).

304. These consultations led to the March 25, 1939 decree on the remodeling of the city of Linz on the Danube River. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 601.

305. See above, March 18, 1938.

306. DNB text, March 18, 1939.

307. See above, September 27, 1939.

308. See above, pp. 1187 and 1193, speech of September 26, 1938.

309. Cf. Schmidt, *ibid.*, p. 439.

310. Cf. *The Times*, March 16, 1939 and Chamberlain, pp. 405 ff.

311. Cf. Strauch, p. 202.

312. Sir Neville Chamberlain had been born in Birmingham on March 18, 1869. He held the speech the night before his seventieth birthday.

313. Chamberlain, pp. 417 ff. and *British Blue Book*, pp. 5 ff.

314. The United States had recalled its Ambassador in Berlin immediately after the November 1938 Pogrom.

315. DNB text, March 19, 1939.

316. See above, pp. 1043 f., March 11, 1938.

317. See Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 43.

318. *Ibid.*

319. See below, April 7, 1939.
320. See above, October 1, 1938.
321. See above, January 21, 1939.
322. For Ribbentrop's notes see *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 203, pp. 130 f.
323. Ribbentrop's choice of words indicates that he was simply reiterating Hitler's argumentation.
324. See below, March 26, 1939.
325. See above, November 24, 1939.
326. Article 99 of the Treaty of Versailles.
327. See above, pp. 666 ff., May 21, 1935.
328. See above, January 5, 1939.
329. DNB text, March 22, 1939.
330. In compliance with the Treaty of Versailles' stipulations, each of the three *Panzerschiffe* (armored ships) *Deutschland*, *Admiral Graf Spee*, and *Admiral Scheer* had a tonnage restricted to 10,000 tons. However, each had a higher number of guns than customary. Thus circumventing the restrictions imposed by the Treaty, they were also commonly known as "pocket battleships" (*Taschen-Panzerkreuzer*).
331. RGBl. 1939, II, pp. 608 f.
332. See above, March 13, 1938.
333. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 5599
334. Even in the case of a tiny, relatively unimportant region such as the Memel territory, Hitler was not willing to assign a native to a crucial position. Hence, the head of the Memel German Movement, Neumann, was merely assigned to the Reich German Gauleiter Koch as deputy.
335. For details on this "Ordnungsdienst" see above, 1939, note 55.
336. DNB text, March 23, 1939.
337. DNB text, March 24, 1939.
338. Grigore Gafencu, born 1892 in Bucharest; State Secretary to the Minister-President from 1930 to 1938; Rumanian Foreign Minister from 1939 to 1940; dismissed from the Diplomatic Corps by Antonescu in 1941; went into exile in Paris after World War II.
339. Verbatim account printed in RGBl. 1939, II, pp. 779 ff.
340. Originally this law had been issued in late 1936. See above, December 1, 1936. Both ordinances of March 25, 1939 concern the implementation of the law and are printed in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 709 ff.
341. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 989. In September 1919, a group of engineers, technicians, and temporary workers had organized themselves on a volunteer basis. They founded the "*Technische Nothilfe*" (Technical Emergency Relief Organization) which, in the event of strikes or other calamities, provided the manpower necessary to keep public services running. By the nature of its work, the organization became an indirect support for the government in place. While the association professed no political allegiances, it displayed strong right-wing preferences.
342. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 745.
343. Published in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1939.

344. Mussolini held this speech in the Rome Olympia Stadium.
345. Dr. Gerhard Wagner, born 1887; died March 25, 1939 in Munich; leader of the Reichsärzteschaft (Reich Physicians' Association).
346. Printed in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1939.
347. Printed in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 208, pp. 134 f.
348. Reference is made to Hitler's speech before the Reichstag in late February 1938, in which he declared: "The Polish nation respects the national conditions in this state, and this city and Germany both respect Polish rights." See above, p. 1032, February 20, 1938.
349. Ribbentrop's notes are printed in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 208, p. 133.
350. Hitler used this expression in his speech of April 1, 1939. See below.
351. Report in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1939.
352. DNB text, March 28, 1939.
353. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 30, 1939.
354. DNB report, March 30, 1939.
355. RGBL 1939, I, p. 761.
356. DNB notes, March 31, 1939. Captain Freiherr von Moreau had crashed on March 26, 1939. He was a veteran of the Condor Legion deployed in the Spanish Civil War. He was also a veteran pilot who had many record-holding flights to his credit, such as the cross-Atlantic flight from Berlin to New York and a flight linking Berlin and Tokyo. Hitler had a wreath placed at his funeral.
357. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 17, p. 36 and Chamberlain, p. 423. In a letter soon afterwards, Chamberlain made the following precise distinction: "What we are concerned with is not the boundaries of States but attacks on their independence. And it is we who will judge whether their independence is threatened or not." Cf. H[enry] N[orman] Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Volume I, *Rearmament Policy* (London, 1976), p. 702 (= *History of the Second World War*; United Kingdom Military Series, edited by J. R. M. Butler).
358. Reference is made to the negotiations conducted by the French and Polish governments.
359. See above, Introduction, p. 53. "For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
360. Report on the outburst by Admiral Canaris, who witnessed the scene, in Hans Bernd Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende* (Hamburg, 1947), Vol. II, p. 107.
361. Adolf von Trotha, born 1868 in Koblenz; Vice Admiral; Chief of Staff of the High-Seas Fleet in 1916; Chief of the Admiralty in 1919; placed in the reserve in 1920; Prussian Councillor of State in 1933.
362. DNB text, April 1, 1939.
363. Hitler should have referred to the Kaiser instead, since Tirpitz had merely assisted him in the implementation of his plans, and the credit for the Navy's build-up has to be accorded to William II.
364. Reference to Admiral Franz von Hipper, born 1863; died 1932; Raeder had served as Hipper's Chief of Staff during the First World War.

365. Its predecessors had been the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, and the *Bismarck*.
366. Numerous sources insist that Hitler issued the first instructions on “Case White” no earlier than April 3, 1939. Cf. Bullock, p. 499. This is incorrect, however, since Hitler was taking a vacation aboard the KdF ship *Robert Ley* from April 1 through April 4. Only Keitel’s correspondence was dated April 3, 1939.
367. IMT, 120-C.
368. Published in VB, No. 93, April 3, 1939.
369. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
370. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
371. See above, September 29, 1938 (Munich Agreement) and September 30, 1938 (Anglo-German Declaration).
372. According to Hitler, all states newly created by the Western Powers after 1918 were “Satellite States.” The states he generally referred to in such terms were Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania primarily.
373. On September 12, 1938, Hitler had still claimed that the Czechs were Germany’s “irreconcilable adversary.” See above, p. 1158.
374. Hitler is referring to Pierre Cot who, however, had made this statement many years earlier. See above, p. 1154, speech of September 12, 1938; and p. 1188, speech of September 26, 1938.
375. See above, pp. 513 and 758; see also below, December 18, 1940.
376. See below, April 15, 1939.
377. This would have been March 10 or March 11, 1939, i.e. precisely at the point at which Hitler gave orders to invade the remainder of Czechoslovakia. It seems far more likely that he had come up with this ‘idea’ of naming the Party Congress as quoted in the night of March 31 to April 1, 1939.
378. See below, April 26, 1942.
379. DNB report, April 3, 1939.
380. See above, March 21, 1939.
381. The meeting had the following result, according to the record of encounter published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. V, no. 16, pp. 47 ff.:

Record of Conversations

Fourth Meeting

At a meeting in the Secretary of State’s room on the evening of the 6th April the following confidential summary of the conclusions of the conversations was drawn up and approved by the Secretary of State and M. Beck. The text was checked and initialled as correct by the Polish Ambassador and Sir A. Cadogan on the following day.

Summary of Conclusions:

1. As a result of the conversations held in London on the 4th–6th April, 1939, between the Polish Foreign Minister on the one side and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the other, the Polish Government and His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom record the following conclusions:

I.

2. The Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have decided to place their collaboration on a permanent basis by the exchange of reciprocal assurances of assistance. They are accordingly prepared to enter into a formal agreement on the following basis:

(a) If Germany attacks Poland His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will at once come to the help of Poland.

(b) If Germany attempts to undermine the independence of Poland by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will support Poland in resistance to such attempts. If Germany then attacks Poland, the provisions of paragraph (a) above will apply. In the event of other action by Germany which clearly threatened Polish independence, and was of such a nature that the Polish Government considered it vital to resist it with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would at once come to the help of Poland.

(c) Reciprocally, Poland gives corresponding assurances to the United Kingdom.

(d) It is understood that the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will keep each other fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening the independence of either country.

3. As an earnest of their intention to enter into a formal Agreement to render assistance to Poland in the circumstances contemplated above, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have informed the Polish Government, and have stated publicly, that during the period required, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with its national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power.

4. The Polish Government, for their part, give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom a reciprocal undertaking to the same effect, which in the same way as the undertaking given by His Majesty's Government, is already in force and will remain in force during the period required for the conclusion of the formal agreement outlined in paragraph 2 above.

II.

5. The following points remain to be settled before the formal agreement can be concluded:

(a) His Majesty's Government desire that the formal agreement should provide that if the United Kingdom and France went to war with Germany to resist German aggression in Western Europe (the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark), Poland would come to their help. (M. Beck appreciated the vital importance of this question for the United Kingdom, and undertook that the Polish Government

would take it into serious consideration.)

(b) The obligations which His Majesty's Government have accepted towards Poland during the period necessary for the conclusion of the formal Agreement have also been accepted by France. It is understood that the obligations to be accepted by His Majesty's Government in the formal Agreement itself should also be accepted by France; the method of arranging this would be a matter for discussion with the French Government.

III.

6. His Majesty's Government wished it to be part of the formal Agreement that Poland should come to the help of Rumania if the latter were the State threatened. The Polish Government, while respecting to the full the obligation of mutual assistance which exist between Poland and Rumania, thought it premature to express a definite opinion as to the desirability of including the case of Rumania in the formal Agreement. They consider that they should treat the matter in the first instance direct with the Rumanian and Hungarian Governments. They will, in the meanwhile, immediately consult with His Majesty's Government should developments in relation to Rumania or Hungary render this desirable.

7. It is understood between the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government that the conclusions recorded above do not preclude either Government from making further agreements with other countries for the purpose of safeguarding their own independence or that of other States.

8. It is the intention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for their part

(a) To continue the exchanges of views which they have already initiated with the Rumanian Government, with the object of developing collaboration between the United Kingdom, Rumania and other Powers, for the purposes set forth above.

(b) To initiate exchanges of views for a similar purpose with the Governments of the other members of the Balkan Entente.

9. His Majesty's Government, while realizing the difficulties standing in the way of associating the Soviet Government with action such as is contemplated above, are further persuaded of the importance of maintaining the best possible relations with the Soviet Government, whose position in this matter could not be disregarded.

10. The Polish Government for their part declare that, should His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom assume further obligations in Eastern Europe, these obligations would in no way extend the obligations undertaken by Poland.

11. The Polish Government emphasize the importance, in the consideration of any attempt to develop collaboration, of taking into account the position of the Eastern Baltic States.

382. Published in the magazine *Kraft durch Freude*, summer 1939 edition.

383. Ghazi I, King of Iraq, born 1922; died April 4, 1939 of injuries sustained

- in a car crash.
384. DNB note, April 5, 1939.
385. *Mein Kampf*, p. 533.
386. See above, pp. 826 f., September 4, 1936.
387. Chamberlain, pp. 432 ff.
388. See also below, August 25, 1939.
389. A verbatim reproduction of the Agreement is published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 19, pp. 37 ff. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 459, p. 294. See also Moos, p. 69.
390. The reference “European power” is very remarkable. This cunning stipulation was to apply to Germany exclusively and to exclude the Soviet Union which was understood as *an Asian as well as* a European power! Hence Great Britain, surprisingly for non-experts, did not declare war on Russia as it invaded Poland in September 1939. On an inquiry placed before the House of Commons on October 19, 1939, the House declared that the Mutual Assistance Pact applied solely to Germany as a potential aggressor. Cf. *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, p. 295, note. As had been foreseeable, the ingenuity of the formulation—which managed to avoid an Anglo-Russian confrontation in favor of a possible future alliance—completely escaped Hitler’s mind. In his traditional speech at the Bürgerbräukeller, Hitler wondered why Great Britain had not declared war on the Soviet Union, too, “since Poland was divided approximately in half.” See below, November 8, 1939.
391. Reference to the Free City of Danzig.
392. See above, p. 1110.
393. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 31.
394. See above, p. 1261, December 6, 1938.
395. *Ibid.* See also Mussolini’s speech of March 3, 1939, published by *Agenzia Steffani*, March 26, 1939.
396. See above, pp. 939 f., conference of November 5, 1937.
397. Cf. Hitler’s talk with the Italian Ambassador in late March 1939 in Schmidt, p. 442.
398. DNB report, April 7, 1939. It was not until April 15, however, that Göring personally conveyed “the Führer’s congratulations on the successful resolution of the Albanian question” to Victor Emmanuel III at the Quirinal. Report in VB, No. 127, April 17, 1939.
399. Report in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1939.
Wilhelm Knochenhauer, born 1878 in Meiningen; died 1939 in Hamburg; Cavalry General; from 1935 on Commanding General of the Tenth Army and Commander of the Tenth Recruitment District Hamburg.
Conrad Albrecht, Commander in charge of the Group Command East from 1938 on; previously Chief of the Naval District Baltic Sea; his promotion to Rear Admiral was contingent upon the successful occupation of the Memel territory.
400. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 185, pp. 223 ff. Enclosures I and IV are not printed. For the full text cf. IMT, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 382 ff. See also below, June 22–24, and July 27, 1939, for additional directives.

401. This statement reveals Hitler's disdain for the military capabilities mounted by the "primitive" Bolsheviks.
402. Editor's note: The text of the Reich Defense Law is not included in the German Edition of this work or in the DGFP. Even the English Edition of the IMT documents contains only the German text of the law which has now been translated for this work.—The Reich Defense Law of September 4, 1938 was kept secret on Hitler's additional order of the same day (IMT, 2194-PS, pp. 326 f.) which canceled the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935. A decree of October 7, 1938 (IMT, 2194-PS, p. 318) with regard to "Protecting the Secrecy of the *RV-Gesetz (Reichsverteidigungsgesetz)*" stressed the following: "It shall continue to be forbidden to cite the Reich Defense Law in public or in the context of other laws made public, as well as any reference to the contents of the law in its entirety." On July 17, 1939, the secrecy ban was partially lifted. The main passages of the Reich Defense Law (IMT, 2194-PS, pp. 319 ff) read:

Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
R e i c h D e f e n s e L a w

September 4, 1938

The Reich Government has passed the following law which is hereby promulgated:

I. State of Defense

§ 1

- (1) As holder of the total state power, the Führer and Reich Chancellor can declare a "state of defense" ("*Verteidigungszustand*") for the Reich territory or parts thereof.
- (2) Should the political situation necessitate this, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall order a "mobilization." This mobilization can be limited to parts of the Reich or the Wehrmacht.

§ 2

- (1) Once an operations area is determined and a state of defense declared, the Commander in Chief of the Army [*Heer*] and the Commanders in Chief of the armies [*Armeen*] shall be authorized to exercise executive power in this operations area, without any additional order being issued.
- (2) The Commanders in Chief exercising executive power shall be able to issue legal regulations effective for the operations area, set up special courts, and issue directives to the authorities and offices responsible for the operations area, with the exception of the Supreme Reich Authorities, the Supreme Prussian Länder Authorities, and the Reich Leadership of the NSDAP. This authority shall have precedence over directives by other superior offices.
- (3) The Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht shall determine the size of the operations area.
- (4) Special regulations for the event of an unexpected threat to the Reich territory:

Should a part of the Reich territory suddenly be threatened militarily and should it be impossible to await special authorizations to ward off this danger, then the commanders of the threatened defense districts shall have the right to issue directives immediately necessary for the protection of the endangered area to all non-military offices within the area they command. The same rights shall belong to the commanding admirals of the Navy in the event of an unexpected threat to the coastal area and to the air defense commanders of the Gaus (*Luftgaubefehlshaber*) in the event of surprise attacks from the air, within the framework of their duties in the war. The execution of these directives shall take precedence over all other duties and directives by superior offices. The aforementioned commanders shall be able to transfer their authority to issue directives to subordinate troop leaders down to the senior officer at the location.

§ 3

(1) With the declaration of the state of defense, the “General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration,” appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor, shall take over the unified leadership of the non-military administration, with the exception of the economic administrations.

His subordinates shall be:

the Reich Minister of the Interior,

the Reich Minister of Justice,

the Reich Minister for Science and Education (*Erziehung und Volksbildung*)

the Reich Minister for Church Affairs

the Reich Office for Regional Planning (*Raumordnung*).

(2) The General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration must comply with the requests of the OKW that are of crucial significance to the Wehrmacht. Should it prove impossible to reconcile these requests with the concerns of the Reich Administration, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall decide.

(3) In concurrence with the OKW and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration shall be entitled, within his sphere of duties, to issue legal regulations which differ from existing laws.

§ 4

(1) With the declaration of the state of defense, the “General Plenipotentiary for the Economy,” appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor, shall take over the leadership of the economy, with the exception of the armament industry.

(2) It shall be the task of the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy to place all economic powers at the service of the defense of the Reich and to secure economically the life of the German Volk.

His subordinates shall be:

the Reich Minister of Economics,

the Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture,
the Reich Minister of Labor,
the Reich Chief Forester,
the Reichskommissar for Price Control.

He shall further be responsible for the financing of the Reich's defense within the framework of the Reich Ministry of Finance and the Reichsbank.

(3) The General Plenipotentiary for the Economy must comply with the requests of the OKW that are of crucial significance to the Wehrmacht and secure the economic basis for the output of the armament industry directly administered by the OKW in accordance with its requests. Should it prove impossible to reconcile these requests with the concerns of the economy, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall decide.

(4) In concurrence with the Wehrmacht High Command and the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration, the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy shall be able, within his sphere of duties, to issue legal regulations which differ from existing laws. [—]

§ 7

The Deputy of the Führer shall be responsible for the formation of the political will of the Volk. He shall make use of the NSDAP, its formations, and connected associations.

II. State of War

§ 8

(1) Should a fight be forced on the German Volk with the enemy abroad, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall declare a state of war.

(2) With the declaration of a state of war, the laws and regulations for war shall enter into force, without any additional order being issued. [—]

§ 12

The OKW shall assure the unity of the preparations for the beginning and course of the mobilization. Regarding the concrete nature of the preparations, the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy shall issue orders for their respective sphere. [—]

IV. Final Regulations

§ 15

Penalty Laws

Whoever acts, wilfully or negligently, in contradiction to the regulations of an ordinance based upon this law shall be punished by imprisonment and fine or one of these, insofar as the offense does not carry a heavier penalty in accordance with another regulation.

§ 16

Implementing and Supplementary Regulations

In concurrence with the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, the OKW shall issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this law.

§ 17

This law shall immediately enter into force.

Berchtesgaden, September 4, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

Field Marshal Göring

The Deputy of the Führer, Hess

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, Funk

The Reich Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop

The Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command, Keitel

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

403. August 22, 1864 Geneva Convention; 1899 The Hague Peace Conference; The Hague Conventional War Convention "laws and customs in ground battle;" the Hague Agreement on "bombardment by naval units in times of war;" and eight additional agreements signed on October 18, 1907. All of these agreements stipulate that a declaration of war must be issued before the onset of armed hostilities.
404. DNB report, April 12, 1939.—Friedrich Haselmayr, born 1879; member of the General Staff; worked with Epp after the First World War; left the Reichswehr in 1928 and joined Hitler's forces.
405. The accident took place on April 11, 1939 and resulted in fifteen deaths. Numerous men sustained injuries. Hitler's telegram is published in VB, No. 105, April 15, 1939.
406. See above, pp. 512, 622, and 856; statements to Ward Price.
407. On April 29, 1937, Hitler stressed the following in reference to his approach to plebiscites: "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!" See above, p. 890.
408. RBl. 1939, I, pp. 762 f.
409. According to Article 30 of the Reich Electoral Law of April 27, 1920, every 60,000 votes cast resulted in one delegate being assigned one seat.
410. These regulations concerning the Party were made public in VB, No. 105, April 15, 1939.
411. The order cross in question consisted of curved beams; the sovereign symbol was placed in the center, surrounded by a laurel wreath. Tailed beams emanated from each corner of the cross. It was awarded in several different categories: the bronze cross for ten years; the silver cross for fifteen years; the gold cross for twenty years of active service

with the NSDAP or with other National Socialist societies and associations. The cross was worn on a ribbon, three centimeters wide, the color of which varied according to the category awarded in: a brown strap indicated ten years' service; a blue one fifteen years; and a red one twenty-five years. The ribbon of the cross had two white stripes on either side of the strap and was attached to the band of medals displaying the bearer's distinctions. For female recipients, a special one and a half centimeter ribbon was designed to be worn around the neck. The band of medals women were awarded also featured a reduced colored sovereign symbol and laurel wreath.

412. For stipulations on the Cross of Spain, the honorary cross to be borne by survivors of soldiers killed in action in the Spanish Civil War, and the cross for soldiers who sustained injuries in battle in the years 1936 to 1939, see *RGBL*. 1939, I, pp. 1359 ff.

The cross of Spain was awarded in three categories; bronze, silver, and gold. It had eight points and a circular shield adorned with a swastika placed in its center.

A special version of the distinction, the Cross of Spain with two swords crossed beneath the insignia on the central shield, was awarded exclusively to volunteers of the Condor Legion, and to crew members of the Navy who had witnessed the air raid on Ibiza, the shelling of Almeria's harbor, and the bombing of Palma.

The ordinary Cross of Spain was bestowed upon civil volunteers, couriers, and other Wehrmacht personnel who had served in Spain for more than three months, but who had not been actively involved in the fighting.

The Cross of Spain with crossed swords was given out 1,126 times in gold; 8,304 times in silver; and 8,462 times in bronze. Twenty-eight persons received the Cross of Spain in gold, studded with diamonds. In addition, the Cross of Spain without swords was distributed 327 times in silver and 7,869 times in bronze. These figures indicate roughly how many members of the Wehrmacht were stationed in Spain during the three-year conflict. It appears that their numbers never exceeded 18,000 men. When considering this figure, it is important to bear in mind that turnover of troops was frequent in particular among the Luftwaffe units and that their total number at any time would have been considerably less than the above number.

Based upon the number of times the "Honorary Insignia to Survivors of German Fighters in Spain" was awarded, the death toll for Germans killed in combat was 315. This honorary insignia consisted of a miniature Cross of Spain without swords that was worn on a black band with a white-red-yellow-red rim.

The "Medal for German Volunteers who sustained injuries in the Spanish Fight for Freedom from 1936 to 1939" was awarded 182 times in black and only once in silver. The medal was nearly identical with the one awarded to soldiers injured in the First World War, the only difference being that a swastika balanced on an edge was placed above

the steel helmet in the medal's center. This distinction was to be awarded many times over in the course of the Second World War.

413. See above, February 18, 1937.
414. RGL. 1939, I, p. 777.
415. See above, March 24, 1939.
416. DNB report, April 13, 1939.
417. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. "At the time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition." See above, Introduction, p. 57.
418. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, born 1919 in Tehran, died 1980 in Cairo; assumed power in Iran on September 16, 1941 after his father's renunciation of the throne; took office in 1956 with US support; deposed in the Islamic revolution of 1979.
419. Report in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939. Germany's delegation consisted of Graf von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador to Moscow, and Lieutenant General Grauert. See below, August 25, 1939.
420. Cf. DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. V, no. 180, pp. 212 ff. Also published in DNB text, April 16, 1939.
421. Reference to Roosevelt's telegrams of September 26 and 27, 1938 on the topic of the Sudeten crisis. See above, pp. 1197 ff. and 1938, note 417.
422. Editor's note: The spelling of "Luxemburg" and "Roumania" in the original text was changed for reasons of uniformity with the other sources. Similarly standardized were some different spellings in DGFP, as for example in the case of Romania (spelled as Rumania, Romania, or Roumania).
423. See above, April 1, 1939.
424. DNB note, April 19, 1939.
425. DNB report, April 17, 1939.
426. Cf. DGFP, D, VI, no. 213.
427. The non-aggression pacts with Denmark on the one hand, and Estonia and Latvia on the other were signed on May 5 and on June 7, 1939 respectively. Verbatim reproduction in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, nos. 345–347, pp. 230–233. An official statement on May 19, 1939 revealed the reluctance by Sweden, Norway, and Finland to enter into non-aggression pacts with Germany. Verbatim reproduction *ibid.*, no. 344, p. 230. Later that year, Hitler distanced himself from the Finnish cause once open hostilities broke out between Moscow and Helsinki. Thus he avenged himself for the earlier disinterest by Finland. See below, December 7, 1939.
428. Report in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939.
429. DNB text, April 18, 1939.
430. See above, April 14, 1939.
431. Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk, the creator of modern Turkey, was by no means as great a friend of Germany as Hitler maintained. In one instance, he even burst out: "Never again war! And if war, then never again on the side of Germany!" Despite von Papen's endeavors, Turkey

- succeeded in concluding a mutual assistance pact with Great Britain in May 1939. The thrust of this agreement was plainly directed against German and Italian expansionist designs.
432. Published in VB, No. 109, April 19, 1939.
433. Turkey declared war on Germany on March 1, 1945.
434. Ewald von Massow, born 1869 in Belgard, Pomerania. As President of the “Nationalist Club 1919,” he had known Hitler since 1929 when Hitler had frequented the club then located at Bellevuestrasse. Massow was also president of the German-Bulgarian Association.
435. Published in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939.
436. Report on the meeting in Grigore Gafencu, *Les derniers jours de l'Europe* (Zurich, 1946), pp. 75 f. Foreign Ministry report published in DGFP, D, VI, pp. 290 ff.
437. Reference here is made primarily to the Germans of Transylvania, a region that had passed from Hungarian into Rumanian hands after the First World War. Contrary to Hitler's judgments expressed here, Rumania had to cede a large section of Transylvania to Hungary in accordance with the Second Viennese Sentence of 1940. This greatly antagonized not only Rumanians and Hungarians, but also the German population of Transylvania. Once more, Hitler revealed himself as a pure opportunist who took advantage of the situation in complete disregard of principles and promises given earlier. See below, August 30, 1940.
438. Gafencu's own account of his April 19 meeting with Hitler is a near verbatim reproduction of Hitler's April 28 speech before the Reichstag. It is equally possible that Gafencu possessed an extraordinary memory or he made use of the speech in recounting his conversation with Hitler, or that Hitler, who never greatly differentiated between remarks made privately or in public, in fact said exactly the same on both occasions. See below, April 28, 1939.
439. Ibid.
440. Hitler made the same mistakes the governments of Austria and Germany had made at the beginning of the First World War. He invaded Poland in 1939 just as Austria had invaded Serbia in 1914. Moreover, Hitler also disregarded all British warnings and thus, once more, the subsequent British declaration of war caught Germany's leadership by complete surprise. Despite earlier pledges to the contrary, Germany again violated Belgian neutrality just as it had done in 1914.
441. Whenever Hitler referred to “colonies” he had in mind the new areas he intended to conquer in Eastern Europe and Russia. He voiced claims to formerly German overseas colonies, e.g. in Africa, only if he wished to rattle the British. As early as in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had expressed his disdain for Imperial Germany's colonial politics: “For it is not in colonial conquest that we see the solution of this question. Rather we hold this solution to lie exclusively in the acquisition of new lands for settlement to augment the size of the mother country, to uphold the

innermost bonding between new settlers and their native land, and to secure, to the benefit of the entire country, those advantages that lie in the aggregate grandeur of the land." *Mein Kampf*, p. 741.

In an interview on August 5, 1934, Hitler declared: "I would not demand the life of a single German in order to gain any colony in the world. We know that the former German colonies in Africa are an expensive luxury for England." See above, p. 511.

442. The British had never claimed that a war against Germany would be an easy one; nevertheless, the British were certain they would prevail in the end.
443. Hitler is alluding to negotiations then underway on the question of a possible collective security pact between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union against Germany. The British allegedly had insisted that they could spare no more than two divisions for this effort. However, this restriction applied to peacetime conditions only, as soon was to become evident, not to mention their allies.
444. It was amply proved in the course of World War II that neither the "genius" of German engineers, technicians, and chemists, nor any mysterious great invention, could augment military potential.
445. William II had already proposed a division of the world into spheres of influence for Germany and Great Britain to King Edward VII and Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. In 1910, the heir to the German throne, Crown Prince William had approached the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on the same subject. The crown prince remarked the following on the proposal he presented to Grey: "In my opinion, it would be only reasonable if Germany and Great Britain, the two great Germanic powers, allied themselves; one being the leading military power on the Continent, the other reigning supreme on the High Seas. By the same token, we could also divide amongst ourselves the remainder of the world (if we should do this at all)." Cf. Karl Rosner, *Erinnerungen des Kronprinzen Wilhelm* (Stuttgart/Berlin, 1922), p. 116. It is worthy of note that Hitler not only advocated the same ideas from 1919 on, but also used similar wording.
446. Reports on the birthday festivities in VB, Nos. 111/112, April 21/22, 1939.
447. See above, pp. 391 f.
448. In the early years of World War II, Hitler's addresses before the officer cadets were also attended by the Untersturmführers of the Waffen SS. Because of their great numbers, Hitler desisted from personally accepting their oath of loyalty on the eve of his fiftieth birthday.
449. Published in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1939.
450. See above, p. 455.
451. Cf. Gafencu, p. 93.
452. DNB text, April 20, 1939.
453. Published in VB, No. 112, April 22, 1939.
454. DNB text, April 22, 1939.

455. Hitler's decree on this addition to the statutes of the "Order of Merit of the German Eagle" was made public in RGBl. 1939, I, p. 853. He had established the other award categories of the original order two years earlier. See above, May 1, 1937.
456. DNB report, April 22, 1939.
457. DNB report, April 26, 1939.
458. Report in VB, No. 117, April 27, 1939.
459. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1939.
460. The British Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, returned to Berlin on April 23, 1939. Cf. Strauch, p. 211. He supposedly was to inform the German Government of the reintroduction of general conscription to Great Britain. In all likelihood, Henderson's timely return was due to the anticipated importance of Hitler's speech before he Reichstag. On April 26, 1939, the French Ambassador Coulondre also returned to Berlin early. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
461. Published in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1939.
462. Here Hitler made it plain that he held the Reichstag to be the only legislative body in the Third Reich that could effectively oppose him and his reign. At the time, in view of his past successes, he remained convinced that the Reichstag would continue to unconditionally second his undertakings. As the war dragged on and victories became increasingly rare, he no longer could be certain of its support. See below, April 26, 1942 and 1943, Major Events in Summary.
463. In this speech, Hitler did his utmost to flatter the Czechs whom he had called the "irreconcilable adversary" of Germany barely a year earlier. See above, p. 1158, speech of September 12, 1938.
464. *Ibid.*, p. 1154.
465. The speech referred to actually took place two days earlier. *Ibid.*, pp. 1020 ff. Hitler repeatedly misquoted the date of this particular speech. *Ibid.*, p. 1174.
466. See above, 1938, note 7.
467. Hitler remained silent on the fact that he himself had encouraged this approach by the Hungarians and Slovaks. See above, October 14, 1938.
468. Reference is made to King Carol of Rumania who had called on Hitler privately after the Munich Agreement. See above, November 24, 1938.
469. Always when Hitler insisted that time would tell whether his decisions had been correct or not, these proved to be wrong. In November 1942, Hitler maintained: "Let us wait and see if it was a strategic mistake to go to Stalingrad!" See below, November 8, 1942. After the Allies' landing in the Normandy, Hitler challenged: "Let us wait and see if they manage to conquer France!" See below, July 4, 1944.
470. See above, pp. 1210 f., September 30, 1938.
471. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.
472. See above, 1938, note 495.
473. See below, November 8, 1940.
474. As usual, the figures cited by Hitler are greatly exaggerated. A great number of armed conflicts then were the result of the collapse of the

Tsarist Empire and of the Central Powers (consisting of Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, and Turkey). Armed conflicts in the period between 1918 and 1938 which were termed “wars” are enumerated below: the Polish-Russian War of 1920–21; the Greek-Turkish War from 1920 to 1922; the Chinese Civil War from 1922 to 1928; the war between Bolivia and Paraguay from 1932 to 1935; the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935–36; the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939; the Japanese-Chinese War of 1932 and its resurgence in 1937. Further military clashes took place at the following locations and dates: the Russo-Finnish border disputes of 1918; the Polish-Lithuanian border disputes of 1920; the struggle of the Red Army with the White Russian Army in 1920; the uprisings in Morocco led by Abdel Krim in 1923–26; the Corfu conflict of 1923; the Mossul conflict of 1924; the Austrian Social Democrats’ attempt at revolt in February 1934; and the revolt in Crete in 1935.

475. The American military interventions of which Hitler is speaking actually began much earlier, even before 1918. The victorious United States forced Mexico to cede Texas after the Mexican War of 1846–48. In the 1860s, Washington strongly opposed the imposition of Archduke Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States secured Cuba, the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico for itself in the Treaty of Paris. In 1903, the United States achieved the separation of Panama from Columbia. In 1912, it established a protectorate in Nicaragua. American troops did not begin withdrawing from this country until 1925. In 1915, the United States occupied Haiti and maintained occupation forces there until 1934. In 1916, a foray into the Dominican Republic ensued and American soldiers remained stationed there until 1924. Two renewed military interventions in Cuba, from 1906 to 1909 and from 1917 to 1919 respectively, brought American troops back to the island which had been occupied until 1902 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a general tendency to withdraw American troops from occupied territories. President Roosevelt initiated the “Good Neighbor” policy in 1933, promoting “Good Feeling” between all states on the American continent.
476. This claim on Hitler’s part is unfounded. Apparently, he summarily included all armed conflicts during these years in his calculations, irrespective of their cause. At the time, hostilities arose primarily because of the collapse of Tsarist Russia, its strained relations with the newly created neighbor states (e.g. Poland and Finland) and the unrest due to the agitation of the White Russian army. Furthermore, Hitler assumed that all conflicts in which communists played a part in one way or another were perpetrated by the Soviet Union. He greatly suspected Moscow’s hand in the Spanish Civil War, the Chinese Civil War, the government of Béla Khun in Hungary, the soviet government established in the city of Munich (*Räterepublik*), and in the case of the uprising in Saxony led by Max Hölz.

477. Allusion to Orson Welles' broadcast which had produced panic reactions in the American public as it portrayed the alleged landing of Martians in a highly realistic fashion. See above, 1938, note 495.
478. Reference to Roosevelt's telegrams of September 26/27, 1938 on the topic of the Sudeten crisis. See above, pp. 1197 f. and 1938, note 417.
479. Hitler was generally irritated by the manner in which the British media reported on developments in Germany. Whenever an Englishman called on him, Hitler felt compelled to voice his displeasure.
480. Reference to the recall of the American Ambassador in November 1938 and to the recall of the British and French Ambassadors in March 1939.
481. Reference to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and Abyssinia.
482. Editor's note: Italicized expressions were made in English in the original text.
483. Hitler had spoken of peace for many years, using the topic as a means to an end. In a 'secret speech' before members of the German press, he stated in November 10, 1938: "For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace." See above, p. 1243. Moreover, whenever he spoke in the Sudetenland in October 1938, Hitler maintained that initially he had stood prepared to proceed by the use of force.
484. The reason for war—namely, the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East—he had made unmistakably clear in *Mein Kampf*. See above, Introduction, p. 50.
485. See above, note 121.
486. In truth, the League of Nations resolved numerous international disputes and did so quite successfully. Hitler himself had been forced to grudgingly recognize this as the Saarland was returned to the Reich without any major disturbances. See above, March 1, 1935.
487. Hitler had little to boast about. The fact that no blood had yet been shed in any of his ventures was not of his doing. He would assuredly have had no qualms about either annexing Austria by force in March 1938 or starting a war against Czechoslovakia on October 2, 1938. See above, pp. 1039 f. and 1230. Only a few months after the April 28 speech before the Reichstag, he launched the war against Poland.
488. While this is undoubtedly an exaggeration, there is some truth to this. Nevertheless, Germany was accorded a peace treaty that allowed for the continued existence of the Reich. Once Hitler took possession of a territory conquered, he ruled arbitrarily and failed to grant the conquered people the benefit of re-establishing law and order by means of a peace treaty.
489. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 473, states that Hitler purposely failed to mention Poland here: ". . . he [Hitler] slyly left out Poland." However, this is erroneous. Hitler was not so unintelligent as to reveal his intentions by simply not including Poland in this list.
490. Reference is made to Egypt and Palestine where British troops were still stationed at the time.
491. See above, March 16, 1935 and May 21, 1935.

