

HITLER'S IMAGE OF BRITAIN

A Thesis

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by

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I may point out that still, about a week before his death, the Fuehrer had again pointed out to me the necessity of Anglo German friendship. . . . This was on the twenty-second or twenty-third of April when the Fuehrer spoke to me for the first time that the war was lost.

I mean it only shows you how he really stuck to his fundamental ideas. He came back to that again, about the tremendous necessity of these two countries coming to some sort of an arrangement.

- Statement of Joachim von Ribbentrop  
before the Nuremburg Tribunal

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
The Development of an Image	
1919-1933 . . . . .	1
The Courtship	
1933-1938 . . . . .	18
Munich and After	
1938-1940 . . . . .	30
The Image in the War Years	
1941-1944 . . . . .	52
Defeat and Retrospection	
1945 . . . . .	69
Conclusion . . . . .	75
Bibliography . . . . .	78

# I

## The Development of an Image 1919 - 1933

Very little is known of Hitler's image of Great Britain before the First World War.<sup>1</sup> There is some suggestion in Mein Kampf that he was impressed by British democracy because he considered it to be "dignified," and that he had a great respect for the English as a fellow Teutonic race.<sup>2</sup>

This certainly was his attitude when he first encountered the British in the fields of Flanders. Here the "contemptible little army" had held up for some time German attempts to reach the channel coast, and as a soldier in the List regiment, Hitler could not help but be impressed. "I well remember the astonished faces of my comrades," he wrote, "when in Flanders we faced the Tommies personally. After the first few days of battle the conviction dawned on everyone that these Scots did not quite correspond to those one had thought fit to describe to us in comic papers and newspaper dispatches."<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the war, Hitler must have been perplexed by

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<sup>1</sup>For example the two authoritative works on Hitler's youth Franz Jetzinger, Hitler's Youth. (London, 1958), and August Kubizek, The Young Hitler I Knew. (Cambridge, 1955) make no mention of the subject.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Complete and Unabridged) (New York, 1939), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

the English. If they were as tough a people as they had proved in battle, if they possessed those qualities most admired by the Nordic mind, then why had they stood in opposition to German ambitions? For Hitler there was an historical answer, and he felt compelled to explain it to his disillusioned countrymen.

The British, he stated, had reason to be proud. They had been masters of commerce for nearly a century,<sup>4</sup> and their naval and colonial might remained unchallenged. Such power had not been achieved through cunning alone, but through a unique combination of Anglo-Saxon techniques. Intense patriotism, such as Germany lacked, Hitler pointed out, had served as an impetus for all English undertakings. In colonial ventures the Englishman had always understood how to maintain racial purity. He was no brother to subject peoples, but always their lord and master. Moreover, the Briton was endowed with an extraordinary sense of resourcefulness. His skill was so great that he could make alliances with a defeated foe and together conquer new lands. This accomplished, British merchants and technicians would move in ahead of other European powers.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, English conduct had not always been exemplary, he admitted. The nation's actions in the Opium War, her general treatment of Italy, and her ruthless conquest of the Boers left much to be desired ethically. When the German Reich had emerged as a united

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<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the meeting of the German Workers Party, 10 December 1919., in Reginald Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner im Jahre 1920" Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. XI, No. 3. (July, 1963), p. 290.

<sup>5</sup>Speech of 17 April 1920, Document #3 in Ibid., p. 297.

nation in 1871 and sought to become a colonial and naval power, British policy had had no alternative but to contain and encircle that powerful country.<sup>6</sup>

Adolf Hitler saw further determining factors in the English mentality. Historically, Great Britain had been able to develop ahead of other nations as an industrial power because she had relatively few Jews. The immense surge of British manpower into the city had enabled the Jew to conceal himself, and so "Europeanize" himself that, in time he was accepted as a Briton. As usual, however, he was up to his normal chicanery, and was instrumental in developing certain negative qualities of English life. Political parties, for instance, were a Hebrew invention.<sup>7</sup>

It was through propaganda, however, that the Jew had achieved his greatest triumph. Under the aegis of Lord Northcliffe<sup>8</sup>, Jews controlled ninety-nine per cent of the British press. With such a powerful tool they carefully and deliberately molded English opinion so that it sought a war of annihilation against Germany.<sup>9</sup>

Such then was Hitler's image of Britain in the years following the Great War and before the abortive Bierkeller Putsch of November, 1923. Aside from the records of his speeches, there is little that

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 297-298.

<sup>7</sup> Speech of 28 July 1922, in Norman Baynes (ed.), The Speeches of Adolf Hitler. (London, 1942), pp. 22-24.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, was the long time editor of the Daily Mail, a newspaper which specialized in sensationalism and jingoism. He was not a Jew.

<sup>9</sup> Speech of 13 April 1923 in Ibid., p. 47.

has been preserved from this period which might be helpful in describing the would-be Fuehrer's attitude toward England. Dr. Ernst Hanfstaengl, however, Hitler's piano player and an early member of his immediate entourage, has recorded a revealing little incident which occurred soon after the two had first met in 1922. They had been talking about astrology, and Hanfstaengl happened to mention that Hitler had been born on the same day in which Cromwell had dissolved Parliament.<sup>10</sup> "Ah Cromwell," Hitler interjected, "that's my man. He and Henry VIII are the only two positive figures in English history."<sup>11</sup>

Before 1923 Hitler had been known in Germany - if he were known at all - simply as a Bavarian rabble rouser. But the sensational nature of his unsuccessful November Putsch and his subsequent trial in Munich raised him to a figure of European renown. The violent young politician was well aware of the international press coverage of his trial, and he went out of his way to transform the courtroom into a political platform.<sup>12</sup> His statements before the tribunal reflected a new line of thought in his attitude toward Britain. England, he stated, was not the avowed enemy of the Reich. To be sure she sought to 'Balkanize' the continent, i.e., to prevent the rise of any state

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<sup>10</sup> 20 April

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Hanfstaengl, Unheard Witness (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 69. It seems incongruous that Hitler should admire two such different individuals. Perhaps he had a high regard for Cromwell because he led a popular revolt and envied Henry VIII because he defied the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>12</sup> William Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, (New York, 1960), p. 75.

which might challenge her position as a leading power, but she could never be an enemy simply on moral grounds.<sup>13</sup>

As Hitler wrote Mein Kampf in Landsberg Prison he advanced a view of British history which combined an odd mixture of keen perception and warped prejudice. Queen Elizabeth I, he maintained, had laid the cornerstone of English policy by carefully and deliberately preventing the rise of any state which might seek to upset the European balance of power. This policy had been continued down through the years in such a way that Great Britain had come to determine the destiny of Europe. No sacrifice in maintaining this balance of power had been too great for British statesmen. They had never hesitated to use military means to maintain "a condition of paralysis among the individual state powers of Europe . . ."<sup>14</sup> To be specific, the Feuhrer reminded the reader of how Britain had squelched Spanish, Dutch, and French hopes of ruling the continent.<sup>15</sup>

Hitler continued in asserting that British foreign policy had formulated a new approach to world politics in 1871. This was to be the "peaceful, economic conquest of the world."<sup>16</sup> Of course, this did not mean " . . . the maintenance of a dubious world peace, but . . . the reinforcement of British world domination."<sup>17</sup> The end result of

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<sup>13</sup>Speech of 27 March 1924 before the Munich Tribunal, in Baynes, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Mein Kampf, p. 895.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 895-896.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 896.



this policy had been tension with Germany, and the outbreak of the Great War. But England was not entirely to blame for the catastrophe of 1914, maintained the Fuehrer; Germany certainly should have tried harder to avoid war with Britain. As a nation which had sought expansion to the East, the Reich had had need of a British ally to guard her rear. "To gain England's favor," he said, "no sacrifice should have been too great,"<sup>18</sup> - not even the renunciation of colonies and naval power. Instead, Imperial Germany had so frightened Britain that the latter nation had looked for allies elsewhere. And, of course, while all this was going on, asserted Hitler, the interests of the international "Jewish stock-exchange" had been busy whipping up anti-German sentiment in England.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the course of the war itself, the Fuehrer admitted, Britain had been Germany's toughest opponent. Inspired by an enormous propaganda barrage, the average Tommy believed in what he was fighting for; he had also been prepared for the horrors of war.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he possessed a leader of brilliance in David Lloyd George, a man who could give expression to thoughts which opened the heart of his people. He " . . . made this people ultimately serve entirely his will. The very primitiveness of this language, the originality of its expressions and the application of easily understandable most simple examples,

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 905, 929.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 827, 234-235.

contain the proof of the superior political ability of the Englishman."<sup>21</sup>

In the post-war world Hitler saw Britain as no better off than before 1914. The destruction of German economic, colonial, and naval power had benefitted no one but England's enemies.<sup>22</sup> The United States now stood as a naval equal,<sup>23</sup> and the despicable French had emerged as the dominant power on the continent. In France England could see nothing but a threat to her security.<sup>24</sup> In short, Britain had not achieved her war aims. France was the new European enemy, and for the inevitable war there would be need of a faithful ally; an ally, heralded the Fuehrer, which must be Germany.<sup>25</sup>

Thus it would seem that Adolf Hitler had found a place for Great Britain in his world. An Anglo-German alliance would serve not only the interests of both nations but those of Europe as well. Germany would control the continent, England, the seas. With time he expanded this idea, he regretted it, he re-examined it, but he never gave it up. It became a fixed tenet of his mind.

In Mein Kampf one can see that Hitler viewed the British Empire

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 713. Throughout his life Hitler was very much fascinated by Lloyd George. Perhaps, as exemplified by this passage, he saw himself in the wartime British Prime Minister.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 897.