492. Germany had not been completely disarmed by the exigencies of the Treaty of Versailles. It still maintained an army of 100,000 men, a navy of 15,000 men, and a police force of several hundred thousand men well after 1919. Furthermore, it was Hitler who disarmed the countries vanquished in a far more thorough manner.
493. Savings in Germany were not “extorted” by the Allies, but rather fell victim to the inflation that sets in after every war.
494. The correct figure was nearly six thousand unemployed.
495. Hitler’s claim that he had “returned to the Reich the provinces robbed in 1919” had no foundation whatsoever since neither Austria nor the Sudetenland had belonged to the Reich proper in 1919. The Memel territory was the only region he did in truth “restore” to the Reich. The remaining “lost provinces” belonged to the Reich no more in April 1939 than they had twenty years earlier. These provinces were: West Prussia, Poznan, parts of Upper Silesia, Alsace-Lorraine, the area Eupen-Malmédy-Moresnet, and North Schleswig.
496. If things had gone in accordance to Hitler’s initial design, blood might well have been shed as early as October 1938, as revealed in several of his public speeches. See above, pp. 1215 ff. And as further events would prove, Hitler’s ventures would cause more than enough blood to be spilled in any event.
497. Verbatim content of the memorandum published in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1939.
498. Eisenstein’s film, which contained also passages of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, was not shown in the USSR from 1939 to 1941, because of the treaties with Germany.
499. DNB note, April 29, 1939.
500. On the establishment of National Socialist “exemplary enterprises” see above, April 30, 1937.
501. DNB report, May 1, 1939.
502. Report in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1939.
503. In a speech on January 25, 1936, Hitler referred to the people of Germany as the “stubborn German Volk.” See above, p. 744.
504. See below, campaign speech of May 1, 1939.
505. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1939.
506. Ibid.
507. See Mephisto’s lamentation in Goethe’s *Faust*:
“*Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft,
Lass nur in Blend- und Zauberwerken
Dich von dem Lügengeist bestärken,
So hab ich dich schon unbedingt!*”
(Reason and Knowledge only thou despise,
The highest strength in Man that lies!
Let but the Lying Spirit bind thee
With magic works and shows that blind thee,
And I shall have thee fast and sure!)

- Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, Scene IV (English quotation taken from the London, 1866 edition).
508. Parody of the Lauretanian litany chant: “*Du Sitz der Weisheit—Du vortreffliches Gefäß der Andacht*” (You seat of wisdom—you most excellent receptacle of piety).
509. DNB note, May 1, 1939.
510. RGL. 1939, I, p. 949. The medal consisted of a cross of beams, equal in length, white enamel, encased in gold. The sovereign symbol adorned its center. It was to be worn on a red band with a white border.
511. RGL. 1939, I, p. 861. The statutes issued on the same day stipulated that the medal was to be worn on a green-white-red band on the left chest. The medal’s face bore two male figures replete with swastika and sovereign symbol. On the rear, the medal bore the inscription: “In Commemoration of the Return of the Memel territory—March 22, 1939.” RGL. 1939, I, p. 863.
512. *Ibid.*, p. 862.
513. This description is easily misconstrued. Actually the bronze and square clasp was to be attached to the Sudeten medal. It bore a relief reproduction of the Prague fortress on its face. Once war with Poland had broken out, Hitler re-established the Iron Cross distinction, a similar clasp to be worn next to the World War I Iron Cross Second Class. See below, September 1, 1939.
514. DNB report, April 3, 1939.
515. Illustrated report on Hitler’s visit in Nuremberg printed in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1939.
516. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1939.
517. Cf. details on the relations between the Red Army and the Reichswehr in Edward Hallett Carr, *German-Soviet Relations between the two World Wars 1919–39* (Baltimore, 1951).
518. Cf. details on the negotiations between Berlin and Moscow, conducted with varying intensity, in the period April to August 1939 in DGFP, D, VI, nos. 215 ff., pp. 266 ff.
519. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 78.
520. IMT, 120-C, Appendix II.
521. Reports on Hitler’s tour (from May 14 until May 19/20, 1939) of the fortifications in the West in VB, Nos. 135–142, May 15–22, 1939.
522. The fortifications in question were located at Bildchen and Köpfchen. See above, October 9, 1938.
523. DNB text, May 18, 1939.
524. DNB text, May 19, 1939.
525. Printed in VB, No. 140, May 20, 1939.
526. DNB text, May 19, 1939.
527. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1939.
528. RGL. 1938, I, pp. 1923 ff. On December 16, 1938, Hitler had established the “Cross in Honor of the German Mother.” It was an oblong cross in blue enamel on a white band. The horizontal beam was slightly curved. Around the central white, round plaque a medal rim

- bore the inscription “*Der Deutschen Mutter*” (to the German mother). The award was distributed in three categories: bronze (four or five children), silver (six or seven children), gold (eight or more children).
529. Frau Goebbels also entertained Ciano during his visit. Ciano later recalled and wrote down her frank remarks on the nightly get-togethers with Hitler: “It is always Hitler who talks! He can be the Führer as much as he likes, but he always repeats himself and bores his guests.” Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.
530. Ibid., pp. 84 f. and DNB report, May 21, 1939.
531. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 426, pp. 561 ff. Original text in RGBL 1939, II, pp. 826 ff.
532. For details on the award see above, 1937, note 193 and April 20, 1939.
533. Published in VB, No. 143, May 23, 1939.
534. In celebration of the signing of the accord, Ciano presented Ribbentrop, in the name of King Victor Emmanuel, with the highest Italian order, the *Ordine dell’ Annunziata*. In theory, this made Ribbentrop a “cousin” of the Italian King. Göring was greatly put out that he did not receive a similar distinction. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 86.
535. See above, January 12, 1939.
536. DNB report, May 22, 1939.
537. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
538. See below, September 27, 1940.
539. See above, Mussolini’s speech of September 28, 1937.
540. See above, pp. 1044 f. (telephone conversation with Prince Philip of Hesse, March 11, 1938).
541. DNB report, May 23, 1939. Friedrich Graf von der Schulenburg had been Chief of Staff of the Guard Corps when war broke out in 1914, and served in the same capacity from 1916 to 1918 with the Army Group *Deutscher Kronprinz*. He joined Hitler’s forces as early as 1930.
542. See above, pp. 129 f.
543. As a favor to Hitler, Mackensen had withdrawn his honorary membership in the Stahlhelm and hence paved the ground for the dissolution of this association. In recognition of his effort, Hitler had awarded him the ancestral estate Prüssow, which was state property, on October 22, 1935. See above, p. 718.
544. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 433, pp. 574 ff. IMT, 079-L. The protocol is also printed in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 92 ff.
545. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 582. Final entry—December 23, 1943.
546. Since neither Mussolini nor Hitler were too keen on the August 4 date for the meeting, it was cancelled. There was only one other meeting later with Ciano in Berchtesgaden. See below, August 12 and August 13, 1939.
547. DNB report, May 24, 1939.
548. DNB text, May 30, 1939.
549. RGBL 1939, II, pp. 856 f.
550. See below, April 9, 1940.

551. DNB note, May 31, 1939.
552. Paul Prince of Yugoslavia, born 1893 in St. Petersburg; presided over the Regent's Advisory Council for King Peter II who was then still a minor; married to Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark, born 1903 at Tatoi Castle. Details on the official visit by Prince Paul in VB, Nos. 153 to 157, June 2 to 6, 1939.
553. This visit took place in January of 1938. See above, pp. 1001 f., January 15, 1938.
554. DNB report, June 1, 1939.
555. Published in VB, No. 153, June 2, 1939.
556. Hitler's cynicism is quite evident in this instance. Indeed, it took great nerve to trace the development of German-Yugoslav friendship back to the days of the First World War. After all, Serbia had been the war's first victim. On August 12, 1939, no solemn past assurances of friendship for the peoples of Yugoslavia would keep Hitler from advising Italy "to give Yugoslavia a *coup de grâce* as soon as possible." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 118.
557. For Hitler there was no such thing as "pacified frontiers drawn for all time." In 1941, he was to take advantage of the military situation and move the German-Yugoslav frontier considerably to the South. See below, April 13, 1941.
558. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1939.
559. DNB report, June 3, 1939.
560. He was to expound this revised view of world history during both Henderson's and Carl Jakob Burckhardt's visits. Professor Burckhardt served as the League of Nations' High Commissioner in Danzig.
561. Published in VB, June 5, 1939.
562. "Corporal" Hitler proved none the smarter than "Captain" Bethmann-Hollweg. Both provoked a British declaration of war in the same manner and in complete ignorance of the true power structures in the world. See below, September 3, 1939 and Vol. IV, Appendix.
563. DNB report, June 5, 1939.
564. German volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil War, known as the Condor Legion, had already arrived in Hamburg on May 31, 1939. They had returned to Germany aboard the KdF ships *Robert Ley*, *Wilhelm Gustloff*, *Stuttgart*, *Der Deutsche*, *Sierra Cordoba*, and *Hamburg*. The ships had proved themselves worthy of their actual mission, namely: the transport of troops. The pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spree* and the Sixth Torpedo Fleet entered the Hamburg port at the same time. Göring welcomed the men who then set up a tent city on the Döberitz maneuver field. There the volunteers listened to various speeches by Brauchitsch, Raeder, and Göring. On May 4, 1939, in a most timely fashion, a grotesque announcement was printed in the Reich Law Gazette (RGBl. 1939, I, p. 907): "Effective as of today, the following laws are no longer in force:
1. The law on the prevention of participation in the Spanish Civil War of February 18, 1937. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 241.

2. The law regulating the traffic between German and Spanish seaports of April 7, 1937. RGBl. 1937, II, p. 127.”
565. Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen, born 1895 in Barzdorf, Silesia; died 1945 in Ischl, Austria; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 1, 1938 on; Field Marshal in 1943. Richthofen’s predecessors in command of the Condor Legion were Generals Sperrle and Volkmann. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg; died 1953 in Munich; Field Marshal in 1940; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 6, 1936 to July 31, 1937. Hellmuth Volkmann, General der Flieger; later Commander of the Luftkriegsakademie; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 1, 1937 to October 31, 1938.
566. Published in VB, Nos. 158/159, June 7/8, 1939.
567. DNB report, June 6, 1939.
568. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 987 f. and 1923.
569. Verbatim reproduction of both pacts in RGBl. 1939, II, pp. 945 f. and 947 f.
570. DNB report, June 7, 1939.
571. DNB report, June 8, 1939. The “unexpected” nature of Hitler’s visit as emphasized by the news bureau was intended to allay his constant fear of attempts on his life.
572. Spain had acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact on March 27, 1939. Cf. RGBl. 1939, II, p. 741.
573. DNB report, June 12, 1939.
574. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1939.
575. Reports on Hitler’s visit to Vienna in VB, Nos. 162–164, June 11–13, 1939.
576. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1015 ff.
577. See above, January 30, 1939.
578. Reports in VB, No. 167, June 16, 1939.
579. Report in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1939. The units in question were the Artillery Unit “*Imker*” (bee-keeper), made up of both German and Spanish troops, and the Panzer Unit “*Drohne*” (drone). Both contingents were primarily responsible for training Spanish Nationalist soldiers in the handling of heavy artillery guns and of armored motor vehicles.
580. Report in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1939.
581. Ibid.
582. DNB note, June 20, 1939.
583. In a speech of October 30, 1936, Hitler had referred to Goebbels as his “shield bearer.” See above, p. 847.
584. DNB text, June 18, 1939.
585. Reports in VB, No. 171, June 20, 1939. The medal was awarded on both recipients’ eightieth birthday.—Dr. Heinrich Schrey, born 1859, nationalist author; Dr. Heinrich Sohnrey, born 1859 in Jühnde, Southern Hanover; author of stories about village life and essays on folklore. The

- dedication on the medal read: “*Dem Hüter und Pfleger eines gesunden Bauerntums*” (to the protector and preserver of a healthy peasantry).
586. Report in VB, No. 172, June 21, 1939. The 1940 Olympic Games that were to take place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen had to be cancelled because of the outbreak of World War II.
587. IMT, 120-C.
588. Ibid and DGFP, D, VI, p. 277, note 5. The bridges in question were railway and highway connections close to Dirschau (i.e. located in the area between Danzig and the Polish Corridor), which the Polish Army blew up, nevertheless, on September 1, 1939.
589. See below, July 27, 1939.
590. Published in Berber, pp. 200 ff.
591. Published in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1939.
592. DNB note, June 28, 1939. Count Constanzo Ciano, born 1876, died 1943, served as the first president of the Fascist Cabinet. He had made a name for himself as an Admiral in World War I.
593. DNB report, June 29, 1939. Knochenhauer had celebrated his fortieth service anniversary on April 10. On May 20, Knochenhauer had still accompanied Hitler on his inspection of the Waffen SS in Munsterlager.
594. DNB note, June 29, 1939.
595. Report in VB, No. 184, July 3, 1939.
596. Report in VB, No. 185, July 4, 1939.
597. Report in VB, No. 186, July 5, 1939.
598. Reports on the callers and their visits in VB, No. 187, July 6, 1939.
599. Georgi Kiosseivanov, born 1884; Bulgarian Minister-President from 1935 to 1939.
600. DNB report, July 6, 1939.
601. Report in VB, No. 189, July 8, 1939. The ‘Grenzmark’ flew Ribbentrop to Moscow for his historic visit on August 22, 1939.
601. DNB report, July 7, 1939. This unusual procedure was the consequence of Albrecht’s marriage in defiance of the officers’ code of conduct. Raeder had insisted on Albrecht’s immediate dismissal from the Navy. In such peripheral matters, admirals and generals apparently were able to influence and pressure Hitler to a certain extent.
603. From 1915 to 1918, Friedrich Wiedemann had been the adjutant in command of the Bavarian Infantry Regiment 16 (List) in the First Company of which Hitler had served in the First World War. Cf. Solleder, p. 370.
604. DNB text, July 10, 1939. As early as in his speech in Wilhelmshaven, Hitler had announced that the slogan for the next Party congress would be “Reich Party Congress of Peace.” See above, April 1, 1939.
605. DNB report, July 11, 1939.
606. Report on the “Day of German Art 1939” in VB, Nos. 196 to 198, July 15 to 17, 1939.
607. Dino Alfieri was appointed Italian Ambassador to Berlin in 1940.
608. Previously, the square had borne the name *Reichskanzlerplatz*.
609. Published in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1939.

610. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1939.
611. DNB text, July 18, 1939.
612. DNB report, July 21, 1939.
613. DNB reports, July 24, 1939.
614. DNB report, July 25, 1939.
615. Reports in VB, Nos. 207/208, July 26/27, 1939.
616. Report in VB, No. 209, July 28, 1939.
617. This instruction formed part of a secret directive received by the Commander in Chief of the Navy from the General Officer commanding the Naval Air Force on July 27, 1939; cf. DGFP, D, VI, p. 227, note 6; IMT, 30–C; and Bullock, p. 512. The precise date for “Day Y” had yet to be inserted by Hitler.
618. Published in VB, No. 211, July 30, 1939.
619. DNB report, July 30, 1939.
620. Report in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1939.
621. Report in VB, No. 214, August 2, 1939.
622. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1335 f.
623. DNB report, August 2, 1939.
624. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1365 f. On the front of the bronze medal in question a bunker was depicted above which there was a cross formed by a sword and a spade. The inscription on the back of the medal read: “Für Arbeit zum Schutze Deutschlands” (for labor in defense of Germany). The medal was worn on a brown band with a white rim. In October 1944, this distinction was bestowed upon various recipients once more. See below, October 18, 1944.
625. DNB report, August 3, 1939.
626. DNB report, August 4, 1939.
627. See above, September 2, 1938.
628. DNB report, August 10, 1939. Hitler was greatly taken by Lloyd George, although this “friendship” was not a mutual one as would become increasingly evident in the course of 1939. See above, pp. 826 f.
629. Protocol of Hitler’s conversation with Csáky in DGFP, D, VI, no. 784, pp. 1093 ff.
630. Hungary assented to the Anti-Comintern Pact on February 24, 1939. RGBL 1939, II, p. 749. On November 4, 1939, Hungary declared its withdrawal from the League of Nations. Teleki’s letters had not made a favorable impression on either Hitler or Mussolini. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 112.
631. DNB report, August 10, 1939.
632. Cf. *Nautisches Jahrbuch 1939* (Berlin, 1938), p. 112.
633. Initially Hitler had held the General Staff to resemble a “blood hound” ready to tear to pieces any adversary in sight. See above, November 5, 1937. In the course of the Second World War, however, Hitler complained bitterly that he constantly had to urge the generals to take action before any engagement. See below, September 24, 1941.
634. Report on the talk with Henderson, undated, cited in accord with a letter by Halder addressed to Dr. Helmut Krausnick, Institut für

- Zeitgeschichte, Munich. From the author's notes.
635. Cf. Weizsäcker, pp. 235 ff.
636. Printed in Strauch, p. 235.
637. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6151.
638. The May 31, 1941 draft of Goerdeler's "peace proposal" consisted of demands identical with those voiced by Hitler after the campaigns in Poland and France. On the issue of colonies, Goerdeler's demands were even greater than those Hitler had made. Cf. Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 569 ff.
639. Details on Dahlerus' undertakings in Birger Dahlerus, *The Last Attempt* (London, 1947). The following review of public opinion in Britain was given to Göring at the meeting arranged by Dahlerus:
1. This memorandum is intended to give, to the best of our knowledge, as true a picture of public opinion in Great Britain. Beyond this, however, it is also intended to show the effect and significance of this public opinion.
 2. From 1918 until recently, feeling in Great Britain was rather pro-German. The British people regarded the Germans as a people closely related to themselves in race and temperament. The guilt for the World War was attributed here far more to the ambition of the German Kaiser and his advisers, than to a hostile attitude of the two peoples to each other. The German people's magnificent efforts in their economic and political reconstruction were followed here with admiration and appreciation.
 3. It was, of course, regretted in this country that the parliamentary system in Germany failed in the task of securing a lasting orderly regime; but in general the British public is not prone, where other nations are concerned, to give preference to one form of government over another. Our people have learned from long political experience that different kinds of living conditions and political circumstances also demand different kinds of public institutions. In brief, the British people do not care about the form of government which another nation regards as proper. They maintain that a government is there to serve the people and that any government can remain in power only as long as it is, by and large, sure of the consent of its people.
 4. The British people have little understanding for abstract ideas, if anything they treat high-sounding rhetorical pronouncements with the deepest distrust. The Englishman is wont to judge a government by its actions and not by the principles it proclaims. The harsh, and, from the British point of view, arbitrary treatment which the Reich Government have meted out to others holding different political views has undoubtedly angered large sections of the British public. Here they have not overlooked that at times unusual problems or unusual difficulties might also require unusual methods.
 5. After the Munich Conference in September 1938, the majority of the British people stood behind the Government of Mr. Chamberlain, who

was credited with the initiative and success of the Conference. The British people were at that time convinced that the Führer of the German people was determined to solve international questions, not by force, but by negotiation. They believed that the declarations signed at Munich, which denounced war as a means of solving international questions, were sincere and, moreover, really meant what they said. The implacable speech in Saarbrücken [see above, speech of October 9, 1938, pp. 1221 ff.] did indeed deal this opinion a hard blow and subsequent events still further strengthened the opinion in this country that the Reich Government did, in fact, prefer the method of force to that of negotiation.

6. This feeling was further increased by the tone of the German press which sought to represent the Munich Conference as the result of British fear of German rearmament. When, furthermore, the German Government, in contrast to previous statements to the contrary, openly admitted that they had taken a decisive part in the Spanish Civil War, this further increased the doubts of the British public as to the sincerity of German assurances, and certain political groups in England did not hesitate to make capital out of this general feeling.

7. Public opinion in England never changes by leaps and bounds. Propaganda has little effect on the British people, except perhaps for certain districts in London and South Wales. Rational, moderate words will more readily receive a favorable hearing than flamboyant accusations; the Englishman regards cautious moderation as a sign of prudence and not of weakness. Only in this light can Lord Halifax's most recent speech be correctly understood as an objective assessment of the thoughtful but resolute mood of our people in this grave hour. It was the announcement of a carefully considered policy, based on the determination of our people to translate such policy into action.

8. At present public opinion in Great Britain is undoubtedly anti-German. The Englishman regards the great achievements of the German nation, not with anxiety or disfavor, but with the feeling that the arbitrary use of military power must be limited at some point. This feeling, and only this feeling, is the real root of the present anti-German attitude in England. The continual attacks in the German press upon British statesmen, who are represented as weaklings, are naturally not calculated to allay this feeling. On the contrary, such attacks strengthen the feeling of the British people that they must not give in to the pressure of the Axis Powers. Nothing expresses this feeling more clearly than the speed and extent of the response evoked amongst the British people by the call for voluntary military service. This feeling of the British people shows itself also in the decision of the Government to devote all its powers to rearmament. The striking progress of this rearmament leaves no doubt regarding the earnestness of this decision. If it is true that this concentration on rearmament places an unavoidable strain on the economic and private life of the Englishman which, for this quiet and comfort-loving people, is doubly disturbing, it should

not be concealed that this strain on the British people is causing a growing impatience, an impatience which expresses itself in the feeling that if war is already unavoidable then at least let it come soon.

9. It is understandable that a nation in this frame of mind regards the Danzig question as one of principle, even as a symbolic problem. An attack on Danzig or forcible incorporation of the Free City in the Greater German Reich would not be regarded here merely as a threat to the economic and political existence of Poland. Such an act would, in addition, be taken as obvious proof that the German Reich is determined to fulfil all its political desires by armed force.

10. An accompanying symptom of this anti-German feeling among the British people is a deep and growing mistrust of German assurances and declarations. A really concrete contribution by Germany to the cause of peace would, in the circumstances, be an invaluable contribution to the re-establishment of confidence between the two great nations. Chamberlain by his "appeasement" policy endeavored to secure peace because doubtless he visualized the horror and misery which would be the consequences of a general war. The aim of his policy is to solve international problems by free and open discussion. Discussion presumes, however, in advance, participants who are prepared to deliberate with one another and to abide by the result of their discussions.

11. Some people here think that the German Government perhaps have doubts as to the permanence of an agreement between the German Government and the Government of Mr. Chamberlain. It is said here sometimes that perhaps the Reich Chancellor fears that an agreement between him and Mr. Chamberlain would be upset by another British Government with more anti-German views.

12. If such a fear actually exists in Germany it is based on a fundamental misconception. The vast majority of the British people desire nothing more than a secure peace. Every step for the security of peace would in consequence meet amongst all classes of people with such resounding enthusiasm that it is not conceivable that any party in a Government could prefer a war policy to a peace policy.

13. In addition, the strength of the Government of Mr. Chamberlain is frequently underestimated. The Government parties have 430 of the 615 seats in the House of Commons and a majority of 246 votes against any other possible combination of parties. Of the Opposition parties, the Labour Party has 154 seats, Sir Archibald Sinclair's Liberal Party numbers 17, Lloyd George's Independent Liberals have in all four seats, which, by the way, are held by himself, his son, his daughter, and a close friend of the family.

14. In the political life of Great Britain the Opposition is there to oppose. It is the traditional point of view of every British Parliamentary Opposition that the Government are never right and that it would be best for the country if the Government were defeated. In order to fulfil this purpose the Opposition has full freedom to criticize. This right

publicly to discuss and criticize any measure of a Government does not appear to the British public as a parliamentary farce, but as an important security against unjust or careless misuse of the power of the Government.

15. Many of the comments which are made in the House of Commons and many speeches of politicians who do not belong to the Government must be regarded in this light. They are very often meant rather as demonstrations of political opposition than as serious criticisms of Government measures. On the other hand we do not doubt that many of those violent anti-British attacks in the German press which cause so much annoyance here are mainly intended for home consumption.

16. The weight and the importance of political statements depend naturally on the circumstances in which they are made. The most important circumstance to be which must be considered here is the legal freedom which permits of political demonstrations and comments. Otherwise, unfortunate and serious misunderstandings could arise. In judging political statements it must never be forgotten that an official propaganda machine, on the lines of the totalitarian States, does not exist in Great Britain. The most important sources of information and comments here are the daily press and wireless.

17. The British radio is, on principle, forbidden ever to take up a one-sided attitude to foreign affairs. In broadcasting news it must, in general, confine itself to giving facts and avoid comments. Comments are only permissible as quotations of statements made by persons who substantiate the statements with their full name. Statements for or against the policy of the British Government are equally permissible.

18. Further misunderstanding might arise abroad from the attitude of the British press. It must always be remembered that in Britain all newspapers are completely private concerns. A "Government press," in the sense as understood on the Continent, does not exist in Great Britain. This independence of the press in Britain is in no way a sign of weakness or lack of influence of British Governments. It is far more a proof of their strength and security. On all questions of domestic and foreign politics the press of this country is given the greatest possible freedom. Apart from the laws to protect State secrets and personal honor, as well as against incitement to violent breaches of the peace, no bounds are set to the press in Great Britain.

19. The British daily newspapers can be divided into two large groups: the provincial press, and the great newspapers which are distributed throughout the country. Each of these groups, as well as each single newspaper, has its own character, its own political opinion and its typical style of writing. This must be given due consideration if one wishes to judge correctly certain statements made in the British press. Nor is there any central organization whatsoever in Great Britain which could influence the news service or the attitude of the press, or wishes to do so. An occasional unanimity in British newspapers on certain questions is, therefore, never artificially created. It is, on the contrary,

- a true reflection of the real and genuine unanimity of the British people on this question.
Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 783, pp. 1088 ff.
640. See above, Introduction, pp. 88 ff.
641. For a report on the encounter see Carl Jakob Burckhardt's account of March 19, 1940 delivered to the League of Nations in Geneva. Printed in *Documents on International Affairs 1939-46*, Vol. I, p. 346.
642. Reports on the August 12 and 13, 1939 meeting of Hitler and Ciano in Schmidt, pp. 447 f.; DGFP, D, VII, no. 43, pp. 39 ff. and no. 47, pp. 53 ff.; and in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 119 f.
643. Ciano was not pleased by this remark since Mussolini was nearly sixty years old at the time. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 119.
644. See above, March 1, 1935 and September 30, 1938.
645. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 120.
646. Ciano returned to Berlin early and consulted with Hitler for several hours. See below, October 1, 1939.
647. DNB note, August 12, 1939.
648. Massimo Magistrati, Ciano's brother-in-law who had married his sister Maria; Italian diplomat serving first in Berlin, then in Bern and Bucharest.
649. Hans Georg von Mackensen, son of the Field Marshal; German Ambassador in Rome from 1938 to 1943.
650. DNB text, August 13, 1939.
651. DNB note, August 13, 1939. Ambassador Attolico protested against this report which perpetrated Italian and German agreement on the Danzig question. Cf. *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Series 8, Vol. XXVIII.
652. See above, March 31, 1939.
653. Examples of such pacts were the Stargard Agreement (1762), the Treaty of St. Petersburg (1762), the Tauroggen Convention (1812), the Reassurance Treaty (1887), the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), the Treaty of Rapallo (1922). For Russia's steps to the pact with Hitler see Louis Fischer, *Russia's Road from Peace to War* (New York, Evanston, and London, 1969) pp. 303 ff.
654. First partition of Poland on August 5, 1772. Parties involved: Austria, Prussia, Russia.
Second partition of Poland on January 4, 1793. Parties involved: Prussia and Russia.
Third partition of Poland on October 24, 1795. Parties involved: Austria, Prussia, and Russia.
655. Cf. Ribbentrop's August 14, 1939 telegram to Graf von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, DGFP, D, VII, no. 56, pp. 62 ff.
656. Cf. Franz Halder, *Kriegstagebuch 1939-42*; on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; also published in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., *Generaloberst Halders Kriegstagebuch*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1962-63). Excerpts (August 14, 1939 to September 3, 1939) in DGFP, D, VII, no. 551 ff. Quoted from the entry of August 14, 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 551 ff.
657. Reference to Chamberlain and Daladier.

658. Apparently Hitler was convinced that, in a worst case scenario, the Western Powers would react to the outbreak of a German-Polish war by imposing economic sanctions on Germany. This was based on his experiences in the case of the 1936 Italian conquest of Abyssinia, where highly vocal protest by the Western Powers had merely entailed trade restrictions,
659. DNB report, August 15, 1939.
660. For details on the history of the unit and on Hitler's military service in the First World War see Fridolin Solleder, *Vier Jahre Westfront* (Munich 1932).
661. See above, November 8, 1933.
662. Reports on the festivities at Munich and the Obersalzberg on the occasion of Hitler's "service anniversary" in VB, Nos. 229 and 230, August 17 and 18, 1939.
663. See above, p. 488.
664. Report on the events in Danzig in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1939. Illustrated reports in *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, August 31, 1939. Also illustrated reports in *Illustrierter Beobachter*, special edition, September 1939. Light and heavy artillery units moved to Danzig to reinforce SS troops already stationed there. In June 1939, the Wehrmacht High Command provided for another 168 officers to travel to Danzig in civilian clothes. On August 28, the *Schleswig-Holstein* liner docked at the Danzig shipyards thus adding to the fighting capacity of the troops in the Free City. Cf. DGFP, D, VI, nos. 547 and 670.
665. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
666. DGFP, D, VII, no. 132, pp. 142 f.
667. See above, statement of August 13, 1939 to Ciano ("late August"); and statement of April 1, 1939 on the *Scharnhorst* ("September 1").
668. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 142, pp. 156 f. The telegram was drawn up at 4:35 p.m. and sent out at 6:45 p.m. The German Ambassador in Moscow received it at 0:45 a.m. on August 21, 1939. He promptly forwarded the message to Molotov who, in turn, submitted it to Stalin.
669. Cf. Papen, p. 311. Papen is mistaken on the date.
670. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
671. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 159, p. 168. The telegram left Moscow at 7:45 p.m. and arrived in Germany at 9:45 p.m. Allegations that, in a secret address on August 19, 1939 Stalin had referred to the potential outcome of a war of attrition between Germany and the Western Powers as beneficial for the Soviet Union and had hence agreed to Hitler's proposals conveyed in the telegram, have been disproved. Cf. Eberhard Jäckel, "Über eine angebliche Rede Stalins vom 19. August 1939," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 6 (1959), pp. 380 ff.
672. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
673. See above, speech of March 15, 1932.
674. Precisely in which direction Hitler wished to maneuver his opponents he made brutally clear in an April 29, 1937 address to Kreisleiters at the Vogelsang fortress: "It is not as though I wanted to force my adversary

- to fight. After all, I do not say yes to the fight because I want to fight him, but because I want to destroy him. And now come to my aid, ingenuity, so that I may maneuver him into a corner so that he cannot strike me while I can strike straight at his heart!" Citation from record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, EW G7 207.
675. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 192, pp. 200 ff. Cf. IMT, 798-PS. Protocols exist of both of Hitler's speeches before the generals on August 22, 1939. American soldiers found the papers in Saalfelden, Tirol, at the end of the war (IMT, 798-PS and IMT, 1014-PS). Neither copy bore a signature and hence the defense at the Nuremberg War Criminal Trials questioned the authenticity of the documents. However, the court ruled that the papers could be submitted as evidence since it appeared beyond reasonable doubt that they were indeed genuine, since two further records confirmed them: The Chief of the High-Seas Fleet, Admiral Hermann Böhm, took notes at the meetings, cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XLI, pp. 16 ff. and Colonel General Halder recapitulated them in his War Diary, cf. DGFP, D, VII, pp. 557 ff. There is also another document which, however, the International Military Tribunal did not admit as evidence; its authenticity was compromised also by the unusual and vulgar language employed in the text (IMT, L-3). This last account is reproduced in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 314, (enclosure), pp. 258 ff. and had the following verbatim content:

Decision to attack Poland was arrived at in spring. Originally there was fear that because of the political constellation we would have to strike at the same time against England, Russia and Poland. This risk too we should have had to take. Göring had demonstrated to us that his Four-Year Plan is a failure and that we are at the end of our strength, if we do not achieve victory in a coming war.

Since the autumn of 1938, and since I have realized that Japan will not go with us unconditionally and that Mussolini is endangered by that nitwit of a King and the treacherous scoundrel of a Crown Prince, I decided to go with Stalin. After all there are only three great statesmen in the world, Stalin, I and Mussolini. Mussolini is the weakest, for he has been able to break the power neither of the crown nor of the Church. Stalin and I are the only ones who visualize the future. So in a few weeks hence I shall stretch out my hand to Stalin at the common German-Russian frontier and with him undertake to re-distribute the world.

Our strength lies in our quickness and in our brutality; Genghis Khan has sent millions of women and children into death knowingly and with a light heart. History sees in him only the great founder of States. As to what the weak Western European civilization asserts about me, that is of no account. I have given the command and I shall shoot everyone who utters one word of criticism, for the goal to be obtained in the war is not that of reaching certain lines but of physically demolishing the opponent. And so for the present only in the East I have put my death-head formations in place with the command

relentlessly and without compassion to send into death many women and children of Polish origin and language. Only thus we can gain the living space we need. Who after all is today speaking about the destruction of the Armenians?

Colonel General von Brauchitsch has promised me to bring the war against Poland to a close within a few weeks. Had he reported to me that he needs two years or even only one year, I should not have given the command to march and should have allied myself temporarily with England instead of Russia for we cannot conduct a long war. To be sure a new situation has arisen. I experienced those poor worms Daladier and Chamberlain in Munich. They will be too cowardly to attack. They won't go beyond a blockade. Against that we have our autarky and Russian raw materials.

Poland will be depopulated and settled with Germans. My pact with the Poles was merely conceived of as a gaining of time. As for the rest, gentlemen, the fate of Russia will be exactly the same as I am now going through with in the case of Poland. After Stalin's death—he is a very sick man—we will break the Soviet Union. Then there will begin the dawn of German rule of the earth.

The little States cannot scare me. After Kemal's death Turkey is governed by *'cretins'* and half idiots. Carol of Rumania is through and through the corrupt slave of his sexual instincts. The King of Belgium and the Nordic kings are soft jumping jacks who are dependent on the good digestions of their over-eating and tired peoples.

We shall have to take into the bargain the defection of Japan. I gave Japan a full year's time. The Emperor is a counterpart to the last Tsar—weak, cowardly, undecided. May he become a victim of the revolution. My going together with Japan never was popular. We shall continue to create disturbances in the Far East and in Arabia. Let us think as 'gentlemen' and let us see in these peoples at best lacquered half maniacs who are anxious to experience the whip.

The opportunity is as favorable as never before. I have but one worry, namely that Chamberlain or some other such pig of a fellow (*"Saukerl"*) will come at the last moment with proposals or with ratting (*"Umfall"*). He will fly down the stairs, even if I shall personally have to trample on his belly in the eyes of the photographers.

No, it is too late for this. The attack upon and the destruction of Poland begins Saturday early. I shall let a few companies in Polish uniforms attack in Upper Silesia or in the Protectorate. Whether the world believes it is quite indifferent (*"scheissegal"*). The world believes only in success.

For you, gentlemen, fame and honor are beginning as they have not since centuries. Be hard, without mercy, act more quickly and brutally than the others. The citizens of Western Europe must tremble with horror. That is the most human way of conducting a war. For it scares the others off.

The new method of conducting war corresponds to the new drawing

of the frontiers. A war extending from Reval, Lublin, Kaschau to the mouth of the Danube. The rest will be given to the Russians. Ribbentrop has orders to make every offer and to accept every demand. In the West I reserve myself the right to determine the strategically best line. Here one will be able to work with Protectorate regions, such as Holland, Belgium and French Lorraine.

And now, on to the enemy, in Warsaw we will celebrate our reunion.

Editor's note: The author of this work chose the first, above mentioned, documents found in Austria for reproduction. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 192, pp. 200 ff. and no. 193, pp. 203 f. They are more concise than either Böhm's notes or Halder's recollections. Halder's entry in his War Diary is reproduced below, note 678.

676. Translation according to other quotations in this work.

677. DGFP, D, VII, no. 193, pp. 203 f. See also IMT, 1014-PS and DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 314 (enclosure).

678. The verbatim content of Halder's entry in his War Diary is reproduced below:

22 August 1939. Führer Conference (Obersalzberg, 12:00)

Present: the Army Group and Army Commanders of the three Armed Forces.

I. *Exposition of the situation, and decision* (Morning)

1. *Development of the decision* to settle Eastern question: theoretically desirable to settle with West first, but as has become increasingly clear that Poland would fall on us from behind in any difficult situation the Eastern question must be disposed of before the problems in the West are tackled.

2. Germany's present position favorable for settlement of Eastern question. A number of factors are in our favor now which would not exist a few years hence.

(a) *Personal considerations:*

On our side: the personality of the Führer.—The personality of Mussolini as the sole champion of the imperial idea. Proved his strength in Abyssinian conflict. The personality of Franco, the champion of unified progressive leadership and of friendship for Germany in Spain.

On the enemy's side: there are no men of the necessary calibre to carry through, firmly and heroically, the very difficult decisions which must be taken, especially on the English side. The enemy has much to lose [whereas we] only stand to gain.

(b) *Political advantages:*

England is contained: in the *Mediterranean*, by tension with Italy; in the Far East, by tension with Japan; in the Near East, by tension with the Mohammedan peoples.