<sup>23</sup> Although he sometimes changed his opinion, Hitler generally viewed America as an enemy of Britain.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 899.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 908.

with genuine interest and good will. To him it was a model of Teutonic achievement which should provide a source of pride to all Germans. Britain, he insisted, had achieved such an imperium through sheer will power and determination. To be sure, she had brutally used mercenaries in defense of her Imperial interests, but only as long as these had sufficed. When a situation had become critical, the average Englishman had not hesitated to sacrifice his life for the cause of Empire.<sup>26</sup>

The British Empire had also become a sort of English world union which was bound by linguistic and cultural ties. It was the foundation of her strength and the area of her true interests. Britain could never be forced to give it up. Only racial degeneration, Hitler felt, could cause the dissolution of this magnificent edifice. Moreover, he continued, its subject people were particularly well off under English rule. India and Egypt, for instance, were foolish in demanding independence. They simply could not hope for a better life than that which they were enjoying as a colonial people.<sup>27</sup>

It must also be said that Mein Kampf reflects other - almost parenthetical - facets of Hitler's image of Britain. English democracy, for example, is viewed with the eye of an architect. "When Barry's Houses of Parliament reared themselves out of the waters of the Thames," Hitler wrote, "he thrust his hand into the history of the British Empire, and drew from it the decorations for the twelve hundred

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-189.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 956.

niches, consoles, and pillars of this magnificent building. Thus in sculpture and painting the House of Lords and the Commons became the temple of the nation's glory."<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the strong interest which is exhibited in Mein Kampf there was yet an element of suspicion in Hitler's image of Great Britain. Soon after the completion of the book in 1925, Ernst Hanfstaengl suggested that the Fuehrer learn English. He pointed out that if he could read some British newspapers, he would realize that another world existed outside the Reich. Hitler was both fascinated with and suspicious of the idea. For weeks he toyed with it, but could never quite make up his mind. Finally, he announced: ". . . German is my language, and quite sufficient for me. After all, your British friends also refuse to learn any other language."<sup>29</sup>

Not a man to give up easily, Hanfstaengl now suggested a European trip.<sup>30</sup> Hitler again wavered. As a soldier, he said, he had seen enough of the outside world, and yet he might consider a short trip to Britain. Hanfstaengl jumped at this chance, and tried to stimulate Hitler's interest by describing Windsor Castle, the Houses of Parliament, and other architectural wonders of the Island Nation. At this the Fuehrer became genuinely absorbed and hastily began to sketch on the back of a menu. The result was a drawing from memory of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 95

<sup>29</sup> Hanfstaengl, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

<sup>30</sup> Hanfstaengl was a great traveler, having seen most of the world and having spent much time in Britain. He was also a onetime resident of the United States where he had been interned during the war, and was a graduate of Harvard University.

Westminster Palace which was perfect in every detail. . Such a performance, as Hanfstaengl recalls, was one of Hitler's favorite tricks. If nothing else, it reflected his fascination both with architecture and with things British.

Hanfstaengl continued, "Of course the Tower is always worth seeing and Hampton Court which is still just as Henry VIII left it. . . ." "Henry VIII," interrupted Hitler excitedly, "now there was a man. If anyone understood the art of politics he did, both abroad and at home. How many wives was it he had?" Five or six, mused Hanfstaengl. "Six wives," pondered Hitler, "That is not bad even when you leave the scaffold out of account. We must go to the Tower and see where they were executed. I really must get away. That would be something worth seeing."<sup>31</sup> And so of the entire world, all that Hitler really cared to see was the block in the Tower of London.

The years from 1924 to 1928 were years of prosperity for most Germans and hence times of small pickings for the Nazis. Hitler, however, was not taking life easy. Instead, he occupied himself with the settling of party feuds and the consolidation of his own control. He also wrote another book which he probably hoped would reach a larger audience than had Mein Kampf, and would be an expansion of his ideas on foreign policy. In substance, the work, which was never published, contained little which was new. It was a polemic aimed at German advocates of internationalism or of cooperation with Soviet Russia. Hitler's basic theme was built around the conviction that an

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-142.

Anglo-German-Italian alliance would be the only sure foundation of European order; that such an arrangement would ensure British Imperial interests, Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean, and German Lebensraum to the East.<sup>32</sup>

As might be expected, Britain's role in the new order received much amplification in this second book, but remained basically the same. Hitler's view of the historical and political Britain, for instance, had not changed, but rather was more precise, more clear. England he stated, never opposed European hegemony by any one power as such, but rather resisted only if this hegemony affected her overseas interests. This had been as true in the case of Wilhelminian Germany as it had in that of Castilian Spain. When the Reich had constructed a navy she had done so at the expense of her army, Hitler claimed.<sup>33</sup> Such an action not only had antagonized Britain, but also had created a serious military imbalance. England, on the other hand, had been wiser; she realized her limitations, and hence had concentrated solely on the maintenance of her dominant sea power. Thus, when the inevitable struggle occurred, Britain was prepared; Germany was not.<sup>34</sup>

But, Hitler asserted, the war should never have come - at least not with England. Britain had not opposed the ascendancy of Prussia; she had even been pro-German during the War of 1870-71. It was not until the Reich had been sucked into a naval race at the turn of the

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<sup>32</sup>Hitler's Secret Book (New York, 1961). See particularly the introduction by Telford Taylor, pp. xiv-xviii.

<sup>33</sup>This statement was not justified.

<sup>34</sup>Hitler's Secret Book, pp. 152-153.

century that the island nation had been offended.<sup>35</sup> Thus, he continued in his round-about manner, as long as Germany had no naval and colonial ambitions, Britain would not only be content but even indifferent to German expansion in Europe.<sup>36</sup> Besides, he noted, the greatest danger to England came not from the European Continent but from North America.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps it seems repititious to keep mentioning exactly what Hitler believed Britain's role in Europe should be, but this is vitally important in a discussion of his image of England as a whole. Perceptive as he was, Hitler never once was able to understand that Britain's fate was tied up with that of the continent. His total inability to recognize this fact and his persistent refusal to acknowledge the advice of others who knew better led him, not only to underestimate the motives and strength of the United Kingdom, but also to make catastrophic mistakes in his foreign policy. And, in the end, when his world came crashing down upon him, he blamed England for his own failures - England, the piece which refused to fit into his jigsaw puzzle.

Earlier Hitler had spoken of the threat posed by a small clique of British Jews to a superior Anglo-Saxon race,<sup>38</sup> but in his second book he became more explicit. Now the discussion was concerned with "superior blood types," the evils of miscegenation, and other

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-154.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>38</sup>See above: pp. 3-4.

such Nazi myths. The average Briton, he stated, had consistently maintained a higher "blood value" than had the average German. What damage the Jew had done had been limited in the sense that there was a smaller percentage of Jewish blood in British veins than in German ones. On the other hand, the Jew in England had been more ubiquitous in his evil, whereas, in the Reich he had encountered the extremes of complete submission or stalwart resistance. The result, stated Hitler, was a "better average" for the Englishman, and his life remained more steady; more normal, even though he could not hope to reach the heights of brilliance of the pure untainted Nordic German.<sup>39</sup>

The outcome of the Jewish struggle in England, concluded the Fuehrer, would be of great consequence to the world. "There," he stated, "the Jewish invasion still meets with an old British tradition. The instincts of Anglo-Saxondom are still so sharpened and alive that one cannot speak of a complete victory of Jewry, but rather, in part, the latter is still forced to adjust its interests to those of the English."

If the Jew were to triumph in England, English interests would recede into the background; just as in Germany today German interests no longer are decisive but rather Jewish interests. On the other hand, if the Briton triumphs then a shift of England's attitude vis a vis Germany can still take place.

As exemplified by this diatribe on racism,<sup>40</sup> it can be seen that Hitler was approaching his plea for an Anglo-German alliance from as many angles as possible. Historically and politically Britain

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<sup>39</sup> Hitler's Secret Book, pp. 101-102.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 215.



could not oppose such an agreement. What opposition existed came only from the Jews. Lest any reader have any doubts about the worth of England to Germany the Fuehrer next set out to assess British military strength. He carefully showed that her true power depended on the Royal Navy.<sup>41</sup> Of course, he asserted, this did not mean that the British army was inferior in any way but in numbers. Small and embryonic, it was still a tough, well trained, and spirited fighting organization. Moreover, it possessed excellent weapons and equipment.<sup>42</sup> The average Tommy also knew the extent of Britain's greatness. Serving in all areas of the world, he could not help but be impressed with the power and prestige of his Empire.<sup>43</sup>

The British Empire itself was now described in even more glowing terms than in Mein Kampf. It could only be compared, felt Hitler, to the Roman world. It had been built through will power, clear political aims, and superior race value. Consciously or unconsciously the Briton had brought culture and improved living standards to his conquered peoples. And yet he had done this not for idealistic or romantic reasons, but solely for the benefit of England alone. This, said Hitler, was how Britain resembled Rome.<sup>44</sup>

In the years between the writing of this treatise and the assumption of the Chancellorship in 1933 Hitler continued to preach the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 80-83, 147.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 80-83.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-149.

need for an alliance with Britain. He consistently held to the conviction that the island nation would remain indifferent to German ambitions in the East, and in 1927 he had even gone so far as to announce that she could have no direct interest even in the "total extinction of Central Europe."<sup>45</sup>

Albert Krebs, however, onetime Gauleiter of Hamburg, has presented an interesting observation of the Fuehrer's attitude toward England at this time. Hitler, he said, either in his ignorance or on purpose, never really understood Britain. For example, he liked to think that England's lack of a written constitution was not the result of centuries of development, but rather the deliberate achievement of scheming politicians who did not want to commit themselves. The Fuehrer simply was unable to see that tradition and ". . . a well integrated society can create such strong foundations that one does not need a binding parchment."<sup>46</sup> He felt that since these English politicians were not bound by any written laws, they could proceed in any way that they pleased. Hitler, of course, stated that he knew better than anyone else, and he liked himself to act arbitrarily. He made no

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<sup>45</sup>Testimony of Alfred Rosenberg before the International Military Tribunal, 18 April 1946, in Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg, 1947), XI, p. 453. (Cited hereafter as I.M.T.) Actually such a statement was not so remarkable for the time at which it was made. Since the conclusion of the Locarno Pact Britain had refused to recognize Germany's eastern boundaries as permanent.

<sup>46</sup>Albert Krebs, Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP. (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 128.

secret of this fact and always claimed that he was merely imitating these British political rascals.<sup>47</sup>

With the coming of the Great Depression and the rise of his own fortunes Hitler went out of his way to be cordial to members of the British press.<sup>48</sup> He told them that a rapprochement between the Reich and their nation would soon become a reality, and that he realized it was difficult in England to understand the problem of a Dolchstoss.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, he asserted, no one in Germany had done more to dispel the old cry of "Gott strafe England!" than he himself.<sup>50</sup>

And yet if Hitler was publicly unabashed in his admiration for Great Britain privately he was still suspicious. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than an incident which occurred in the summer of 1932 when Winston Churchill and his family spent a week in Munich.<sup>51</sup> During this stay he was introduced to Ernst Hanfstaengl who played the piano, dined and genuinely entertained the Churchills. And yet, reported Sir Winston, "He spoke as one under the spell."<sup>52</sup> It was imperative, he insisted, that Churchill meet Herr Hitler.

Meanwhile Hanfstaengl had virtually run to the Fuehrer with the good news. But Hitler was not so receptive; rather he appeared

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Hanfstaengl, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with the correspondent of the London Times, 3 October 1930, The Times, 4 October 1940, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> The Times, 5 December 1931, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> He was completing research for his Life of Marlborough.