England did not win the last war. In entering a new war the Empire must reckon with changes in its structure.

France's position has also deteriorated. Decline in birth rate.

Balance of forces in *Balkans* since Albania, Yugoslavia tied down.

Rumania vulnerable and dependent on the tension between the other Powers. Turkey has no leadership.

“A showdown, which it would not be safe to put off for four to five years, had better take place now.

“Use of military weapons necessary, before final great showdown with West; test the [military] machine.

“A general settlement of accounts is not desirable, but rather disposing of specific issues; this is not only politically but also militarily the right way.”

(c) *Poland:*

Polish-German relations unbearable. Proposals concerning Danzig and communication through Corridor (Currency question) were turned down at England's instigation. Settlement of Polish tension must not be left to solution by third powers. Time for solution now ripe, therefore strike! Political risk involved cannot be avoided. No great decision without risk.

3) *Reasons leading to [this] decision*

Only two States (England and France) can feel any obligation to assist Poland, England primarily, France towed in England's wake.

England's rearmament has not yet altered the situation substantially in England's favor. Improvement of Navy will not be noticeable until 41/42; on land it will also take considerable time for effects to be felt; only air force improved. Today England's vulnerability in the air is still great. Therefore England desires armed conflict only in three to four years' time.

France's armament partially outdated, but not bad. Population dwindling, France cannot afford long war.

In the West there remain only two possibilities:

Blockade: Unpromising, as we can utilize Danube basin.

Attack in West:

(a) Attack on West Wall psychologically impossible, also militarily very difficult.

(b) Violation of neutral States. These countries really wish to remain neutral. Besides, England also needs their neutrality.

Therefore we expect that England and France will not violate neutrality. Military intervention therefore without prospects. “Long war” not attractive. Germany can be expected to do better in a long war now than in 1914.

Russia will never be so senseless as to fight for France and England.

Developments: Dismissal of Litvinov: sign of ending of policy of intervention; commercial treaty. Even before that, conversations, on Russia's initiative, on non-aggression pact, intervention in Russo-Japanese conflict, Baltic States.

Russians have informed [us] that they are prepared to conclude pact. Personal contact Stalin-Führer. “With this I have knocked the weapons out of the hands of these gentry (*Herrschaften*). Poland has been maneuvered into the position that we need for military success.”

Ultimate effect cannot yet be foreseen: new course! Stalin writes that he expects a great deal for both sides. Tremendous revolution in the whole European political situation.

II. *The Führer's demands on his military chiefs*

1) *Ruthless determination*: Anglo-French counter moves will come. We must stand fast. Build-up in the West will go forward (*W-Aufmarsch wird gefahren*). "Iron steadfastness of all in authority."

2) *Aim: Annihilation of Poland*—elimination of its vital forces. It is not a matter of gaining a specific line or a new frontier, but rather of the annihilation of an enemy, which must be constantly attempted by new ways.

3) *Solution*: Means immaterial. The victor is never called upon to vindicate his actions. We are not concerned with having justice on our side, but solely with victory.

4) *Execution*: Harsh and remorseless. Be steeled against all signs of compassion!

Speed: Faith in the German soldier, even if reverses occur!

Of paramount importance are the wedges [which must be driven] from south-east into the Vistula, and from the north to the Narev and Vistula. Promptness in meeting new situations; new means must be devised to deal with them quickly.

5) *New frontiers*: New Reich territory? Outlying protectorate territory. Military operations must not be affected by regard for future frontiers.

III. *Details*

1) Probable start: Saturday morning.

2) Slovakia (List): Instruct Barckhausen to strengthen Slovak frontier defense. Elements of 7th Air Force Division to Zipser-Neudorf. Slovak airmen to be grounded. We guarantee Slovakia against Hungarians taking action.

3) Dirschau: Attack at dawn on Y-day by dive-bomber groups on western end of bridge and town (barracks, power plant, etc.). Simultaneously freight train (*Bahnzug*) from Marienburg, followed by armored train and remainder of [group] Medem.

4) Gdynia: Air attack simultaneously with Dirschau; simultaneous blockade of harbor.

5) Operation of Army Reichenau. No comment.

6) Review of position of enemy in sector of Army Groups North. Published in DGFP, D, VII, pp. 557 ff.

679. Hitler repeatedly chose a Saturday to launch various of his undertakings: Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933; the reintroduction of general conscription on March 16, 1935; the military occupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936; and the invasion of Austria on March 12, 1938

680. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 191, p. 200.

681. Hoffmann was not only Hitler's court photographer, he also served as storyteller. Whenever he spoke with the Führer, he would address him simply as "Herr Hitler" just as he had in earlier days. Hoffmann enjoyed

great privileges in the Hitlerian household. For example, he was exempt from the sycophantic court ceremonial to which even men of such standing as Göring, Goebbels, and Hess were subjected. Hoffmann also was very frank in expressing his opinion to the Führer, a bluntness that greatly impressed Hitler.

682. Cf. *Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen*, No. 6, in *Münchener Illustrierte*, 48 (1954).
683. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 249: "His facial expression froze and he paled."
684. Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma, born 1867; died 1952 in a Tokyo prison.
685. See above, pp. 767 f., speech of March 7, 1936.
686. See above, pp. 689 f., speech of January 1, 1937.
687. Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of February 9 and March 3, 1918.
688. DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 137, p. 122
689. *Ibid.*, no. 140, p. 124.
690. English texts of the letters exchanged are taken from *Documents Concerning the Last Phase of the German-Polish Crisis* (New York, 1939), nos. 6 f., pp. 15 ff. (Hereafter referred to as the *German White Book*.) Cf. also DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, enclosure, pp. 215 f. and no. 201, pp. 216 ff.
- Initially, the August 22/23, 1939 correspondence between Hitler and Chamberlain was not published in the German media. By contrast, Hitler's later correspondence with Daladier was made public. See below, August 26/27, 1939. After the war had begun, Hitler's correspondence with Chamberlain was belatedly published in the *Deutsches Weissbuch*, II, of September 5, 1939. Every bookstore in the Reich carried this book and thus the contents of the letter were easily accessible to the general public. (See *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, nos. 454 to 456, pp. 290 to 292). The correspondence is also published in Berber, pp. 208 ff.
691. Chamberlain's injection proves that he himself paid no heed to this hypothesis. As a matter of fact, Great Britain had issued warnings to both Germany and Austria in 1914, cautioning them to consider the possible consequences a move against either Belgium or Serbia might entail.
692. Cf. Strauch, pp. 261 f.
693. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 251.
694. Werner Hewel, Legation Counselor; later Ambassador, functioned as intermediary between Hitler and Ribbentrop; chief of Ribbentrop's personal staff; presumed dead in 1945 Berlin.
695. Cf. Strauch, pp. 265 f.
696. See above, September 15 and September 22, 1938.
697. Cf. Henderson, p. 247.
698. Quoted according to DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, pp. 210 ff. German text published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 455, pp. 290 f. However, the latter rendition is incomplete as certain passages on Russia, Poland, and Great Britain were omitted in this particular account of the interview. Cf. also DBrFP, VII, no. 200, pp. 161 ff.

699. Reference to Sir Edmund William Ironside, Chief of the General Staff of Great Britain's Overseas Forces from 1939 to 1940; Field Marshal in 1940.
700. The claim that England had issued a "blank check" to Poland by entering into an alliance with Warsaw is completely unfounded. The guarantee prescribed mutual assistance only in the event of either armed aggression against Poland on the part of Germany, or an official German declaration of war on Poland. This agreement would not have applied had Poland initiated hostilities by attacking Danzig and Germany.
701. Hitler was obviously bluffing when he threatened to order general mobilization. Troops had been called up far in advance. By this time, the soldiers were already at their battle stations and stood ready to move against Poland. Hitler never issued a mobilization order, not even after the September 3, 1939 official declaration of war by Great Britain and France.
702. Reference to the January 5 conference in Berchtesgaden. See above, January 5, 1939.
703. In retrospect, it is quite ironic that Hitler's "long treaty" lasted barely two years. He himself terminated the agreement by launching his ill-fated campaign against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.
704. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 203.
705. See above, pp. 1028 f. and 1034.
706. Published in the DGFP, D, VII, no. 201, pp. 216 ff. The German original is published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 456, p. 292.
707. Editor's note: The sentence given in italics in DGFP was underlined in the German original. Cf. notice in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 232, p. 191.
708. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, pp. 214 f. The *Deutsches Weissbuch* does not contain the afternoon conversation between Hitler and Henderson.
This second talk moreover resembles a similar conversation between Napoleon I and the British Envoy Lord Withworth. They met in the Tuileries on March 13, 1803. Napoleon demanded of the diplomat: "So you are determined to go to war?—If you wish to take up weapons, then I shall do so, too. If you wish to do battle, I shall do battle, too. You may kill France, but you shall never intimidate her."
When the Envoy replied that he desired nothing of the kind, the French Emperor retorted: "Well, then you have to honor the contracts. Woe to him who does not honor contracts"! (Based on Lord Withworth's report to the British Foreign Secretary Lord Hawkesbury).
Napoleon's claim that he was innocent of breach of contract was not true. After all, it had been France that had defied the provisions of the Treaty of Amiens of 1801. In complete disregard of this accord, Napoleon had upset the status quo by subjugating Italy, violating Swiss neutrality, and exerting increasing pressure upon the German States. In May 1803, Great Britain demanded guarantees that France entertained

no further expansionist designs. After the expiration of a seven day ultimatum set by Prime Minister Addington, Great Britain declared war on France.

709. Reference to Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha, a Jew born 1895 in Mogador, Morocco; Minister of War from 1937 to 1940.
710. On this particular claim of Hitler's see above, Introduction, p. 34.
711. In full view of the public, Hitler had repeatedly stated his determination to launch a war as early as October 2, 1938. In a speech at Znam on October 26, 1938 he maintained: "We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another." See above, p. 1230. In a speech before the Reichstag on January 1939, he further detailed that preparations hereto dated back to the spring of 1938: "On May 28, I issued orders for the preparation of a military intervention against this state on October 2." See above, p. 1113 and January 30, 1939.
712. Hitler is alluding to his "peace proposals" of 1936. See above, March 7, 1936 and April 1, 1936.
713. Reference to the German Ambassador in London.
714. DNB text, August 23, 1939.
715. The *Würzburger Generalanzeiger's* correspondent reported the following news from Berlin: "The official communiqué on the cabinet meeting yesterday confirms that England intends to blindly fulfill all of its contractual obligations to Poland. [—] Instead of teaching Poland some common sense, England supports Polish cries for war and encourages Poland's delusions of grandeur. How it was possible that, given these circumstances, Chamberlain had the audacity to send the Führer a message remains one of the unresolved mysteries of the increasingly confused state of British politics."
716. Entry in Halder's War Diary, DGFP, D, VII, p. 559.
717. Cf. telegram of August 20, 1939 in *ibid.*, no. 154.
718. Arthur Greiser, born 1897 in Schroda in the Province of Posen (Poznan); hanged 1946 in Poznan; President of the Danzig Senate from 1934 to 1939; Gauleiter of the Reichsgau Wartheland (former Province of Poznan).
719. Cf. Ribbentrop's telegram of August 23, 1939, wired from Moscow at 8:05 p.m. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 205, p. 220.
720. Contents of the telegram published *ibid.*, no. 210, p. 223.
721. On Hitler's alliance policy see above, p. 414.
722. DNB report, August 24, 1939.
723. DGFP, D, VII, no. 228, pp. 245 ff. DNB text, August 24, 1939. Also published in RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 968 f.
724. DGFP, D, VII, no. 205, pp. 246 f.
725. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 253.
726. Even had there been a change in the composition of the Cabinet, this would not have changed the general direction of British policy.
727. As reported by Weizsäcker, p. 254.
728. *Ibid.*
729. Cf. *Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen*, No. 6, in *Münchener Illustrierte*,

- 48 (1954).
730. In 1812, angered by Caulaincourt's objective reporting from the Russian Court, Napoleon I had declared: "Tsar Alexander thinks he can make politics with polite phrases. He made a Russian out of Caulaincourt." Cf. Armand Caulaincourt, *Mit Napoleon in Russland* (Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1938), p. 29.
731. In *Mein Kampf*, p. 705, Hitler had stated: "Germany has only two potential allies in Europe in the near future: England and Italy." Further, Hitler maintained: "If one's goal were more land in Europe, this could only be accomplished, broadly speaking, at Russia's expense, meaning that the new Reich [of 1871] would once again join the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plough and daily bread for the nation. For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See also above, Introduction, p. 53.
732. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 266, pp. 281 ff. Italics according to the source (spacing out in the German original).
733. Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (original Jewish name: Meir Moisejevich Wallach), born 1876 in Bialystok; died 1951 in Moscow; People's Foreign Commissar from 1930 to 1939; replaced by Molotov on May 4, 1939.
734. Cf. report in Schmidt, p. 458. The texts of these statements are also published in the *British Blue Book*, nos. 64 f.
735. Cf. Henderson's August 25 report to Halifax which arrived in London at 7:00 p.m. Published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 68, p. 120.
736. Published in German in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 69, pp. 152 f. Quotation according to the translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 265, pp. 279 ff. Cf. the translation in the *German White Book*, no. 8, pp. 19 ff. See also below, August 27, 1939, note 784 and Dahlerus, pp. 65 ff.
737. Cf. Henderson's telegraphic report to Lord Halifax in the *British Blue Book*, no. 69, p. 123.
738. Schmidt, p. 459. Hitler's proposal for an alliance is published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 68, pp. 120 ff. It reflects the proposals put forth in the "six points" which Dahlerus took with him on his flight to London. See below, August 27, 1939.
739. Cf. Bullock, pp. 535 f.
740. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, p. 459. Attolico used this pretense only to calm Hitler. Since the German Ambassador in Rome did not convey the contents of Hitler's letter to Mussolini until 3:20 p.m., Attolico could not possibly have known of a reply at this hour.
741. No record of this particular encounter was found in the German archives. The rendition reproduced above is based upon the account given in Schmidt, pp. 460 f. and on the August 25 report Coulondre sent to the French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet, published in the *French Yellow Book*, no. 242. This report is also published in Walther Hofer, *Die Entfesselung des zweiten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt am Main/Hamburg, 1960), pp. 218 ff.

742. See above, p. 1204, September 28, 1938.
743. See above, October 14, 1933.
744. See above, April 6, 1939.
745. It is not entirely clear whether news of the imminent ratification of the treaty reached Hitler before or after Coulondre's visit. Schmidt, p. 459, maintained that Hitler indeed had got the message before. Thus it is likely that Hitler had prior word of the imminent ratification, but not of the accomplished fact, since the treaty was not ratified until 5:35 p.m. that day.
746. Henderson's wire containing his report on the conversation with Hitler and the friendship offer of the latter arrived in London at 7:00 p.m. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 69, p. 122. Hence the Anglo-Polish Assistance Pact had already been concluded as it was ratified earlier—at 5:35 p.m. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that Henderson informed his superiors of the result of his talk with Hitler by telephone immediately after emerging from the conference room at 3:00 p.m.
747. In jest, Hitler had referred to the English as "my Hugenbergers," implying that they had no more stamina than the former German Nationalist Legation Counselor Hugenberg. Hence, he argued, they deserved similar treatment. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
748. See above, p. 1232. Hitler had mocked Chamberlain in a rather transparent manner in this speech of November 6, 1938, calling him a bourgeois "umbrella carrying prototype."
749. Original Italian text published in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Series 8, Vol. XIII, no. 250. Editor's note: The official translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 271, pp. 285 f. ("If Poland attacks and her allies open a counter attack against Germany" etc.) has been changed according to the Italian Original.
750. Cf. Schmidt, p. 462.
751. Cf. Halder's War Diary, DGFP, D, VII, p. 561.
752. Evidence given by Keitel at the Nuremberg Trials on April 4, 1946, the attack was initially postponed to August 31, 1939. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, p. 578.
753. Testimony by Göring at the Nuremberg Trials on August 28, 1945. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 280.
754. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 277, p. 289.
755. Cf. also Bullock, p. 362.
756. See above, Introduction, p. 51 and *Mein Kampf*, p. 705.
757. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, p. 73: "A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false only then acts decently if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of any further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time." See above, Introduction, p. 28.
758. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 50 f.

759. DNB, August 26, 1939. These public announcements were initially aired and only subsequently printed—in part still in the evening edition of that Saturday's papers (August 26, 1939). The remainder was published the following Monday, August 28, 1939. The Reich Law Gazette carried an item entitled "Ordinance to secure vital supplies for the German Volk" on August 27, 1939. Its stipulations in the interest of a wartime economy concerned matters such as the rationing of coal consumption, soap, textiles, shoes, agrarian products, etc. in private households. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1495 ff.
760. This official statement omitted the fact that Hitler had cynically chosen the title "Reich Party Congress of Peace" for this particular rally. See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
761. The *Schleswig-Holstein* had been selected to play a crucial role in the launching of the attack on Poland (cf. operational order for the ship of the line *Schlewig Holstein* of August, 21, 1939 in IMT, 126–C). Initially, the smaller cruiser *Königsberg* had been chosen for the task of opening fire on Danzig, but given its restricted fire power and the might of the Polish fortifications, preference had been given to the *Schleswig-Holstein*. The armored ship had a tonnage of 13,200 tons, had been launched in 1906, and had not been scrapped after the First World War. It was equipped with four 28 cm cannons and fourteen 17 cm cannons and therefore had far greater firing power than the small *Königsberg*.
762. Italian original printed in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 301, pp. 258 f. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 301, pp. 309 f.
763. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 129.
764. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 307, pp. 313 f.
765. Cf. Mackensen's August 26 report to Ribbentrop printed in DGFP, D, VII, no. 320, pp. 324 ff.
766. Italian original in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 317, p. 276. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 317, p. 323.
767. At 2:50 p.m. on August 26, Coulondre was handed the text of the letter in Paris. French original in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 324, p. 276. English translation in the *German White Book*, no. 9, pp. 21 f. See also DGFP, D, VII, pp. 330 f. No records of the August 26, 1939 conversation between Hitler and Coulondre have been found.
768. DGFP, D, VII, no. 324, pp. 330 f. Original text in the *French Yellow Book*, no. 253. Initially, the correspondence between Hitler and Daladier had been intended to remain confidential. On August 28, 1939, the German News Bureau published its contents nevertheless with the following explanation: "In a statement given before members of the French press in Paris on Sunday evening [August 27, 1939], the French Premier Daladier spoke in reference to past correspondence with the Führer. In presenting his arguments, Daladier briefly referred to the contents of said correspondence and drew conclusions from them, however, without presenting the letters themselves to the media. In order to provide the public with more complete information, the DNB has decided to publish the verbatim contents of the letters

- exchanged.—Author's note: Daladier had merely stated that Hitler had rejected his appeal. See also *Neue Basler Zeitung*, August 28, 1939.
769. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 326, p. 332.
770. For reproduction of Roosevelt's telegrams to Hitler and the Polish State President Moscicki cf. *British Blue Book*, nos. 124, 125 and 127, pp. 182 ff. Roosevelt also addressed a note to King Victor Emmanuel. *Ibid.*, no. 122, pp. 181 f.
771. Three years later, Hitler used the same term to belittle Roosevelt. See below, November 8, 1942.
772. Cf. Weizsäcker's memorandum in DGFP, D, VII, no. 328, p. 334.
773. Cf. reports on these assurances of neutrality as conveyed by Germany's missions abroad in DGFP, D, VII, no. 304, p. 312 (Switzerland); no. 313, pp. 319 f. (Netherlands); no. 315, p. 321 (Belgium); no. 321, pp. 326 f. (Luxembourg); and no. 333, pp. 339 f. (Memorandum by the Legal Department).
774. DNB text, August 27, 1939.
775. The telegram was sent at 12:10 a.m. on August 27, 1939. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 341, pp. 346 f.
776. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 58 ff.
777. *Ibid.*
778. See below, Hitler's letter of August 27, 1939 to the French Premier.
779. Reference to the conversation between Hitler and Henderson. See above, August 25, 1939.
780. Editor's note: Hitler's phrases—partly in German in Dahlerus' English Edition—were completed both in German and in English in brackets.
781. On Hitler's obsession with numbers, his need to impress his listeners by reiterating technical details memorized in advance, see above, Introduction, p. 19.
782. This rhetorical question is a parody of Jesus Christ's challenge: "Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" John 8, 46.
783. Already evident in the manner Hitler dealt with Czechoslovakia was his penchant for determining the fates of lands and peoples at a whim, as described by Dahlerus here. Cf. Schmidt, p. 430.
784. Editor's note: In comparison with his report, Dahlerus, pp. 65 ff., printed several translations of the conversation Hitler-Henderson as published in the *British Blue Book*, nos. 68, 74, and 98. (See also above, August 25, 1939 and notes 735 f.)
785. This particular item was not contained in the proposal Henderson received later.
786. The text is cited in accordance with the English rendition of the letter published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 354, pp. 356 ff. Cf. also the translation in the *German White Book*, no. 10, pp. 22 ff. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 461, pp. 297 f. The contents of two additional versions (DNB text, August 28, 1939 and the reproduction based on Ribbentrop's carbon copy in DGFP, D, VII, no. 354) deviate slightly from the *Deutsches Weissbuch's* account, but not to any significant

- extent. Initially, the letter was to be taken to Paris by special plane, but at 4:00 p.m. it was transmitted by wire. Hitler apparently was convinced Daladier would be duly impressed receiving correspondence from “an old front-line soldier to another.” In 1938 Hitler had told Mussolini: “I get on quite well with Daladier. He was a front-line soldier, too, just as we were, and hence you can talk sensibly with him.” Schmidt, p. 422.
787. Report in DGFP, D, VII, no. 376, pp. 374 f.
788. The *Neue Basler Zeitung* reported that loudspeakers for the Reichstag address had been mounted on August 27. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, No. 210, August 29, 1939.
789. A popular joke at the time claimed that, after obediently listening to Hitler’s oratorical outpourings, the only real task facing the 900 Reichstag deputies was to sing the “Deutschlandlied” (*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*) and the “Horst-Wessel-Lied” (*Die Fahne hoch*) together with Hitler.
790. On Hitler’s persistent unease concerning the potential powers of the Reichstag see above, January 30, 1939 and April 26, 1942.
791. DNB text, August 28, 1939.
792. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 132.
793. Cf. excerpts from Halder’s War Diary in DGFP, D, VII, p. 563.
794. The “several Party notables” mentioned by Halder were also deputies of the Reichstag.
795. Italian original in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, D, VII, no. 350, p. 295. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 350, pp. 353 f.
796. “Here I wish, above all, to thank Italy which lent us support during this entire time. You will understand that we do not wish to appeal to a foreign power for assistance in this battle. This is our task and we shall carry it out ourselves.” See below, speech of September 1, 1939.
797. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1553 f. DNB report, August 28, 1939.
798. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1938 to 1946.
799. Churchill noted the following on the topic at a speech at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester on May 9, 1938:
Never before has the choice of blessings or curses been so plainly, vividly, even brutally offered to mankind. The choice is open. The dreadful balance trembles. It may be that our Island and all the Commonwealths it has gathered around it may if we are worthy play an important, perhaps even a decisive part in turning the scales of human fortune from bad to good, from fear to confidence, from miseries and crime immeasurable to blessings and gains abounding.
We make ourselves the servants of this cause, but it is no use espousing a cause without having also a method and a plan by which that cause may be made to win. I would not affront you with generalities. There must be a vision. There must be a plan, and there must be action following upon it.
We express our immediate plan and policy in a single sentence: “Arm and stand by the Covenant.” In this alone lies the assurance of safety,

the defense of freedom, and the hope of peace. [—]

This is no question of resisting Dictators because they are Dictators but only if they attack other people. Have we not an ideology—if we must use this ugly word—of our own in freedom, in a liberal constitution, in democratic and Parliamentary government, in Magna Carta and the Petition of Right? Ought we not to be ready to make as many sacrifices and exertions for our own broad central theme and cause as the fanatics of either of these new creeds? Ought we not to produce in defense of Right, champions as bold, missionaries as eager, and if need be, swords as sharp as are at the disposal of the leaders of totalitarian states?

Finally, there must be a moral basis for British foreign policy. People in this country, after all we have gone through, do not mean to be drawn into another terrible war in the name of old-world alliances or diplomatic combinations. If deep causes of division are to be removed from our midst, if all our energies are to be concentrated upon the essential task of increasing our strength and security, it can only be because of lofty and unselfish ideals which command the allegiance of all classes here at home, which rouse their echoes in the breasts even of the Dictator-ridden peoples themselves, and stir the pulses of the English-speaking race in every quarter of the globe. [—]

If we could, therefore, get as far as this, believe me the war danger would be removed from use perhaps for our lifetime. And across the Atlantic Ocean the United States would signal her encouragement and sympathy. I shall be told, "But this is the encirclement of Germany," I say, No, this is the encirclement of an aggressor." Nations who are bound by the Covenant can never, however powerful they may be, menace the peace and independence of any other state. That is the essence of the conditions which bring them together. To form a war combination against a single state would be a crime. To form a combination for mutual defense against a probable aggressor is not only no crime, but the highest moral duty and virtue. [—] Undoubtedly our Government could make an agreement with Germany. All they have to do is to give her back her former colonies and such others as she may desire; to muzzle the British press and platform by a law of censorship, and to give Herr Hitler a free hand to spread the Nazi system and dominance far and wide through Central Europe. [—]

It is no small or local cause we plead tonight. We must march in the good company of nations and we march under the standards of Law, of Justice and of Freedom. We must gather together round the joint strength of Britain and France and under the authority of the League all countries prepared to resist, and if possible to prevent acts of violent aggression. There is the path to safety. There are the only guarantees of Freedom. There, on the rock of the Covenant of the League of Nations alone, can we build high and enduring the temple and the towers of Peace.

Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 5955 ff.

800. This ambition is evident in several of Churchill's public statements, as well as in those of Henderson. For instance, Henderson stated the following in a September 3, 1939 conversation with Davignon, the Belgian Ambassador to Berlin: "Do you believe my country would fight if public opinion were not convinced that, up to the very last minute, everything possible had been undertaken to keep this horrid trial from descending upon the world? For the trial that awaits us will be a terrible one and, above all, it will be a long one!" Cf. Jacques Vicomte Davignon, *Berlin 1936–40. Souvenirs d'une mission* (Paris-Brussels, 1951). In an address to the City Carlton Club in London, Churchill stated on June 28, 1939:
- We are an old nation. It is nearly a thousand years since we were conquered. We have built up our state and way of life slowly and gradually, across the centuries. Therefore we can afford to make exertions for peace which would not be easy in a race less sure of itself and of its duty. There are two supreme obligations which rest upon a British government. They are of equal importance. One is to strive to prevent war, and the other is to be ready if war should come.
- Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6142.
801. Dahlerus placed two telephone calls from the Foreign Office to Göring who then related Hitler's consent. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 74 ff.
802. Ibid.
803. At one point, Göring confessed to Schacht: "I often resolve to tell him something, but then, when I stand in front of him, I lose heart." Cf. Hjalmar Schacht, *Abrechnung mit Hitler* (Hamburg, 1948), p. 32.
804. Published in VB, No. 214, August 29, 1939. A broadcast commemoration speech by Brauchitsch in honor of Tannenberg had been scheduled for the evening of August 26, 1939, but then had cancelled suddenly.
805. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1531 ff. on August 29, 1939.
806. In the days of the Third Reich, ingenious euphemisms, the so-called *Sprachschöpfungen* (linguistic innovations or "coining of phrases"), were employed to veil unpleasant realities. (See also below, note 1034.) For example, *besonderer Einsatz* (special deployment) stood for war; *Versehrte* (disabled) referred to soldiers wounded in battle; *Absetzbewegungen* (moves for disengagement) and *Frontverkürzungen* (reductions in the length of the front) signaled an ignominious retreat. The terms often included a complete distortion of sense: *Verteidigung* (defense) meant attack, etc. Hitler's *Sprachschöpfungen* inspired above all George Orwell's "Newspeak" in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), but also many science fiction authors such as Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953); the method itself survives until today, as many new technical terms give proof.
807. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1535 ff. on August 30, 1939.
808. Verbatim reproduction in DGFP, D, VII, no. 384 and enclosure, pp. 381 ff. See also *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 463, pp. 299 f. and Berber, pp. 218 ff.

809. See above, Chamberlain's letter of August 22, 1939.
810. This conversation between Hitler and Henderson is cited in accordance to a memorandum drawn up by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VII, no. 384, pp. 381 ff. Cf. Strauch, p. 287.
811. As is evident from the conversation above, Hitler was firmly convinced that the British would respond to the situation in Poland in the same manner they had reacted to the developments concerning Czechoslovakia a year earlier. Either Great Britain would once more acquiesce to a cession of the territories claimed by Germany, or London would completely fail to respond to an armed German aggression against Poland. The reality was a different one, however. In the earlier case, there had been no contractual obligation for Great Britain to intervene on behalf of Czechoslovakia. In 1939, by contrast, a mutual assistance pact between Britain and Poland had been drawn up on April 6, 1939 and had been ratified on August 25, 1939 with the obvious intent to serve as an unequivocal warning to Germany.
812. The "others" Hitler was referring to in this instance apparently were the Italians, Japanese, and Russians.
813. Cf. Schmidt, p. 464.
814. Verbatim account in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, August 29, 1939. The German media published a shorter version.
815. Cf. Otto Meissner, *Staatssekretär unter Ebert-Hindenburg-Hitler* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 502 f.
816. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, nos. 351 (pp. 354 f.); 376–378 (pp. 374 ff.); 418 (p. 411).
817. Herbert von Dirksen, born 1882 in Berlin; German Ambassador to Moscow from 1928 to 1933; German Ambassador to Tokyo from 1933 to 1938; German Ambassador to London from 1938 to 1939. Cf. Herbert von Dirksen, *Moskau-Tokio-London, Erinnerungen und Betrachtungen zu 20 Jahren deutscher Aussenpolitik 1919–39* (Stuttgart, 1949).
818. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, nos. 58 (p. 65); 115 (pp. 123 f.); 130 (pp. 138 ff.).
819. Hitler was fond of ridiculing Germany's diplomats, their "miserable reports" and "lacking sense of reality". Cf. Picker, pp. 60 f., 97 f. and 106.
820. Dahlerus, p. 84.
821. Weizsäcker, p. 258.
822. Before his Commanders in Chief, Hitler had already announced the further development with this notable sentence. See above, August 14, 1939.
823. For Hitler's quote see above, note 674.
824. See above, September 30, 1938. At the time, Hitler had given the Czechs a 48-hour ultimatum with an initial expiration date of September 28 which was subsequently extended to September 30, 1938. He let the next day pass without taking any action. It was his intention to strike at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of October 2 and to assault Czechoslovakia from three sides.
His plans for the attack on Poland were similar. Halder noted in his War

Diary: "Poles directed by English to go to Berlin, as required by the Germans. Führer wants them to come tomorrow. Basic principles: Raise a barrage of demographic and democratic demands. Plebiscite within six months, under international supervision. Those opting for Germany must remain German citizens; the same holds good for the Poles. Poles will not want Germans in their territory. 30.8.: Poles in Berlin. 31.8.: Blow up (*Zerplatzen*). 1.9.: Use of force (*Gewaltanwendung*)." Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 567.

825. The *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, asserts that the visit took place at 6:45 p.m., while Henderson maintains he called on Hitler at 7:45 p.m. Shirer states that Henderson arrived at the Chancellery at 7:15 p.m. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 577.
826. Verbatim account in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 464, pp. 300 f. and in DGFP, D, VII, no. 421, pp. 413 ff.
827. Report on the meeting in Schmidt, p. 465. Further see three reports by Henderson to Lord Halifax on August 29–30, published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, nos. 493, 508, and 565.
In a telegram, Henderson reported the following on the German response to Viscount Halifax in the early morning hours of August 30:

Berlin, August 30, 1939. 2:30 a.m.

German reply gave me impression that it had been drafted by Herr Hitler himself. I felt this immediately when I read it and I must admit it seemed to me a very disappointing answer to dignified, passive, and reasoned note of His Majesty's Government.

Ibid., no. 508, p. 393.

828. Hitler intended to deliver an ultimatum the next day, in the unlikely event that a Polish intermediary should indeed arrive.
829. Published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 508, p. 393.
830. *Ibid.*, no. 565, pp. 427.
831. Verbatim content of the letter and protocol of the oral message in DGFP, D, VII, nos. 417 and 418, pp. 410 f.
832. Cf. Schmidt, p. 465.
833. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 98 f.
834. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 427, pp. 421 f.
835. See above, August 23, 1939.
836. See below, September 1, 1939.
837. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, p. 1539. See below, August 31, 1939.
838. Reference to the imminent war.
839. A "Council on the Defense of the Reich" had not existed officially before. All impressively sounding cabinet formations (e.g. "Privy Cabinet Council," "Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich," or the "Council on the Defense of the Reich" mentioned in this particular ordinance) were a guise for an inner circle that comprised virtually the same men every time: Göring, Keitel, Frick, and Ribbentrop, all obedient servants of their master. It was Hitler who determined the Reich's policy in all questions of import.

840. This was Frick who served as Reich Minister of the Interior at this point. He would be succeeded by Himmler in 1943.
841. Walter Funk, then Reich Minister of Economics.
842. Hitler was mistaken on this point. The provisions of this decree were not rescinded by him, but rather by the military commanders of the four Allied Powers at the end of the war.
843. In the early years of the war, Hitler customarily signed ordinance with “Der Führer” and decrees as either “Der Führer” or “Der Führer und Reichskanzler.” At times, there is no discernible reason for a change in usage by Hitler. For instance, while placing his signature as “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” beneath a January 16, 1942 decree on construction regulations in the city of Salzburg (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 26), Hitler signed a similar decree on redesigning Munich as the capital city of the Movement (RGBl. 1942, I, pp. 45 f.) that very day simply as “Der Führer.” A like August 18, 1942 decree on construction work in the Reichsgau Vienna (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 535) bore the signature “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” once more. Then again Hitler signed as “Der Führer” a decree on remodeling the city of Breslau on November 22, 1942 (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 659). Hitler styled himself “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” one last time when he signed into law an amendment to the Reich Remuneration and Travel Reimbursement Law of March 30, 1943 (RGBl. 1943, I, pp. 189 ff.). From August 15, 1943 on (RGBl. 1943, I, pp. 489 ff.), Hitler signed laws exclusively as “Der Führer.” For Hitler’s habits before the war see above, 1934, note 204.

Given Hitler’s set of mind, it is not surprising that only he was permitted to sign decrees into law and not Göring, for example, who after all was the “President of the Ministerial Council.”

In the course of the war, Hitler deprived the Reichstag of all its legislative powers. With the sole exception of a September 1, 1939 law on the reunification of the Free City of Danzig with the Reich, the Reichstag refrained from exercising its powers. Even the Reichstag’s transfer of extraordinary executive and judiciary powers to Hitler on April 26, 1942 (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 247) was not classified as a constitutional law, but declared a “resolution by the Greater German Reichstag.” The decree was termed an “affirmation of the rights claimed by the Führer in his speech.” When the provisions of the Enabling Act expired on May 10, 1943, Hitler himself prolonged it in a “decree on governmental legislation” (RGBl. 1943, I, p. 295). He was sufficiently concerned not to let the Reichstag convene for this purpose and hence reserved for himself prerogative to secure an “approval of the Reich Government’s powers through the Greater German Reichstag.”

Of course, this never came about in spite of the fact that Hitler continued to govern for an additional two years. See below, 1943, Major Events in Summary.

844. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 458, pp. 447 ff.
845. See above, note 824.
846. Leopold Graf Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz, born 1863 in Vienna;

died 1942 in Perznye (Ödenburg); Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Imperial Court from 1912 to 1915. While the ultimatum the Count issued to Serbia contained demands apparently justified by the assassination in Sarajevo, it granted Serbia a reprieve of only 48 hours. Despite the fact that Serbia assented to nearly all demands by July 25, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire severed ties to Serbia the same day and opened hostilities. The official declaration of war followed on July 28, 1914.

847. Cf. Schmidt, p. 469.

848. For a summary of these statements and other like utterances by Hitler see above, Introduction, p. 35.

849. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.

850. Dahlerus, p. 99.

851. Cf. telegram sent by Halifax to Henderson at 2:00 a.m. on August 30, 1939. Published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 81. In a further telegram later that day (6:50 p.m.), Halifax instructed Henderson to admonish the German Government to follow standard procedures in the dealings with the Polish Government and, hence, to forward its proposals directly to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin. The British Government felt itself not in a position to advise Warsaw to submit to the completely incomprehensible German request of dispatching an extraordinary plenipotentiary to Berlin. Nevertheless, Great Britain would "do their best to facilitate negotiations." Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 88.

852. Adrian Holman, the First Secretary of the British Embassy in Berlin, transmitted Chamberlain's message at 5:30 p.m. on August 30, 1939:
The British Ambassador in Germany to the Reich Foreign Minister
August 30, 1939, British Embassy, Berlin

My dear Reichsminister!

I am directed by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to convey to Your Excellency the following message from the Prime Minister for His Excellency, the Reich Chancellor:

"We are considering the German note with all urgency and shall send an official reply later in the afternoon. We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoidance of frontier incidents and I would beg you to confirm similar instruction on the German side. I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views which are taking place of that desire for Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke in Parliament yesterday."

I should be grateful if the above message could be delivered to His Excellency as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Neville Henderson

DGFP, D, VII, no. 450, p. 441.

853. Cf. telegram of the Foreign Ministry to the German Embassy in Moscow, *ibid.*, no. 56, pp. 62 ff. The telegram detailed six proposals on improving German-Soviet relations. Ribbentrop instructed the German Ambassador: "I request that you do not give M. Molotov these

- instructions in writing, but that you read them to him verbatim.”
854. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, p. 466. For the official protocol of the meeting see DGFP, D, VII, no. 461, pp. 451 f.:

Berlin, August 31, 1939

Record of the conversation between the Reich Foreign Minister and the British Ambassador, Henderson, at midnight on August 30, 1939.

Henderson first handed over the written communication enclosed. He then added two oral communications. He said that complete restraint on the part of the Polish Government could only be expected if the German Government adopted the same attitude on their side of the frontier, and if there were no acts of provocation by the German minority in Poland. Reports were circulating to the effect that the Germans in Poland were committing acts of sabotage which would justify the strongest counter measures on the part of the Polish Government.

The Foreign Minister most emphatically contradicted this last remark by the British Ambassador. Germany knew only of Polish acts of provocation, but Polish propaganda had evidently not failed in its effect on the British Government. The most outrageous acts of sabotage were being committed by the Poles. In the German records there were 200 cases alone of murders committed by the Poles. He (the Reich Foreign Minister) refused to discuss this subject at all with the British Government. Henderson's third communication referred to the German Government's reply of the previous day, in which the German Government had stated their willingness to enter into direct contact with Poland if the Polish Government would send a plenipotentiary at once. The British Government were not in a position to advise the Polish Government to comply with this procedure. They proposed to the German Government that matters should be set in motion through normal diplomatic channels, i.e., by handing the proposals to the Polish Ambassador, so that he, in consultation with his Government, might be enabled to make preparations for direct German-Polish negotiations. If the German Government would also communicate these proposals to the British Government, and if the latter thought that the proposals formed a reasonable basis for a settlement of the problems at issue, they would bring influence to bear on Warsaw towards achieving a solution. Henderson, referring to the last paragraph of the German reply of the previous day, asked if the German proposals had already been formulated and whether these proposals could be handed to him.

The Foreign Minister replied that (1) so far British mediation had produced only one definite result, namely, Polish general mobilization. (2) Germany had expected a Polish representative to arrive today. This had not been an ultimatum, as the British Ambassador had wrongly supposed, but, as the Führer had already explained the day before, a practical proposal dictated by the requirements of the present circumstances. Up to midnight, Germany had heard nothing from the

Poles. The question of possible proposals therefore no longer arose. But in order to show what proposals Germany had intended to make if the Polish representative had arrived, the Reich Foreign Minister read out the German proposals contained in the enclosure.

Henderson replied that the Foreign Minister's statement that the non-arrival of the Polish representative by midnight on Wednesday nullified the proposals which Germany had originally intended to make, seemed to confirm his interpretation that the proposal was an ultimatum.

The Foreign Minister again vehemently contradicted this view and referred to the Führer's statement of the previous day that speed was required owing to the fact that two mobilized armies were facing each other within firing range and an incident might at any moment start a serious conflict.

In conclusion Henderson proposed that the Foreign Minister should summon the Polish Ambassador and hand him the German proposals.

The Foreign Minister refused to do this himself and closed the conversation, having reserved all decisions for the Führer.

Submitted herewith to the Foreign Minister, according to instructions.

Schmidt, Minister

855. Cf. original memorandum published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 461 (enclosure), pp. 453 f.:

Berlin, August, 30, 1939

His Majesty's Government appreciate the friendly reference in the declaration contained in the reply of the German Government to the latter's desire for an Anglo-German understanding and to their statement of the influence which this consideration has exercised upon their policy.

2. His Majesty's Government repeat that they reciprocate the German Government's desire for an improvement in relations, but it will be recognized that they could not sacrifice the interests of friends in order to obtain that improvement. They fully understand that the German Government cannot sacrifice Germany's vital interests, but the Polish Government are in the same position, and His Majesty's Government believe that the vital interests of the two countries are not incompatible.

3. His Majesty's Government note that the German Government accept the British proposal and are prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government.

4. His Majesty's Government understand that the German Government accept in principle the condition that any settlement should be made subject to an international guarantee. The question of who shall participate in this guarantee will have to be discussed further, and His Majesty's Government hope that to avoid loss of time the German Government will take immediate steps to obtain the assent of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics whose participation in the guarantee His Majesty's government have always assumed.

5. His Majesty's Government also note that the German Government

accept the position of the British Government as to Poland's vital interests and independence.

6. His Majesty's Government must make an express reservation in regard to the statement of particular demands put forward by the German Government in an earlier passage in their reply. They understand that the German Government are drawing up proposals for a solution. No doubt these proposals will be fully examined during discussions. It can then be determined how far they are compatible with the essential conditions which His Majesty's Government have stated and which the German Government have expressed their willingness to accept.

7. His Majesty's Government are at once informing the Polish Government of the German Government's reply. The method of contact and the arrangements for discussion must obviously be agreed with all urgency between the German Government and the Polish Government, but in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact so early as today.

8. His Majesty's Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of discussions and they share the apprehensions of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that during negotiations no aggressive military movements take place. His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government, if the German Government would give similar assurances.

9. Further His Majesty's Government would suggest that a temporary *modus vivendi* might be arranged for Danzig, which might prevent the occurrence of incidents tending to render German-Polish relations more difficult.

856. Schmidt, p. 467. According to Henderson's report to Halifax, Ribbentrop said: "His Majesty's Government's advice had had cursed (*verflucht*) little effect." DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 571, p. 430.

857. At 3:00 p.m. on August 30, 1939, the Polish Government resolved to order general mobilization. Placards announcing the mobilization were posted throughout Warsaw at 4:30 p.m. the following day. One hour later, the German Embassy reported the call-up to Berlin in a short message. Published in DGFP, D, VIII., no. 451, p. 442.

858. Cf. Henderson's report to Halifax in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 574, pp. 432 f.

859. Ibid. Statement before the International Military Tribunal on March 29, 1946. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, p. 311.

860. See below, speech of September 19, 1939.

861. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 100 f.

862. Ibid., p. 102. Göring dictated the terms of the sixteen-point proposal to Dahlerus once more on the morning of August 31, 1939.

863. Broadcast in Germany at 9:00 p.m. on August 31, 1939.

864. Standing before the Nuremberg court on March 19, 1946, Göring

- declared that in so doing he had taken “an enormous risk, since the Führer had forbidden this information being made public. [—] Only I could take that risk.” Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. IX.
865. Earlier that year, Hitler had stated regarding the English: “They will not wear me out!” See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
866. Expression used by Hitler and recorded by Schacht: “Chamberlain, that bastard (*dieser Kerl*), has ruined my entry into Prague.” See above, 1938, note 7.
867. “I am only afraid that at the last moment some swine (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.” See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
868. Ibid.
869. For Lloyd George’s visit to the Berghof on September 4, 1936 see above, pp. 826 f.
870. See above, April 4, 1939.
871. For the Duke of Windsor’s visit on October 22, 1937, see above, pp. 956 f.
872. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 485, p. 472. While the Duke’s initial correspondence to Hitler was not found after the war, his statements apparently did not deviate, judging by Hitler’s reply, from the official position espoused by the British Government. Hitler’s assumption that the Duke of Windsor, in the case of need and as his “personal friend,” would opt to support him instead of the British Government was no more realistic than his other theories on England and his English “friends.” See also Schmidt, p. 383.
873. DGFP, D, VII, no. 493, pp. 477 ff. and IMT, 126-C. See also reproduction of the document in Hofer, *Entfesselung*, pp. 303 f. The remarks in italics above were made to stand out in the original as well. The order for the attack was given at 4:00 p.m. Cf. Helmut Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung 1939–43* (Wiesbaden, 1951), pp. 50 f. See also Halder’s War Diary in DGFP, D, VII, pp. 569 f. The fact that the initially planned evacuation of civilians along the French-German border was not carried out, prompted Halder to the following revealing remark on Hitler’s assessment of the situation: “Decision against evacuation shows that he expects France and England will not take action.”
874. The time for the attack, as scheduled in the order issued August 25, 1939, was deferred another 15 minutes because of the seasonal change in the interim. The attack was to begin at dawn (4:30 a.m.) about 45 minutes before daybreak. On August 25, sunrise had been at 5:23 a.m. (CET at longitude 15), while the sun would not come up until 5:31 a.m. on September 1, 1939. The fact that the sun along Germany’s eastern border rose ten to twenty minutes earlier than at CET time also figured in these calculations.
875. Churchill stated in an October 1, 1939 radio broadcast: “It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end.” Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.

876. Hitler had declared: "There is hardly anyone who will question that the borders of 1914 can be re-established if blood is shed. [—] For those of us who hold that the future of Germany demands our greatest sacrifices, in one way or another, then, aside from all consideration of what is politically beneficial, we must create and defend a goal worthy of such a sacrifice." *Mein Kampf*, p. 738.
877. See above, Introduction, p. 28.
878. As early as on October 19, 1932, Hitler had compared the German Government to a train—"the train of government" as he called it—at the helm of which he himself stood. See above, p. 170 and Introduction, pp. 58 f.
879. In late 1941, Hitler stated: "In the days when I was not yet Reich Chancellor, I always thought of the General Staff as a bloodhound whose collar I had to grip tightly lest he attack everybody." See below, statement of September 24, 1941 in Borisov.
880. Halder evidently would not have been surprised had the entire attack on Poland been cancelled completely. On August 30, 1939, he noted in his War Diary: "Führer: either 1 or 2 [Sept.]; all off after 2 [Sept.]." Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
881. See above, March 24, 1936.
882. Hitler made various such statements to Ciano, Dahlerus, and Henderson in the month of August. See above, August 23, 1939.
883. See below, speech of July 4, 1944.
884. Cf. Keith Feeling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1947), p. 415. For extracts from Chamberlain's speech see also below, September 1, 1939.
885. Cf. Ward Price, p. 148: "We have a choice of evils. There is little human probability of war being permanently avoided. Such vast preparations can hardly fail to have their natural sequel. The last time the Teuto-Slav conflict broke out, Britain was dragged into it. On that occasion Russia was backing Serbia against Austria. She is now backing Czechoslovakia against Germany.
If this ancient feud flames up again, it would be well to deflect it into those regions where it can do least harm. Humanity and common sense alike suggest that the broad steppes of Little Russia are a more suitable locality than the densely populated centers of civilization in Western Europe."
886. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 60.
887. On the various diplomatic attempts in this cause, cf. DGFP, D, VI, no. 466; no. 475; no. 476. See also *Polish White Book*, nos. 108, 110, 112; and *British Blue Book*, no. 90. Further see Dahlerus, pp. 103 ff. and Strauch, pp. 306 ff.
888. Entry in Halder's War Diary for August 31, 1939, 4:20 p.m.: "ObdH [Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, Commander in Chief of the Army]: Orders to go out. (Führer refuses to receive Lipski.)" DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
889. Lipski had requested to be received at 1:00 p.m. He repeated his

- request at 3:15 p.m. as recorded in the German files at 4:00 p.m. Following this delaying tactic, Ribbentrop finally received Lipski at 6:30 p.m. Ibid., no. 475, p. 462 and no. 476, p. 463.
890. Ibid., no. 473, p. 461.
891. For report on this conference see Dahlerus, pp. 113 ff.
892. See above, March 15, 1939.
893. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 474, p. 462.
894. Report on the meeting *ibid.*, no. 476, p. 463.
895. Published *ibid.*, no. 478, p. 465.
896. Reference to Mussolini's message. See above, August 28, 1939.
897. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 478, p. 465. Due to pressure on the German side, the treaty was ratified speedily on August 31, 1939. Ratification had initially scheduled at a later date, but Molotov had decided to give his speech before the Supreme Soviet at an earlier date than that anticipated.
898. An SS Kommando disguised in Polish army uniforms carried out the staged assault under the guidance of Alfred Naujocks. Amongst the perpetrators of the attack, there was one criminal whom they shot after the attack and left to die at the entrance to the station. Once inside the radio station, they aired a three to four minute long proclamation in both Polish and German. Then, after an exchange of fire, they disappeared into the night. Cf. Naujocks's testimony of November 19, 1945 given before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, IMT, 2751-PS. Published in Hofer, *Entfesselung*, pp. 327 f. See also Jürgen Runzheimer, "Der Überfall auf den Sender Gleiwitz," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 10 (1962), pp. 408 ff.
899. See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
900. For the statements made in meeting with Henderson and in letter to Mussolini see above, August 25, 1939. The *Deutsches Weissbuch* provided an overview of forty-two border incidents perpetrated in the period from August 26 to August 31, 1939. Cf. *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 470, pp. 307 ff. For the day of August 31, there were a further ten alleged transgressions cited, in addition to the Gleiwitz attack. Hence Hitler had a wide selection of events to choose from for the "provocative act for propaganda use" (*propagandistischer Anlass*) he sought as a pretext for opening hostilities. In his Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, Hitler claimed that "fourteen additional violations of the border" were recorded the previous night, "amongst them three of a most serious nature."
- It is always unwise to start a war because of so-called border incidents which by their very nature are most difficult to verify. Germany's August 14, 1914 declaration of war on France which consisted of the official note of recall of the German Ambassador to Paris, for instance, was based upon the allegation that "French bombers penetrated into Baden, Bavaria, and the Rhine Province" in order to disturb railway traffic there. Later it became evident that these allegations were unfounded.
901. The murder of Röhm and other SA leaders are further examples of

unnecessary measures taken by Hitler, given the fact that he could have achieved his goal irrespective of these killings. Another case in point is the “Law concerning the Head of State of the German Reich.” See above, August 1, 1934.

902. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 482 (enclosure), pp. 468 ff. German text published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 468, p. 306.
903. See above, August 30, 1939.
904. For the talk between Henderson and Weizsäcker cf. Strauch, p. 313.
905. Cf. the State Secretary’s memorandum of August 31, 1939, published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 482, p. 468.
906. The Westerplatte was located at the entrance to the harbor of Danzig and had initially served as a sea-side resort. After the creation of the Free City of Danzig, it became a munitions depot and was fortified in order to safeguard Polish rights on access to the port.
907. Published in the *Polish White Book*, no. 118.
908. Even in the Dark Ages, it had been common practice to open hostilities only after a formal announcement. Neither of the states Hitler attacked received any such warning. This was the case not only for Poland, but also for Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Greece, and the Soviet Union. For one, this was the result of Hitler’s penchant for taking advantage of the element of surprise in his military ventures. However, there was also a second factor involved, namely, an absurd but widespread belief in Germany that the country had been held solely responsible for the outbreak of World War I because it had issued formal declarations of war upon France and Russia in 1914. In the years subsequent, a popular sentiment took hold in Germany that the party who declares war first would be held guilty by the other belligerents.
909. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
910. Cf. text of September 1, 1939 instructions sent out by wire at 8:35 p.m. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 512, p. 491.
911. See above, August 23, 1939.
912. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
913. See above, March 13, 1938.
914. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
915. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
916. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 119 on his September 1 meeting with Hitler (see below, *ibid.*).
917. See above, speech of September 26, 1938.
918. See above, September 27, 1938.
919. On September 2, 1939, German newspapers, as for example the *Würzburger Generalanzeiger*, reported on the Wehrmacht’s advance into Poland under the heading: “Punishment (*Züchtigung*) of the Violator of the Peace.”
920. See above, September 26, 1938 and 1938, note 410.
921. IMT, 360-PS.
922. For the telegram sent out at 9:40 a.m. on September 1, 1939 see DGFP,

- D, VII, no. 500, p. 483.
923. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 117.
924. Cf. the correspondent's telegram in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, evening edition, September 1, 1939.
925. Should read: "for the first time since World War I or 1920, respectively." See above, p. 1182 and below, note 938.
926. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
927. See below, September 1, 1939 and note 966.
928. See below, speeches of January 1, 1941 and of January 1, 1942.
929. See above, January 30, 1939.
930. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
931. Reference to the Reichstag address in April. See above, April 4, 1939.
932. The claim that he and his "Government . . . sat and waited . . . for two whole days" was untrue. Actually, Hitler had mostly been waiting alone during the two days in question (August 30 and 31, 1939), while Göring or Ribbentrop had kept him company on occasion.
933. On April 9, 1940, both Denmark and Norway would find out precisely how "deadly serious" Hitler was in making these assertions. The assault upon Poland merely set the stage for surprise attacks on non-belligerents which had explicitly declared their neutrality. On May 10, 1940, German troops moved toward France and in the process violated the neutrality of three states: Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. On April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia and Greece became Hitler's next victims, and the Soviet Union followed suit on June 22, 1941.
934. This future "for all time" ended prematurely on June 22, 1941.
935. The attack was launched at 4:45 a.m. according to plan and not at 5:45 a.m. as Hitler erroneously stated.
936. This in fact meant that nearly 14 billion Reichsmarks were allocated for rearmament every fiscal year. In light of this, there apparently was little truth to Hitler's 1932 claim that the final repayment of the three billion Reichsmarks outstanding in reparations would spell the ruin of Germany. In his 1939 statement, Hitler once more greatly exaggerated the sum spent on rearmament. According to research by Heinrich Stübel the figure more accurately had to be placed around 63 billion instead of the 90 billion Hitler cited. Cf. Heinrich Stübel, "Die Finanzierung der Aufrüstung im Dritten Reich," in *Europa-Archiv*, 6 (1951), pp. 4128 ff.
937. Further developments revealed that Hitler had no intention of placing his own life in danger or suffering the same privations the German people did because of the policies he espoused.
938. The tunic Hitler sported that day had little in common with the jacket he had worn during World War I; only the color was the same. Aside from this, cut and quality of the material had markedly improved: it was no longer the tunic of a mere corporal, but rather it was to clothe the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. The tunic was replete with golden buttons and an eagle in gold on the left sleeve. The tunic made plain that Hitler occupied a higher rank than an ordinary Wehrmacht

general whose golden insignia was placed on the right chest. Moreover, the Supreme Commander naturally was in a position superior to that of a Waffen SS general whose insignia, while embroidered on the left sleeve as well, was in silver only.

939. As Hitler felt his position in power threatened by like bodies, this senate was never actually in session. Six years earlier, Hitler had also announced the creation of a senate whose members one day would convene to elect a new Führer. Needless to say, this senate never met either. See above, p. 349, speech of August 6, 1933.
940. For Hitler, capitulation meant “submission to the will of another.” For himself, this was out of the question. He made this unmistakably clear in a speech in late April 1941: “As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your Supreme Commander. Once more, this one word is ‘capitulation’ and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never!” See below, April 29, 1941.
941. Here once again Hitler’s “Fridericus Complex” surfaced, a delusion many Germans suffered from as well. It was based upon the premise that, despite serious setbacks and an international coalition sworn against him, the Prussian King Frederick II the Great (Fridericus Rex) had reigned victorious at the end of the Seven Years’ War because of his steadfastness.
The truth of the matter was, however, that Frederick’s role in this war was a peripheral one as the hostilities between Prussia and Austria were not at the center of the conflict. The rivalry between England and France determined the war’s outcome; had Frederick the Great been allied with France, instead of with victorious England, neither his steadfastness nor any other virtue would have saved him from a fate no different from that of defeated Austria in 1763. Austria had fought on the French side as France’s chief ally in the conflict.
942. Hitler was not in the least disposed to risk his life for the cause; rather he was very careful as far as his personal well-being was concerned.
943. This statement is a characteristic one for Hitler. Already at the beginning of the war, he made certain that his cohorts knew they were to report good news exclusively: victories, successful campaigns, and great enthusiasm amongst the common folk.
944. According to Hitler, it was the main mission in the life of Germany’s youth to die a hero’s death; however, that they were to do so with a “radiant heart” was indeed a new turn of the phrase.
945. See above, August 27, 1939.
946. See above, p. 1053.
947. Text of the telegram published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 504, pp. 485 f. At 11:15 a.m., Germany’s Ambassador to Rome, von Mackensen, informed Mussolini of the imminent receipt of a telegram. Berlin transmitted the text to Mackensen per telephone at 12:40 p.m. He held on to the telegram until 3:00 p.m. when he finally presented it to Mussolini. This

- delay may have been caused by Mackensen's awaiting of final instructions from Berlin, in the unlikely event that the English should decide in Hitler's favor.
948. Shortly thereafter, it would become clear how much Hitler was determined to "take away" from the Poles, namely, everything.
949. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 119.
950. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
951. The history of the Iron Cross dates back to the times of the Teutonic Knights. On March 10, 1813, the Prussian King Frederick William III officially established the award as recognition for bravery in the Napoleonic Wars. On the anniversary of the death of Queen Louise on July 19, 1870, the future Kaiser William I renewed the award of the "Iron Cross" to Prussian soldiers who had fought in the Franco-Prussian War. The Prussian King extended the scope of the award by bestowing it on participants from the various German states and not limiting it to Prussian service men, as had been the case previously. After the onset of World War I, the German Kaiser and King of Prussia, William II, brought the award to life once more on August 5, 1914. As a soldier, Hitler received both the Iron Cross, Second Class, and the Iron Cross, First Class, for meritorious service. See above, p. 552, note 16.
952. In the course of the Second World War, Hitler established a multitude of new award categories. Soldiers received not only Iron Crosses (second and first class) and the Grand Cross as in previous wars, but also the newly introduced *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross) and various subdivisions thereof, for example: the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath and swords; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath, swords, and diamonds; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with golden laurel wreath, swords, and diamonds. Hitler established this latter category on December 29, 1944 and limited the number of its recipients to twelve.
953. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 1573 f.
954. This particular form of the award was new. It was to replace the highly coveted "Pour le mérite" and like this medal was to be worn around the neck. Frederick the Great had established a first "Pour le mérite" award in 1740 which was also bestowed upon civilians. The military distinction "Pour le mérite" dated back to a 1810 decree by Frederick William III. It was restricted to officers who had distinguished themselves in battle. Hitler's *Ritterkreuz* further served as a replacement for awards for bravery in the previously separate German lands, e.g. the Bavarian military award "*Max-Josephs-Orden*," the Saxon military award "*Sankt-Heinrichs-Orden*," and numerous other awards of this nature.
955. The Grand Cross was reserved for distribution to army leaders exclusively. It consisted of a medal to be worn around the neck. Only Blücher in 1815 and Hindenburg in 1918 received the award's special category, a pin-on cross surrounded by golden rays.
956. In the First World War, there were five recipients of the Grand Cross:

William II, Hindenburg, Mackensen, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, and Infantry General Ludendorff. On Christmas 1918, seven additional crosses were to be bestowed upon members of the Royal Family, heirs to the throne, etc., but the end to the war prevented distribution. In the Second World War, Göring was the only man to be distinguished by receipt of the Grand Cross on July 19, 1940. Göring had “his” Grand Cross manufactured in platinum and onyx according to personal specifications.

957. The Iron Cross awarded in 1813 had a smooth surface on its front side. On its back there was a reproduction of the Royal Prussian Crown, three laurel garlands, and the year “1813” engraved in the center. This design on the Iron Cross’s reverse side remained the same on subsequent versions of the award, even on those distributed by Hitler. In 1870 and 1914, however, the face of the medal was altered, bearing a Prussian crown above a “W” at the cross’s center (initial of William I or William II, respectively) and beneath it either the year “1870” or “1914.”
958. The central stripe on this band was red in contrast to earlier versions of the award. There the central part had been black on the ribbons awarded to combatants, and white on those granted to non-combatants (in accordance to Prussia’s national colors: black and white).
959. A similar decree had been issued in 1915 for recipients of the Iron Cross, who had received this distinction for service in the War of 1870–71, and who then actively participated in the First World War. In 1895, they had already received a laurel wreath emblem bearing the number “25” as a reminder of their wartime heroism a quarter of a century earlier. In 1915, they received a silver needle upon which a miniature Iron Cross was engraved and which was to be worn above the laurel wreath emblem. Cf. Waldemar Hesse Edler von Hesselthal and Georg Schreiber, *Die tragbaren Ehrenabzeichen des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, 1941).
960. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 1577 f. Hitler had received the “black medal for injuries sustained in battle” (*Verwundetenabzeichen in Schwarz*) during the First World War. He wore the badge beneath his Iron Cross First Class on his uniform.
961. See above, April 14, 1939 and note 412.
962. The text of the message is published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 530, p. 506. Hitler’s reply is published *ibid.*, no. 531, pp. 507 f.
963. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 105, pp. 157 ff. German translation published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Sunday edition, September 3, 1939.
964. Henderson should present this note to Ribbentrop at 9.00 in the evening of that September 1. See the text below and note 971.
965. Here Chamberlain was alluding to the superiority of the Royal Navy in comparison to the German Fleet. No doubt, he had also in mind the improvements in the Royal Air Force that proved itself more than a match for the German Luftwaffe in the course of the war. The prefix “Royal” in both the title of the Air Force and the Navy signified their

- elite status within the three branches of the British Armed Forces.
966. From Switzerland, Thyssen fled to France only to be apprehended by the Gestapo in the wake of the Wehrmacht's advances in the east in 1940. Thyssen then spent several years incarcerated in the psychiatric ward of the Sanatorium Babelsberg. Subsequently, he was transferred to a series of concentration camps in Germany. Thyssen was initially held at Oranienburg from where he was moved to Buchenwald, and then on to Dachau where American soldiers finally liberated him in 1945.
967. See above, p. 148.
968. "If we do one day achieve power, we will hold onto it, so help us God. We will not allow them to take it away from us again." See above, p. 170, speech of October 17, 1932.
"When I once enter the Government, I do not intend to leave it." See above, *ibid.*, speech of October 19, 1932.
969. Statements by then Reich Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner. See above, July 3, 1934.
970. Cf. notes of Privy Councillor Erich Kordt, published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 509 and no. 510, p. 490.
971. Published *ibid.*, no. 513, p. 492. The text of the communication was in English in the Original. Henderson presented both the original note and an unofficial written translation into German to the Reich Foreign Minister. For the published German text and the Envoy Schmidt's notes on the encounter Henderson-Ribbentrop—see *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 472, p. 315. Cf. also Henderson's report to Halifax in DBrFP, Third Series, no. 682, p. 493. Records of the ensuing conversation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 513, p. 493.
972. Cf. Strauch, p. 318.
973. On August 4, 1914, two telegraphic notes by the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, reached the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir E. Goschen, who subsequently presented them to the German Government. The first note—of 9:30 a.m.—read:

The King of the Belgians has made an appeal to His Majesty the King for diplomatic intervention on behalf of Belgium in the following terms:

"Remembering the numerous proofs of your Majesty's friendship and that of your predecessor, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870 and the proof of friendship you have just given us again, I make a supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of your Majesty's Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium."

His Majesty's Government are also informed that the German Government has delivered to the Belgian Government a note proposing friendly neutrality entailing free passage through Belgian territory, and promising to maintain the independence and integrity of the kingdom and its possessions at the conclusion of peace, threatening in case of refusal to treat Belgium as an enemy. An answer was requested within twelve hours.

We also understand that Belgium has categorically refused this as a flagrant violation of the law of nations.

His Majesty's Government are bound to protest against this violation of a treaty to which Germany is a party in common with themselves, and must request an assurance that the demand made upon Belgium will not be proceeded with and that her neutrality will be respected by Germany. You should ask for an immediate reply.

Published in *Correspondence Respecting the European Crisis* (London, 1914), no. 153, pp. 75 f. Hereafter referred to as the *British White Book* (1914). Cf. further *British Documents on the Origin of the War, 1898-1914*, Vol. XI (London, 1926), no. 573, p. 306 (hereafter referred to as *British Documents (WWI)*). See also below, note 1000.

974. Cf. notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt and the verbatim reproduction of the note in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 473, p. 316. English translation according to the *German White Book*, no. 19, p. 43.
975. Cf. protocol of the meeting in DGFP, D, VII, no. 535 (enclosure), pp. 509 f.
976. In the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis, hostilities ceased, despite the fact that the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt had already begun.
977. See above, p. 1072, speech of March 25, 1938.
978. See above, p. 1977, speech of March 29, 1938.
979. See above, p. 1084, speech of April 6, 1938.
980. See above, p. 1219, speech of November 6, 1938.
981. See above, August 22, 1939.
982. See below, September 3, 1939.
983. Cf. notes on the meeting taken by the Envoy Schmidt published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 539, pp. 512 f.
984. For a report on the conversation see Schmidt's notes, *ibid.*, no. 541, p. 514. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 471.
985. Notes taken on the conversation by Legation Counselor Brücklmeier published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 554, pp. 524 f.
986. Excerpts published in the *German White Book*, no. 22, p. 44. A German translation is published, also in excerpts, in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 476, p. 317.
987. Verbatim text in the *British Blue Book*, no. 116, pp. 172 ff. Cf. also the following report of the speech as published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 732, p. 521.

Foreign Office. September 2, 1939. 8:00 p.m.

Following passage occurs in statement which Prime Minister is making to House of Commons at 7:30 this evening.

Begins.

1. No reply has yet been received from the German Government to the warning message delivered by Sir N. Henderson which was read to the House yesterday. It is possible that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which has meanwhile been forward by Italian Government that hostilities should cease and there should then imme-

diately be a conference between the Five Powers—Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany, and Italy.

2. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government for their part would find it impossible to take part in a conference whilst Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment, and Danzig has been made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force.

3. His Majesty's Government will, as was stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of the French Government to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such withdrawal.

4. If the German Government should agree to withdraw their forces, then His Majesty's Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the Polish frontier, that is to say, the way would be open to discussion between the German and Polish Government of the matters at issue between them, on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured by an international guarantee.

5. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other Powers should be associated with them in the discussion, His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree.

Ends.

988. As reported by the Berlin correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, both Henderson and Coulondre inquired about a reply to the joint Anglo-French Declaration at the Foreign Ministry in the evening hours of September 2. The staff there informed them that such a response was still in the process of being prepared. Cf. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, morning edition, September 4, 1939.
989. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 120 ff.
990. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 558, pp. 527 f. Apparently, the telegram was sent around midnight and arrived in Berlin at 2:00 a.m. in the morning of September 3, 1939.
991. Text of the telegram arrived at 3:00 on the morning of September 3, 1939 is published *ibid.*, no. 547, pp. 520 f.
992. See above, note 819.
993. See above, 1938, note 57.
994. Cf. Schmidt, p. 472.
995. For Henderson's statements see *ibid.*
996. Quotation according to the telegraphic order by Lord Halifax to Henderson at 5:00 in the morning of September 3 as printed in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 757, p. 535. Also published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 560, p. 529 and in the *British Blue Book*, no. 118, p. 175. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 477, p. 317. On the British Declaration of War see Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler. British Politics and British Policy 1933–1940* (London, 1975), pp. 313 ff.

Halifax had included the following instructions for Henderson:
If the assurance referred to in that communication is received, you should inform me by any means at your disposal before 11.0 a.m. today, September 3. If no such assurance is received here by 11.0 a.m., we shall inform the German Representative that a state of war exists as from that hour. [—]

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Washington, Rome, Angora, Athens, Bucharest, Cairo, Bagdad and Lisbon.

DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 756, p. 534.

997. British summer time was the same as Central European Time at this point.
998. See Schmidt, pp. 473 f. and Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 613. Cf. Schmidt's testimony at Nuremberg on March 28, 1946. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X.
999. On August 3, 1914, the German Crown Prince had voiced similar reservations regarding the stance of the English to then Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg who had replied: "England on the other side? That is completely out of the question. England will surely remain neutral!" Cf. Karl Rosner, ed., *Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen, Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922), p. 137.
1000. It was the second note of that August 4, 1914 (for the first document, see above, note 973) which was telegraphically transmitted at 2:00 p.m. by Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, Berlin, to be conveyed to the German Government. It read:

We hear that Germany has addressed note to Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that German Government will be compelled to carry out, if necessary, by force of arms, the measures considered indispensable. We are also informed that Belgian territory has been violated at Gemmenich.

In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that Germany declined to give the same assurance respecting Belgium as France gave last week in reply to our request made simultaneously at Berlin and Paris, we must repeat that request, and ask that a satisfactory reply to it and to my telegram of this morning be received here by 12 o'clock to-night. If not, you are instructed to ask for your passports, and to say that His Majesty's Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves.

Published in the *British White Book* (1914), no. 159, p. 77. Cf. also *British Documents (WWI)*, Vol. XI, no. 594, p. 314. For the "coincidentally" equal course of events see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.

1001. Hitler had completely excluded Goebbels from all preparations for war and had not consulted with him in any form. Goebbels had not been asked to participate in any of the secret conferences. Only in Danzig, Hitler had permitted him to give an insignificant speech on June 18, 1939.

As mentioned earlier (see above, Introduction, p. 66) there is a

tendency, here in Germany as well as abroad, to greatly overestimate the role Goebbels played both before and after the seizure of power. In the period from 1933 to 1939, Hitler debated issues with Röhm in the beginning and later with either Göring or Ribbentrop. The one person Hitler shunned as an audience was Goebbels. The claim that Goebbels had “conquered Berlin” for Hitler, and thus had made Hitler’s rise possible in the first place, cannot be maintained as such. Goebbels’ performance as Gauleiter of Berlin was in no way different from that of other Gauleiters in similar positions. By no means did Berlin constitute a stronghold for National Socialism in the years before 1933. The percentage of votes cast for National Socialists was lower than in many other cities. And by no means did Goebbels mobilize the man on the street, lead him to take possession of government buildings and thus pave the way for Hitler to the Chancellery. It was not Goebbels but Hindenburg and his advisors who were instrumental in Hitler’s rise to power in 1933. While Goebbels no doubt was a gifted propagandist, he needed to be constantly inspired by his master. When he was on his own, for example as a witness in the Reichstag fire trial, he was a complete failure. He wished to be nothing other than Hitler’s faithful servant, his “shield bearer” as Hitler had called him see above, October 30, 1936. And loyal he was indeed; he was the only one amongst Hitler’s cronies to share the Führer’s fate in the bunker beneath the Chancellery in 1945.

1002. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See above, Introduction, p. 53.
1003. See above, August 13, 1939.
1004. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 71 ff. See above, Introduction, p. 28.
1005. Within the next few months, the German media as well as public held on to the delusion that a “war-like situation” did not mean that the country was indeed “at war.” For example, see Halder’s War Diary entry for August 29, 1939: “Führer would not take it amiss if England were to wage a sham war.” Published in DGFP, D, VII, p. 564.
1006. The allegation that England had given Poland “full powers for all actions against Germany” cannot be substantiated. Great Britain had agreed to assist Poland only in the event that aggression were to be initiated by Germany and this guarantee would not have applied had Poland attacked Germany.
1007. Editor’s note: Quoted with few corrections according to the translation cabled to London by the American Embassy in Berlin on September 4, 1939. Printed in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 766, pp. 539 ff. Cf. also the—insignificantly differing—later translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 561, pp. 529 ff. The German text is reproduced in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, II, 1939, no. 479, pp. 318 f. See also identical DNB text, September 3, 1939.
1008. This had not been the case. Hitler himself had labored to delay the German policy statement in order not to have to second Mussolini’s motion. See above, September 2, 1939.

1009. Stephen King-Hall, Commander, retired from Navy in 1929; British publicist, broadcaster, and commentator on military and public affairs, whose statements had no official character.
1010. DNB text, September 3, 1939. Aleksander A. Shkvartsev was thirty-nine years old at the time and was known to be sympathetic to Germany. Together with General Maxim Purkayev and three other Russian officers, he had flown from Stockholm to Berlin in a military carrier that morning. In order to place the Soviet-German military alliance in full view of the world public, Germany had insisted a military mission be sent to Berlin. The Russians to the contrary wished as little public exposure as possible and had reluctantly bowed to German pressure. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 534, p. 509.
1011. Roosevelt's radio address is published in *American Foreign Relations*, Vol. II (Boston, 1940), pp. 3 ff. (hereafter referred to as AFR). See also below, Roosevelt's radio address of December 29, 1940. Only six days after the proclamation of American neutrality (ibid., pp. 629 ff.), Roosevelt invited Winston S. Churchill, recently appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, to enter into direct correspondence with him. In his personal letter, Roosevelt also referred to certain resemblances with World War I:

September 11, 1939

My dear Churchill:

It is because you and I occupied similar positions in the World War that I want you to know how glad I am that you are back again in the Admiralty. Your problems are, I realize, complicated by new factors but the essential is not very different.