<sup>52</sup> Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston, 1948), p. 83.

petrified at the idea. A thousand excuses poured from his lips; he was too busy; he had not shaved; Churchill was a Francophile. All through the next day Hanfstaengl tried to convince him of the worth of such a meeting, but a nervous Hitler would have none of it. Finally, he sidestepped the issue by complaining, "In any case, what part does Churchill play? He is in the opposition, and no one pays any attention to him."<sup>53</sup>

Thus Hitler was afraid to meet Winston Churchill. He sensed what sort of man Churchill was, and probably felt inferior to him. At any rate, the incident must have seemed remote to the Fuehrer when, just a few months later he found himself as Chancellor of the German Reich. Now the time had come for him to test Britain.

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<sup>53</sup> Hanfstaengl, op. cit., p. 196. Also see pp. 193-196.

## II

### The Courtship 1933-1938

The period from January, 1933, up to the autumn of 1938 emerges as a distinct chapter in the development of Hitler's attitude toward Britain. Generally speaking, it may be described as a period in which the Fuehrer wooed Great Britain to achieve his coveted alliance with her. In pursuit of this goal the suitor was willing to offer almost anything in exchange for what he considered a small price, viz., German freedom of action on the continent. This attained, the Reich would renounce her colonial claims, put twelve divisions and her tiny fleet at England's disposal, and turn eastwards.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, there were deviations from this pattern, but events show that Hitler was more than cordial in his interviews with members of the British press and leading English statesmen. He exhibited generally a friendly attitude in all his relations with the United Kingdom. Only in 1938 when it became obvious that the Island Nation was not going to conform to her assigned role did the Fuehrer's attitude change - and then the change was radical.

In February, 1933, Hitler held a meeting with his naval chiefs

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<sup>1</sup>See: F. H. Hinsley, Hitler's Strategy (Cambridge, 1951), p. 6, Walter Ansel, Hitler Confronts England (Durham, 1960), pp. 11-12, and Testimony of Joachim von Ribbentrop in Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Supplement B, (Washington, 1948), p. 1180.

in which he explained his firm determination to live in peace with Italy, Japan, and particularly Great Britain. It was his desire, he stated, to come to an agreement with England, and to undertake naval rearmament only with her approval. The German fleet itself was to remain a small but effective unit, not unlike the French navy, but under no circumstances was the Reich to be involved in a naval armaments race.<sup>2</sup>

With this conference Hitler had taken a first step to win British friendship. The next came in May when he held a reception for the English Ambassador, Sir Horace Rumbold. Rumbold had expressed his resentment at Nazi totalitarian and racial outbursts, a resentment which apparently did not bother the Fuehrer. Instead he repeated his regret that there was so little understanding in the United Kingdom for what went on in Germany; that he was only fighting against Bolshevism, and that Britain would inevitably join him in this struggle.<sup>3</sup> As for the Jews, he said they spoke out against the state and hence should be punished. As Rumbold noted later, Hitler was wholly unable to understand that a Briton who verbally attacked his government would not be punished.<sup>4</sup>

Interviews such as this, with their typical "Hitlerean"

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<sup>2</sup>See statements of Admiral Erich Raeder in I.M.T., XVIII, p. 382, and Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. (Washington, 1948), Supplement B., pp. 1438-1439. (Cited hereafter as N.C.A.)

<sup>3</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy. (Washington, 1949-1957), Series C, Volume I, p. 405. (Cited hereafter as D.G.F.P.)

<sup>4</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series 2, Vol. V, (London, 1946-1960), p. 283. (Cited hereafter as D.B.F.P.)

rationalizations soon became common. In 1934, the Fuehrer told Anthony Eden that all parliamentary governments were basically weak, and that they displayed strong lines in foreign policy only to cover their internal position. Eden bluntly replied that he did not consider this to be true in the case of his own government. Of course not, stated Hitler in great embarrassment, England was a special case; there democracy rested on national growth and tradition.<sup>5</sup> On still another occasion, Sir Eric Phipps, the new ambassador to Berlin, questioned the Reich Chancellor about the para-military nature of the S.S. and S.A.. These were certainly not military organizations, replied the Fuehrer; in England they might be compared to the Salvation Army.<sup>6</sup>

If Hitler thus appeared as somewhat of a bumpkin to polished Whitehall diplomats, he still remained deadly serious in his own convictions. His private conversations of this period (1932-1934), as reported by Hermann Rauschning, reflect this earnestness as well as another facet of his conception of England. Britain, he sometimes stated, suffered from a "lack of firmness." Her leaders lacked courage and foresight, and her people were believers in pacifism. Moreover, the British Empire was becoming nothing but a decayed shell on the verge of a total breakdown.<sup>7</sup> In short, he asserted, Britain was " . . . quite incapable of waging another war."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon, Facing the Dictators (Cambridge, 1962), p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>D.B.F.P., Series 2, VI, p. 173. (Interview of 8 December 1933.)

<sup>7</sup>Hermann Rauschning, The Voice of Destruction (New York, 1940), pp. 120-124.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

But there would never be another war between Germany and England. Such a conflict would not only be a racial crime but unnecessary as well, because Britain needed a strong Germany to lean on.<sup>9</sup> To accelerate England's entry into the German orbit would be a difficult but not impossible job, maintained the Fuehrer. First the Reich would seek to exploit Britain's weaknesses, a process which could lead to complete German control within a few years.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, everything would have to be done to prevent cooperation between the United Kingdom and France. This would also be an easy task as English democracy had no more vitality than that of the United States or France. If these tactics should fail and war become unavoidable, then, Hitler asserted, he would not shrink from the battle. Instead, he shouted, "Where Napoleon failed, I shall succeed . . . I shall land on the shores of Britain. I shall destroy her towns from the mainland."<sup>11</sup>

Like his earlier reluctance to learn English and his open fear of Winston Churchill, these conversations reveal Hitler's inbred suspicion of England. Were the British not to cooperate, they would be punished. To be sure, the island nation was a great power, a power to be envied, but it was not that strong. Its people tended to be pacifist, its leaders weak, its empire to be ephemeral. If worst came to worst, England could be beaten.

The Fuehrer thus probably found himself in a state of

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 121.



ambivalence. He was still a great admirer of Great Britain, but he realized her shortcomings. When she angered him, then, he announced, he would destroy her, but more often he tried to play the kindly adviser and explain these weaknesses, as he saw them, to British statesmen. As early as May, 1933, for instance, he told Sir Horace Rumbold that the loss of India would not only be a disaster for Great Britain but for the entire world as well.<sup>12</sup> This warning was repeated to Eden in 1935<sup>13</sup> and to Lord Halifax two years later. As a matter of fact, Hitler even went so far as to tell Halifax how the Indian problem should be solved.<sup>14</sup> "All you have to do," he remarked, "is to shoot Gandhi. If necessary, shoot more leaders of the Congress. You will be surprised how quickly the trouble will die down."<sup>15</sup>

Hitler's advice, of course, was not entirely altruistic. He wanted to divert Britain's attention from Europe, and he thought he could do so by reminding British statesmen that the empire was the true center of their interests. Should London lose India, he reasoned, she would be able to concentrate more on European problems.

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<sup>12</sup>D.B.F.P., Series 2, Vol. V, p. 231.

<sup>13</sup>Eden, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>14</sup>That is, how Britain should treat native moves for independence.

<sup>15</sup>Eden, op. cit., p. 585. Of all of Britain's colonial possessions Hitler was fascinated most by India, probably because he considered it to be the perfect working model of the "dominance of the many by the few." Anthony Eden, however, has reported that there was also some sort of mystical attraction. He noted as an example that in 1935 all of the top Nazis attended a film in Berlin entitled Lives of a Bengal Lancer, which romantically depicted life on a lonely British outpost in Northwest India. Afterwards, everyone, from the Fuehrer on down, talked about this movie with great enthusiasm. See: Eden, p. 154.

Nonetheless, whatever doubts plagued Hitler's mind, he still sought an alliance with Britain. As exemplified by his conference with his admirals in 1933, he considered some sort of naval agreement to be a primary step toward this goal. By 1935 a number of exchange visits between German vessels and British war ships had created a favorable atmosphere between the two nations, and London expressed its willingness to discuss the terms of a naval treaty.<sup>16</sup> After a preliminary meeting in March, 1935 between Hitler, Anthony Eden and Sir John Simon, it was agreed that a naval treaty be further investigated by experts on both sides, and another conference be convened in June.<sup>17</sup>

Although no one in the British government would go as far as an alliance with the Reich in this period, there still were those who had been partly convinced by the Fuehrer's arguments, and others who were particularly receptive to the idea of a naval rapprochement. Hitler apparently was aware of this, and on 21 May sought to further influence British public opinion through a speech he delivered to the Reichstag.<sup>18</sup> A naval treaty, he stated, might limit the German navy to thirty-five per cent of the gross tonnage of the British fleet. For the Reich such a commitment would be final and binding. Germany had no desire to enter another naval race, and besides, he concluded, such

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<sup>16</sup> Even though it had just violently protested Hitler's announcement that Germany was rearming. Of all peoples the English were particularly sensitive to guilt feelings about the Versailles Treaty, and perhaps felt they could compensate the Germans through this treaty. Of course the British were also quite wary of any naval rivalry.

<sup>17</sup> See: Erich Raeder, My Life. (Annapolis, 1960), pp. 173-174.

<sup>18</sup> See: Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny. (New York, 1961), p. 292.

a treaty would also have the net effect of drawing the two nations more closely together.<sup>19</sup> Even the Fuehrer must have been surprised at the speed with which the English responded and at the rapid conclusion of negotiations for the pact which was signed on 18 June.<sup>20</sup>

The Anglo-German Naval Agreement has since been criticized by many people, but it must be said that Adolf Hitler considered it to be in Germany's best interests. Of course, he could enter a naval treaty all the more easily because he was not interested in naval warfare. Up to the spring of 1938 he always insisted that the agreement be observed to the letter, and even after the Munich crisis he showed a marked reluctance to abandon it. It was not until 27 April 1939 that he announced the treaty was no longer in force.<sup>21</sup> Nor was this a feint on Hitler's part, for in 1939 the German navy found itself woefully unprepared for war. This is not to suggest that the Reich could have built a fleet which was anything like the Royal Navy in size and efficiency, but it is generally agreed that the Fuehrer could have had a better navy if he had wished. Evidently, Hitler entered into the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in the hopes of gaining British friendship, or at least neutrality, while he did his work on the continent.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Speech of 21 May 1935, in Baynes, op. cit., pp. 1242-1243.

<sup>20</sup>Bullock, op. cit., p. 292.

<sup>21</sup>Hinsley, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8, and Testimony of Raeder in N.C.A., Supplement B, p. 1439. Also note Memorandum by v. Neurath in D.G.F.P., C, IV, p. 119. (Hitler here again reminds Neurath of his desire to achieve an alliance., 3 May 1935.)

If nothing else, the Agreement was consistent with his image of Britain.