What I want you and the Prime Minister to know is that I shall at all times welcome it if you will keep me in touch personally with anything you want me to know about. [—]

Published in *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, edited by Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas (London, 1975), p. 89.—Roosevelt served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1920, Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915.

1012. The following proclamations are reproduced in accordance with the DNB texts, September 3, 1939.
1013. The Kaiser's appeal of August 6, 1914 read as follows:

To the German Volk!

In the forty-three years since the foundation of the Reich, it has been my forefathers' and my own greatest ambition to preserve peace in the world to the benefit of our own powerful advancement. But our adversaries envy the fruits of our labor.

Up to now, conscious of our power and responsibilities, we have stood the open and secret animosity of our enemies both east and west, as well as overseas. Now, however, they seek to humble us. They demand of us to stand by silently as they arm for a most

treacherous attack. They seek to forbid us to stand by our ally in loyalty, an ally that is fighting to retain its reputation as a world power, an ally whose humiliation would also cause us to lose our honor and might. [—] Now the sword must force a decision. The enemy attacked in the midst of peace. Hence, rise! To the weapons! Any indecision or hesitancy constitute high treason to the Fatherland.

It is a question of to be or not to be for this Reich our fathers once again created. A question of to be or not to be for German greatness and for German being. We shall fight back unto the last breath drawn by man and steed. In a world full of enemies, we shall prevail. Never yet was Germany vanquished when it stood united.

Onward in the name of God who will stand by us just as he stood by our fathers!

William II

Published in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Depeschen 1914/1915* (Dessau, 1915), pp. 17 f.

1014. Hitler is alluding to a statement allegedly made by Clemenceau but correctly attributed to the Prussian General von Liebert: "There are twenty million Germans too many." Cf. Ernst Meier, "20 Millionen Deutsche zuviel!" in *Publizistik*, 3 (1958).
1015. Hitler's belittlement of Bethmann-Hollweg is hardly justified, as he himself performed no differently from his predecessor, rather even worse.
1016. See above, speech of October 9, 1938.
1017. See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
1018. This figure is incorrect. Even if it comprised not only the Germans living in the Reich proper, but also those living in Danzig and in Poland, there were by no means 90 million Germans alive at the time. Even if the Czechs were included in the count, there would still have been no more than 88 million.
1019. In particular to the northern German listener expressions such as this (*Dieser Entschluss 'ist ein unerbittlicher'* instead of *'ist unerbittlich'*) sounded alien as they formed part of a peculiar idiom which was spoken in southern Germany and Austria on a small scale. Hence, what is conspicuous, Bavarians felt Hitler's language and tone to be Austrian, and vice-versa. And in this context, it is also more than remarkable to note that Empress Augusta Victoria, the Kaiser's wife, used this same curious idiomatic expression in her "Appeal to Germany's women" of August 6, 1914: "*Der Kampf aber wird ein ungeheurer sein*" (The struggle, however, will be a tremendous one). Printed in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Depeschen*, p. 18. For the phenomenon of such 'coincidences' see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.—Augusta Victoria, born 1858 in Dolzig (District Sorau, East Brandenburg); Princess of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg (Northern Germany), from 1881 married with the later Emperor William II of Prussia; died 1921 in Doorn (Netherlands), the Kaiser's exile.

As mentioned earlier (Introduction, pp. 64 f.), Hitler's voice and rhetoric often became 'unnatural,' when he spoke of subjects such as war, weaponry, and the like. Nevertheless, there is no substance to the allegation, especially popular abroad, that Hitler's command of the German language was flawed and poor. His countless speeches, proclamations, letters, decrees, laws, interviews, etc., as published in this work, give impressive evidence to the contrary.

1020. Once more Hitler attempted to rally Germans in support of the old unity theory. After the outbreak of the First World War, William II also appealed to this sentiment in August 1914: "Never yet was Germany vanquished when it stood united." See above, note 1013.
1021. Excerpts in *Feeling*, pp. 415 f. German text in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 4, 1939, morning edition. The newspaper also reproduced the speeches held in the House of Commons.
1022. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 120, pp. 173 f.
1023. Rome secured the victory in all three Punic Wars for itself. The wars were the result of the struggle for hegemony in the Mediterranean between Rome as a world power and the nascent power of Carthage in northern Africa. The First Punic War began in 264 BC and ended with Rome's victory in 241 BC. The Second Punic War lasted from 218 BC to 201 BC. Having crossed the Alps with fifty-seven elephants in 218 BC, the conqueror Hannibal was victorious at Trasimene and Cannae, but failed to take Rome. The Third Punic War launched in 149 BC ended with the complete destruction of the city of Carthage in 146 BC.
1024. See above, speech of November 8, 1939.
1025. The further course of events proved Chamberlain right. The Führer's role in the conflict could be well compared with that of the challenger Hannibal, while Churchill played the role of a Scipio Africanus by securing victory for Britain—as Scipio had done at Zama in 202 BC thus deciding the Second Punic War in favor of the Roman World Empire. Comparing the printed speeches of the two antagonists, Churchill was clearly the better orator and superior stylist. One must, however, bear in mind that Hitler did not carefully prepare his speeches in written form or read them out. Mostly to the chagrin of his listeners, he was able to speak for several hours while reciting countless 'facts' from memory.
1026. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6152 f. German text reproduced in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 4, 1939.
1027. Reuters report, September 3, 1939.
1028. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 576, pp. 548 f.
1029. See above, directive of August 31, 1939.
1030. That very evening, September 3, 1939, the British liner *Athenia* became the first victim of the directive: "offensive operations are permitted." Two hundred miles to the west of the Hebrides, a German submarine sank the ship with 1,400 passengers aboard. One hundred of these died in the attack, among them twenty-eight American

citizens. The indignation worldwide at this attack bore strong resemblance to the outcry provoked by the 1915 sinking of the *Lusitania*, also torpedoed by a German submarine. The Reich Government at first denied any responsibility for the attack on the *Athenia* and then glossed over the incident. On October 23, 1939, Hitler had Goebbels declare in a radio broadcast that Churchill was responsible for the ship's fate. The broadcast alleged that Churchill had a time bomb placed aboard and planned, after the disaster, to incriminate Germany.

Cf. testimony by Raeder, Weizsäcker, and Fritzsche in IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIV, pp. 78 and 279 f. and Vol. XVII, pp. 191 and 234 f.

1031. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 574, p. 546.
1032. Published *ibid.*, no. 565, pp. 538 f.
1033. There is much truth in Hitler's statement. Had he indeed been granted Danzig and the Polish Corridor in 1939, this would not have prevented him from invading the remainder of Poland "for more than six months or, shall we say, a year." The case of Czechoslovakia provided ample proof of that. An invasion of Poland at a later date would still have provoked war with the Western Powers, just as it did in September 1939.
1034. For the remainder of the war, "according to plan" became one of Hitler's favorite slogans. He cherished the illusion that all the Wehrmacht's offensive operations proceeded "according to plan." Later in the war, all its retreats or so-called *Frontverkürzungen* ("reductions in the length of the front," i.e. disengagements) were claimed to have been planned beforehand. Everything developed "according to plan," from the disastrous "Battle of Britain" in 1940 to the last pitiful days in Berlin of 1945.
1035. As Hitler only spoke of France as an adversary here, he apparently wished not to consider England, the German 'brotherland,' as an enemy.
1036. After the ignominious defeat at Stalingrad, Hitler had Göring speak in his stead before the Reichstag, too. See below, speech of January 30, 1943.
1037. Göring's speech before laborers at the Rheinmetall-Borsig-Werke was broadcast later that month. See below, September 9, 1939.
1038. Reuters note, September 4, 1939.
1039. DNB note, September 4, 1939. Cf. also below Göring's speech of September 9, 1939. The conclusions that Strauch, p. 326, draws in his analysis of this air raid are incorrect as he mistakenly cites September 5 as the date of the attack which took place a day earlier.
1040. DNB report, September 5, 1939.
1041. DNB report, September 6, 1939.
1042. DNB report, September 7, 1939.
1043. The slow pace of events along the Franco-German border that autumn led people to refer to it as "drôle de guerre" or "*Sitzkrieg*" ("Phony War"). The German term *Sitzkrieg* was based on the

assumption that the opponents “sat” across from each other without anything happening. This was only true, however, of troops stationed on the left and right bank of the Rhine. In the border region between the Rhine and the Saar rivers, frequent exchanges of artillery fire and numerous forays characterized the situation in particular in the months of September and October. Entire French regiments advanced into the Hornbach area and took several German villages. German troops later forced their retreat and, close to Saarbrücken, the Wehrmacht pursued them a few miles into French territory. These “preliminary hostilities” in the region between Saar and Rhine cost the lives of several hundred German soldiers.

1044. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 101, p. 101.

1045. Cf. Halder’s entry in his War Diary on September 7, 1939, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.

1046. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 31, pp. 30 f.

1047. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 43, p. 41. See also Walther Hubatsch, *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung 1939–45* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 27 f.

1048. “Deutsche Bucht” in the original.

1049. See above, September 3, 1939.

1050. DNB text, September 9, 1939.

1051. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 619. Chamberlain made this and other statements before the House of Commons in a speech at 12:06 p.m. on September 3, 1939:

“This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do: that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have sacrificed so much . . . I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.”

During the Second World War, the German public had access to statements by foreign statesmen, such as Chamberlain’s plea cited above, only through third parties (the BBC in this instance as detailed by Shirer). Listening to “enemy” radio stations was strictly forbidden and punished by imprisonment. In addition, the foreign radio stations had to struggle with interference from the “*Störsender*” (jamming transmitters) which strove to make foreign broadcasts unintelligible by increasing static interference.

With few notable exceptions, German newspapers were restricted to reporting on positive developments. One exception was the weekly *Das Reich* published exclusively for high ranking officials. Its readers were occasionally informed on developments abroad not accessible to the general public. This was true to a certain extent also for the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, although the latter was forced to close down in 1943.

1052. Reference to the early September British air raid on the coastal cities

- of Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven. See above, September 4, 1939.
1053. As the Second World War raged all around them, the German Volk would indeed remember all these flamboyant assurances by Göring. The Royal Air Force dropped bombs and not “propaganda flyers” on Germany’s cities, while the German Air Force was able to do only little “in retribution.” During the war as well as subsequently, rumors circulated that Göring had proclaimed that should “a single enemy plane penetrate German air space,” he would change his name to “Herr Meier.” As the war progressed, the man on the street contemptuously referred to Göring as “Herr Meier.” However, there is no official record of any such statement by Göring.
1054. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1753 f. Hitler pardoned members of the Wehrmacht in a similar manner. On October 21, 1939, civil servants were granted a like pardon. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 2103 f. Pardons like these were customarily granted after the outbreak of war in order to allow those detained to join the armed forces.
1055. DNB report, September 11, 1939. Report also in VB, No. 255, September 12, 1939. See also below, note 1142.
1056. DNB text, September 11, 1939.
1057. DNB reports, September 12, 1939.
1058. Report in VB, No. 256, September 13, 1939.
1059. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 1751. This law on the capture of enemy ships served as a supplement to the earlier *Prisenordnung* (Decree on Prizes) as issued on August 28, 1939. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 1585. Similar steps had been taken in 1914.
1060. Report in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1939.
1061. *Ibid.*, No. 258, September 15, 1939.
1062. DNB report, September 15, 1939.
1063. *Ibid.*, September 17, 1939.
1064. One month later, Hitler revealed himself as the author of the leaflet. See below, speech of October 6, 1939.
1065. In November, Hitler was sufficiently annoyed to state: “The case of Poland proves that England is not interested in the existence of such states else it would have had to declare war on the Soviet Union as well.” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.
1066. George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston; born 1859; died 1926; English conservative politician; Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924. In 1919, Curzon proposed drawing the border between Russia and Poland along ethnographic lines. In 1920, Poland launched a war against Russia and, in defiance of the Curzon line, conquered territories located in the Ukraine and Belorussia, incorporating these into the Polish state.
1067. DNB report, September 19, 1939.
1068. DNB text, September 20, 1939.
1069. Later Heitz was promoted to the rank of Colonel General; taken prisoner at Stalingrad in 1943.
1070. In such instances, Hitler was reluctant to make genuine appearances

before the public, after e.g. seizing the office of Reich President and in the aftermath of the Röhm Purge.

1071. Warsaw capitulated on September 27, 1939. The fortress Modlin held out another day before bowing to the superiority of the German war machinery. Forces on the Hela peninsula withstood the German assault until October 1. The last remaining Polish resistance at Kock (to the east of Deblin) collapsed on October 16, 1939.
1072. DNB text, September 19, 1939.
1073. Hitler was not speaking the truth when he made the rhetorical claim to be standing on this soil for the first time. As a matter of fact, he had been to Danzig about seven years earlier and had even reviewed a SA parade at the city's airport on April 5, 1932. A delegation of Danzig police officers had welcomed him on the occasion. See above, p. 128.
1074. In his appeal to the German Volk earlier that month, Hitler had spoken of 90 million. See above, September 3, 1939.
1075. Hitler had already used the slogan of the *Nationalitätenstaat* (nationalities state) while moving against Czechoslovakia. Evidently, he intended to apply this concept to any state he chose for annexation to the Reich.
1076. Hitler liked to marvel at his own "modesty" and his great "leniency." In a letter to Daladier, dated August 27, 1939, he wrote: "I made an offer to the Polish Government, which startled the German people." In his speech before the Reichstag in September, he declared: ". . . and I must repeat here that there is nothing more modest or loyal than these proposals [to the Polish Government]." See above, September 1, 1939. In another correspondence addressed to Sven Hedin on October 30, 1942, Hitler once more reflected on his proposals to Poland: "It now appears so unreal to me that I almost blame myself for having gone too far in my proposals!" But Hitler had entertained similar doubts regarding what he considered an exceedingly lenient behavior on his part. In his Sportpalast speech on September 26, 1938, he explained: "Leniency has reached its limits, any further leniency would have been construed as a most fatal weakness. I would not have the right to appear in the annals of German history had I nonchalantly abandoned these ten million [Germans living in Austria and Czechoslovakia] to their fate . . . I had brought [enough] sacrifices." See above, p. 1186.
1077. Reference to Edward Smigly-Rydz, Marshal of Poland, Inspector General of the Polish Army 1936–39.
1078. See above, note 700.
1079. See above, events of September 2, 1939.
1080. Quotation from a martial song dating back to 1812. See above, 1938, note 212.
1081. Hitler's facile pronouncement that "for every bomb on a German city five or ten will fall back" upon the adversary's cities proved impossible to carry out in practice. On the contrary, in the course of World War

- II, it was the Allied forces who avenged themselves for German air raids upon their territories by dropping one hundred times as many bombs on Germany's cities.
1082. Threats of this nature did not benefit him in the least. Such grandiose proclamations on Hitler's part merely forced him to follow through on these announcements, for fear of losing credibility, instead of making the English more eager for peace.
1083. As he moved against Russia in 1941, Hitler would reveal precisely how "limited" these interests were indeed. The new Lebensraum in the east encompassed not only the Ukraine, but also of Russia as well.
1084. Hitler's mistaken notion on the parallel nature of domestic and foreign policy is evident in these statements once more. Even if one assumed there was some truth to this idea, one has to take into consideration: domestically, Hitler had prevailed without the use of force; in his foreign policy he resorted to brute force to achieve his goals, a different way which he could not victoriously end in the long run.
1085. Nickname for the French soldier.
1086. Hitler is alluding to the use of magnetized mines which both German submarines and planes dropped in British coastal waters. Since the majority of British ships were made of iron, the magnetic field of the new German mines attracted them to the ship's hull. This posed a danger to vessels passing in its proximity. However, the British soon caught on and devised a procedure for demagnetizing and thus protecting their ships from the mines. Hence, this particular one of "Hitler's secret weapons" lost its effectiveness quickly.
1087. This appeal to the "Lord Almighty" was at the same time an appeal of great urgency to the English to end the "senseless" war.
1088. See above, note 1073.
1089. Legation Counselor Knoll drew up the protocol on the meeting between Hitler and the Japanese officers delegation. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 132, pp. 131 ff.
1090. DNB reports, September 21, 1939.
1091. Report in VB, No. 266, September 23, 1939.
1092. The circumstances of Fritsch's death were peculiar. According to Foertsch, p. 134, he committed suicide.
1093. Cf. Baur, p. 180.
1094. For Jodl's report and Hitler's reaction to it, cf. Graf Kielmannsegg, *Der Fritschprozess 1939* (Hamburg, 1949), p. 146.—Alfred Jodl, born 1890 in Würzburg; Colonel General in 1944; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
1095. HVBL, 1939, Part C, p. 333 (September 26, 1939).
1096. DNB report, September 23, 1939.
1097. Hitler himself did not attend the September 26 state funeral. The ceremony took place at the Unter den Linden Memorial where Göring placed a wreath for Fritsch. Brauchitsch was instructed to give the commemorative speech, and the aged Field Marshal von Mackensen made a token appearance.

Hitler ordered numerous state funerals during the Second World War, and in many instances the cause of death of the person thus honored was far from clear. The term “state funeral” thus acquired an ominous meaning. The man in the street began to refer to those who had provoked Hitler’s displeasure as men who would no doubt soon receive a “state funeral.” Rommel’s death was one poignant example; see below, note 1103 and October 12, 1944.

1098. DNB report, September 25, 1939.
1099. Report in VB, No. 269, September 26, 1939.
1100. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 135, pp. 135 f.
1101. DNB text, September 25, 1939.
1102. See below, October 21, 1939.
1103. Erwin Rommel, born 1891 in Heidenheim; Field Marshal in 1942; Hitler forced him to commit suicide in 1944 in the region between Herrlingen and Ulm.
1104. Notes by the Envoy Schmidt on this conversation published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 138, pp. 140 ff.
1105. This remark was unmistakably aimed at Finland, Belorussia, and the Baltic States. For the time being, Hitler intended to leave these to Russia in the hope of thereby making the situation all the more difficult for the Western Powers. Moreover, he believed that once sufficiently frightened by the Bolsheviks, they would be easy prey for him.
1106. “Should a fourth Englishman say: ‘For us the frontier runs along the Rhine,’ and the next comes up to say: ‘For us the frontier runs along the Vistula river,’ then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we shall have to assist you in the process!” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.
1107. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XX, p. 573.
1108. Cf. report in VB, No. 271, September 28, 1939.
1109. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 146, p. 151.
1110. Reference to the cooperation of Germany and Turkey in the First World War.
1111. DNB note, September 28, 1939. Already in the course of the first month of the war, German submarines had been successful in many battle engagements. For instance, one German submarine had sunk the British *Courageous*, an aircraft carrier of 22,500 tons, on September 18. However, further developments proved that submarine-warfare was not an effective tool, in the long run, against the Royal Navy and the British Merchant Marine.
1112. Ribbentrop’s wired report to Hitler is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 152, pp. 159 ff. No record of Hitler’s assent exits.
1113. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 157, pp. 164 f. German text in RGBl. 1940, II, p. 3. The DNB also published the text of the agreement in its September 29, 1939 issue.
1114. A copy of the map is published in DGFP, D, VIII, Appendix VI, according to the Political Treaties file of the German Foreign Ministry

- (644/254451-56). The map with the new borders had been signed by both Stalin and Ribbentrop.
1115. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 158-160; pp. 165 f.
1116. "Agents of the Government of the Reich" immediately began the process of resettlement of German inhabitants of the Baltic States and of those living in the formerly Polish areas subsequently placed under Soviet sovereignty. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 153, p. 162. Further see DNB reports of September and October 1939. Popularly the Germans evacuated from these territories, awaiting resettlement in temporary camps in the Reich, were referred to as "*Beute-Deutsche*."
1117. After the attack on the Soviet Union, Hitler would deny knowledge of any such agreement. He maintained that the USSR had appropriated Lithuania in complete disregard of its contractual obligations. See below, June 22, 1941.
1118. See above, secret additional protocol of August 23, 1939.
1119. This boundary correction was never carried through, since Hitler had already determined to annex Lithuania to the Reich in the near future. Nevertheless, Lithuania received the previously Polish area around Vilnius. Poland had conquered the territory in the 1920 War against Lithuania.
1120. Cf. DNB texts, September 29, 1939. The full contents of Ribbentrop's letters are published in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 162 and 163, pp. 167 f.
1121. *Ibid.*, no. 161, p. 167. DNB text, September 29, 1939.
1122. Report in VB, No. 273, September 30, 1939.
1123. *Ibid.*
1124. Report in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1939. The Iron Cross recipients in question were Göring, Raeder, von Brauchitsch; the Colonel Generals von Rundstedt, von Kluge, List, Milch; Admiral General Albrecht; Generals Blaskowitz, von Kuchler, Kesselring, Löhr; and Rear Admiral Schniewind.
1125. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 170, pp. 176 f. See also Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 29 f.
1126. DNB report, October 1, 1939.
1127. DNB note, October 2, 1939.
1128. See above, August 13, 1939 and Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 120.
1129. The official German protocol by the Envoy Schmidt is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 176, pp. 184 ff.
1130. Report in Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 154.
1131. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 480 f.
1132. DNB report, October 2, 1939.
1133. DNB note, October 2, 1939.
1134. Cf. DNB report, October 5, 1939. The report was on Hitler's visit to Warsaw.
1135. DNB text, October 5, 1939.
1136. See above, Major Events in Summary and note 37.
1137. See Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
1138. In a speech the following month, Hitler proclaimed: "This time

another Germany faces the England of the World War [—] and it can only laugh at the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers.” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.

1139. DNB text, October 6, 1939.
1140. Reference to the defense of Alcázar by Franco’s troops in the Spanish Civil War.
1141. At this early stage of the war, Hitler could still play the cynic and proclaim such grandiose victories publicly. He remained silent when from 1943 onward, hundreds of thousands of German prisoners of war had to set out on their “march to Moscow.”
1142. Voivod(e) (*hist.*): army commander and eligible prince in Poland, Moldavia, and Walachia. Since 1919: leader of a Polish province.
1143. This “lasting cooperation” ended on June 22, 1941.
1144. The accusation that Hitler had failed to “keep his word” was not based upon a “revision” of the Treaty of Versailles Germany had sought. Hitler was guilty of breach of contract based on the Munich Agreement.
1145. It was a well-known fact that Hitler immensely disliked all forms of international bodies and conferences. He had been greatly irked by the fact that in both the cases of the Saarland and the Sudeten German territories, he had to accept these terrains from the hands of similar “international consortia” which he considered “inappropriate.”
1146. Hitler neglected to mention Finland’s refusal to enter into a non-aggression pact with Germany. See above, note 427.
1147. Indeed, the methods were highly “beneficial,” however, they were “beneficial” to Hitler exclusively. Further into the war, the methods he employed would backfire on him.
1148. The only person whose “welfare” Hitler evidently felt “obliged to safeguard” was his very own.
1149. When Hitler spoke of “strength,” he usually meant using “brute force” to achieve his ends.
1150. Cf. Napoleon’s January 2, 1805 message to the King of England:
My dear Sir and Brother!
Called upon by Providence [!], the voice of the Senate, of the People and of the Army to occupy the French Throne, the desire for peace is foremost in my mind. France and England are endangering their own welfare. They can do battle for centuries [!]. But shall their governments in this manner fulfill the most sacred of their missions? And shall not the torrents of blood shed needlessly weigh heavily upon their consciences? I do not feel it dishonorable to take a first step. I think I have proven to the world many times over that I do not fear war. I do not know why I should fear war. My heart desires peace, even though war has yet to be to the detriment of my fame. [—]
I plead with Your Majesty not to forsake the glory of bestowing peace upon the world. [—] What can Your Majesty hope to achieve by war? To enter into a coalition with some mighty powers? [—] To renew the disquiet of his heart? Times have changed. Does he wish to ruin our

financial power? Financial power based upon a healthy agriculture can never be completely destroyed. To wrench France's colonies from it? For France, these colonies have only secondary significance. And does Your Majesty not already possess more than he can administer?

If Your Majesty would kindly reflect upon this himself for once, He will come to see that in this war there is neither sense nor victory to be found. It is all too sad to lead people to battle only that they should do battle. This world is big enough for both our nations to exist within it. Reason is mighty enough to allow us to find ways to settle our differences if both sides truly desire to do so.

Published in Paul and Gertrude Aretz, *Napoleon I—Mein Leben und Werk* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1936), pp. 278 f.

1151. Apparently, Hitler was referring mainly to Churchill whom, in a speech in January 1942, he derided as “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals (*Herostratennaturen*) in world history.” See below, January 30, 1942.
1152. The further course of events proved that England was still impenetrable from the Continent as, despite modern weaponry, it remained an island most difficult to assail for a land power. While the German Luftwaffe could do damage there, it was not capable of bringing about decision. Only a naval power of sufficient might would have been able to pose a real danger to Great Britain. And neither Napoleon nor Hitler had such a force.
1153. This proposal was not the last to be made by Hitler. Already on July 19, 1940, he would put forth yet another “most generous” offer to England. See below, July 19, 1940.
1154. Cf. IMT, 686-PS.
1155. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 224, pp. 248 ff. Cf. also IMT, 62-C. Instructions also published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 32 f. and in Jacobsen, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 113.
1156. Marginal note, handwritten by Raeder: *Nicht* (no).
1157. IMT, 52-L.
1158. While nearly one million men had died in the fighting surrounding the city of Verdun, the battle brought about no decisive turn in the war. The senseless slaughter along the Western Front in the years 1915 through 1916 later became symbolic for the murderous nature of positional warfare.
1159. DNB text, October 10, 1939.
1160. George Bernard Shaw, born 1856 in Dublin, died 1950 in Ayot St. Lawrence (Herfordshire), was an early member of the socialist Fabian Society (founded in London in 1894; influenced the Labour Party and the social welfare legislation in Great Britain); Shaw's plays combine irony with political, philosophical, and polemic aspects; they include *Arms and the Man*; *Devil's Disciple*; *Man and Superman*; *Saint Joan*; he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. The Republic of Ireland remained neutral in World War II.

1161. Parliamentary Debates, 5th series, House of Commons, Vol. 352, pp. 563 ff.
1162. According to DNB text, October 13, 1939.
1163. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 259, p. 289.
1164. Cf. Hitler's remark to Dahlerus. See above, September 26, 1939.
1165. Address of November 12, 1939; Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6172.
1166. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 2077 f.
1167. For the above cited statements see Helmut Krausnick, "Hitler und die Morde in Polen," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 11, (1963), pp. 196 ff. Cf. Zoller, p. 195. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. VII, pp. 516 f. On this topic see also Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939 bis 1945* (Stuttgart, 1961), and below, October 2, 1940.
1168. Sven Anders Hedin (1865–1952), Swedish archaeologist, geographer, and explorer in Central Asia and China; explored routes across the Himalaya and produced the first maps of Tibet; published books as *My Life as Explorer* (1925) and *Across the Gobi Desert* (1928).
1169. Memorandum by Legation Counselor Hewel. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 263, pp. 293 ff.
1170. *Ibid.*, p. 294. There was much truth to Hitler's suspicion that the Scandinavian states preferred to orientate themselves along the lines of British foreign policy and distanced themselves from the policy pursued by Germany. None of these countries desired to witness yet another "Copenhagen of 1807." For Hitler's article on "Germany and the Finnish Question" see below, December 7, 1939.
1171. DNB note, October 17, 1939. Karl Dönitz, born 1891 in Berlin-Grünau, died 1980 in Aumühle (near Hamburg); Grand Admiral in 1943; appointed 1945 by Hitler as his successor in defiance of the constitution; sentenced 1946 to ten years imprisonment in the Spandau military prison; released 1956.
1172. DNB text, October 18, 1939.
1173. Reference to Admiral Ludwig von Reuters, born 1869; died 1943.
1174. Hitler did not sign "Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War." It bore merely the signature "by order: Keitel." Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 276, pp. 316 f.
1175. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 2069. The cross in question had eight points; in its center, a laurel wreath surrounded a swastika. On the reverse side of the second class award, the year "1939" was engraved. The design was similar to that of the 1933 "Front-Line Soldier" and World War I veterans' medal. Depending on whether the recipient had been a soldier on active duty or a civilian, this distinction was awarded with or without swords. The second class version in bronze was worn on a black-white-red band, the black central stripe of which dominated. The first class medal in silver consisted of a pin which was to be worn on the left chest like the Iron Cross. After the establishment of the Knight's Cross, there was also a version to be worn on a band around the neck. See below, August 19, 1940.
1176. DNB note, October 19, 1939. RGBl. 1940, II, p. 3.

1177. Cf. Ribbentrop's telegram to the German Embassy in Moscow on October 15, 1939. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 258, p. 280.
1178. Report in VB, No. 293, October 20, 1939.
1179. DNB text, October 19, 1939. Cf. notes taken by Legation Counselor Hewel on the conversation between Hitler and Cernak in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 286, pp. 326 ff.
1180. Reference to the Olsa region which, in accordance with the provisions of the Munich Agreement, Polish troops had occupied on October 1, 1938.
1181. The treaty was signed on November 21, 1939. It is reproduced verbatim in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 381, pp. 436 f.
1182. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1939. See also below, 1940, note 12.
1183. DNB report, October 25, 1939.
1184. Report in VB, No. 300, October 27, 1939.
1185. DNB report, October 27, 1939. Recipients of the Knight's Cross were: Colonel General Keitel, Chief of the OKW; Generals Halder, Guderian, Strauss, and Hoepfner; Lieutenant Generals Olbricht, von Briesen, and Reinhardt; General Majors Jeschonnek and Kübler; Colonel Schmidt; Lieutenants Steinhardt and Stolz.
1186. See below, speech of November 23, 1939.
1187. Cf. Schlabrendorff, pp. 45 f. See also Hans Rothfels, *Die deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main, 1958), p. 90.
1188. Cf. entries in Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
1189. DNB note, November 6, 1939.
1190. The telegram by King Leopold and Queen Wilhelmina is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 332 (enclosure), p. 384.

Telegram of the King of the Belgians and the Queen of the Netherlands to the German Chancellor

The Hague, November 7, 1939

In an hour which is of ominous import for the entire world, before the war in Western Europe begins in full violence, it is our conviction that it is our duty once more to raise our voices.

Some time ago, the belligerent parties declared that they were not averse to examining honest and secure bases for a just peace. It is our impression that they find it difficult in the present circumstances to establish contact for a more complete exposition and coordination of their positions.

As the Sovereigns of two neutral states which have good relations with all their neighbors, we are prepared to offer them our good offices. If agreeable to them, we are willing to place ourselves at their disposal as they may see fit and, with all resources at our command and in the spirit of friendly sympathy, facilitate the transmission of proposals for the attainment of an understanding.

This is in our judgement the mission which we have to carry out for the sake of the well-being of our nations and in the interest of the

entire world. We hope that our offer will be accepted and that with it the first step will be taken toward the restoration of a lasting peace.

Wilhelmina

Leopold

1191. IMT, 72-C.
1192. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 346, pp. 397 f.
1193. DNB text, November 15, 1939.
1194. Cf. NSK announcements, November 6 to November 9, 1939.
1195. DNB text, November 8, 1939.
1196. The DNB text contains an error, reading “sterilization” instead of “stabilization.” Author’s notes.
1197. Reference to Chamberlain who, after Hitler’s breach of contract regarding the Munich Agreement, had correctly identified Hitler as a man not to be trusted in future dealings.
1198. At the end of the First World War, the last site for the German war headquarters had been located in the resort town of Spa. William II had left Spa in 1918, headed for exile in Holland.
1199. Hitler’s insistence on associating economic hardship with the number of suicides committed at a particular time was based upon false premises. Interestingly enough, research has shown that in Germany the number of suicides was usually higher in times of prosperity than in times of economic recession. See above, p. 311.
1200. Hitler was mistaken in his belief that Britain was split into two halves. Particularly in times of war, the British population displayed marked unity, and government and people stood united.
1201. Here, Hitler is ridiculing Halifax by a mixture with the German expressions *Faxen* (tricks, fooling around) or *Faxenmacher* (buffoon).
1202. While in 1940, Hitler once more held out “his hand,” but England and France rejected it again. See below, July 19, 1940.
1203. See above, note 390.
1204. Had Hitler refrained from going to war, he might well have lived to see the day on which the British Empire granted “full liberties” to its former colonies.
1205. Hitler revealed the true nature of the “arms reductions” he had supposedly carried out when he stated that his Government had spent 90 billion Reichsmarks on the Armed Forces in a six year period. See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
1206. Hitler nevertheless did them this favor on June 22, 1941.
1207. The German Volk did not share Hitler’s enthusiasm for war and was not pleased by his statement: “The war can last as long as it wants to.” Hitler displayed more sensibility in the DNB reproduction of the speech in which the phrase was edited to read: “It does not matter how long it [the war] will take—Germany will never capitulate.” Original quotation taken from the author’s notes.
1208. Contrary to the First World War when the rationing of foodstuffs and raw materials essential to the war effort was not implemented until one year into the war in 1915, rationing in the Second World War began before the war proper had been launched, namely, on August

- 26, 1939. While the situation with foodstuffs was far better in the course of World War II than it had been in 1914–18, this was only due to the exploitation of the territories occupied.
1209. Churchill was sixty-five years old at the time and he would prove to Hitler many times over that he was not as senile and decrepit as his ‘young’ opponent apparently assumed.
1210. The train in question, the ‘D-Zug No. 71,’ left Munich on schedule at 10:00 p.m.
1211. Cf. Baur, p. 183.
1212. Cf. Zoller, p. 181.
1213. After his escape from the assassination attempt of 1944, Hitler and many others would be reinforced in the belief that something mysterious was happening. It was remarkable that external factors—and not a “sixth sense” of the Führer—played an important role for the outcome of both events. See below, July 20, 1944.
1214. DNB text, November 9, 1939.
1215. The death of yet another victim brought the casualty figure to eight men.
1216. Cf. DNB report, November 21, 1939. See also *Johann Georg Elser, Autobiographie eines Attentäters*, ed. by Lothar Gruchmann (Stuttgart, 1979), including the Gestapo protocols. Johann Georg Elser was born 1903 in Hermaringen and murdered 1945 at the Dachau concentration camp. According to the official German statements, Elser had operated for the British Secret Service or Otto Strasser, the brother of Gregor Strasser (see above, 1932, note 169). In 1939–40, the public waited in vain for additional news on a trial supposedly awaiting Elser. Several years later, an official police report dated April 16, 1945 announced that Elser had become the victim of an Allied bomb raid. While interned at the concentration camp Dachau, Elser confided to the pastor and later President of the World Council of Churches Martin Niemöller that the Gestapo had forced him to lay the bomb. At the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, Elser made similar statements to Captain Payne Best, one of the Secret Service officers kidnapped at Venlo on November 9. Cf. S. Payne Best, *The Venlo Incident* (London, 1950), pp. 128 ff.
1217. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 167.
1218. See also above, note 44. On November 21, 1939, a report on the incident entitled “Resolution of the Munich Attempt” was published along with an official statement: “On November 9, 1939, the heads of the British Intelligence Service in Europe, Mister Best and Captain Stevens, attempted to transgress the Dutch border to Germany at Venlo. They were apprehended by the German officers observing them and were handed over to the State Police. At present [i.e. November 21, 1939], an investigation is underway to determine whether or not these men were taken prisoner on Dutch or German territory.” Cf. also Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne, 1959) and Payne Best, op. cit.

As a result of the incident, the Dutch officer Klop who had accompanied the two Englishman was seriously injured. Both he and the Dutch driver were also brought across the border into Germany. For the attempts by the Dutch consulate to obtain their release and, after the death of the officer, to secure at least the release of his remains see DGFP, D, VIII, no. 344, pp. 395 f.

1219. See above, August 31, 1939.
1220. See below, speech of November 23, 1939.
1221. DNB report, November 9, 1939.
1222. DNB report, November 10, 1939.
1223. Ibid.
1224. Ibid.
1225. Reports on Hitler's visit to Munich on November 11, 1939 in VB, No. 316, November 12, 1939.
1226. DNB reports, November 11, 1939.
1227. DNB text, November 11, 1939.
1228. Report in VB, No. 317, November 13, 1939.
1229. See below, note 1238.
1230. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
1231. On May 30, 1942, Hitler declared: "Had I realized the extent of the danger, had I known what awaited us, then I would still have—despite misgivings—ordered the attack on the West in the year 1939 and I would have already attacked the East in 1940." Record on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 7 EW 68 970).
1232. DNB text, November 18, 1939.
1233. Hitler had used this phrase on the battle or war "forced upon us" in his September 3, 1939 appeal to the NSDAP. See above, *ibid.*
1234. See above, September 30, 1938.
1235. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 2235.
1236. Report in VB, No. 324, November 20, 1939. Aurelio Mosquero Narváez had been State President since 1938.
1237. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 377, pp. 430 ff. The code names "Rhein" and "Elbe" in the initial text of the Directive were changed to "Danzig" and "Augsburg." The instructions signed by Keitel are reproduced verbatim in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 37 f. A supplement dated December 11, 1939 on sealing-off Belgian and Dutch ports is published there, too.
1238. Hitler repeatedly ordered maneuvers, alerts, and exercises during the winter months. On January 1, 1940, the Belgians accidentally obtained information on battle formations as a result of a military airplane having to make an emergency landing at Mechelen-sur-Meuse while en route from Münster to Bonn. No action was taken nonetheless. Despite unusually cold temperatures that winter, Hitler paid no attention to the facts that the Armed Forces barely managed to start their engines in the cold of the Eifel and Hunsrück mountains, and the Rhine was frozen over. In the end, he reached his goal of confusing his opponents on the other side of the Rhine. Indeed, his attack on May 10, 1940 came as somewhat of a surprise to the Allies.