The year 1936 was a year in which Hitler launched a major offensive to woo English leaders over to his way of thinking. The first prominent individual whom the Fuehrer charmed was Thomas Jones, Secretary to the British Economic Advisory Council and confidant of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin. Through him he hoped to get a foot in the door to Baldwin, and in March he summoned Jones to Munich. Here the two discussed the future of the League of Nations, and agreed that it should become a "consultative body." Hitler also stressed the need for an alliance with Britain and consistently expressed his desire to meet Baldwin.<sup>23</sup>

Jones returned from this encounter as if he had been bewitched by the Fuehrer and rushed to the Prime Minister with Hitler's request. Baldwin, however, did not display a particular eagerness to meet with the Reich Chancellor, but David Lloyd George did. Consequently, in September Jones returned to Germany with Lloyd George for what was to become one of the most interesting interviews Hitler ever conducted.

The Fuehrer had prepared his office for the occasion by placing a solitary photograph of the ageing British statesman on his desk.<sup>24</sup> When Lloyd George arrived he said: "I am exceptionally pleased to be able to welcome to my house the man whom we in Germany

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<sup>23</sup>Thomas Jones, A Diary with Letters 1931-1950 (London, 1954), pp. 200-201, and A. L. Rowse, Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline 1933-1939 (New York, 1961), p. 44.

<sup>24</sup>Rowse, op. cit., p. 47.

have always regarded as the actual victor of the World War."<sup>25</sup> The old statesman was deeply touched by this tribute and referred to Hitler as the "greatest German of the age."<sup>26</sup> Having thus expressed their mutual admiration, the two began a lengthy discussion of world problems.

The Fuehrer expressed his well known view that Britain should be guaranteed naval and colonial supremacy in exchange for German "security" in Europe and that the two nations secure a rapprochement. Lloyd George concurred and then both agreed that Communism was the real danger to the West. It was like the Muslim horde, added Hitler.<sup>27</sup> After this the discussion centered on the World War, while the Fuehrer went out of his way to praise British soldiery for its fortitude, equipment, and tactics.<sup>28</sup>

Lloyd George emerged from this meeting thoroughly charmed by Hitler, but he was not the only one who had been moved. The Fuehrer himself virtually radiated and beamed from the recognition accorded him by such an eminent person as his visitor. He was quite eager to invite him to attend the Nuremberg Party rally, and in later years would often refer to his conversation "with the great English statesman, Lloyd George."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter (London, 1950), p. 56.

<sup>26</sup>Rowse, p. 47.

<sup>27</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 245. (He was referring to the Arabian conquests of the Middle Ages.)

<sup>28</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

Lloyd George was not the only Englishman who impressed Hitler in this period. He was particularly entranced by the person of King Edward VIII whom he considered to be sympathetic to the ideology of the Third Reich. He apparently felt that the King would be a great help in securing his Anglo-German rapprochement and in easing tensions between the two nations. Thus when Edward was forced to abdicate in December, 1936, it was reported that the Fuehrer was left speechless and simply could not believe the news to be true.<sup>30</sup>

After Edward, now the Duke of Windsor, had visited Hitler, the Fuehrer seemed even more convinced that he was Germany's friend. In later years he even stated that the Duke had been betrayed as King by anti-German politicians.<sup>31</sup> The Duke's wife, the former Wallis Simpson, also left a lasting impression on Hitler. After the couple had departed, he regretfully stated: "She would have made a good queen."<sup>32</sup>

There were British politicians and leaders, however, who did not impress the Fuehrer. Eden he found to be particularly detestable and unrealistic,<sup>33</sup> while Sir Neville Henderson<sup>34</sup> was regarded as being a conceited striped pants diplomat. Only once was Hitler cordial to

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<sup>30</sup>Fritz Hesse, Hitler and the English (London, 1954), p. 31. Hesse was Ribbentrop's expert on English affairs.

<sup>31</sup>See: Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944 (New York, 1961), Conversation of 31 August 1942, p. 630.

<sup>32</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>33</sup>See: Speech of 3 January 1937 in Gordon Prange (ed.), Hitler's Words: Two Decades of National Socialism 1923-1943 (Washington, 1944), p. 260.

<sup>34</sup>Ambassador to Berlin, 1937-1939.

Henderson, and often his mere sight would annoy the German dictator.<sup>35</sup> Lord Halifax, leader of the House of Lords and Foreign Secretary from 1938 to 1940, was no favorite of the Reich Chancellor either. He often liked to refer to him as the "English Parson."<sup>36</sup> Someone whom Hitler both hated and respected was Winston Churchill. In many ways he considered him to be the only "real man" in British politics, but he also feared the day he would become Prime Minister.<sup>37</sup>

Although Hitler actually did take a sincere liking to certain English leaders, his motives in speaking with them were not always altruistic. He often sought to screen his other activities on the continent with peace offers, and up until 1938 no one can say that this strategy did not work. His policy of rearmament, his occupation of the Rhineland, and even the annexation of Austria met with but the feeblest protests from Whitehall. In addition, the indifferent attitude exhibited by the British government had another effect of seemingly reaffirming Hitler's belief that what happened on the continent was of no concern to London.<sup>38</sup>

On 5 November, 1937, the Fuehrer summoned his armed forces chiefs and his Foreign Minister, von Neurath, to Berlin for a top secret meeting. He announced that Germany's problem of Lebensraum would have to be solved within the next five years, even if the

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<sup>35</sup>Schmidt, p. 86.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 77

<sup>37</sup>Hesse, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>38</sup>For instance see: Schmidt, op. cit., p. 47.

solution required the use of armed force. As Hitler outlined his plans for aggressive war he also discussed what possible reactions would emanate from Whitehall. The British, he surmised, would behave as they should; they would not oppose German moves in Europe. Recent history had proved this to him, and he predicted that, in all probability, England had already conceded Czechoslovakia to the Reich. Besides, Britain was so embroiled in colonial problems that she would be in no position to oppose Germany even if she wanted to. Constitutional disputes in India, Italian threats in the Mediterranean, the ever present Irish problem, and Japan's superior position in Asia, all gave the United Kingdom enough reason to stay out of Europe. Of course, the Fuehrer continued, he would fight the British if necessary; they were not "unshakable."<sup>39</sup>

Thus as the year 1938 dawned on Europe, Adolf Hitler prepared to move outside the Reich. To oppose him there would be several foes, but Britain - that most formidable of opponents - would not be among them. She had been assigned a role in the new order - that of a bystander. To be sure, the Fuehrer assumed, there were elements of opposition in the island nation - particularly among the Jews and the press - but the government itself would not resist. He would soon have complete "freedom of action" in Europe.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>"The Hossbach Notes," in I.M.T., II, 386 PS, pp. 262-272.

<sup>40</sup>According to Gordon Craig, Lord Halifax had told Hitler in December, 1937 that England realized that certain changes would have to be made in the status quo of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and even the Polish Corridor within the next few years. Hitler, of course, regarded this "dangerous suggestion" as a go-ahead signal. See: Gordon Craig, Europe Since 1815 (New York, 1962), p. 700.



Munich and After  
1938 - 1940

The year 1938 brought about a decisive change in Hitler's image of Britain. However friendly he might have felt toward the island nation in the beginning of that year, his attitude slowly changed to suspicion and, by October, to outright anger and wrath. The Fuehrer continued to be disdainful until the following autumn when he again came to respect Britain. Such a conflict of feelings produced a true state of spiritual ambivalence, or as John Wheeler-Bennett has called it a Freudian "love-hate complex."<sup>1</sup> This complex would pursue Hitler for the rest of his life.

At first, the British behaved exactly as expected. In March they accepted the annexation of Austria without any apparent qualms, and when the Nazis began assailing Czechoslovakia in April, London went so far as to support them in their demand that the Czechs make major concessions to the Sudetin Germans.<sup>2</sup>

In May, however, German troops launched such threatening maneuvers along the Czech frontier that Britain was forced to protest this latest move. Meanwhile, a countermobilization by Prague was heartily

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<sup>1</sup> John Wheeler-Bennett, Munich; Prologue to Tragedy, (New York, 1948), p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> These demands were known as the so-called Karlsbad Program.

applauded by the British press which played it up as a Nazi setback. These two incidents infuriated Hitler, and he announced his intention to settle the problem of Czechoslovakia no later than 1 October, regardless of the consequences.<sup>3</sup>

England's stiffening attitude toward Germany in the summer of 1938 both angered and astonished him. By protesting what went on in Central Europe she was not conforming to her assigned role. In August, when Lord Runciman was sent to Czechoslovakia to investigate the crisis at first hand, Hitler flew into a rage. Such a mission he termed to be " . . . the most impudent piece of interference in European affairs that has ever been perpetuated and a departure from the traditional policy . . . that Great Britain's interest stopped at the Rhine."<sup>4</sup>

Hitler was puzzled by England's attitude as the Czech crisis developed, but he was truly surprised when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain offered to fly to Germany and attempt a peaceful solution. As the Fuehrer himself later said; "Ich bin vom Himmel gefallen!" (I fell from heaven!)<sup>5</sup> But if Hitler had been astonished by Chamberlain's offer, he was also pleased. To think, he said, that the Prime Minister of Great Britain and her mighty Empire would come bowing and scraping to him, the leader of the German Reich. This was the justification of all he had fought for; this was the ultimate gratification of his vanity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See: Gordon Craig, op. cit., p. 702.

<sup>4</sup>Hesse, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Bullock, op. cit., p. 400.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 400-401.

In the course of his conferences with Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden, at Godesberg and at the subsequent Munich conference Hitler said little which suggested any change in his image of Britain. He did tell the Prime Minister that Germans and Britons were of the same race and hence should not oppose one another, and that England's intervention in the Czech affair had come as a surprise to him. But basically the German dictator was concerned solely with Czechoslovakia.<sup>7</sup> Even the threat of war with Britain did not frighten him.

But after Munich had passed and the Fuehrer had gained his triumph he became pensive and annoyed. "That fellow Chamberlain has spoiled my entry into Prague?,"<sup>8</sup> he was heard to complain at first. Later he sarcastically stated: "It would be a good thing if in Great Britain people would gradually drop certain airs which they have inherited from the Versailles epoch. We cannot tolerate any longer the tutelage of the governess. Inquiries of British politicians concerning the fate of Germans within the frontiers of the Reich - or of others belonging to the Reich are not in place. . . . We would like to give these gentlemen the advice that they should busy themselves with their own affairs and leave us in peace."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, as Hitler began to see the Munich Agreement in retrospect, it became clear to him that Britain was not his friend after all. He

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<sup>7</sup> See: D.G.F.P., Series D, II, pp. 878-900.

<sup>8</sup> Reported by Hjalmar Schacht in I.M.T., XII, p. 531.