- Details on the preparation for the offensive to the West in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Westfeldzuges 1939–40* (Göttingen, 1956).
1239. DNB report, November 23, 1939. For the medal, see above, note 624.
1240. DNB text, November 23, 1939.
1241. There had been no such meeting the previous year. It is possible that Hitler had in mind expositions of his intents such as the November 1937 ‘secret speech’ before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht and Neurath. See above, November 5, 1937.
1242. See above, May 23, August 14, and August 22, 1939.
1243. Aretz, op. cit.
1244. IMT, 789-PS. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 384, pp. 439 ff.
1245. Hitler never was a man to make “thorough observation,” rather he assessed every issue by his own biased standards.
1246. This “history” dated back no longer than 1914 and was fated to end in 1941 when Hitler arbitrarily caused yet another two-front war by attacking the Soviet Union.
1247. This reference is inappropriate. For one, the Reassurance Pact was not terminated by Russia, but by the Reich, then under Chancellor Leo von Caprivi (1890–94), successor to Bismarck. Secondly, while Bismarck had concluded the Reassurance Pact in 1887 as a mutual guarantee of neutrality between Russia and Germany, he had no part in the subsequent breach of contract by the Reich.
1248. Allusion to the explosion in the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, 1939.
1249. Hitler meant “1918.”
1250. This was a thinly veiled reference to Brauchitsch’s objections to Hitler’s policies in the November 5, 1937 debate.
1251. This reference is to the Venlo incident. See above, note 1216.
1252. This “decisive advantage” to be gained by deploying these new mines was soon lost as the British developed a procedure to protect their ships from the magnetized mines. See above, note 1086.
1253. Despite Hitler’s fervent belief to the contrary, neither magnetized mines, submarine warfare, air raids, nor rocket fire would “bring England to its knees.” Nevertheless, Hitler could not persuade himself to proceed more forcefully against them since he still entertained the hope of bringing them over to his side.
1254. Cf. in this context the item “Hitler’s decisions” in the index.
1255. Hitler was referring to the strained nerves of Hellmuth von Moltke who had served as Chief of the General Staff from 1906 until September 1914.
1256. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XX, p. 628. For further details on Hitler’s chastisement of the generals, in particular his 1939 statement that he intended to “suppress by brute force” any opposition by the general staff, see Halder’s War Diary, entry of November 23, 1939, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
1257. Reports in VB, No. 331, November 27, 1939.

1258. RGBI. 1939, I, p. 2341.
1259. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 399, pp. 463 ff. See also Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 40 ff.
1260. Reference to the anticipated successful conduct of the Western Offensive, the first phase of which consisted of the occupation of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and of all northern France's ports situated on the Channel.
1261. DNB note, December 4, 1939.
1262. Report in VB, No. 339, December 5, 1939.
1263. Reference to a "Resolution by the Greater German Reichstag" in April 1942. See below, *ibid.*
1264. DNB text, December 6, 1939.
1265. Mackensen lived long enough to see the end of the war and bore witness to the complete collapse of the Third Reich. He died on November 8, 1945 in Burghorn, a town near Celle.
1266. On December 4, 1939, Molotov had already sent a telegram to Geneva, declaring that the Soviet Union would not take part in the League of Nations' sessions. The Soviet Union denied the constitutionality of the council session and the full assembly convened. On December 11, 1939, the assembly created a committee to investigate the issues at hand. That same evening, it determined that the Soviet Union was to cease hostilities against Finland within 24 hours. Two days later, Soviet radio broadcasts announced that the Soviet Union was incapable of complying with this sentence. On December 15, 1939, the League of Nations' Council arrived at the conclusion that the Soviet Union's aggression against Finland had severed its ties to the League. As a repercussion, the Soviet Union no longer held membership in the League.
1267. See above, note 427.
1268. The article was dated "Berlin, December 7" and the DNB published it later, too.
1269. Published in VB, No. 343, December 8, 1939.
1270. The originally quoted German proverb corresponds to the proverb: "As you give, so you receive."
1271. DNB note, December 9, 1939. The "Adolf Hitler Channel" had a length of 41 kilometers and connected the Upper Silesian industrial region with the Oder river.
1272. IMT, 064-C. A report on the conference is also published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 443, pp. 519 ff.
1273. The popular German ocean-going passenger-steamship *Bremen*, former recipient of the "Blue Band" distinction, had sought refuge in the harbor of Murmansk after the outbreak of war. With the connivance of the Soviet Union, it managed to return to Germany at a later date.
1274. Vidkun Quisling, born 1887; shot on October 24, 1945; former Norwegian Minister of War; Minister-President from 1942 to 1945 under the German Reichskommissar Terboven.

1275. Illustrated report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1939.
1276. DNB note, December 14, 1939. The Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* belonged to a class of so-called *Taschen-Panzerkreuzer* ("pocket battleships") which owed their classification to their armored hull and relatively high number of cannons aboard as compared to their tonnage. In compliance with the Treaty of Versailles regulations, this tonnage was officially limited to a maximum of 10,000 tons. Other ships in this category were: the *Deutschland* with an actual tonnage of 11,700 tons, launched in 1931; the *Admiral Scheer* with an actual tonnage of 12,100 tons, launched in 1933; the *Admiral Graf Spee* with the same tonnage, launched in 1934. Cf. Erich Gröner, *Die Schiffe der deutschen Kriegsmarine und Luftwaffe 1939–45 und ihr Verbleib* (Munich, 1954). For the actions off the River Plate and Montevideo, cf. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. I, pp. 465 ff. In 1956, the British film *The Battle of the River Plate* was based upon the last activities of the *Admiral Graf Spee*.
- Within this context, the Editor supplements the following: The pocket battleship was named after Admiral Maximilian Reichsgraf von Spee, born 1861 in Kopenhagen, killed in action on December 8, 1914 in the South Atlantic. While the German Admiral was victorious over the British in the Battle of Coronel (Chile) on November 1, 1914, he was vanquished afterwards in the Battle of the Falkland Islands on December 8, 1914. (See also above, note 207.)
- The fact that the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*, exactly twenty-five years later at the beginning of another World War, was confronted with the same course of events and experienced the same fate as its patron in the same part of the world, is another one of those already mentioned strange "coincidences." See below, Vol. IV, Appendix.
1277. Hans Langsdorff, born 1894 in Bergen (Rügen island); joined the Navy in 1912 as cadet; took part in the 1915 Battle of the Skagerrak aboard the battleship *Grosser Kurfürst*; later became Commander of torpedo-boat flotillas; naval staff officer.
1278. Verbatim contents of telegrams in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 461 and 463, pp. 542 f.
1279. DNB text, December 18, 1939. The following is known concerning the fate of the two remaining pocket battleships, the *Deutschland* and the *Admiral Scheer*: Having played a role in the Spanish Civil War, the *Deutschland* operated predominantly in the Atlantic in 1939. When war broke out, it fled to a temporary safe haven in Soviet territorial waters. Subsequently, the ship returned to Germany to be renamed the *Lützow* in an effort not to compromise Germany in the event that the ship should be sunk. In addition, the new name was to conceal the fact that the actual *Lützow* (a newly built heavy armored ship of 14,800 tons, launched in 1939) had been sold to the Soviet Union. The precaution measure of renaming the *Deutschland* proved of great value as, in 1945, the ship came under heavy enemy fire in an air raid on the Swinemünde harbor. Having sustained several hits on April 16,

the *Lützow* foundered and its crew was forced to blow it up. Several days previously, on April 9, the *Admiral Scheer* had also sustained great damage in an air raid on the docks of the Deutsche Werke in Kiel. This vessel sank and was buried under the debris. Cf. Gröner, *Kriegsmarine*, op. cit.

1280. Cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 669.
1281. *Ibid.*, p. 678 and Bullock, p. 576.
1282. DNB text, December 19, 1939. Notes on the conference Ribbentrop–Kurusu published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 448, p. 524.
1283. DNB text, December 21, 1939. Hitler's telegram congratulating Stalin was published on the first page of every major German daily paper. The media also carried Stalin's reply in a similarly grandiose manner: "Please accept this expression of my appreciation of the congratulations expressed to my person and to the congratulations extended to the peoples of the Soviet Union. J. Stalin." DNB text, December 26, 1939.
1284. Reports on Hitler's holiday visits with the troops from December 23 to December 25 in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1939. Further see DNB report, December 26, 1939 and the illustrated report by Heinrich Hoffmann.
1285. The "List Regiment" was the wartime formation of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, Hitler's regiment in World War I.
1286. Report in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1939.
1287. Report in VB, Nos. 364 and 365, December 30 and 31, 1939. The emblems were to be worn on the left chest and mirrored Hitler's fancy for pins.

The Year 1940

Notes

1. See above, November 29, 1939.
2. See above, speech of November 11, 1939.
3. “Directive No. 9 for the Conduct of the War against the Enemy’s Economy” in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 399, pp. 463 ff. See above, November 29, 1939.
4. Statement by Chamberlain on April 5, 1940. See also below, speech of December 10, 1940.
5. See above, speech of September 26, 1938.
6. See above, appeal of September 3, 1939. The number was exaggerated; see above, 1939, note 1018.
7. The Polish State had a population of 35 million in 1939. Of these, however, only 25 million were ethnic Poles.
8. In 1944–45, German troops became active in northern Norway exclusively while defending themselves not against the Allies but against the Russian units penetrating Finland.
9. The Battle of Sedan began on September 1, 1870 and ended a day later with the capture of Napoleon III.
10. The Battle of the Marne from September 5 to September 9, 1914, constituted a major turning-point in the First World War. Five German armies encountered strong and determined resistance by the Entente forces. With both sides stalemated, a long and exhausting trench warfare ensued. After the First World War, there was much debate in Germany as to who was to blame for the disastrous battle. One popular version purported that Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch had inspected the armies in the west on September 8. On returning to Headquarters, Hentsch had reported on the situation in a most “pessimistic” manner. The generals in charge of the campaign became “very depressed” as a result, especially the two generals Kluck and Kuhl, who then ordered a retreat. Notes taken by Hentsch on September 15, 1914 on his travels do not substantiate this theory in the least. A partial facsimile of this report is reproduced in Erich Otto Volkmann, *Der grosse Krieg 1914–1918* (Berlin, 1938). Another version of the Hentsch hypothesis implies that Hentsch had probably been a Freemason and, hence, it was no surprise that he had given such a negative account of the situation to discourage the generals. In German schools in the 1920s and later, this image of Hentsch was conjured up for the pupils as an example of the “horrendous” consequences that defeatism and pessimism of even a low level government employee could have in times of war. According to this rationalization, Hentsch’s assessment of the situation was to blame for the downfall of Imperial Germany. Against this background, it is easily understood why, from the onset of hostilities, Hitler insisted on receiving only good news from his generals at the front and forbade any reports to the contrary.

11. Churchill declared in a 1939 radio broadcast: "If we are conquered, all will be enslaved, and the United States will be left single-handed to guard the rights of man." Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174. See above, November 12, 1939.
12. "The greatest battle of all time," "the greatest battle in world history," and "the greatest victory of all time" became Hitler's favorite expressions in particular in the years before 1942. See below, June 5, 1940 and Vol. IV, Index of Subjects ("Time").
13. Bidding farewell to the former Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima, in October of the previous year, Hitler had stated that he would not "care to share the victory with anyone." According to Senior Counselor Hewel's record of the conversation, Hitler claimed that "he [Hitler] had also made this clear to Mussolini and had told him, moreover, that he did not need Italy's military assistance." Report in DGFP, D, VIII, pp. 333 f. See also above, November 24, 1939.
14. In October 1939, Hitler proclaimed: "I am making this declaration because, as is only natural, I wish to spare my Volk suffering. Should, however, the attitudes of Herr Churchill and his entourage prevail, then today's declaration will have been my last one." See above, speech of October 6, 1939.
15. See below, speech of January 30, 1942. See also above, 1939, note 1151.
16. In 1805, Napoleon I made all necessary preparations for a landing and made many a grandiose statement of his intentions. For example, in a letter dated August 3, 1805, Napoleon announced to Admiral Decres: "The English do not realize what is hanging above their heads. England will be a 'has been' once those twelve hours of crossing the Channel lie behind us." Despite this, Napoleon never dared to cross the Channel with his armies. Later he would claim that this was the fault of Admiral Villeneuve who had not come to Toulouse in time and who had instead sailed on to Cadiz. That this was merely an attempt to find a scapegoat for his own personal failure is proved in the instruction he himself had issued to Villeneuve. See below, September 15, 1940.
17. "And when people in England today nosily inquire: 'Well, why isn't he coming?' Calm yourselves: he is coming!" See below, speech of September 4, 1940.
18. Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6275 ff. Broadcast of September 11, 1940, on the night bombing of London.
19. The Anti-Comintern Pact had initially been concluded by Germany and Japan. See above, November 25, 1936. A year later, Italy also joined the Pact. See above, November 6, 1937.
20. See below, October 23, 1940.
21. See below, June 22, 1941; see further Vol. IV, Appendix, for the phenomenon of these and other strange "coincidences."
22. "For this kind of policy [the conquest of Lebensraum at the expense of the Russians] there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See also above, Introduction, p. 53.
23. DNB text, January 1, 1940.

24. See above, September 19, 1939.
25. At the end of nearly every New Year's proclamation during the War, Hitler prophesied that the New Year was certain to herald final victory for Germany. In pronouncing this vision, Hitler preferred nebulous wording which, given the questionable nature of these assurances, implied only that victory would be gained in the coming year without stating so outright. In 1940, Hitler announced that the Reich was "entering into the most decisive year in German history." The next year, the Führer proclaimed that "the year 1941 will bring us the conclusive and greatest victory in our history." The next New Year's Proclamation was more humble in nature: "Let us implore the Lord that the year 1942 shall bring about a conclusive decision in the salvation of our Volk and of those nations allied with us." In 1943, the New Year's Proclamation had strikingly general wording: "At one point in this struggle, one of the powers shall be the first to experience a downfall. And we know that this power shall not be Germany." The following year, there was even more caution to be detected in Hitler's choice of words: "The year 1944 will be one of many trials and tribulations for all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will be coming to a head this year. Confidence that we shall emerge from it victoriously suffuses all of us." In 1945, Hitler resorted to a plea to the Almighty that He might bestow on the German people a more prosperous New Year: "As the speaker for Greater Germany before the Almighty, I pledge that we shall loyally and unshakeably proceed with our duties in the New Year, firmly convinced that the hour of final victory shall come soon for the most deserving among the belligerents: the Greater German Reich." While Hitler never lacked new inspiration for yet more grandiose proclamations, the continuous change of tone in his New Year's proclamations nonetheless betrayed the slow but steady decline of his regime.
26. Allusion to the explosion in Munich's Bürgerbräukeller. See above, November 8, 1939, and note 1216.
27. Reference to the "peace proposal" of October 6, 1939. See above, *ibid.*
28. DNB text, January 1, 1940.
29. *Ibid.*
30. DNB texts, January 2, 1940.
31. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 504, pp. 604 ff.
32. Hitler avenged himself for Mussolini's bold letter after Italy's ill-fated campaign in Greece which, in addition to the perilous situation in northern Africa, got the Duce into considerable trouble. See below, November 20, 1940.
33. DNB note, January 7, 1940. As the situation deteriorated further, Hitler was to change this assessment of the role of art in times of war. From September 1944 on, all theatres and concert-halls were forced to close their doors as the Wehrmacht requisitioned all creative and performing artists for what had in the meantime become a "total war." See below, decree of July 25, 1944.

34. DNB note, January 8, 1940.
35. For details on this incident that let top secret documents—on a planned offensive to the West—fall into the Belgians' hands, see above, 1939, note 1238.
36. Cf. Hitler's conversation with Kurt Lüdecke: "I have an old principle," he told Lüdecke, "only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it." Bullock, p. 381. Cf. also Kurt Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (London, 1938).
37. Published in Heeres-Dienstvorschrift, No. 19, August 1, 1943 (Verschluss-Sachen-Vorschrift). A supplementary order was issued July 12, 1942 on the "transmission of operational directives and extraordinary orders to the front."
38. DNB note, January 12, 1940.
39. DNB note, January 17, 1940. This personal nature of the congratulations conveyed to Attolico was not merely a question of marked politeness regarding the Ambassador, but also served to slight Mussolini. While the "obedient" Attolico was distinguished by receipt of a handwritten note of congratulations, Hitler chose to ignore the Duce and failed to acknowledge receipt of Mussolini's "insolent" letter of January 3, 1940.
40. See above, pp. 1145 ff., speech of September 6, 1938.
41. IMT, 136-PS.
42. Frederick II, King of Prussia; born January 12, 1712 in Berlin; died August 17, 1786 at Sanssouci Castle in Potsdam.
43. See above, speech of January 18, 1939; for the detailed content of these addresses see below, May 3 and December 18, 1940.
44. The last inspection of officers took place on November 28, 1943 in Breslau (Wrocław). The majority of Hitler's speeches on these occasions have been preserved in the form of silver-coated copper records, found after the War. The Bertelsmann publishing house and the Ariola record company repaired the disks, donating them to the Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Additional records were found in 1964. For the contents of these appeals see also below, May 3, 1940 and December 18, 1940.
45. See above, speech of November 23, 1939.
46. See above, p. 1254.
47. DNB text, January 24, 1940.
48. Later, Navy officer cadets attended these roll calls.
49. Göring's opening remarks and the first part of Hitler's speech were preserved on a record, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (L2/EW 65 881-65 886).
50. Hitler himself took care that Germany became entangled in a war on all its frontiers ("*nach allen Seiten der Himmelsrose*") by attacking neutral states, invading the Soviet Union, and declaring war on the United States. Hitler committed a slip of the tongue as he sought to employ the idiomatic phrase "Himmelsrose" instead of the proper term "Windrose."
51. See above, September 19, 1939.
52. Hitler evidently made this remark to confuse the Western Powers as to

- the time of the attack by issuing alerts repeatedly and without apparent reason. See above, November 20, 1939 and note 1238.
53. DNB text, January 25, 1940. The armored ship returned with great difficulty and only managed to do so thanks to Russian support. It was clear that Hitler ordered the change of name of the ship for psychological reasons; if the ship were later destroyed, it would not be taken to have a symbolic meaning for all of *Deutschland*. In addition, the re-naming was to conceal the fact that the actual *Lützow* had been sold to Russia earlier.
 54. There was no indication here that the renaming was to be carried out by the Soviet Union.
 55. IMT, 063-C.
 56. Cf. Walter Hubatsch, “*Weserübung*”—*Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940* (2nd ed. Göttingen, 1960) and the *German White Book*, 4, 1940.
 57. See above, December 12, 1939.
 58. IMT, 166-C.
 59. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs* (London, 1948), pp. 13 f.
 60. The attitude of the military that inactivity demoralized the troops greatly facilitated winning over the generals to Hitler’s plans. In spite of grave misgivings, the generals yielded to Hitler in both the winter campaign in late 1939 and in late 1940. While not at all enthusiastic about Hitler’s plans for an offensive in the West and an invasion of Russia, the generals finally held these to be the lesser evil of the two choices the military faced (inactivity or action) in consideration of the morale of the standing troops. On the other hand, the activities German soldiers became involved in as they entered the Soviet Union were not to the liking of the generals either.
 61. During the First World War, the command of the German High Seas Fleet had kept the majority of its vessels in harbor. This had been the result of sober calculations, and not of cowardice and lack of a sense of duty. The few battles in which the German High Seas Fleet was involved (e.g. Falkland Islands; Skagerrak) demonstrated how vulnerable it was to the superior Royal Navy. The Imperial Fleet would have risked complete destruction in any serious engagement with the British naval forces.
The sailors’ mutiny in November 1918 was the result of the Navy command’s decision to undertake a last desperate, suicidal foray along the English coast, before the final capitulation by Germany’s Armed Forces. Once the “soldiers’ soviets” began their short rule in Germany, they were joined by Navy personnel whose blue attire, in a sea of field gray uniforms, naturally struck the eye of the onlooker. This created the impression and the widely-accepted belief that the 1918 revolt had been spearheaded by a rebellious Navy.
 62. Diary entry by Raeder on September 3, 1939: “In addition, the High Seas Fleet is so inferior to the British Fleet in numbers and strength that all its men can do is to show that they know how to die valiantly.” *The*

Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, pp. 13 f.

63. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 810.
64. Hitler made similar claims after the 1923 Putsch; see above, pp. 541 f. and 723 f. After the 1934 Röhm Purge, he searched for similar excuses; see above, pp. 496 ff.
65. "The German nation has been given its Germanic Empire after all." See above, p. 943, speech of September 13, 1937.
66. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 240.
67. DNB text, January 1, 1940.
68. This sarcasm on the part of Hitler was completely inappropriate since, on many occasions, Hitler grandly proclaimed a Reich of honor, peace, and social justice. At a banquet on February 24, 1892, William II had proclaimed: "I will lead you still to magnificent days!" See above, 1933, p. 406 and note 350.
69. See above, 1939, note 1014.
70. Reference to Thomas Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States 1913–21.
71. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia neither "disintegrated" Germany nor "tore it to pieces." Quite the contrary, the Treaty made possible the continued existence of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation for another century and a half.
72. At its inception in 1871, Imperial Germany had a population of 41 million, not of 80 million as Hitler insisted.
73. Despite its obvious shortcomings, the Weimar Republic most certainly did not embrace a nihilistic philosophy. Actually, the motto ("We want only to destroy! What we cannot possess shall be destroyed!") rather befits Hitler's reign, as should become obvious.
74. There is some truth to Hitler's statement here. Indeed, the "Party, Labor Service, SA, SS, all other organizations, Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe, Army, and Navy" were nothing other than "means to an end," namely: Hitler's claims on power.
75. See above, September 19, 1939.
76. This figure was divorced from reality.
77. This was an exaggeration, too.
78. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 203.
79. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 399.
80. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 204 ff.
81. Cf. entries into Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
82. DNB note, February 2, 1940.
83. Cf. Jodl's diary, IMT, 1809-PS.
84. DNB note, February 16, 1940.
85. DNB text, February 16, 1940.
86. See above, May 22, 1938.
87. Cf. reports on the incident by the German Captain Dau, the German Naval Attaché Schreiber, and the German Envoy Dr. Bräuer; DNB reports, February 17 and February 18, 1940; and DGFP, D, VIII, no. 618, pp. 779 ff.

88. Chamberlain and Halifax rejected the Norwegian Government's formal protests against what Norway claimed was a transgression of its neutrality. Moreover, Chamberlain and Halifax accused Norway of conniving at Germany's transgression of its neutrality by allowing for the transport of British prisoners of war through Norwegian territorial waters. On February 23, 1940, Churchill stated:
"To the glorious tale of the action off the Plate there has recently been added an epilogue—the rescue last week by the *Cossack* and her flotilla, under the nose of the enemy and amid the tangles of one-sided neutrality, of the British captives taken from the sunken German raider. Their rescue at the very moment when these unhappy men were about to be delivered over to German bondage proves that the long arm of British sea power can be stretched out, not only for foes but also for faithful friends." Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6193.
89. For details on the mood in Norway after the *Altmark-Cossack* incident see DGFP, D, VIII, no. 626, pp. 791 ff. On February 19, 1940 in Rome, Ciano recalled a conversation with the British Ambassador, Sir Percy Loraine, the successor of Lord Perth: "The British attack on the German steamer *Altmark*, which was sailing in Norwegian territorial waters with English prisoners, has made a deep impression. I speak of it with Percy Loraine, and to his surprise I declare that the English action is justified and reminiscent of the boldest traditions of the Navy at the time of Francis Drake." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 209.
90. DNB note, February 20, 1940.
91. IMT, 1809-PS.
92. DNB report, February 19, 1940.
93. Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, then Commanding General of an Army Corps stationed in Koblenz; later Colonel General; subsequently Commander of the forces deployed in Norway.
94. IMT, 1809-PS.
95. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 815. Cf. IMT, 1809-PS supplement, pp. 1534 ff.
96. Report in VB, Nos. 55 and 56, February 24 and 25, 1940.
97. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1940.
98. DNB text, February 24, 1940.
99. Despite this remark, Hitler rejoiced at any praise the English chose to bestow on him and failed to realize the irony it concealed.
100. In November 1938, Hitler had declared: "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." See above, p. 1245, speech of November 10, 1938.
101. Hitler's derisive remarks on the Imperial Army and the potential of its armament were inappropriate. The fact that the production of the military industrial complex greatly increased in the years after 1914 does not validate the claim that, had productive capacity reached this level before the outbreak of war, Germany would have beaten its

adversaries. On the other hand, it is only natural that the productive capacity of the armament industry would rise in times of war, and Germany's weaponry industry also greatly expanded after 1939. However, this increase did not benefit the war effort, since the Allies' productive capacity increased, too, and did so at a much faster pace.

102. See above, September 3, 1939 and note 1000.
103. Citation from Martin Luther's song "*Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*" (Our God is a strong fortress).
104. DNB report, February 28, 1940.
105. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351, entry of May 13, 1941.
106. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 673, pp. 817 f.
107. HVBL, 1940, Part C, No. 278, p. 89.
108. "*Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen*" (Victorious we'll beat France) was the chorus line of the martial song "*Musketier seins [sind] lust'ge Brüder*" (Musketeers are jolly fellows), third verse. In the years 1933 to 1939, this song had been banned in order not to offend France.
109. Report in VB, Nos. 62 and 63, March 2 and 3, 1940.
110. *Ibid.* This precedent led to the rough estimate that a Knight's Cross was awarded for 100,000 tons of the adversary's ships sunk. For 200,000 tons, the Knight's Cross with laurels was received, etc.
111. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 644, pp. 831 ff.
112. Protocol drafted by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 649, pp. 838 ff.
113. See above, February 29, 1940.
114. The 1932 Ottawa Conference had been the economic summit of the Commonwealth States that year.
115. This phrase revealed Hitler's mistaken belief that Sumner Welles would be able, though with great difficulty, to persuade the English to be lenient and to agree to a peace with Germany.
116. Published in VB, No. 64, March 3, 1940.
117. Protocol by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 654, pp. 862 ff.
118. The Finnish people are not of "Nordic-Germanic" origin. Like the Hungarians, the Finns originally came from Asia; their language is quite distinct from those of Slavic or other European peoples.
119. DNB note, March 5, 1940.
120. Cf. Jodl's diary in IMT, 1809-C.
121. Report in VB, No. 67, March 7, 1940.
122. Verbatim reproduction of this letter published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 663, pp. 871 ff.
123. IMT, 1809-C.
124. Oscar, Prince of Prussia and son of Emperor William II; born 1888 in the Marble Palace at Potsdam; retired Major General; died 1958 in Munich.
125. "Believe me, in the end it will be revealed that the actual perpetrator was the Crown Prince [William]!" Cf. Zoller, p. 186. For Hitler's reaction see below, July 20, 1944.
126. DNB text, March 10, 1940.

127. IMT, 1809-C.
128. Reports in VB, No. 71, March 11, 1940.
129. Cf. Schmidt's notes on this reception, published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 665, pp. 882 ff.
130. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 668, pp. 896 ff. Ciano made the following remark on the German Foreign Minister's visit to Rome in his diary: "With respect to Ribbentrop's visit to the Pope, I judge it to be a gesture as phony as it is futile." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 218.
131. Ribbentrop refrained from expanding on this "entirely new form of political and national life." All it amounted to, in fact, was a reorientation of life along the lines of Hitler's ideas.
132. Cf. Alberto Giovanetti, *Il Vaticano e la Guerra* (Rome, 1960).
133. Protocol of this meeting drawn up by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 669, p. 908. Cf. Schmidt, p. 487.
134. Sumner Welles noted this change in Mussolini's disposition on his second Rome visit with the Duce in mid March. Cf. Sumner Welles, *The Time of Decision* (New York, 1944), p. 138.
135. Cf. Jodl's diary, entry of March 11, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS.
136. Report in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1940.
137. Report in VB, No. 73, March 13, 1940.
138. Notes on the meeting taken by Hewel in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 671, pp. 910 ff.
139. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT 1809-PS.
140. Verbatim reproduction of the Russo-Finnish Peace Accords in Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen* (Bern, 1940), Vol. I, pp. 158 ff. For an overview of the course of the Russo-Finnish War in the years 1939 and 1940 see *ibid.*, pp. 129–160.
141. Remark by Hitler to Sven Hedin. See above, March 4, 1940.
142. A look at the history of Russia's military reveals that such elite troops were generally not deployed until much later in the war.
143. DNB report, March 13, 1940.
144. Report in VB, No. 74, March 14, 1940.
145. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
146. Report in VB, No. 75, March 15, 1940.
147. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 539. Hitler had empowered Bürckel to divide Austria into six autonomous Reichsgaus. See above, April 23, 1938.
148. DNB texts, March 15, 1940.
149. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 513. According to Jodl's entry in his diary, Hitler did not sign the decree until March 20, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS.
150. Cf. Schmidt, p. 489.
151. See above, speech of May 23, 1939.
152. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 223.
153. DNB text, March 18, 1940.
154. Report in VB, No. 79, March 19, 1940. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS. The England song "*Heute wollen wir ein Liedlein singen*" (Let us sing a little song today) dated back to the First World War. The well-known folk poet Hermann Löns had written its text before becoming one of that

war's casualties himself. It's chorus line "*Denn wir fahren gegen Engelland*" (For we are going against England) was immensely popular. On a side note: the poetic though inaccurate spelling "*Engelland*" literally means "angels' land." The composer of march music and master musician of the Labor Service, Herms Niel (actual name: Hermann Nielebock), composed the score at the beginning of the Second World War.

155. DNB note, March 20, 1940. Gunnar Gunnarsson was born 1889 in Valpjofsstadur.
156. DNB text, March 22, 1940.
157. DNB note, March 29, 1940. Dragisha Cvetkovich, born 1892; Minister-President from 1939 to 1941.
158. Report in VB, Nos. 90 and 91; March 30 and 31, 1940.
159. DNB text, April 1, 1940.
160. IMT, 1809-PS.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
163. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Volume I, *The Gathering Storm* (London, 1948), p. 522.
164. IMT, 1809-PS.
165. Report in VB, No. 96, April 5, 1940.
166. DNB note, April 8, 1940. Hitler also attended the official ceremony on April 12, 1940. It took place in front of the Technical School in Berlin. DNB report, April 12, 1940.
167. Cf. *Hitler e Mussolini, Lettere e Documenti* (Milan, 1946) and *Les lettres secrètes échangées par Hitler et Mussolini* (Paris, 1946). Cf. summary of the letters' contents in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 233 ff.
168. DNB text, April 9, 1940.
169. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 53, pp. 88 ff.
170. See above, May 31, 1939.
171. Published in Hans-Günther Seraphim, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs* (Göttingen, 1956), pp. 104 f. Cf. also Hans-Dietrich Looock, "Zur 'grossgermanischen Politik' des Dritten Reiches," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 57 ff.
172. Cf. Air Force General von Kaupisch's report on the occupation of Denmark on April 9 and 10, 1940 in *Dänische Parlamentsberichte*, XII, (Copenhagen, 1945).
173. As recently as March 30, 1940, the German officer Erfurth had taken the ferry from Warnemünde to Gjedser and, as a civilian, checked out the situation in Denmark. On April 4, Major Glein flew to Denmark on the regular, scheduled flight to Copenhagen and inspected the harbor. The next day, he gave thorough attention to the citadel there and its fortifications. Earlier in Germany, Glein had been placed in command of the battalion that was to attack Copenhagen from the sea and was to take both the citadel and the harbor. Major General Himer, chief of staff with von Kaupisch, surveyed the citadel and the harbor once more on April 8, having come to Denmark on board a regular flight to

- Copenhagen. Cf. reports *ibid*.
174. Cf. research by the Dutch historian Louis de Jong, *Die deutsche fünfte Kolonne im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1959), pp. 60 ff. and 155 ff.
 175. The cession of the territory in northern Schleswig had been carried out in accordance with Section XII, Articles 109 through 114 of the Treaty of Versailles. RGBl. 1919, pp. 879 ff. In a similar manner, after the occupation of Belgium, Hitler ordered the reintegration of the region Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet in the Reich. See below, decree of May 18, 1940 (Section 1).
 176. Cf. Walter Hubatsch, *Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940* (Göttingen, 1952). Further see de Jong, pp. 63 ff. and 163 ff.
 177. The Continental Hotel served as the German divisional headquarters in Oslo. When Quisling appeared in the hotel in the afternoon hours of April 9, 1940, and introduced himself as the new Minister-President, the German General Engelbrecht nearly had him arrested.
 178. The heavy cruiser *Blücher* with a tonnage of 13,900 tons had been launched in 1937. On April 9, 1940, it sank off shore at Drobak in the Oslo Fjord. Hence the *Blücher* shared the fate of its predecessor, the armored cruiser *Blücher*, built in 1908 and sunk in the Battle of the Doggerbank as one of the ships of Admiral Hipper's naval unit.
 179. Off Kristiansand the British submarine *Truant* and the torpedo-boat *Greif* sank the 6,650 ton cruiser *Karlsruhe*. The German vessel had been launched in 1927.
 180. The 6,650 ton cruiser *Königsberg* sustained several direct strikes by bombs and went under on April 10, 1940, close to Bergen. The wreckage was salvaged in 1943.
 181. Cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 704 f. Cf. Bräuer's report to the Foreign Ministry, reproduced in the report of the investigation committee of the Norwegian Parliament (Oslo, 1945), Vol. I, pp. 319 f.
 182. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 235.
 183. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6202.
 184. Eduard Dietl, born 1890 in Aibling, died 1944; soldier by profession since 1909; teacher at the Infantry Academy in Munich where he established first contacts with Hitler after the First World War; took command of a mountain ranger (*Gebirgsjäger*) regiment in 1935; head of mountain ranger division stationed at Graz from 1938 on. Dietl remained in northern Norway in the years 1940 and 1941. After the outbreak of war, Dietl assumed command of a section of the front in northern Finland known as the "Murmansk Front." He was able to achieve little in this function and died suddenly in 1944, supposedly a victim of a plane crash.
 185. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
 186. Published in VB, No. 109, April 18, 1940.
 187. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 657 f.
 188. Josef Terboven, born 1898 in Essen; committed suicide on May 11, 1945 in Oslo; bank employee by profession; NSDAP Gauleiter of

Essen; member of the Reichstag from 1930 on; appointed president of the Rhine Province in 1935; Reichskommissar of Norway in the years 1940 to 1945.

189. IMT, 1809-PS. See below, decree of April 24, 1940.
190. See above, p. 468.
191. See below, decree of April 24, 1940.
192. DNB text, April 20, 1940.
193. Ibid.
194. A rather pitiful array of further congratulatory notes supplemented this list on April 22, 1940, mostly sent by political figures from the Balkans. The following statesmen conveyed their personal and their government's best wishes to Hitler on his birthday: the King of Bulgaria; the Minister-Presidents of Hungary, Count Teleki; of Yugoslavia, Dragisha Cvetkovich; and of Slovakia, Dr. Vojtech Tuka; further the Yugoslavian Foreign Minister, Cincar-Markovich; the Italian Ministers Farinacci and Perrone; the Government of Thailand; and the former [!] Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima.
195. Both telegrams were published in VB, No. 113, April 22, 1940. Before this, Hitler had once more described the current military situation in rosy terms in a letter addressed to the Duce. In Rome, Prince Philip of Hesse commented to Ciano on the planned offensive in the West and declared that Hitler "blamed the bad weather for his not being able to celebrate his birthday in Paris." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 236.
196. DNB notes, April 20, 1940.
197. Published in VB, No. 114, April 23, 1940.
198. DNB text, May 6, 1940. Also published in VB, No. 128, May 7, 1940.
199. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
200. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 162, pp. 230 f.
201. Johann Nygaardsvold, born 1879; died 1952; Norwegian Prime Minister from 1935 to 1940.
202. The Administrative Advisory Committee in the occupied territories had been established on April 15, 1940. Its membership consisted of six prominent Norwegians, among them Bishop Eivind Berggrav and the President of the Supreme Court, Paal Berg.
203. Report in VB, No. 118, April 27, 1940.
204. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 240 f.
205. DNB report, April 30, 1940. The Duke was then on a world tour, travelling as the president of the German Red Cross, and had arrived in Japan after visiting the United States.
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.
208. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
209. The Allies indeed withdrew from the bridgeheads established at Andalsnes and Namsos in the days between April 30 and May 2, 1940. Before this, however, they had taken the King of Norway and the Norwegian Government aboard and had helped them escape to Tromsø north of Narvik.