<sup>9</sup> Speech of 9 October 1938, in Baynes, op. cit., p. 1536.

had wanted war,<sup>10</sup> and she had cheated him of the chance. For weeks he brooded over this lost opportunity and, with time, came to blame England for all his troubles.<sup>11</sup> He was particularly annoyed by British leadership which he considered to be composed of weaklings or warmongers: Chamberlain he resented as a simpleton who had no backbone, and he soon came to refer to him in obscene terms.<sup>12</sup> Churchill he denounced as an enemy of the Reich, a man who publicly urged the destruction of National Socialism, and a charlatan of the first order. Duff Cooper and Anthony Eden, stated the Fuehrer, were also war mongers.<sup>13</sup>

Feeling as if he had not been understood earlier, Hitler now set out to tell the British exactly how they should behave. In a speech in Munich he scolded them for intervening in Central European affairs - which of course to him were solely German concerns. "If there is indeed a human being who is qualified to decide for the German people," he stated, "then gentlemen, British members of Parliament, it is I! The German regime is an internal affair of the German people, and we reject any school masterly supervision."<sup>14</sup> Germany, he continued, had tried to live in peace with England, and would always

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<sup>10</sup>That is, a small localized war against Czechoslovakia. Hitler felt that war was a fine test of a nation's mettle and that fighting was a natural outlet for one's energies.

<sup>11</sup>See & Cf.: Ulrich von Hassell, The Von Hassel Diaries (New York, 1947), p. 11, and Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 114, 119.

<sup>12</sup>Rowse, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>13</sup>Speech of 6 November 1938 in Prange, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>14</sup>Speech of 8 November 1938 in ibid., pp. 300-301.

try to do so, but Britain ought not to interfere in an area where she had no business. As he succinctly put it: "The English Parliamentary gentlemen will surely feel themselves very much at home in the British Empire, but in Central Europe they are not at home."<sup>15</sup>

If this had been intended as a warning on Hitler's part, it had little effect in the United Kingdom. Barely two days later England was aflame with indignation over a new wave of attacks on the Jews which had been launched on the night of 9-10 November. When the Fuehrer heard the news of Britain's reaction he became furious. How dare the English concern themselves with the destiny of the German Jews; the idea was outrageous. Undoubtedly Whitehall was the capital of world Jewry and Great Britain an enemy.<sup>16</sup> "I don't give a damn," he began to yell, "if it takes ten years, I am going to rub them down!"<sup>17</sup> [Sic.]

In the winter of 1939, however, Hitler acted as if he wanted to forget about England altogether, and set out to strengthen ties with Rome by negotiating the so-called "Pact of Steel." Occasionally he did reaffirm his desire to come to an understanding with the United Kingdom, but now such pleas were fewer and less emphatic.<sup>18</sup> Apparently the Fuehrer seemed more concerned to let events take their course,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>16</sup> Bullock, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Walter Ansel, Hitler Confronts England (Durham, 1960), p. 14. Apparently Hitler made this statement many times after Munich.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, see: Speech of 31 January 1939 in Prange, op. cit., p. 187.

although he still wanted to maintain as friendly relations as possible with Whitehall.<sup>19</sup> In March, however, his occupation of Prague increased tensions with London, and the British government set out to negotiate a treaty of mutual guarantee with Poland. When rumors of this news reached Hitler he flew into a rage. 'How dare these British block his road to the east, he screamed. He would fix them: he would make them regret such an action; he would " . . . cook them a stew that they'll choke on!"<sup>20</sup> Later, however, when he had received official confirmation of the Anglo-Polish negotiations the Fuehrer merely sat and brooded at his desk.<sup>21</sup> It was as if he were "in a stew," not the English.

On 1 April, Hitler again lashed out against Great Britain for meddling in European affairs. " . . . We Germans have no business in Palestine," he thundered, "and England has no business in Germany's living space."<sup>22</sup> Bohemia, he explained, was German, not English. It had been the centre of Teutonic glory long before Britain had even emerged as a nation. Therefore its fate was no concern of Whitehall.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the rest of the spring the Fuehrer seemed at a loss on how to proceed. For the first time in his career the Western Powers

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<sup>19</sup>See: Schmidt, op. cit., p. 100, who says that Hitler wanted to be friendly to England even when he was angry.

<sup>20</sup>Reported by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris in Hans Gisevius, To the Bitter End (Boston, 1947), p. 363.

<sup>21</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>22</sup>Speech of 1 April 1939, in Prange, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

had rejected outright his demands, and he found himself in a complete muddle. He could understand why France opposed him, but why, he kept asking, why was Britain so stubborn? The only answer was that England wanted war, and as he said: " . . . she can have it. It will not be an easy war as they [sic] like to think, nor a war fought in the way the last one was. England will not have the whole world on her side; this time half at least will be on our side."<sup>24</sup>

At the end of April, Hitler addressed the Reichstag in what appeared to be another plea for Anglo-German unity. He stated that the Reich had feelings of great friendship for Britain but that such feelings could not be based on racial ties alone. They depended also on mutual respect for each other's interests. As Reich Chancellor he had demonstrated his respect for British interests by signing the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, and he would always be ready to guarantee the integrity of the British Empire. The English, on the other hand, he insisted, had refused to recognize Germany's interests and now sought to strangle her through a policy of encirclement. It seemed, he concluded, that England was moving towards war.<sup>25</sup>

In this speech Hitler inferred that a conflict with England was a possibility, but apparently he did not regard war as inevitable until the end of May. At this time he held a conference with his generals in Berlin and spoke of Britain as the "driving force

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<sup>24</sup>Reported by Gregoire Ganfencu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, and quoted in Bullock, op. cit., p. 446.

<sup>25</sup>Speech of 28 April 1939, in Baynes, op. cit., pp. 1623-1624.

against Germany."<sup>26</sup> She saw in the Reich a dynamic power which could weaken her own strength, and therefore looked on Germany as an enemy. This in itself made war inevitable.

The Anglo-German conflict, Hitler continued, would be a life-and-death struggle for both nations. Britain's defeat would spell the end of her world power and the loss of her Empire. Germany could hand England such a defeat, he stated, but the task would not be easy. The Anglo-Saxon people were a proud courageous race who could be expected to fight like tigers - particularly when their existence was at stake. They were also extremely clever and knew how to exploit each new development to their advantage. Furthermore they were, of course, a Nordic folk, and possessed certain other psychological advantages from being a world power.

But, asserted the Fuehrer, the British had one weakness; they could not feed themselves. "The moment England's food supply routes are cut," he stated, "she will be forced to capitulate."<sup>27</sup> For this task the Luftwaffe would be employed; it would annihilate the Royal Navy. In conclusion, the German dictator reminded his staff that Britain would be the principal enemy of the coming war. No victory could be achieved until she had been decisively defeated.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, throughout the summer of 1939 Hitler actively prepared for war against England, but it must be said that he planned with

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<sup>26</sup>"The Schmuidt Notes," 23 May 1939, in I.M.T., II, p. 282.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 283.



uncertainty. In the back of his mind there was probably still the hope that he could avoid a conflict with her.<sup>29</sup> Should he temporarily reduce tensions with Poland, Britain might decide to reduce her obligations to that state, and by negotiating the famous Soviet-Nazi Non-Aggression Pact he also apparently hoped at least to force England into neutrality. This, of course, was not the main purpose of the Pact, but a number of observers have reported that the Fuehrer did have such an objective in mind.<sup>30</sup>

These tactics, of course, did not work, and Sir Nevile Henderson told Hitler that the British Government would honor its guarantee to the Polish state, in spite of the Russo-German Treaty. Very well, he replied, "if you have given a blank cheque, you must also meet it."<sup>31</sup> Why, however, was England interested in the fate of Danzig? The Polish Corridor, he stated again, was a German problem. That London permitted the Poles to persecute German nationals was intolerable, and she would pay for this attitude. What was tragic about the affair, Hitler concluded, was that "England had made an enemy of the man who had wished to become her greatest friend."<sup>32</sup>

This is not the place to recapitulate Hitler's many conversations with and letters to Henderson and other British leaders in August, 1939. Suffice it to say that these communications all reflect

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<sup>29</sup>See: Bullock, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>30</sup>Cf., ibid., p. 470, Hesse, op. cit., pp. 77, and Ernst von Weizsacker, Memoirs (Chicago, 1951), p. 203.

<sup>31</sup>Interview between Henderson and Hitler, 23 August 1939, in D.G.F.P., D., VII, p. 210.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

some deep confusion in the Fuehrer's mind. One moment he would offer the hand of friendship and the next threaten a war of violence.<sup>33</sup> And yet of all these interviews the one which best illustrates Hitler's "love-hate" complex toward Britain in this period was held not with an Englishman, but with a Swedish industrialist, Birger Dahlerus.

An acquaintance of Hermann Goering, Dahlerus was a man who had many influential connections in the British government. In July he had begun a self-appointed mission of bringing about an understanding between London and Berlin in the hope of preventing a world war. In this endeavor he had traveled extensively between the two nations, and on 27 August he came to Berlin for discussions with Hitler.

The Fuehrer greeted him with enthusiasm, and began a long discourse on German foreign policy and on his attempts to achieve an understanding with Britain. In this respect, Hitler asserted, he had been the unlucky suitor, for England had shown no desire to cooperate. Now she even sought to destroy him. This monologue dragged on for some twenty minutes before Dahlerus was able to get in a word. "I have worked a long time as a worker in England," he stated at last, "and I know the different classes of the English people."<sup>34</sup>

Hitler was startled: "What did you say? Have you worked as a common laborer in England? Tell me!"

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<sup>33</sup>For instance, see: "The Fuehrer to the Prime Minister" in D.G.F.P., D; VII, pp. 216-219; Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers (London, 1948), p. 301; and Bullock, op. cit., pp. 470-471.

<sup>34</sup>Birger Dahlerus, Der Letzte Versuch; London-Berlin Sommer 1939 (Munich, 1948), p. 63.

Dahlerus began to explain the social class structure of the United Kingdom in depth. The Fuehrer listened in fascination, forgot his political diatribe, and asked many questions. He was particularly concerned with what he considered to be the dominance of plutocrats in England. These, he felt, were responsible for Britain's weaknesses.

As the conversation dragged on, Dahlerus came to feel that Hitler really had no conception of what life in England was like, and he made no effort to hide this opinion. Sensing this, the Fuehrer started to pace back and forth, and spoke of the power of his armed forces. He compared the armour of his weapons with those of the British, and announced that his Luftwaffe could destroy the United Kingdom. When warned of a blockade by the Royal Navy, he became even more nervous and began to shout; "There will be war, then I shall build U boats, U boats, U boats. . . . I shall build airplanes, airplanes, airplanes, and I will annihilate my enemies!"<sup>35</sup>

Then, as suddenly as he had lost it, Hitler regained his composure and pleaded: "Herr Dahlerus, you know England so well. Can you explain to me the cause of my consistent failure to come to an understanding with England?"<sup>36</sup>

Dahlerus coolly stated that the British believed his regime to be dishonest. "Idiots," screamed the Fuehrer, "never in my life have I told a lie!"<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

Again Hitler calmed down, thanked Dahlerus for his trouble, and asked him to fly to London and explain the Nazi position in person. "I do not believe that Henderson has understood me," he concluded, "and I sincerely wish that an understanding will come about."<sup>38</sup>

Alan Bullock has noted that it is virtually impossible to follow Hitler's intentions in the week before he attacked Poland,<sup>39</sup> but it does seem clear that he did not want a war with Great Britain. The evidence is more than emphatic on this point. The Dahlerus interview, a remark to Goering on 28 August that he would try to avoid British intervention,<sup>40</sup> and his repeated exhortations to Henderson for Anglo-German friendship all point to the plausibility of this theory. What Hitler did want was a localized war against Poland without British intervention if possible. On the other hand, if Downing Street would be unwilling to cooperate, he would fight Britain too, and he would fight her until she was decisively defeated.

In fact, the Fuehrer did not do much to prevent a war with Britain. His mind was too rigid for compromise; he wanted to annihilate the Polish state, and this time no one was going to rob him of the chance to fight a war. He seems to have accepted war with England

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>39</sup>Bullock, op. cit., pp. 478-479.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 479.

as inevitable, and yet, in the back of his mind, he also seems to have hoped that it would not come.<sup>41</sup>

But war with Britain did come, and although Hitler had realized its near-certainty<sup>42</sup> he still seems to have been stunned when he heard the news. His interpreter, Paul Schmidt, who first reported the British declaration of war, has stated that the Fuehrer actually said nothing. Rather, he sat and stared for a considerable period of time, then turned to his foreign minister, Ribbentrop, and bitterly asked; "What now?" - as if he had been misled.<sup>43</sup> Another observer has stated that, later in the day, Hitler seemed at a complete loss. He had secretly been writing a book on foreign affairs for many years, and

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<sup>41</sup>For instance, see: Fuehrer Conference of 28 August 1939, in I.M.T., II, p. 288. Here Hitler spoke to his generals of the negativity of British leadership and the danger of an all out war to the British Empire. But even at this time he felt there was a possibility that London would not interfere in his Polish adventure.

<sup>42</sup>On 1 September, the Fuehrer met Dahlerus again, and nervously stated that if Britain wanted to fight for ten years, he was willing to accept the challenge. See: Dahlerus, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>43</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 158. During and after the war many leaders on both sides expressed the belief that Hitler had been duped by Ribbentrop, that had there been no Ribbentrop there might have been no war with England. (Among others this conception was held by Raeder, von Hassell, and Henderson.) It is true that Hitler considered his foreign minister an expert in English affairs and that Ribbentrop might have indeed misled him in other areas of foreign policy, but this writer cannot accept the premise that Ribbentrop led his Fuehrer into war with Britain. As early as 1927, long before he had even heard of Ribbentrop, Hitler believed that England could hold no interest in the elimination of Central Europe. He expressed this view time and time again until 1939, and even if Ribbentrop agreed - which he did - it cannot be said that Hitler had been "misled." Ribbentrop merely served to confirm the views of the Reich Chancellor.

when he began to digest the import of the British declaration he said to his deputy, Rudolf Hess: "Now my entire work is ruined. My book was written for nothing!"<sup>44</sup>

Hitler, however, was not one to regret his actions for long, and when his armies had successfully smashed Polish independence, he justified his limited war by smugly holding out the olive branches to London. "Well, gentlemen of the great British Empire," he gloated, "Germany's aims are definitely limited. . . ."<sup>45</sup> You know my offers to England. I had only one great aim - that of concluding an honorable and friendly relationship with the British nation . . ."<sup>46</sup> Whether Hitler actually wished to come to terms with England after the Polish campaign<sup>47</sup> or whether he merely sought to screen his forthcoming offensive in the West by peace offers<sup>48</sup> must remain a matter of speculation. The fact remains that he refrained from assailing the United Kingdom until November. Then in Munich he caustically mocked English life and institutions. The British, he asserted, felt that they were civilized, but "civilization, of course, is only to be found in Britain, in the English mining districts, in the distressed areas of England, in Whitechapel, and in other areas stricken by poverty and decay."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the United Kingdom was plagued by a cultural

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<sup>44</sup>Albert Zoller, Hitler Privat; Erlebnisbericht Seiner Geneimsekretärin (Düsseldorf, 1949), pp. 155-156.

<sup>45</sup>Speech of 19 September 1939, in Prange, op cit., p. 267.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>47</sup>A belief held by Hesse, op. cit., p. 91

<sup>48</sup>The conception of Bullock, op. cit., p. 495.

<sup>49</sup>Speech of 8 November 1939 in Prange, op. cit., p. 308.

lag: " . . . one single German, Beethoven, for instance, has accomplished more in the realm of music than all the British musicians in the past and the present as a whole."<sup>50</sup>

If Hitler was thus ridiculing the British, his mind still remained in a state of ambivalence. Throughout the winter of 1940 he acted as if he wanted to forget the British altogether, but if he were forced to comment on the subject, his attitude toward England seems to have been more altruistic than it had been since Munich. He told Mussolini in March, for instance, that he hoped to come to an understanding with Britain even though the latter still seemed determined to continue the war. The only reason Whitehall refused to consider his proposals, he felt, was because it feared a loss of prestige.<sup>51</sup>

In June, 1940, when the Fuehrer had emerged as the master of Western Europe, Paul Schmidt noticed a further change in his attitude. He suddenly pondered whether it would be such a good thing to annihilate the British Empire. "It is, after all, a force for order in the world," he commented.<sup>52</sup> This change of heart was observed by several other people including one of his personal secretaries who overheard Hitler remark: "It would have been better for me if the English would have allied themselves with us, for they stand next to us racially."<sup>53</sup>

It thus seemed that Hitler was regaining his admiration for

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>51</sup>See: Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, pp. 361-364.

<sup>52</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 177-178.

<sup>53</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 218.

the British nation. With German hegemony assured, he felt that the English would now understand his point of view and come to terms. These terms, he told Ribbentrop, would be more than generous. Great Britain would be given a chance to bow out of the war as gracefully as possible; she would be asked to restore one or two of Germany's old colonies; and she must agree to an everlasting peace with the Reich. "That is the only thing we want," Hitler emphatically stated.<sup>54</sup>

These German peace proposals were communicated to London through the neutral capitals of Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and the Vatican, but the only answer they elicited was a note of defiance from a people who were resolved to fight on to the end. To Hitler such an idea was inconceivable, and for nearly two weeks he did little but hope that the British would change their mind. Nothing was even said about continuing the war against England.

Finally, on 2 July a directive issued by the High Command mentioned the possibility of a landing in Britain but cautiously noted that " . . . the invasion is still only a plan, and has not yet been decided."<sup>55</sup> Five days later, Count Ciano, the Italian foreign minister, found Hitler in an even more divided mind. He was now rather sure that the war would continue, he said, but it was still quite possible that Whitehall would have a change of heart.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Testimony of Joachim von Ribbentrop in N.C.A., B, p. 1179. General Alfred Jodl noted in his diary that Hitler began drafting these terms as early as 20 May. See: William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York, 1960), p. 746.

<sup>55</sup>Quoted in ibid., p. 751.

<sup>56</sup>Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 375.



On 11 July the Fuehrer sounded out his armed services chiefs on the matter, and they seemed as ambivalent as he. Only Raeder, who suggested a war of attrition - which ran counter to Hitler's military thinking - offered any concrete proposals.<sup>57</sup> Five days later the Fuehrer at last made a decision. A directive from his headquarters announced: "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."<sup>58</sup>

On 19 July Hitler stood before the Reichstag to present his final peace offer to Britain. It was one of his most effective speeches; one which almost reached a level of artistry. "From Britain," he stated, "I now hear only a single cry - not of the people but of the politicians - that the war must go on!"<sup>59</sup> Such an idea, he continued, was insane. England would perish in the first onslaught, and this would not be his responsibility but that of the British politicians. "It almost causes me pain to think that I should have been selected by Fate to deal the final blow to the structure which these men have already set tottering. . . . Mr. Churchill ought perhaps, for once, to believe me when I prophesy that a great Empire will be destroyed - an Empire which it was never my intention to destroy or even to harm. . . ."<sup>60</sup> To conclude, he pleaded, ". . . I am not the vanquished

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<sup>57</sup>Raeder, My Life, pp. 322-323.

<sup>58</sup>Quoted in Shirer, op. cit., p. 753. (Emphasis my own.)

<sup>59</sup>Roussy de Sales. (ed.), My New Order (New York, 1941), p. 836.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 836-837.

begging favors, but the victor speaking in the name of reason. I can see no reason why this war must go on."<sup>61</sup>

It is true that Hitler's motives in this address were complex. He obviously hoped to appeal directly to the British people, to make their leaders responsible for any disasters which might befall them, and above all to make them appear as the guilty party in the eyes of the German people.<sup>62</sup> But the truly remarkable thing about the Fuehrer's speech was its consistency with his image of Great Britain: England was an island controlled by crafty politicians; the fall of the British Empire would be a tragedy for mankind; an Anglo-German alliance was still necessary to ensure world peace. With great reluctance - and in this Hitler must have been sincere - he must force Britain to bend to his will.<sup>63</sup>

And yet even more fascinating than this was the part that the German dictator's image of England came to play in Operation Sea Lion, as the proposed invasion of Britain had come to be called. To begin with, Hitler had a great fear of the sea - a fear which stretched back to the days of his youth. Born as he was in the very heart of Central Europe, he probably never saw a large body of water until he was well into manhood. August Kubizek, his boyhood companion, has reported

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 837.

<sup>62</sup>See: Shirer, op. cit., p. 756.

<sup>63</sup>See: Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943 (New York, 1946), p. 277. Here the Italian foreign minister reports a conversation with the Fuehrer on 20 July in which Hitler reflected on his speech of the night before, and again emphasized the importance of the British Empire.

that never once did he see Hitler immersed in anything larger than a small stream,<sup>64</sup> while Ernst Hanfstaengl says that the Fuehrer could not swim at all and refused to learn. He would become petrified while rowing, convinced that the boat was about to capsize, or would shiver with fright while flying over the sea.<sup>65</sup> Nor did this fear of water abate with time; in 1940 he remarked to Admiral Raeder: "On land I am a hero, but on water I am a coward."<sup>66</sup>

Secondly, Hitler never put his heart into planning an invasion of Britain. Even if he had understood the importance of sea power, which of course he did not, it is still doubtful that he would have pressed the attack with much vigor. His mind was not concerned with England; it was thinking of an attack on the Soviet Union. Since December, 1939, his generals had been planning for this campaign, and Hitler himself was so fascinated with the idea that he seriously considered launching it in the fall of 1940.<sup>67</sup> Besides, as Commander in Chief he rarely interfered in military planning sessions for the invasion of England. This in itself was remarkable for the man who had almost completely dominated such conferences in the recent conquest of Western Europe.