210. Published in VB, No. 124, May 3, 1940.
211. IMT, 1809-PS.
212. Ibid. Lieutenant General Student, Commander of the parachute units, and Graf Sponek, in charge of the airlift division, attended the conference.
213. DNB note, May 3, 1940.
214. Editor's note: The speech, which has not been published to date, is preserved on disc records at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 3 EW 65 847-65 861) and on tape records at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, DRA, Frankfurt am Main, No. 52.8881. Complete transcription and translation for this work according to the records of the DRA.
215. *Mein Kampf*, p. 726.
216. Hitler's exuberance was later punished by ever-increasing casualty figures reported by the Wehrmacht in the course of the war.
217. For Hitler, his own life was of far greater importance than the welfare of the German Volk. He undertook everything possible to avoid placing his own "irreplaceable" person in danger. To the end, he hung on to power with grim determination, willing to let the whole German Volk perish rather than to give up his position.
218. See above, p. 196, speech of December 5, 1932.
219. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
220. See below, OKW report of June 10, 1940. Hitler edited the text himself and greatly praised Dietl's "heroic resistance" in the Narvik venture.
221. DNB report, May 4, 1940.
222. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 243.
223. IMT, 1809-PS.—"*Fall Gelb*" was the code name for the occupation of Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France, i.e. the first phase of the war in the West.
224. Ibid.
225. DNB text, May 8, 1940.
226. Allusion to alleged plans by England to intervene in Rumania.
227. DNB note, May 9, 1940.
228. Ibid. Dr. Bernardo Attolico, born 1880 in Cannebo (Bari); Italian Ambassador to Berlin from 1935 to 1940; Italian Ambassador to the Vatican State from 1940 to 1942.
229. Based on information in Jodl's diary entry of April 26, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS. In Ciano's diary there is a passage, dated April 24, 1940, in which Ciano noted a remark on Attolico by the newly arrived German Ambassador to Rome, von Mackensen. Ciano wrote: "I invite him to talk, and then he says that in Berlin they would now welcome his recall. That is natural. He is an Italian and a gentleman. As his successor, Hitler is thinking of Farinacci and Alfieri." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 338 f.
230. DNB text, May 9, 1940. See also below, decree of June 1, 1940.
231. See above, speech of May 3, 1940.
232. DNB text, May 10, 1940.
233. This figure is devoid of any basis in reality. In the "two centuries" from 1740 to 1940, France and Germany clashed eleven times:

1. Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. Belligerents: alliance between England and Prussia against a triple alliance by Austria, France, and Russia. France declared war on Prussia in 1757.
2. 1792–94. Belligerents: reactionary regimes in Europe against the French revolutionary regime. Germany declared war on France.
3. "Revolutionary Wars" in the period 1795 to 1797. Belligerents: French revolutionary armies against the Reich (Prussia remained neutral). France initiated hostilities.
4. So-called "War of the Coalitions" from 1799 to 1801. Belligerents: coalition of forces by Austria, Great Britain, and Russia versus France. France declared war.
5. "War of 1805." Belligerents: revolutionary France under Napoleon and Austria (Prussia once more remained neutral). Austria declared war.
6. "Napoleonic Wars" from 1806 to 1807. Prussia declared war on France.
7. "War of 1809." Austria declared war on France.
8. "Wars of Liberation" from 1813 to 1815. Prussia and Austria declared war on France.
9. Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Belligerents: France against Prussia and its allies. France declared war.
10. First World War. Germany declared war on France in 1914.
11. Second World War. France declared war on Germany in 1939.

In summary, France declared war five times while Germany or the German States respectively initiated hostilities six times.

234. On September 3, 1939, Hitler had claimed the German Volk numbered 90 million. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
235. Weizsäcker witnessed the following remark by Hitler in December 1939: "The offensive to the West will cost me a million men, but it will cost our adversaries the same and they cannot sustain such losses." Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 271. Hitler had resorted to the old "blood-letting" theory, popular with the German General Staff in the years 1914 to 1916. The French General Nivelle—who was generally known to be extraordinarily "blood-thirsty"—also propagated this theory.
236. Two potential headquarters for the Führer had been constructed before the offensive in the West: "Ziegenberg" in the Taunus Mountains and "Felsenest" in the Eifel Mountains. Hitler gave preference to the latter in a decision of February 22, 1940 (see IMT, 1809-PS). Hitler claimed that Ziegenberg was too comfortable for him. (Cf. Baur, pp. 187 f.). It is also highly likely that Hitler preferred the Felsenest because it was closer to the area of operations. For many months, it had been rebuilt and expanded to accommodate several guard units providing housing and bunkers, a switchboard, briefing hall, map room, anti-aircraft positions, etc. To the north of Münstereifel, the new Führer Headquarters stood on a rise outside of the village of Rodertwas, located about one kilometer to the South of a route connecting Münstereifel and Altenahr. The working staff of the Supreme Commander

of the Wehrmacht was to be housed in what formerly had been a local forester's home, located at Hüllach a few kilometers to the East. Hitler secluded himself in his remote, forested headquarters until early June. If he felt that visits to the rear sections of the front were called for, he went to the Odendorf airfield east of Euskirchen by motorcar, which allowed him to return to the headquarters that same day. The specially designed three-axle cross-country vehicle, which he had already used in 1938 on the occasion of the Anschluss, served for such small excursions. As the war in the West flared up once again in 1944–45, Hitler no longer set up quarters at the Felsenest. Only guard units remained behind. Allied bombers nonetheless targeted the structures throughout January 1945. While many of the surrounding buildings were destroyed in the air raids, the central facilities remained intact until the guard units, acting on orders, blew up the bunkers because of the enemy's advance.

237. Resort in the vicinity of Berlin, located along the railroad connecting Nauen to the Lehrte station.
238. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 492 ff.
239. Cf. Baur, p. 189.
240. IMT, 1809-PS.
241. Provincial town 40 km to the south of Cologne, situated along the railroad connecting Cologne to Trieste.
242. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 246.
243. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 214, pp. 301 ff.
244. Allusion to the Venlo incident. See above, November 9, 1940.
245. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 215, pp. 306 f.
246. See above, November 23, 1939.
247. See above, March 16, 1935; August 26, 1936; March 19, 1939; September 1, 1939; and April 11, 1940.
248. The German ultimatum to Belgium on August 2, 1914 had strikingly similar contents:

The Imperial Government is in possession of reliable information on preparations for an anticipated concentration of French armed forces along the line of the river Meuse between Givet and Namur. This has eliminated any remaining doubts on the intent of France to violate Belgian territorial integrity in order to penetrate into Germany.

The Imperial Government cannot cast off severe misgivings on the ability of Belgium, despite best intentions, to ward off a French advance of so immense a nature and with all prospects of success, without external assistance. Therein the Imperial Government perceives a grave threat to the security of Germany. The German Government would greatly regret, should the actions of its adversaries force Germany to enter Belgian territory also, if the Belgian Government were to interpret this as an act of aggression directed against Germany.

Desiring to forestall potential misinterpretation of its endeavors, the Imperial German Government declares the following:

1. Germany entertains no hostile intentions vis-à-vis Belgium. Should

Belgium be willing to embrace a stance of benign neutrality toward Germany in the pending conflict, Germany shall pledge itself to guarantee the full extent of Belgium's present territorial possessions and, after a peace settlement, to restore the complete independence of the Kingdom.

2. Under the circumstances enumerated above, Germany shall pledge itself to withdraw from the Kingdom's territory after the negotiation of precise terms of the peace.

3. Should Belgium demonstrate friendly intentions toward Germany, Germany shall willingly remunerate in cash any supplies requisitioned and shall coordinate this effort with the Royal Belgian Administration. It shall also provide compensation for any potential material damage incurred by its armed forces.

However, in the event that Belgium were to assume a hostile compartment toward German troops, especially should it hinder their advances by mounting resistance along the river Meuse line of fortifications or by destroying crucial components of the local infrastructure (railroad, streets, tunnels, etc.), then Germany shall be forced, to its great regret, to regard the Kingdom as a belligerent. Should this indeed be the case, Germany shall be incapable of assuming any type of responsibilities toward the Kingdom. Germany shall then leave the conduct of any future relations between both states to be determined on the battleground.

The Imperial Government cherishes the hope that this shall not occur, and that the Royal Belgian Government shall take timely and appropriate steps to prevent the realization of the considerations enunciated above. Should this be the case, the friendly relations between the neighboring states shall prosper and permanently be strengthened hereby.

Additional note to the Imperial Ambassador von Below in Brussels:

May it please your Highness to relay this message in strict confidence to the Royal Belgian Government at 8:00 tonight and to demand a clear response within twelve hours, i.e. before 8:00 tomorrow morning.

German text in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Dokumenten* (Berlin, 1914), Vol. I, pp. 11 ff. Comparison of the Imperial Government's August 2, 1914 ultimatum to that penned by Hitler on May 10, 1940 reveals the nearly identical nature of their texts. Although Hitler in all likelihood was not aware of the earlier ultimatum's verbatim contents, he may well have remembered Bethmann-Hollweg's speech before the Reichstag on August 4, 1914. See below, note 249.

249. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 288. In a speech before the Reichstag on August 4, 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had declared: "It is in self-defense we are acting now. And necessity acknowledges no conventions."
250. Published in *Belgium—The Official Account of What Happened 1939–1940*. Published by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (New York, 1941), p. 28.—Paul Henri Spaak, born 1899; Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs September 1936–1946; Prime Minister after the Second World

- War; later also presided over the Council of Europe and European Economic Union (Montanunion).
251. Reference to the German Government's declaration of October 13, 1937 on the inviolate nature of Belgian neutrality.
 252. Published in Moos, Vol. I, p. 203.
 253. DNB text, May 10, 1940.
 254. Cf. verbatim reproduction of the notes in Moos, Vol. I, pp. 203 f.
 255. On the military aspects of the campaign cf. e.g. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Generaloberst Halders Kriegstagebuch* (Stuttgart, 1962); *Dokumente zum Westfeldzug 1940*; and *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, op. cit.; Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 47 ff.; John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander* (London, 1971), pp. 97 ff.; etc. On the British stance toward France see Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Volume I (London, 1970) pp. 251 ff.
 256. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 757.
 257. DNB note, May 13, 1940.
 258. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 249 f.
 259. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 246, pp. 343 f.
 260. This directive is not preserved. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 46
 261. See above, May 23, 1939.
 262. The rapid seizure of the Netherlands led to speculations on activities of a German "fifth column" in the country which supposedly sabotaged the efforts of the Dutch military. This formation was alleged to have caused confusion among the Dutch troops by distributing falsified orders and by encouraging high treason and desertion by individual soldiers. This was no more true in the case of Holland than similar speculations had been in the case of Norway. The Institut für Zeitgeschichte published the Dutch historian Louis de Jong's extensive research on this topic, op. cit. The crucial element in the fast pace of the conquest of the Netherlands had actually been the swift deployment of parachutists in coordination with their speedy reinforcement by ground troops.
 263. DNB text, May 15, 1940.
 264. IMT, 1809-PS.
 265. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. See also reproduction in Jacobsen, *Halders Kriegstagebuch*.
 266. IMT, 1809-PS.
 267. Apparently, this is a reference to Directive No. 9, the contents of which were not found after the War. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 52 f.
 268. DNB report, May 18, 1940. Alfieri was a member of the Fascist Council.
 269. Cf. DGFP, D, IX.
 270. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 777. These territories had been ceded to Belgium in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Articles 32 to 34.
 271. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 778.
 272. See above, April 24, 1940.

273. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
274. Ibid.
275. In all likelihood, such a project would have ended in a fiasco. In the First World War, even German troops had proved neither capable of making any advances in the Vosges Mountains nor of breaking through to the Langres Plateau. Mussolini's troops would never have managed to take the Maginot Line, which ran along the upper Rhine, by themselves. In June 1940, the Italians failed to gain any significant successes along their own Alpine frontier to France.
276. Statement by Hitler to the former Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima, in October of the previous year that he would not "care to share the victory with anyone." In addition, Hitler further informed Oshima that "he [Hitler] had also made this clear to Mussolini and had told him, moreover, that he did not need Italy's military assistance." DGFP, D, VIII, pp. 333 f. See also above, note 13.
277. Cf. special report out of Belgrade on England's assistance in the evacuation process in VB, No. 143. May 22, 1940.
278. Testimony by General Günther Blumentritt from Rundstedt's Staff, published in B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Other side of the Hill. Germany's Generals. Their Rise and Fall, with their Own Account of Military Events 1939-1945* (3rd ed. London, 1951) pp. 144 ff. Blumentritt admitted that the generals "had never expected such a sweeping success as was achieved" in the West. "Hitler alone believed that a decisive victory was possible." Ibid.
279. Napoleon had also been willing to exchange colonial possessions for peace with England. In a letter dated January 2, 1805, Napoleon wrote to the British King: "For France, these colonies are of secondary importance only. And does Your Majesty not already possess more than he can administer? [—] If Your Majesty would kindly reflect upon this himself for once, He will come to see that in this war there is neither sense nor victory to be found." Aretz, pp. 278 f. See also above, 1939, note 1150.
280. Napoleon persisted in being torn between love and hate for the English people even after the ignominious downfall of his regime in 1815. On July 13 of that year from his place of exile on the island of Aix, Napoleon conveyed the following note to the British Prince Regent: "I come like Themistocles to sit and warm myself at the hearth of the British people. I request protection under its laws which I implore Your Royal Highness to extend to me as the mightiest, most persevering and most noble of my adversaries." Ibid.
281. After the War, von Rundstedt made the following statement: "To me, Dunkirk was one of the turning points of the war. If I had had my way the English would not have got off so lightly at Dunkirk. But my hands were tied by direct orders from Hitler himself. While the English were clambering in the ships off the beaches, I was kept useless outside the port unable to move." Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (rev. ed. New York, 1986), p. 52.

282. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
283. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 312, pp. 427 ff.
284. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
285. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 255.
286. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
287. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
288. DNB texts, May 28, 1940.
289. Reference to the Laeken Castle in the Brabant province.
290. In various, voluminous memoirs written after the Second World War, numerous German generals sought to create the impression that the disastrous defeat of the Third Reich's military was largely to be blamed on Hitler's "ill-fated intervention" in questions of strategy. Obviously, the military men endeavored to delude themselves that Germany would have indeed won the war had the real experts been allowed to pursue their objectives without Hitler's annoying interference. However, this theory is simply absurd.
291. DNB report, May 30, 1940. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 257.
292. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
293. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 258 f.
294. DNB text, June 1, 1940.
295. See above, May 9, 1940. In 1943, Hitler once more had the released Dutchmen again apprehended and incarcerated.
296. Bruly-le-Pêche was a small village located in the Belgian Province Namur near Philippeville and was converted into a mobile headquarters of sorts.
297. Langhemarq (German transcription: Langemarck) was a town located in the Belgian province of West Flanders. In the ill-fated Battle at the Yser, a small unit of German student volunteers had, as part of the "Fuchs Division," to sacrifice themselves in a most senseless way: Singing the "Deutschlandlied," they marched straight into the line of fire of English machine guns and sustained horrendous losses. Reports on Hitler's visits to First World War battle sites in VB, No. 162, June 10, 1940, and in *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, 24 (1940).
298. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 849.
299. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 885. See also Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6230 f.
300. DNB texts, June 5, 1940.
301. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 56 f.
302. *Ibid.*, pp. 58 f.
303. DNB note, June 8, 1940.
304. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 263.
305. DNB text, June 10, 1940. A facsimile of the typed draft with corrections in Hitler's handwriting, mostly additions of superlatives, is reproduced in Walter Görlitz and Herbert A. Quint, *Hitler—Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1952), p. 557.
306. DNB text, June 10, 1940.
307. *Ibid.*

308. DNB text, June 13, 1940.
309. Paul Reynaud, born 1878 in Barcelonette; lawyer by profession; replaced Daladier as Premier on March 21, 1940; stepped down on June 17, 1940; tried by the Vichy Government in 1940; incarcerated in Germany in 1944; liberated in 1945.
310. DNB text, June 13, 1940.
311. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 433, p. 567.
312. Published in VB, No. 168, June 16, 1940.
313. Philippe Pétain, born 1856 in Chaucy-*à*-la-Tour; French Marshal; defender of Verdun in the First World War; Minister of War in 1934; French Ambassador to Spain from 1939 to 1940; named Vice Premier in May 1940; President of the Republic from 1940 to 1944; taken into German protective custody in Sigmaringen in 1944; condemned to death by a French court in 1945; pardoned and sent to the Island of Yeu for life imprisonment; died there in 1951.
314. Published in Moos, Vol. I, p. 286.
315. Cf. photo No. XLI.
316. Source: Domarus Archives.
317. See above, statement of May 20, 1940.
318. This purpose was not only evident in the demarcation lines drawn by Hitler, but also was circulated within the Party as the more or less evident German demands for a potential peace treaty.
319. See above, speech of March 29, 1938.
320. DNB text, June 17, 1940.
321. William II had hitherto refrained from making any type of compromising statements from his place of exile, in striking contrast to Napoleon who talked all through his exile. Now, on June 17, 1940, the former Kaiser sent from Doorn, in occupied Holland, the following exuberant telegram to Hitler:
Under the deeply moving impression of the capitulation of France I congratulate you and the whole German Wehrmacht on the mighty victory granted by God, in the words of Emperor William the Great in 1870: "What a turn of events brought about by divine dispensation." In all German hearts there echoes the Leuthen chorale sung by the victors of Leuthen, the soldiers of the Great King: "Now thank we all our Lord!"
Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 469, p. 598.
Hitler was less than pleased by this telegram. The German media were not allowed to publish anything on the message. While Hitler drafted a highly reserved response to the telegram, he never sent the reply to William II. Immediately before the anticipated German offensive to the West, the British Government offered William II to exchange his exile in Holland for an exile in England. However, William II refused this offer. After the German conquest of Holland, Hitler suggested that William II might return to Germany, but once more the former Kaiser declined, choosing instead to remain at the Doorn Castle. While the Netherlands were occupied by Germany, numerous Wehrmacht officers

- called on William II and, reportedly, he toasted the health of Hitler as the “greatest of Germans.” He was fortunate not to live long enough to witness how this “greatest of Germans” plunged Germany into a two-front war by attacking Russia. William II died in June 1941 in his home.
322. Report in VB, No. 171, June 19, 1940.
323. Ciano further remarked: “I cannot be accused of excessive tenderness toward him, but today I truly admire him.” Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 266. Reports on the meeting also in Schmidt, pp. 494 f.
324. DNB text, June 18, 1940.
325. The interpreters were forced to work by candlelight in a little village church. Cf. Schmidt, p. 496.
326. War diary entry kept by the Navy, cf. Karl Klee, *Das Unternehmen “Seelöwe”* (Göttingen, 1958), p. 58.
327. While General of the Army Charles Huntziger had been Commander of the Second Army at Sedan, Léon Noël had served as Ambassador to Warsaw.
328. This had formerly been dining-car No. 2419 D.
329. See above, May 20, 1940.
330. DNB text, June 21, 1940.
331. Ibid.
332. Ibid. Masons from Munich would blow up the “locations and stones” cited in August 1940. Cf. report in VB, No. 240, August 27, 1940.
333. On July 21, 1940, Moscow forced the integration of the three Baltic States as “Republics of the Soviet Union.” Like these states, Bessarabia had formed part of the Soviet Union before 1920. Russia had conquered the Bucovina in 1769 and had lost the area to Austria in 1774. The Bucovina remained part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918.
334. Once the war against the Soviet Union had begun, Halder forged the three Baltic States into the administrative body of the “Reichskommissariat Ostland.” See below, November 17, 1941.
335. DNB text, June 22, 1940.
336. In both world wars, the “daylight saving time” concept was introduced to Germany. It was identical with the “summer time” in Eastern Europe, i.e. one hour behind Central European Standard Time. It was to save energy by taking advantage of daylight hours; general introduction in West Germany in 1980 as in most other European countries before this date.
337. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 523, pp. 671 ff.
338. The territory in question spanned northern France; at its southernmost extension was the Loire river; it encompassed the entire Atlantic coast of France up to the Pyrenees.
339. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
340. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
341. Hitler issued Directive No. 19 b on “Operation Attila” in an effort to attain the “rapid occupation of the unoccupied territories in the remainder of the French heartland as of this date.” See below,

- December 10, 1940. On November 11, 1942, Hitler ordered his troops to take possession of the previously unoccupied territories in southern France. See below, November 11, 1942.
342. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 893. Cf. DGFP, D, IX, pp. 671 ff.
343. Report in VB, no. 177, June 25, 1940. Antonio Oscar Fragoso Carmona, born 1869; State President from 1926 until his death in 1951.
344. Count Manzoni's mansion was located eight kilometers south of Rome.
345. For a verbatim reproduction of the major part of the armistice agreement see Moos, Vol. I, pp. 296 ff.
346. DNB text, June 24, 1940.
347. Ibid.
348. Hitler used this term in reference to the Battle for Flanders and the fighting in the Artois on June 5, 1940. See above, June 5, 1940.
349. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6238.
350. A hasty evacuation of the civilian population living in the Saarpfalz, including the cities of Saarbrücken, Zweibrücken, Pirmasens, etc., was carried out on September 3, 1939. These men and women had to seek shelter in other Gaus, mostly in Hesse and Lower Franconia. In 1944, a similar evacuation took place as the Allies moved dangerously close to the border area.
351. Cf. Baur, p. 192. Further reports in VB, No. 182, June 30, 1940. Additional reports in *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, 28 (1940) and in Berlin's *Illustrierte Zeitung* 28 (1940).
352. Ward Price, p. 19, remarks: "In works on travel, the maps and plans get most of his attention. He says if he ever went to London or Paris he would immediately be able to find his way about, and he claims that there is hardly a famous building in the world which he could not draw from memory."
353. DNB text, June 29, 1940.
354. Tannenberg is located in the Black Forest west of Freudenstadt.
355. DNB report, June 29, 1940.
356. Ibid., June 30, 1940.
357. In a telephone conversation on June 30, 1940, Alfieri informed Ciano that Hitler once more was "seeking seclusion," a state of mind which usually preceded the announcement of some great decision on his part. For this reason he had not yet responded to the Duce's inquiry whether Italian naval and infantry units could participate in the pending attack on England. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 271.
358. Published in DGFP, D, X, no. 73, p. 82.
359. Directive by the High Command of the Wehrmacht, reproduced in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, p. 129.
360. See above, June 22, 1940.
361. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6241.
362. DNB report, July 4, 1940. The vessels in question were the battleships *Dunkerque*, *Provence*, and *Bretagne*. A fourth battleship, the *Strasbourg*, escaped to the Mediterranean.
363. DNB text, July 4, 1940.

364. Presided over by General von Stülpnagel, the joint Franco-German commission on details of the Cease-Fire Agreement convened in the Nassauer Hof Hotel in Wiesbaden for many months.
365. DNB report, July 6, 1940.
366. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
367. See above, April 10, 1938. See also above, March 19, 1939.
368. Source: Domarus Archives.
369. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, pp. 502 f. Also reproduced in Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 274. Cf. also DGFP, D, X, no. 129, pp. 147 ff.
370. Report in VB, No. 191, July 9, 1940.
371. DNB note, July 8, 1940.
372. Report in VB, No. 193, July 11, 1940. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 274 f.
373. Report on this meeting on July 11, 1940, according to notes in the war diary reproduced in Klee, p. 66.
374. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 989 ff.
375. The fortress is located outside of the town of Wewelsburg in the District of Büren. Cf. Karl Hüser, *Wewelsburg 1933–1945. Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS. Eine Dokumentation* (Paderborn, 1982). The Wewelsburg served Himmler as a meeting place for the inner circle of his SS Order, which was modeled after the Teutonic Order and the legendary Round Table. Himmler not only saw himself as a reincarnation of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry I the Fowler, he also followed in King Arthur's footsteps with regard to the quest for the Holy Grail.
376. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 992.
377. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; and Klee, pp. 71 f.
378. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 276. In a letter, King Carol had placed himself under Hitler's protection. In turn, Hitler's reply detailed that the King might wish to cede territories to Hungary and Bulgaria, for example strips of land in Siebenbürgen and the Dobrudja region. Cf. July 13, 1940 entry in Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
379. *Ibid.* By the time he moved against Russia, Hitler no longer had any second thoughts about accepting Italy's help and he was no longer in a position to worry about problems with troop reinforcements.
380. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 61 ff.
381. DNB reports, July 18, 1940. Friedrich Fromm, born 1888; Commander of the Ersatzheer (Replacement Army) from 1939 to 1944; arrested in connection with the events of July 20, 1944; executed in 1945.
382. DNB note, July 18, 1940.
383. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
384. Cf. Schmidt, p. 503.
385. DNB text, July 19, 1940.
386. Hitler had not accepted Mussolini's proposal. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
387. These documents were, in part, published by the German Government in the form of a White Book. Cf. *Auswärtiges Amt 1940*, No. 5 (Berlin, 1940). In general, the discussions reproduced contained only expositions

- by the General Staff and instructions for the troops in the event of a German invasion.
388. Maurice Gustave Gamelin, born 1872 in Paris; Chief of the French General Staff from 1931 on; Commander in Chief and Vice President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre of the Allied Forces from 1939 to 1940.—Maxime Weygand, born 1867; Chief of Staff with Marshal Foch; Commander in Chief in 1940; Minister of Defense of the Vichy Government from 1940 to 1941.
389. See above, September 19, 1939.
390. See above, Reichstag speech of October 6, 1939.
391. Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha, born 1895 in Mogador (Morocco); of Jewish origin; British Minister of War from 1937 to 1940.
392. Reference to Winston S. Churchill.
393. In contrast to the generals, Hitler treated men from the Party's leadership, e.g. Goebbels and Ribbentrop, with a marked lack of respect. On this particular occasion, they ranked at the bottom of his list.
394. A military rank of "Reichsmarschall" had not existed previously. Hitler instituted this rank so that Göring, his "best man" after all, could remain the highest-ranking officer in the Armed Forces. The new rank recalled the title "Maréchal de France;" however, the ranks in the German and French armies were not comparable. The Grand Cross was awarded only this one time in the course of the Second World War. Göring had his Grand Cross manufactured according to personal specifications. See above, 1939, note 956.
395. In the subsequent biographic sketches, dates are given for the Field Marshals appointed at this time or on next occasions. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 1093, states that Hitler interrupted his speech in order to distribute personally the marshal's baton to twelve newly appointed Field Marshals. Distribution of the batons, however, was carried out in separate receptions at the Chancellery in the months of August and September 1940. See below, August 14 and September 4, 1940.
396. Walter von Brauchitsch, born 1881 in Berlin, died 1948 in Hamburg; Commander in Chief of the Army from 1938 to 1941; Gerd von Rundstedt, born 1875 in Aschersleben, died 1953 in Hanover; Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, born 1876 in Passau, died 1956 in Hohenschwangau; Fedor von Bock, born 1880 in Küstrin, died in combat on May 3, 1945 in Schleswig-Holstein; Wilhelm List, born 1880 in Oberkirch; Wolfgang von Kluge, born 1892 in Stettin, retired in 1944; Erwin von Witzleben, born 1881 in Berlin, hanged on August 9, 1944 in Berlin in retribution for his involvement in the events of July 20, 1944; Walter von Reichenau, born 1884 in Karlsruhe, died on January 17, 1942, while being "transported to his homeland."
397. Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, born 1881 in Dessau, died 1954 at the Rösberg Fortress near Cologne; Field Marshal in 1943.
398. Georg von Küchler, born 1881 at Philippsruh Castle; Field Marshal in 1942.

399. Ernst Busch, born 1885 in Essen-Steele, died 1945 in England; Field Marshal in 1943.
400. Ewald von Kleist, born 1881 in Braunsfeld, died 1954 in Russia; Field Marshal in 1943; taken prisoner of war by the English in 1945; extradited to Yugoslavia in 1946; extradited to the Soviet Union in 1948.
401. Erhard Milch, born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven.
402. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg, died 1953 in Munich.
403. Albert Kesselring, born 1885 in Marktstef, died 1960 in Bad Nauheim.
404. Robert Ritter von Greim, born 1892 in Bayreuth; committed suicide in Salzburg in 1945; appointed Field Marshal and, as Göring's successor, Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe on April 26, 1945.
405. Wolfram von Richthofen, born 1895 in Barzdor, died 1945 in Bad Ischl; appointed Field Marshal in 1943.
406. Wilhelm Keitel, born 1882 in Helmscherode near Gandersheim, hanged 1946 in Nuremberg; Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht from 1938 to 1945.
407. Cf. Hitler's ideas on a foreign policy oriented along the lines of friendship with Italy and Great Britain as expounded in *Mein Kampf*. See above, Introduction, p. 51.
408. Reference to the Italian Air Force Marshal Italo Balbo. See above, June 29, 1940.
409. Hitler had not noted anything of the kind in his speech of September 1 of the previous year. See above, September 1, 1939. There had been no mention of a "Five-Year Plan;" instead, Hitler spoke repeatedly of a "Four-Year Plan" that had commenced in 1937. In a speech on September 19, 1939, he stated: "Should it [the war] indeed last three years, the chapter will no more close with the word 'capitulation' than it would at the end of a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, or a seventh year." See above, speech of September 19, 1939. On a similar topic, Hitler spoke of "a war of three, four, or eight years" in a speech in October 1939. See above, October 6, 1939.
410. This "final delineation" was to last until the attack of June 22, 1941.
411. This statement that "Russia had not taken any steps outside of its sphere of interest" is worthy of note. By June 26, 1941, Hitler had apparently changed positions and claimed, despite knowing better, that Soviet claims to Lithuania, Bessarabia, and the Bucovina constituted "renewed breaches of contract and simple blackmail." See below, June 22, 1941.
412. Hitler was mistaken in his conviction that Britain's statesmen would comprehend "as time went by" that he alone was to determine the fate of Europe.
413. Napoleon, too, had insisted that he had been forced to do battle despite his great longing for peace. In the spring of 1821, he noted: "I was forced to control Europe with the sword. I have instilled new ideas into France and Europe; ideas that shall never die." Aretz, pp. 509 f.
414. In words remarkably similar, Hitler had mocked his domestic opponents in keeping with his concept of the identical nature of foreign and

domestic policy. In a speech of March 15, 1932, he stated: “Generally speaking, it is no great honor to behold these illustrious opponents with which fate has unfortunately blessed us. It would be better if one were faced with worthy fighters and not this stuff, this nature’s run of the mill.” See above, p. 125.

415. Allusion to a May 10, 1940 air raid on Freiburg-im-Breisgau allegedly carried out by the Allies, but actually perpetrated by the Luftwaffe. See below, note 487.
416. Like so many of his other “prophecies,” this statement would later backfire on Hitler.
417. Napoleon made many similar statements. One example is his February 26, 1807 letter addressed to the King of Prussia. “I even add that, should Russia and England truly so desire, I would be delighted to arrive at a settlement with them. I should despise myself at the thought that I caused such enormous bloodshed. But what can I do if England holds this bloodshed to benefit her plans and her monopoly position?” Cf. Aretz, p. 330.
418. See above, October 1, 1939.
419. Speaking before a gathering of officer cadets in the spring of 1941, Hitler proclaimed: “As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your Supreme Commander. Once more, this one word is ‘capitulation’ and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never!” See below, speech of April 29, 1941.
420. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
421. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
422. DNB texts, July 20, 1940.
423. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
424. While visiting Berlin three years earlier, Mussolini had expressed his motto in the following terms: “And when you have a friend, to march alongside him till the end!” See above, p. 950, speech of September 28, 1937.
425. DNB report, July 22, 1940.
426. Report in VB, No. 204, July 23, 1940.
427. Cf. Halder’s War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
428. Reuters note, July 22, 1940.
429. DNB note, July 23, 1940. Less than five years later, the German broadcast accompanied the news of Hitler’s demise with *Siegfried’s Funeral Music* from the *Götterdämmerung*.
430. See above, July 21, 1940.
431. “At that time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition.” See above, Introduction, p. 57 and *Mein Kampf*, p. 745.
“The greatest power on earth [England] and a youthful nation state [Germany] would bring other qualities to the battle in Europe than

- those of the rotten corpses of states with whom Germany allied itself in the last war." *Mein Kampf*, p. 756.
432. DNB report, July 26, 1940. Ion Gigurtu, Rumanian Minister-President from July 4 to September 4, 1940.
433. See above, note 378.
434. DNB report, July 27, 1940. Bogdan Filov, born 1883; executed in 1945; Bulgarian Minister-President from 1940 to 1942.
435. DNB report, July 28, 1940.
436. Manfred Freiherr von Killinger, born 1886; SA Obergruppenführer; Minister-President of Saxony from 1933 to 1934; German Consul General in San Francisco in 1938. Killinger's mission in Bratislava was of a short duration; afterwards he was named German Envoy to Rumania.
437. Other SA Führers who served as envoys to states of the Balkans were: Adolf Heinz Beckerle, born 1902 in Frankfurt (Main); SA Obergruppenführer and President of the Police in Frankfurt; German Envoy to Bulgaria.—Dietrich von Jagow, born 1892 in Frankfurt (Oder); SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Hungary.—Siegfried Kasche, born 1903 in Strausberg; SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Croatia.—Hanns Ludin, born 1905 in Freiburg; SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Slovakia.
438. DNB note, July 29, 1940. In an interview with the VB, Shekov stated that the topic discussed had been "an enduring peace for the peoples of the Balkans." Cf. VB, No. 217, August 4, 1940.
439. DNB text, July 29, 1940.
440. Ibid.
441. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
442. On Hitler's various attempts to either influence the Duke or have SS Führer Walter Schellenberg kidnap him, cf. DGFP, D, X, nos. 235 ff., pp. 317 ff. Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne, 1946), pp. 108 ff.
443. DGFP, D, X, no. 270, pp. 390 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 65 f.
444. Report in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1940.
445. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 139.
446. Report in VB, No. 220, August 7, 1940. Otto Abetz, born 1903 in Schwetzingen; teacher by profession. His wife being French, he became active early on in promoting improved relations between Germany and France. In pursuit of this goal, he initially worked for the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership) as its French expert and later served in a similar capacity for the Dienststelle Ribbentrop. In Paris in 1949, he was condemned to twenty years of hard labor, but was subsequently pardoned.
447. IMT, 665-D.
448. Published in VB, No. 221, August 8, 1940. The honorary badge bestowed on a "pioneer of labor" consisted of a gold eagle which held the swastika wheel of the German Labor Front in its talons.
449. DNB report, August 7, 1940.
450. Apparently the remaining territories occupied in the West—the

- Netherlands, Belgium, northern France, and Burgundy—were to be integrated into the “Germanic Reich of the German Nation” as “Reichskommissariats.” This procedure was implemented later in the Baltic States and the Ukraine.
451. After the First World War, nationalist circles in Germany discussed whether it would not have been better had Imperial Germany annexed the Alsace region to Baden and the Lorraine region to the Palatine. The argument claimed that had these two areas been integrated in the Reich in such a manner, they would not have been as easily severed from the remainder of Imperial Germany after 1918.
 452. Hitler proceeded in a similar manner in the case of Austria and the Burgenland, an area Hungary had been forced to cede to Austria in 1920. Fearing potential Hungarian claims to the territory, Hitler divided the Burgenland into a department for “Lower Austria” and another separate area for Styria.
 453. DNB text, August 7, 1940.
 454. Understandably, Hitler refrained from publishing these “decrees” in the Reich Law Gazette as he sought to prevent word of the true intent of his measures becoming known abroad, in particular in France and Luxembourg.
 455. Robert Wagner, born 1895 in Lindach; executed in 1946; initially entered into a career as a teacher and later became an active officer; dismissed by the administration for his involvement in the 1923 Putsch; Gauleiter in Baden.—Gustav Simon, born 1900 in Saarbrücken; teacher of economics by profession; Gauleiter of the Gau Koblenz-Trier.
 456. Arthur Axmann, Reich Youth Leader until 1945.
 457. Hartmann Lauterbacher, born 1909; Gauleiter of the Gau Southern Hanover-Brunswick and Oberpräsident of Hanover.
 458. Speaking before officers in late 1939, Hitler put the matter as follows: “As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me.” See above, speech of November 23, 1939.
 459. Cf. Klee, p. 182, and others. Casualty numbers cited in the RAF reports and in the OKW reports reveal that the first hostilities had already broken out on July 10, 1940 (cf. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 283 and 299), upgrading from August 8, 1940. According to the OKW, the following numbers of enemy planes downed and own planes lost were registered: 34 enemy planes, 3 Luftwaffe planes (August 8); 49 enemy planes, 12 Luftwaffe planes (August 9); 2 enemy planes, 2 Luftwaffe planes (August 10); 90 enemy planes, 21 Luftwaffe planes (August 11); 92 enemy planes, 24 Luftwaffe planes (August 12); 132 enemy planes, 28 Luftwaffe planes (August 13); 30 enemy planes, 4 Luftwaffe planes (August 14); etc.
 460. Published in the *Chemnitzer Tagblatt*, No. 221, August 12, 1940. Schirach had been speedily instructed in military affairs, hastily promoted to Lieutenant, had participated in the war on the Western Front and had received the Iron Cross, Second Class.