It thus may be inferred that Hitler was simply not interested

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<sup>64</sup> August Kubizek, The Young Hitler I Knew (Cambridge, 1955), p. 20.

<sup>65</sup> Hanfstaengl, op. cit., pp. 143-144, 188.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony Martienssen, Hitler and His Admirals (New York, 1949), p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> See: T. J. Jarman, The Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany (New York, 1956), p. 277.

in launching a decisive blow against the island nation. Instead, he preferred to bring Britain to her senses by pretending to prepare an invasion while actually unwilling to carry it out. He had offered Whitehall his hand in friendship, he had threatened her, and now he would pressure her into negotiating some sort of rapprochement. He would lay siege to this island fortress until it was ready to meet his terms.<sup>68</sup>

Whatever his real intentions were, everyone, including the Fuehrer himself, knew that no final plans could be drawn up until the German Luftwaffe had gained superiority over the crippled but still potent Royal Air Force. And so through the latter part of August and into September Nazi bomber squadrons flew hundreds of sorties over southern England and London in the hope of hammering Britain into submission.<sup>69</sup> But England's air force fought back with such a tenacity that it soon became apparent that the Luftwaffe was being defeated. Although this English victory in the skies over London came as a surprise in some quarters, Adolf Hitler behaved as if it could almost have been expected.

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<sup>68</sup>This is the view held by Bullock, op. cit., p. 533; Martienssen, op. cit., p. 67; and John Robert Bengston, Nazi War Aims (Rock Island, 1962), p. 37. A little less than a year later Hitler confided to Bormann: "I believe that the end of the war will mark the beginning of a durable friendship with England. But first we must five her the K.O. - for only so can we live at peace with her, and the Englishman can only respect someone who has first knocked him out." See: Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup>Significantly, Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to refrain from the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian populace. All targets were to be solely military in nature. This order was not changed until September. See: Martienssen, op. cit., p. 84.

General Adolf Galland, who commanded a squadron of fighter planes during the Battle of Britain, has reported Hitler's reactions quite precisely. In an interview which he had with the Fuehrer toward the end of September, he expressed his resentment of the condescending tone in which the German press and radio had played down the military prowess of the British nation. The Royal Air Force, he said, was a most formidable opponent. Surprisingly Hitler did not interrupt or grow angry, but calmly nodded and agreed. This description of the English, he stated, confirmed his own beliefs. The Anglo-Saxon peoples were indeed a powerful race. Politically and industrially they were a "hundred years ahead" of Germany. The war, he continued, was a "world historical tragedy"; it could only end in the total annihilation of one side or the other. He had tried to avoid the conflict and now he had no alternative but to destroy Great Britain, an action which could only create a vacuum which would be "impossible to fill."<sup>70</sup>

It thus would almost seem that Britain's determined resistance had reaffirmed Hitler's respect for the United Kingdom. But now he was beset by a new problem - that of a stalemate. He could not conquer England except through an exhaustive war of attrition or through a direct assault, which now seemed to be an impossible task. But there were other possibilities. He could ignore Britain and turn to the more serious task of conquering Soviet Russia. As Alan Bullock has noted, Hitler made his fatal mistake in the summer of 1940 when he

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<sup>70</sup>Adolf Galland, The First and the Last; The Rise and Fall of the German Fighter Forces, 1938-1945 (New York, 1954), pp. 35-36.

decided to attack Russia ". . . whether or not he had first brought Britain to terms."<sup>71</sup> For the Fuehrer this decision was irrevocable. True, he would continue to bomb the United Kingdom ". . . for the purpose of maintaining political and military pressure . . ."<sup>72</sup> but now there was only one dominant thought in his mind; that of the forthcoming crusade against Bolshevism.

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<sup>71</sup>Bullock, op. cit., p. 534.

<sup>72</sup>Fuehrer Directive of 12 October 1940 in Martienssen, op. cit., p. 90.

#### IV

##### The Image in the War Years 1941 - 1944

Up to this point the substance of this discussion has been concerned with a chronological treatment of Hitler's image of Britain. It has been shown what forces molded his concepts of her in the pre-power days, how this image developed, and how it dominated his relations with Britons whom he met.

But what exactly was Hitler's image of the United Kingdom? What, for instance, was his concept of the British social hierarchy, religious and cultural life in England, or British statesmen? From the evidence so far presented - from the Fuehrer's public speeches, from the observations of his associates, from his own writings - the answers to these questions have been found, but only in part. Another key to Hitler's thinking, of course, lies in his table talk and private conversations. Fortunately, the records of these conversations during the years 1941-1944 have been preserved for posterity, and it is thus possible to combine them with the other sources and to develop some sort of a synthesis; to recreate, almost perfectly Hitler's image of Britain in the war years.

England, as the German dictator viewed it, was a land almost entirely covered by vast country estates, so numerous in fact that

their presence made military maneuvers impossible.<sup>1</sup> The nation's capital, London, though not as beautiful as certain towns in Italy,<sup>2</sup> was composed of architectural masterpieces, steeped in tradition and refreshingly unbaroque in composition.<sup>3</sup> England's peoples were widely diversified racially,<sup>4</sup> but primarily of German stock. On the whole they were prudish, cold, and unscrupulous in their actions;<sup>5</sup> but, added Hitler, they were superior to other Teutonic peoples in one respect - that of pride. They possessed a true arrogance which should be emulated. After all, he asserted: "Only the man who knows how to give orders has pride."<sup>6</sup>

Within British society, Hitler continued, there existed strong lines of class distinction. The working class - there was no peasantry, he asserted - although reasonably content as they were, could not possibly realize the extent of their servitude.<sup>7</sup> Poorly clad and hungry, they lived in unbelievable misery,<sup>8</sup> which was not

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944 (New York, 1961), 9 August 1941, p. 53. (Cited hereafter as S.C.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 21 July 1941, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>So Hitler remarked to Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the Hitler Jugend, and his wife in the winter of 1939-40. See: Henriette von Schirach, Der Preis der Herrlichkeit (Wiesbaden, 1956), p. 201.

<sup>4</sup>S.C., 27 January 1942, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6 September 1942, p. 647.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1941, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 5 November 1941, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 27 February 1942, p. 329.



unusual. Common people were the inferior element of any society and "ought to be ruled."<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Hitler said, there also existed in England a million bourgeois and thousands of nobles who possessed incredible wealth and affluence.<sup>10</sup> Time, tradition, and the riches of the British Empire had given them a remarkable self-assurance which had molded them into a class of rulers.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, these people had taste: their country seats and estates were beautiful beyond description,<sup>12</sup> and their clothes of unmatched elegance.<sup>13</sup>

This aristocracy, unlike its counterpart in Germany, Hitler continued, represented a true source of stability in British life. The continued use of the law of primogeniture, for example, was quite sensible.<sup>14</sup> In making the eldest son of a noble family the sole heir to an estate, he argued, the industry and initiative of the other children was ensured. Having nothing, they were forced to work and struggle for their livelihood, and this gave them strength and courage.<sup>15</sup> The English nobility also exerted other positive

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5 November 1941, p. 135.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1941, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1 August 1942, p. 564.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>General Haider has reported that the Fuehrer often gazed in wonderment at London fashion magazines, which he obviously felt typified the life of the English gentry. On one such occasion he looked up from the magazine and exclaimed: "That we have to make war on such personages! Isn't that a pity!" See: Ansel, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>14</sup>S.C., 28 July 1941, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 4 April 1942, p. 376.

influences. Their insistence that only the best classes be educated, for instance, created a superior system of public education. Such a practice, Hitler noted, should be emulated in the Third Reich.<sup>16</sup>

Culture in Britain, the Fuehrer stated, was a "privilege of good society," and could only be appreciated by the most affluent of English nobles. Moreover, the British race as a whole seemed incapable of great cultural achievement or understanding.<sup>17</sup> "Just imagine," he once mused, "in no country is Shakespeare so badly acted as in England. The British love music, but their love is not returned! Besides they have no thinker of genius. What does the National Gallery mean there to the mass of People?"<sup>18</sup> This cultural lag, he reasoned, could be explained in two ways: one was the inadequacies of the English language, which he deemed to lack ". . . the ability to express thoughts that surpass the order of concrete things;"<sup>19</sup> and the other, England's inclination toward "easy living," a mode of life which was eating away at the nation's vitals.<sup>20</sup>

Religious life in Britain, Hitler thought, was ideal. To him the Church of England was a political rather than an ecclesiastical organization, concerned solely with the salvation of the state.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>However, German schools, Hitler was quick to point out, produced better athletes than British institutions. See: Ibid., 11 April 1942, p. 407.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1941, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>S.C., 7 March 1942, p. 342.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1941, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 6 September 1942, p. 645.

"Against a church that identifies itself with the state, as in England," he asserted, "I have nothing to say."<sup>22</sup>

The Fuehrer's view of British political life and institutions combined a certain measure of perception and a vast degree of ignorance. The King of England, for instance, he saw as a powerless monarch who served as the symbolic guardian of the constitution. At the same time he also insisted that a clever King could be influential in politics if he appealed directly to his people for support.<sup>23</sup> The tragedy of George VI was that he was dull, incompetent, and under the influence of Jews, lamented Hitler. In short he was no better than that nitwit, Kaiser Wilhelm II.<sup>24</sup>

Another political institution without influence, as the dictator saw it, was the House of Lords. It performed but one function and that was to sidetrack brilliant politicians ". . . whose talent is becoming dangerous."<sup>25</sup> This, he felt, was a pity, because the aristocracy generally knew what was best for England. Fortunately, Hitler continued, the gentry was represented in the House of Commons by the Conservative Party, a political group which also represented the grandeur of Empire, tradition, and stable forms of society.<sup>26</sup> The Conservatives did not enjoy the support of the masses, but rather

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 13 December 1941, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 8 February 1942, p. 297.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>S.C., 8 February 1942, p. 297.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 27 March 1942, p. 352.

depended on the army,<sup>27</sup> which, the Fuehrer noted, was monarchist in spirit.<sup>28</sup> This, of course, was logical, he continued, for the Tories certainly had no desire to make concessions to the populace, even though social reform was sorely needed. So grave were the social problems in England, asserted Hitler, that it would take another Cromwell to solve them, a man who could find ". . . a compromise between Conservatism and Socialism, by opening the road to the masses, but without depriving the elite of their rights."<sup>29</sup>

The party in opposition to the Tories, the Laborites, were also incapable of solving Britain's social problems. As they advocated the establishment of a Socialist government they could only lead Britain to catastrophe.<sup>30</sup> A Socialist England, Hitler asserted, ". . . and therefore an England tainted with Sovietism would be a permanent danger in the European space, for she would founder in such poverty that the territory of the British Isles would prove too small for thirty million inhabitants to be able to keep alive there."<sup>31</sup>

There was one man, however, who was capable of saving Britain from ruin, and that was Sir Oswald Mosely. As he and his Fascist followers came from many of the "best families,"<sup>32</sup> they represented the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 26 February 1942, p. 323.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 27 March 1942, p. 352.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 27 January 1942, p. 255.