461. DNB text, August 11, 1940.
462. Cf. Klee, p. 105.
463. In 1936, Hitler had Blomberg and the other Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht parade by in front of him at the Nuremberg Party Congress. See above, September 16, 1935 and picture No. XIX.
464. DNB text, August 14, 1940. See also above, July 19, 1940.
465. Respectively, they commanded the Second, Third, and Fifth Air Fleets fighting in Holland, Belgium, France, and Norway. Hitler presented the marshal's baton to each one on September 4, 1940, although the "Luftwaffe's combat engagement" in the Battle of Britain was far from over.
466. Cf. Klee, pp. 105 ff.
467. The bay was located in southwestern England between the towns of Weymouth and Torquay. Implementing Hitler's orders, the High Command of the Wehrmacht issued the appropriate directive on August 16, 1940. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
468. On August 15, 1940, Hitler instructed the Luftwaffe not to disrupt, but to continue the air offensive, given the favorable weather. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
469. DNB text, August 17, 1940. The blockade as formulated by Hitler on August 17, 1940 strongly resembled the blockade imposed by Napoleon on the continent. Neither the Frenchman's blockade launched on November 21, 1806, nor Hitler's measure a century later succeeded in attaining its purpose.
470. See above, October 16, 1939, meeting with Sven Hedin; Hitler's article on the Finnish question, December 8, 1939; renewed meeting with Sven Hedin, March 4, 1940; end of open hostilities between Russia and Finland, March 12, 1940.
471. Germany and Finland concluded an agreement on transit rights on September 22, 1940. Moreover, Germany readily agreed to supplying the Finns with war weaponry. Cf. Karl Gustav von Mannerheim, *Erinnerungen* (Freiburg/Zurich, 1952), pp. 425 ff.
472. DNB text, August 19, 1940.
473. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 1177 ff. The "Narvik" shield consisted of a silver and golden (gold was the Navy's color) coat of arms. Engraved on it were an Edelweiss, anchor, propeller, and the inscription "Narvik 1940" beneath the ensign. The shield was to be worn on the left upper arm. While Hitler generally preferred medals to be worn as pins on the award recipient's chest, there were far too many of this kind either already in existence or to be introduced shortly. Hence, the sleeve of the recipient's tunic had to accommodate the "Narvik" shield. The silver edition of the Knight's Cross for combat service was worn on a wide b a n d across the neck. See above, 1939, note 1175.
474. DNB note, August 29, 1940. The official ceremony took place in the courtyard of Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University on August 30, 1940.
475. DNB note, August 25, 1940.
476. Cf. Klee, p. 112 and p. 123.
477. Reports on the reception in Schmidt, p. 508. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 288.

478. Report in VB, No. 243, August 30, 1940.
479. DNB report, August 30, 1940. Cf. also Schmidt, pp. 506 f. Hitler had exerted great influence on the First Sentence pronounced in Vienna on November 2, 1938, which had effected the cession of Czechoslovak territory to Hungary. See above, November 2, 1938.
480. DNB texts, August 30, 1940.
481. DNB text, September 1, 1940.
482. DNB report, September 2, 1940.
483. The new Iranian Envoy Moussa Noury-Esfandiary was the father of the later Empress Soraya.
484. DNB text, September 4, 1940.
485. DNB text, September 5, 1940.
486. In point 5 of the Directive No. 17, Hitler cautioned: "I reserve for myself final decision on terror attacks in retribution." See above, August 1, 1940.
487. The term "retribution" played a role of importance both during and after the Second World War. In contrast to war at sea and on land, there were no internationally accepted rules that regulated war in the air. Hence both parties proceeded cautiously in the matter and chose to await action by the other belligerents. Only then did they feel justified in doing even greater damage "in retribution." In a speech in early September of the previous year, Göring had warned: "However, woe to him [the English pilot] who should mistake a bomb for a propaganda flyer. He shall not have to wait long for retribution!"

After a British air raid on a small train station in Schleswig-Holstein, the DNB carried the following item in its April 12, 1940 edition: "This constitutes the first instance of enemy planes attacking a German traffic installation in the present conflict. Should subsequent assaults affirm the premeditated character of this attempt, this will completely change, for Germany, the nature of the current air battle against England. The consequences shall be drawn immediately."

In the case of the air raid on Freiburg-im-Breisgau on May 10, 1940, supposedly perpetrated by three enemy planes, but actually carried out by Luftwaffe forces, the DNB published the following statement: "In retribution for this act in violation of international law, the German Luftwaffe will reply in kind. From this day onward, any further premeditated attack by an enemy plane sent to bombard civilian targets in Germany shall result in a response by five times as many German planes that will drop bombs on English or French cities." This did not happen in the case of Freiburg, however, because the matter was considered "too delicate" in this particular instance.

Different motives were involved in the Luftwaffe's destructive air raid on Rotterdam on May 14, 1940. This savage assault was to speed up the capitulation of the Dutch Armed Forces. After the beginning of the German Offensive to the West, British bombers flew over Germany nearly every night and occasionally dropped bombs on cities in western and northern Germany. Berlin was bombed for the first time

on August 26, 1940. These air raids remained within the confines of bombing carried out in the last days of the First World War. As in 1918, population centers in western Germany (such as Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Karlsruhe) were primary targets for the attacks.

There is no doubt that Hitler initiated systematic bombardment of certain target population centers. It was his belief that such “terror attacks” would force the capitulation of his opponents. Examples were both the air assault on Holland (May 1940) and the bombing of English towns (September 1940). His lack of success in the latter case was because he faced an equal or superior adversary that proved more than a match for the Luftwaffe. The Royal Air Force’s “retaliation” accelerated at so swift a pace that the Luftwaffe could not keep up. In this context, Churchill’s October 8, 1940, speech in the House of Commons contains remarkable observations:

“The question of reprisals is being discussed in some quarters as if it were a moral issue. What are reprisals? What we are doing now is to batter continuously, with forces which steadily increase in power, each one of those points in Germany which we believe will do the Germans most injury and will most speedily lessen their power to strike at us. Is that a reprisal? It seems to me very like one. At any rate, it is all we have time for now. [—] Do not let us get into a sterile controversy as to what are and what are not reprisals. Our object must be to inflict the maximum harm on her war-making capacity. That is the only object that we shall pursue. [—] No one must look forward to any relief merely from the winter weather. We have, however, been thinking about the subject for some time, and it may be that new methods will be devised to make the wholesale bombing of the civilian population by night and in fog more exciting to the enemy than it is at present. The House will not expect me to indicate or foreshadow any of these methods. It would be much better for us to allow our visitors to find them out for themselves in due course by practical experience.”

Published in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6287. See also Domarus, *Untergang*, p. 59.

488. DNB text, September 4, 1940.
489. Allusion to the Italian occupation of British Somalialand. See above, August 17, 1940.
490. At this point the words “seen militarily” were inserted in the published account of this speech (the author’s notes). Hitler evidently feared that without this addition, the planned total annexation of the territories would become too transparent. After all, moments earlier he had stated that “there was no more Poland.”
491. Up to this point, Hitler had always spoken of a Volk of “82 million.” The additional three million apparently consisted of the population of the newly conquered territories in Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg.
492. Reference to his “final, last” offer for peace on July 19, 1940. It had been predated by an earlier “last” proposal Hitler had made in October of the previous year. See above, October 6, 1939.

493. Hitler would have to struggle mightily against “General Winter” in late 1941 and early 1942.
494. Nevertheless, Hitler frequently summoned “General Bluff” to his aid against the British.
495. In the official version of the test, Hitler had the figure “one million kilograms” replaced with “and many more kilograms” (the author’s notes). Evidently, even Hitler held “one million kilograms” to be a bit unrealistic. Later in the War, however, the Allies’ Air Forces dropped from 40 to 50 million kilograms of bombs on Germany in one day.
496. Hitler’s choice of words in this particular instance reveals once more that he equated the English opponent with his former domestic adversaries.
497. The phrase “well, you know, according to Ludwig Schmitz . . .” was deleted from the published account of the speech (original quotation according to the author’s notes.) Ludwig Schmitz was a popular actor and comedian from the Rhineland. During the Second World War, he played in many short propaganda films which either were shown during news broadcasts or after the “Wochenschau” in Germany’s cinemas. Schmitz’s popularity was based on his humorous portrayal of the narrow minded, though good-natured Philistine.
498. Report in VB, Nos. 250. and 251, September 6 and 7, 1940.
499. OKW report of September 8, 1940.
500. King Carol II, born 1893 at Pelesch Castle; died 1953 in Lisbon-Estrol; renounced his claim as next heir to the throne in 1925; proclaimed King of Rumania in 1930.
King Michael I, born 1921 at Foischor Castle; took the place of his father as minor regent from 1927 to 1930; Crown Prince from 1930 to 1940; King of Rumania from 1940 to 1947; renounced the Throne on December 30, 1947.
501. Ion Antonescu, born 1882; executed in 1946; General; Minister-President and Leader of the State in 1940; dismissed by King Michael I in 1944.
502. DNB text, September 7, 1940.
503. Published in VB, No. 256, September 12, 1940.
504. DNB note, September 11, 1940.
505. Report in VB, No. 255, September 11, 1940. Döme Sztójay, Hungarian Minister-President in 1944; executed in 1946 in Ofenpest.
506. Ibid.
507. Reports in VB, Nos. 259 and 261, September 15 and 19, 1940.
508. Cf. Klee, p. 177.
509. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6276 f.
510. The topics “Operation Sea Lion” and “Battle of Britain” have been the subject of many studies, for example: Georg W. Feuchter, *Geschichte des Luftkrieges* (Bonn, 1954); Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York, 1952); Adolf Galland, *The First and the Last. The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe Fighter Forces, 1938–45* (New York, 1954); T. Weber, “Die Luftschlacht um England in historischer Sicht” in *Flugwehr*

- und Technik*, 16 (1954); Denis Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939–1945*, Vol. I (London, 1953); Peter Fleming, *Operation Sea Lion* (New York, 1957); Ronald Wheatley, *Operation Sea Lion* (New York, 1958); Edward Bishop, *The Battle of Britain* (London, 1960); J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, Volume II (London, 1957), pp. 267–294 (= *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series*); and Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Volume II, *Their Finest Hour* (London, 1949), pp. 266–300.
511. In August of the previous year, Hitler had reassured the generals of the Luftwaffe's numerical superiority.
“At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns. The new anti-aircraft gun has been ordered. It will take a long time before sufficient numbers have been produced. [—] At the moment the English Air Force has only 130,000 men.” See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
512. Liddell Hart, the well-known English writer on military affairs after the War, stated the following with regard to an interview with former General Blumentritt: “This reflection about Hitler's deeper motive was reinforced by his strangely dilatory attitude over the subsequent plans for the invasion of England. ‘He showed little interest in the plans,’ Blumentritt said, ‘and made no effort to speed up the preparations. That was utterly different from his usual behavior.’ Before the invasion of Poland, of France, and later of Russia, he repeatedly spurred them on. But on this occasion he sat back.” Cf. Liddell Hart, p. 201.
513. According to figures by the transportation office of the High Command of the Navy, the following vessels were ready for deployment on September 4, 1940: 1,910 barges; 168 supply steamers; 419 lighters (including fishing boats); 1,600 motor boats. Cf. Klee, p. 116.
Of these vessels, the Royal Air Force had, by September 21, 1940, either sunk or severely damaged the following: 214 barges, 21 steamers, and five lighters. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
514. Napoleon concentrated a force of 2,283 barges and other supply vessels in these locations. Cf. Napoleon's own figures in Aretz, p. 292.
515. Editor's note: This phenomenal duplication of events can barely be regarded as a mere “coincidence.” Mysterious facts like these seem to have escaped traditional scientific research. Hitler would also choose the same date—June 22—for his invasion of Russia as Napoleon did in 1812. See below, June 22, 1941, and Vol. IV, Appendix.
516. In a letter to Admiral Decres, Napoleon wrote on August 3, 1805: “The English do not realize what is hanging above their heads. England will be a ‘has been’ once those twelve hours of crossing the Channel lie behind us.” See above, note 16.
517. Cf. Aretz, p. 289.
518. The OKW wired instructions on September 17, 1940: “Issuing of the order regarding OKW/WFST . . . (date of landing in England) has been postponed until further notice.” Cf. Klee, p. 205. New directives were issued on October 12, 1941: “The Führer has determined that, from now on until spring, preparations for a landing in England shall be

maintained only as a means of exerting pressure politically and militarily. Should a landing be envisioned once more in the spring or early summer 1941, the necessary alert will be issued in a timely manner. Until then, the military preconditions for such a landing shall continue to be improved.” OKW/WFST/Abt. L (I) No. 33318/40. Published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 149. In reality, a subsequent landing was no longer a viable alternative for Hitler, and his statement on the possibility of a landing in 1941 was as ludicrous a lip-service to his cause as Napoleon’s assurances in a letter addressed to Talleyrand in 1805: “I shall have beaten the Russians and Austrians before they shall have had time to unite their forces. Once the continent has been pacified, I shall focus on the Ocean to once more promote peace at sea.”

519. Report in VB, No. 262, September 18, 1940. Attilio Teruzzi was a leading Italian fascist.
520. Ibid. Romano Serrano Suñer was Franco’s brother-in-law and served as Spain’s Foreign Minister from October 1940 to 1942.
521. See above, Hitler’s statement of July 21, 1940.
522. Report in VB, No. 270, September 26, 1940.
523. Hitler attempted to sell this idea to Franco and Pétain. See above, entry of July 13, 1940 in Halder’s War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
524. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 297.
525. According to Schmidt, Hitler had called Suñer an “insidious Jesuit.” Cf. Schmidt, p. 508.
526. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 294.
527. Report in VB, No. 265, September 21, 1940.
528. Published in Bullock, p. 611. Cf. also IMT, 053-C.
529. This purpose was openly proclaimed in the public announcement on the German invasion of Rumania. See below, October 12, 1940.
530. DNB text, September 21, 1940. Born 1913 in Gelsenkirchen, Werner Mölders was a famed fighter pilot who gained his experience as a member of the Condor Legion in Spain.
531. DNB report, September 22, 1940.
532. DNB report, September 24, 1940. Adolf Galland, born 1912 in Westerholt near Recklinghausen.
533. Ibid. See also Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 295. In the years 1941 and 1942, the Western Powers were to construct a transport route across northern Africa, leading from Dakar to Egypt. This greatly facilitated their operations against the Axis and was crucial to their success.
534. DNB report, September 26, 1940.
535. Cf. Klee, p. 207.
536. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 293.
537. Ibid., p. 274.
538. RGBL. 1940, II, pp. 280 ff. Editor’s note: The German expression *Dreimächtepakt* is in the official sources either translated as “Three Powers Pact” and “Three Power Pact” (cf. DGFP), or “Three-Power

- Pact.” For textual consistency, the agreement is hereafter referred to as “Three-Power Pact” in the sources, in the commentary as “Tripartite Pact,” as the pact was called abroad and in the literature.
539. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 296.
540. In the fairytale, Hans found a gold treasure which he kept exchanging for something supposedly greater and bigger until, in the end, he was left with nothing.
541. DNB texts, September 27 and 28, 1940. Telegram to the Duce also published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 122, p. 208.
542. Prince Fumimaro Konoye, born 1891; committed suicide in 1945; Japanese Minister-President from 1937 to 1939 and once more from 1940 to 1941.
543. DNB report, September 28, 1940.
544. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 296.
545. DNB report, October 1, 1940. Roberto Farinacci, shot in 1945; General Secretary of the Fascist Party and Chief of its propaganda section.
546. Bormann took notes on Hitler’s exposition at the conference. Published in IMT, Blue Series, VII, pp. 252 ff. (USSR-172).
547. Report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1940.
548. DNB text, October 4, 1940. Reports on the conference in Schmidt, p. 509. Cf. also Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 298 f.
549. See above, Introduction, p. 46.
550. Report in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1940.
551. Report in VB, No. 283, October 9, 1940.
552. Photograph published in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1940.
553. Report in VB, No. 286, October 12, 1940. Adolf von Trotha, born 1868 in Koblenz; Chief of Staff with the High Command of the Navy in 1916; Chief of the Navy Cabinet in 1918; Chief of the Admiralty from 1919 to 1920; Prussian State Counselor in 1933.
554. Photographic report in VB, No. 288, October 14, 1940.
555. DNB text, October 12, 1940.
556. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 300.
557. Report in VB, No. 288, October 14, 1940.
558. Report in VB, No. 289, October 15, 1940. Raffaello Ricardi served as Italian Minister of Trade and International Payments.
559. Report in VB, No. 290, October 16, 1940.
560. Ibid.
561. DNB text, October 18, 1940.
562. Published in VB, No. 295, October 21, 1940.
563. From October 19 to October 23, 1940, Himmler visited Franco and Count Mayalde, Chief of the Spanish Police. He also toured the cities of Irun, Madrid, Toledo, and Barcelona.
564. Montoire-sur-le-Loir was a small town located in the Department Loiret-Cher between the cities of Tours and Vendôme. At the time, it had approximately 4,000 inhabitants.
565. DNB text, October 22, 1940.
566. DNB report, October 23, 1940. Cf. report on Hitler’s exposition in

- Hendaye in Schmidt, pp. 510 ff.
567. See above, September 15, 1938.
568. At the conference in Florence on October 28, 1940. Cf. *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, p. 402.
569. DNB text, October 24, 1940.
570. DNB report, October 24, 1940. Cf. report on the conference in Schmidt, pp. 514 ff. See further William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, 1943), pp. 93 ff.
571. See above, statement of October 23, 1940.
572. See above, speech of March 29, 1938.
573. The Duke of Reichstadt was the son of Napoleon I and his second wife, the Austrian Grand Duchess Marie-Louise. The Duke died on July 22, 1832 in Vienna at the age of 22. In December 1940, Hitler ordered the transfer of his coffin from the Viennese Kapuzinergruft to the Dôme des Invalides in Paris. See above, December 15, 1940.
574. Cf. text of the Montoire Agreement in Langer, pp. 94 f.
575. DNB text, October 24, 1940.
576. See above, October 12, 1940.
577. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 300.
578. Cf. Schmidt, p. 517.
579. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 304.
580. Ibid.
581. On November 20, 1940, Hitler wrote Mussolini a letter from which the following excerpt is taken: "When I asked you to receive me in Florence, I began my trip in the hope that I might be able to present my views to you before the beginning of the threatening conflict with Greece, concerning which I had been informed only in a general way. I wanted to ask you in the first place to postpone the action a while longer, if possible until a more favorable season of the year, but in any event until after the American presidential election." DGFP, D, XI, no. 369, p. 639.
582. *Mein Kampf*, p. 705. See also above, Introduction, p. 51.
583. Cf. Schmidt, p. 517.
584. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 305 and *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 399 ff.
585. DNB report, October 28, 1940.
586. Published in VB, No. 305, October 31, 1940.
587. Report in VB, No. 306, November 1, 1940.
588. DNB report, November 4, 1940.
589. Hitler called Roosevelt "Churchill's accomplice in the White House" in early 1942. See below, January 30, 1942. See also above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
590. See below, letter of November 20, 1940.
591. DNB text, November 8, 1940.
592. Reference to Thomas Woodrow Wilson.
593. In keeping with this exposition in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had never considered Japan in this manner, but had thought of England and Italy exclusively.

594. Reference to the speech of October 9, 1938. See above, *ibid.*
595. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
596. This particular one of Hitler's prophecies also did not come true. Evidently, Hitler was attempting to outdo Churchill, who had declared in a speech before the House of Commons that Britain would no doubt emerge victorious from this battle. See above, October 1, 1939.
597. Hitler could not resist making one false prophesy after another.
598. The callous nature of Hitler's remark was truly unbelievable. Even official reports by the administration admitted to at least 60,000 soldiers either missing or dead as a result of the campaign in Poland and the Offensive to the West. In addition to these figures, the total number of casualties also had to take into account those who had given their lives in the early stages of the defense of the West Wall, or as members of the Luftwaffe and the Navy. These figures meant little to a Hitler or a Napoleon. After the bloody Battle of Borodino on September 7, 1812, where tens of thousands lay fallen, Napoleon stated nonchalantly that "a single night in Paris will make up for this!" As the War continued, German casualties increased at such a pace that even Hitler no longer boasted.
599. This remark was aimed primarily at the generals who dared to voice misgivings in 1939 when Hitler had insisted on beginning the campaign in November 1939. See above, October 27, 1939.
600. The Allies soon proved to Hitler that indeed it was possible to create coalitions not only to match his, but also to overpower him and his alliance partners.
601. During the ensuing campaigns, it became increasingly evident who had produced the "greatest military nonsense."
602. Before seizing power, Hitler made many a "compromise," using this as a means for later catching his domestic opponents by surprise. Knowing Hitler, the Western Powers would not agree to any of the proposed "compromises." It did little good for Hitler to belatedly profess that it had been he who had supposedly refused to enter into these compromises.
603. This military complex conspiracy theory was a very popular thesis in Germany. It held that the military industrial complex had furthered its interests by instigating the War. However, this did not correspond to the reality as revealed by the Nuremberg Trials and proved by economic documents on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. War brought good tidings to the armament industrialists no more than it did to the general population.
604. Further developments proved that this "under [all] circumstances" had to be Germany.
605. DNB text, November 10, 1940. This telegram was remarkable in that, after the failure of talks with Molotov, Hitler was to send Hirohito another telegram that was triple the length of the earlier one and was to underline German-Japanese solidarity in the two countries' stance against the Soviet Union. See below, November 15, 1940.

606. Report in VB, No. 316, November 11, 1940.
607. DNB note, November 11, 1940.
608. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 323, pp. 527 ff. Cf. IMT, 444-PS. For the supplementary Directive No. 18a of the OKW and the draft of a Directive No. 19 on "Operation Felix" see Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 72 ff. Their relevance is restricted by the fact that "Operation Felix" was called off on December 12, 1940. See below, 1940, note 670.
609. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 512 ff. Cf. reports on the talks between Hitler and Molotov in Schmidt, pp. 530 ff. and notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt, published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 157 ff.; for Hitler's recapitulation in his proclamation to the German Volk see below, June 22, 1941.
610. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, p. 518.
611. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
612. DNB text, November 12, 1940.
613. Vladimir Georgievich Dekanazov, Soviet Deputy Peoples' Commissar for Foreign Affairs; appointed Soviet Ambassador to Berlin, presented his credentials to Hitler on December 19, 1940. On June 22, 1941, Ribbentrop informed the unsuspecting diplomat of Germany's attack on Russia.
614. Report in VB, No. 320, November 15, 1940.
615. DNB text, November 13, 1940.
616. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 515 f.
617. Allusion to military cooperation of the United States and Great Britain in some British colonies. In September 1940, a lend-lease agreement had provided fifty American destroyers to Great Britain.
618. See Schmidt's report in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 157 ff.
619. Cf. Hitler's Directive No. 18 of November 12, 1940. See below, *ibid.*
620. When, on May 30, 1940, Mussolini had revealed his intention of attacking France on June 6 1940, the Führer had blocked the Duce's move by insisting that he must discuss the matter with the generals first. Hitler delayed action, using this obvious pretext, because he considered the date of the planned Italian assault premature. See above, May 31, 1940.
621. British Armed Forces had landed on the peninsula in the course of the Crimean War of 1854. After the collapse of the Russian military in 1918, England had also carried out landings on the Crimean Peninsula in an effort to lend support to the White Russian troops.
622. On July 7, 1936, the Montreux Treaty regulating passage through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus was signed by the following states: Great Britain, France, Japan, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Italy acceded to the agreement in 1938.
623. See above, August 24, 1939.
624. DNB texts, November 11, 1940.
625. DNB text, November 13, 1940.

626. Published in VB, No. 230, November 15, 1940.
627. In September 1940, the British anti-aircraft units had proved to be more than a match for the German ones.
628. RGL. 1940, I, pp. 1495 ff.
629. Hitler had not even responded to a Soviet overture of November 25, 1940 on acceding to the Tripartite Pact. The Soviet Union set the following conditions for such a move on its part: immediate withdrawal of German troops from Finland; conclusion of an agreement between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria on the use of facilities on land and at sea along the shores of the Black Sea; Turkish assent to the establishment of a Soviet naval base on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; Japan's renunciation of its rights to coal and oil fields located in northern Sakhalin. Cf. Bullock, pp. 621 f.

On November 9, 1940, Moscow had drawn up a draft of the proposed agreement which read:

The Governments of the states of the Three-Power Pact, Germany, Italy, and Japan, on the one side, and the Government of the USSR, on the other side, motivated by the desire to establish in their natural spheres of influence in Europe, Asia, and Africa a new order serving the welfare of all peoples concerned and to create a firm and enduring foundation for their common labors toward this goal, have agreed upon the following:

Article I

In the Three-Power Pact of Berlin, of September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan agreed to oppose with all possible means the extension of the war into a world conflict and to collaborate toward an early restoration of world peace. They expressed their willingness to extend this collaboration to nations in other parts of the world which are inclined to direct their efforts along the same course as theirs. The Soviet Union declares that it concurs in these aims of the Three-Power Pact and is on its part determined to cooperate politically in this course with the three Powers.

Article II

Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union undertake to respect each other's natural spheres of influence. Insofar as these spheres of interest come into contact with each other, they will constantly consult each other in an amicable way with regard to the problems arising therefrom. Germany, Italy, and Japan declare on their part that they recognize the present extent of the possessions of the Soviet Union and will respect it.

Article III

Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union undertake to join no combination of powers which is directed against one of the four Powers.

The four Powers will assist each other in economic matters in every way and will supplement and extend the agreements existing among themselves.

Article IV

This agreement shall take effect upon signature and shall continue for a period of ten years. The Governments of the four Powers shall consult each other in due time, before the expiration of that period, regarding the extension of the agreement.

Done in four originals, in the German, Italian, Japanese, and Russian languages.

Draft

Secret Protocol No. 1

Upon the signing today of the Agreement concluded among the Representatives of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union they declare as follows:

1) Germany declares that, apart from the territorial revisions in Europe to be carried out at the conclusion of peace, her territorial aspirations center in the territories of Central Africa.

2) Italy declares that, apart from the territorial revisions in Europe to be carried out at the conclusion of peace, her territorial aspirations center in the territories of Northern and Northeastern Africa.

3) Japan declares that her territorial aspirations center in the area of Eastern Asia to the south of the Island Empire of Japan.

4) The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean.

The four Powers declare that, reserving the settlement of specific questions, they will mutually respect these territorial aspirations and will not oppose their achievement.

Draft

Secret Protocol No. 2 to be concluded among Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union

On the occasion of the signing today of the Agreement among Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union, the Representatives of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union declare as follows:

1) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union agree in the view that it is in their common interest to detach Turkey from her existing international commitments and progressively to win her over to political collaboration with themselves. They declare that they will pursue this aim in close consultation, in accordance with a common line of action which is still to be determined.

2) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union declare their agreement to conclude, at a given time, a joint agreement with Turkey, wherein the three Powers would recognize the extent of Turkey's possessions.

3) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union will work in common toward the replacement of the Montreux Straits Convention now in force by another convention. By this convention the Soviet Union would be granted the right of unrestricted passage of her Navy through the Straits at any time, whereas all other Powers except the other Black Sea

- countries, but including Germany and Italy, would in principle renounce the right of passage through the Straits for their naval vessels. The passage of commercial vessels through the Straits would, of course, have to remain free in principle.
Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 309, pp. 508 ff.
630. On September 20, 1933, Hitler had stated the following on Communism as a philosophy: "It is an ideology founded on a fear of one's neighbor, in a dread of somehow standing out, and is based on a spiteful, envious cast of mind. This code of regression to the primitive state leads to cowardly, anxious acquiescence . . ." See above, p. 359.
631. Published in VB, No. 322, November 17, 1940. See above, telegram of November 10, 1940.
632. See above, November 12, 1940.
633. DNB text, November 15, 1940.
634. Published in VB, No. 325, November 20, 1940.
635. See below, March 1, 1941.
636. See below, letter of November 20, 1940 and 1940, note 646.
637. Ribbentrop had invited Ciano to a hunt in the Sudetenland on November 2 and 3, 1940. In a short address before his guests, Ribbentrop had declared that the war had already been won. At this, a German Major said to Ciano: "This phrase was given to us in 1914, in 1915, in 1916, and in 1917. I believed it. In 1918, I wished I were dead." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 306 f.
638. Cf. Ciano, p. 312. Reports on these talks also in Schmidt, p. 288.
639. See above, note 525.
640. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, pp. 518 ff.
641. Maria Josepha, born 1906 in Ostend; Princess of Belgium and sister of King Leopold; wife of the Italian Crown Prince, later King Umberto.
642. While Hitler had promised Slovakia a strip of territory in Poland, he had offered to Hungary lands in Slovakia and Rumania. Moreover, he had proposed a parcel of land located in Russia to Rumania in addition to regaining territory Rumania had earlier lost to Hungary. By the same token, Hitler had approached Bulgaria with an offer of a strip of land stretching from Rumania into Greece to be appropriated to Bulgaria. To Yugoslavia finally he had promised a small area in Greece also, along with the port city of Salonica.
643. See above, January 3, 1939.
644. In 1945, Hitler was to rage that Mussolini's ill-fated venture into Greece had furthermore caused the defeat of Germany in Russia. See below, February 28, 1945.
645. Port situated on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt at a distance of approximately 150 kilometers from the border with Libya.
646. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 369, pp. 639 ff. Cf. also Peter de Mendelssohn, *Die Nürnberger Dokumente* (Hamburg, 1947), pp. 211 ff.
647. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 314.
648. See above, note 431.
649. Pál Count Teleki von Szék, born 1879 in Ofenpest; committed suicide

- in Ofenpest in 1941; served repeatedly as Hungarian Minister-President.
650. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia acceded to the Pact in March 1941 there. After the Second World War, the four victorious Allied Powers signed the contract establishing Austria as an autonomous state on May 15, 1955 at the same castle.
651. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 313.
652. Reference to the telegram of March 13, 1938; see above, *ibid.* The telegram had been posted in Linz, not in Vienna.
653. DNB text, November 20, 1940.
654. DNB report, November 22, 1940.
655. Report on this reception in Schmidt, p. 523. Cf. Antonescu's testimony in IMT, Blue Series, Vol. VII, pp. 338 f.
656. Sentence on the partition of the Sudeten German region and the cession of its western part to Hungary; see above, August 30, 1940.
657. The Marshal of France, Foch, declared in December 1928: "The Hungarian is the eternally dissatisfied; he is the incorrigible man of opposition." Cf. Recouly, p. 264.
658. DNB reports, November 23, 1940.
659. DNB text, November 23, 1940.
660. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1940.
661. Report in VB, No. 331, November 26, 1940. Born 1895 in Mordana, Count Grandi was anything but an admirer of Hitler. He was to play a central role in the ousting of Mussolini in July 1943.
662. Report in VB, No. 334, November 29, 1940.
663. Report in VB, No. 336, December 1, 1940.
664. Report in VB, No. 339, December 4, 1940.
665. DNB report, December 4, 1940.
666. DNB text, December 12, 1940.
667. Report in VB, No. 341, December 6, 1940.
668. See above, October 16, 1939 and March 4, 1940.
669. Cf. Bullock, pp. 607 f.
670. On December 11, 1940, Keitel issued the following top-secret order: "Operation Felix will not be carried out as the political requirements for it no longer exist. The investigations conducted at present have been concluded. All further actions in this matter are to be stopped at once; preparations currently underway are to cease. The Batteries intended for the reinforcement of the Spanish Isles and the Spanish coast are not to be delivered." Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 78.
671. Published in VB, No. 344, December 9, 1940.
672. See below, Hitler's decree of February 7, 1941.
673. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 79 f.
674. General Weygand held the post of Minister of War with the Vichy Government. He had earlier served as Chief of Staff under Marshal Foch before becoming Commander in Chief himself.
675. DNB text, December 10, 1940.
676. Without this treaty, however, it is highly likely that the Empire would

- have fallen apart in 1648 and that it would not have endured until 1806. See above, 1938, note 367.
677. In his traditional January 30 address in 1941, Hitler proclaimed: “. . . are these Englishmen truly so conceited as to believe that I have any sort of inferiority complex regarding England?” See below, speech of January 30, 1941.
678. It is possible that the English were surprised by Hitler only in that he did not even attempt a landing on the British mainland.
679. See above, September 19, 1939.
680. Allusion to a phrase pronounced by Chamberlain on April 5, 1940, claiming that Hitler had obviously “missed the bus.” DNB report of April 6, 1940.
681. These “comparatively small losses” by Germany were to greatly increase in the course of the war. See below, March 21, 1943.
682. Despite Hitler’s grandiose proclamations, he could not change the fact that the Allies still had additional resources and ammunition in far greater quantities than Germany.
683. See above, September 4, 1940.
684. German Luftwaffe forces had carried out this air raid on May 10, 1940. See above, note 487.
685. This was yet another attempt to ridicule Churchill’s declaration that the Allies would be the ones to determine the end of the war. See above, October 1, 1939.
686. If all that Hitler could muster was hope that “the hour of peace will come someday,” this bore bad tidings to those yearning for a swift end to the senseless slaughter.
687. In a speech in April 1941, Hitler proclaimed: “. . . ‘capitulation’ and all it means is submission to the will of another.” See below, April 29, 1941 and note 429. See also above, 1939, note 940.
688. The events of July 20, 1944 would prove to the world the depth of these “rifts.”
689. It is not clear what poet Hitler is referring to in this instance, nor whether he was talking in a more general manner.
690. While Hitler had concrete plans for the “peace” he desired to fashion “later,” and realized that he had to bring the war to an end first, he revealed to none precisely how he planned to go about it.
691. DNB note, December 12, 1940. Born 1890 in Rehau, Karl Heinrich Bodenschatz had already served as Göring’s adjutant in the First World War. Both men had formed part of Manfred von Richthofen’s Squadron. In 1933, Bodenschatz was promoted to Göring’s chief adjutant, chief of the Ministry, and liaison officer to Hitler.
692. Report in VB, No. 347, December 12, 1940.
693. Ibid.
694. DNB text, December 12, 1940.
695. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 511, pp. 867 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 81 ff. The code name “Operation Marita” was apparently derived from the river Maritza, the border between Bulgaria and Greece.

696. This no doubt meant deployment of these units in an assault on Russia.
697. DGFP, D, XI, no. 532, pp. 899 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 84 ff. Evidently Hitler had chosen the code name “Barbarossa,” since he intended, like the German Emperor Frederick I in the 12th century, to launch a “crusade” to the East, though this time against the “red plague.” Frederick’s nickname “Barbarossa” literally meant “red beard.”
698. On February 28, 1945, Hitler would blame Mussolini’s Greek adventure for the failure of the Russian campaign. This had forced Hitler to deploy troops to Greece and allegedly led to the belated launching of the attack on Russia on June 22, 1941. The assault had been initially scheduled for late May 1941. However, in reality, the Italian campaign into Greece played no role in the rescheduling of the attack on Russia. See below, April 30, 1941.
699. Cf. talks between Hitler and Darlan, see below, December 26, 1940. Jean François Darlan, born 1881 in Nerac, murdered December 24, 1942 in Algiers; the Admiral served repeatedly as either French Premier or Foreign Minister in the years 1940 to 1942.
700. DNB report, December 18, 1940. Editor’s note: Phonographic records of nearly the entire speech, which has not been published to date, have been preserved on disc records at the Bundesarchiv, BA, Koblenz (Le 4 EW 65 862–65 879; record no. 65 874 is missing) and on tape records at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, DRA, Frankfurt am Main, No. 52.8884. Translation according to the records of the BA and the German transcription by the DRA. The editor thanks Dr. Hans-Dieter Kreikamp, BA, Dr. Rainer Hofmann, BA/Tonarchiv, and Walter Roller, DRA, for their help.
701. Reference to the wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870–71.
702. One man tried to “avoid” this end with unequalled tenacity: Hitler who hung on to his own life to the last minute.
703. DNB report, December 19, 1940.
704. See above, December 21, 1939 and note 1283.
705. Reports on the speeches and tours from December 23 to 26, 1940, in VB, No. 362, December 27, 1940. Cf. also DNB special report, December 26, 1940.
706. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 524.
707. According to a remarkable error in the *Völkischer Beobachter*’s rendition, Hitler began this speech with “What my fate shall be . . .” and not with “What your fate shall be . . .” Original quotation from the author’s notes.
708. Report in VB, No. 363, December 28, 1940.
709. Verbatim account of the speech in IMT, 170-C.
710. Published in AFR, Vol. III, pp. 17 ff.
711. Sidi Barani is a town on the Egyptian coast at a distance of approximately 60 kilometers from the Libyan border.
712. See above, August 29, 1939 and Weizsäcker p. 258.