<sup>30</sup>S.C., 2 September 1942, p. 635.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 26 January 1942, p. 253.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 13 January 1942, p. 209.

necessary compromise between Socialism and Toryism.<sup>33</sup> They would soon settle accounts with the Jews,<sup>34</sup> and end England's senseless war with the Third Reich.<sup>35</sup> But if Mosely were kept in prison,<sup>36</sup> if no one emerged to solve this social crisis, then, asserted Hitler, only chaos could result. The proletarian masses would seize power, stage a violent revolution,<sup>37</sup> and bring the United Kingdom into the Soviet orb.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout his career Hitler had been both pleased and annoyed by British statesmen, but certainly none was as distasteful to him as Winston Churchill. To his way of thinking the wartime Prime Minister had been the man who had led England into war, who had refused to come to terms in 1940, and who dictated that the war should go on. Moreover, his strategy of peripheral warfare was completely beyond the Fuehrer's understanding. As a result he could not respect Churchill as he did his other enemy, Stalin. After all, as Trevor-Roper suggests, Stalin ". . . had understood the problems of the twentieth century in

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 27 January 1942, p. 255.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 2 September 1942, p. 635.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 13 January 1942, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup>He had been interned by the British government for the duration of the war.

<sup>37</sup>S.C., 26 February 1942, p. 323.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Cf. 26 February 1942, p. 323, and 2 September 1942, p. 635.

the same terms as Hitler, . . . Churchill had not."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, because he was scared of him and felt powerless to check him, the Fuehrer categorically refused to admit that the Prime Minister had one good quality.<sup>40</sup> Instead he was the "raddled old whore of journalism,"<sup>41</sup> an undisciplined pig, and a drunken twaddler.<sup>42</sup> One observer has reported that Hitler would grind his teeth in rage whenever he read one of Churchill's speeches,<sup>43</sup> while another states that he sometimes was carried away in a wild outburst of fury at the mere mention of his name.<sup>44</sup>

Fundamentally, Hitler saw Winston Churchill as a man with an "outdated political idea - that of the European balance of power."<sup>45</sup> Such a "superstition," he said, had caused Churchill to race around the continent ". . . like a mad man in search of something to set afire."<sup>46</sup> In time these efforts had succeeded and had plunged the world into war. This of course, had been to no one's interest but the

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<sup>39</sup>H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Mind of Adolf Hitler," in S.C., p. xxiv. In 1941 the Fuehrer sarcastically referred to Churchill in a public speech as the "most blood thirsty amateur strategist that history has ever known." Speech of 5 May 1941 in Prange, op. cit., p. 316.

<sup>40</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>41</sup>S.C., 31 August 1942, p. 630.

<sup>42</sup>Speech of 30 January 1942, in Prange, op. cit., p. 297.

<sup>43</sup>Hesse, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>44</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>45</sup>S.C., 12 January 1942, p. 208.

<sup>46</sup>Speech of 5 May 1941, in Prange, op. cit., p. 316.

Jews.<sup>47</sup> When Churchill had sustained a solid trouncing in 1940 he sought to escape reality by distorting the truth. So well could the Prime Minister lie, maintained Hitler, that he would fabricate magnificent victories from horrible defeats.<sup>48</sup> This, for example, explained why he paid tribute to General Erwin Rommel's genius in the House of Commons; he simply was covering up British setbacks in North Africa.<sup>49</sup>

After America's entry into the war Hitler came to view Churchill as a lesser figure in world affairs.<sup>50</sup> The Prime Minister, he said, had been "bought" by the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and now was little more than a helpless tool of world Jewry.<sup>51</sup> As these interests dictated that English colonial power be destroyed, Churchill could do little more than preside at its dissolution. He was, in fact, the "gravedigger of the British Empire."<sup>52</sup> But English aristocrats and Conservatives would not tolerate such a policy for long, stated Hitler. Already their forces were closing ranks, and it would be but a matter of time before the Prime Minister was

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<sup>47</sup>S.C., 12 January 1942, p. 208.

<sup>48</sup>Prange, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>49</sup>S.C., 9 July 1942, p. 536.

<sup>50</sup>See, for instance: Benito Mussolini, Memoirs 1942-43 (London, 1949), p. 238.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. S.C., p. 195, and Zoller, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>52</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 159. This sentiment was expressed many other times by Hitler. See: S.C., pp. 208, 292.

forced out of office.<sup>53</sup> The fact that this prophecy never came true always puzzled the Fuehrer, but he continued to hope for its fulfillment even up to the time of his death.<sup>54</sup>

If Hitler hated Winston Churchill, there was one other British politician who, he frankly admitted, was even more detestable. That was Sir Stafford Cripps. Sir Stafford, asserted the Fuehrer, was nothing more than a "drawing-room Bolshevik," a puritan who did not understand the problems of the lower classes, and a man who publicly sought to dismember the British Empire.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the German dictator deemed him a Jew,<sup>56</sup> and hence a man to be feared.<sup>57</sup> Among other English leaders whom Hitler found distasteful were Nevile

<sup>53</sup>The possibility of Churchill's "imminent fall" was a constant topic of speculation with the Fuehrer. See: S.C., pp. 195, 272, 292; and Louis Lochner (ed.) The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943 (New York, 1948), pp. 79, 83.

<sup>54</sup>See: The Testament of Adolf Hitler; The Hitler-Bormann Documents (London, 1961), p. 38.

<sup>55</sup>S.C., p. 353.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 1 July 1942, p. 510. It might be noted here that Hitler said little during the war years about the "Jewish threat" in England. Although he felt that Jews had led Britain into war, he still believed that they were small in number. There were, however, those whom Hitler called Jews, like Cripps, out of pure vindictiveness. For further examples see: S.C., pp. 193, 305, 569.

<sup>57</sup>Cripps, Labourite and longtime foe of Nazism, was ambassador to Russia between 1940-42 and later Minister of Aircraft Production. He is most famous, perhaps, for his mission to India in January 1942 in which he persuaded Gandhi and Nehru to support Britain's war effort in exchange for a guarantee of Indian independence immediately after the close of hostilities. For this reason alone Hitler could hate Cripps for he always believed that the possession of India was essential to England's well being.



Henderson, Robert Vansittart, and above all Anthony Eden whom he specifically called a "bumptuous money grubbing clown."<sup>58</sup>

There were, of course, certain leaders whom Hitler admired. Aside from Sir Oswald Mosely these included the Duke of Windsor and David Lloyd George. The Duke, said the Fuehrer, was a "pillar of strength," and a man who would have paved the way for an Anglo-German rapprochement had he remained King.<sup>59</sup> In a similar vein he considered Lloyd George a great figure. "The Briton who made the deepest impression on me," the Fuehrer recalled, "was Lloyd George, . . . a pure orator and a man of tremendous breadth of vision."<sup>60</sup> What he had written on the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler declared, would endure forever. Lloyd George knew that the Treaty was madness, and he had been one of the first British statesmen to attempt to find a lasting peace with the Reich.<sup>61</sup> Had the former Prime Minister had the power, he concluded, a second war with England would never have occurred.<sup>62</sup>

As has been mentioned, Hitler, during the war, continued to worry about the disintegration of the British Empire. He was convinced that it was a dying institution and would probably cease to exist altogether in the near future unless it enjoyed German support.<sup>63</sup> He

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<sup>58</sup>S.C., 18 October 1941, p. 95.

<sup>59</sup>S.C., 31 August 1942, p. 630.

<sup>60</sup>S.C., 22 August 1942, p. 611. (Note the remarkable similarity of this statement with the one made in Mein Kampf nearly twenty years before. Supra., p. 8.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>S.C., 27 January 1942, p. 260.

<sup>63</sup>S.C., 23 July 1941, p. 41.

came to believe this even more fervently after the Japanese had conquered Southeast Asia and were advancing toward India. If only Whitehall would have allied itself with the Reich, moaned the Fuehrer, such a tragedy would never have occurred. "Now, because of their [the English] stupidity, they're losing a whole world - and they've turned us into allies of the Japanese."<sup>64</sup> With the fall of Singapore Hitler seemed to be genuinely disconcerted; everything he had feared for the British Empire appeared to be coming true. His foreign minister Ribbentrop had advised him to play up the Anglo-Saxon defeat in the press, but the Fuehrer refused. "I do not know, Ribbentrop," he said, "whether that is a good idea. One must think in terms of centuries. Sooner or later an argument will arise between the white and yellow races."<sup>65</sup>

But even if Britain's great Empire were to collapse, its history could provide a shining example for the Reich to emulate. The British Empire had shown the world how millions of people could be dominated by only a handful of masters. These English lords had developed the art of keeping natives at a distance and yet maintaining their respect;<sup>66</sup> they knew how to hold the reins of oppression so lightly that they were not even felt.<sup>67</sup> The time had now come,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 27 January 1942, p. 259. For similar feelings of regret see: S.C., 18 December 1941, p. 165.

<sup>65</sup> Zoller, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>66</sup> S.C., 5 August 1942, p. 573.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1942, p. 537.

emphasized the Fuehrer, for Germany to follow England's example: "I firmly believe," he said, "if only on purely biological grounds, that we shall succeed in surpassing the British to such an extent that, with one hundred and fifty to two hundred million Germans, we shall become the undisputed masters of the whole of Europe."<sup>68</sup>

Britain's administration of India would provide the specific example: "Our role in Russia," Hitler asserted, "will be analogous to that of England in India. Like the English, we shall rule this empire with a handful of men."<sup>69</sup> Britain had purchased India with her own blood as now Germany was paying for her conquest of the Soviet Union. After all, commented the Fuehrer, "The blood that has been shed confers a right of ownership."<sup>70</sup> Thus India should be eternally British while Russia and Europe would be forever dominated by Germans.<sup>71</sup>

This, then, was Hitler's image of Great Britain's relationship to her empire. He still insisted that the island nation should have no concern with Europe. "One day," he said, "the English will realize that they've nothing to gain in Europe. [They] . . . have two possibilities: either to give up Europe and hold on to the East or vice versa. They can't bet on both tables."<sup>72</sup> Britain's involvement in continental affairs, continued the Fuehrer, had been the work of the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1942, p. 526.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1941, p. 60.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 3 March 1942, p. 340.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 27 July 1941, p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> S.C., 24 January 1942, p. 239. Also see: Speech of 26 April 1942 in Prange, op. cit., p. 318.

charlatan Churchill. Once he was forced from power, a change would occur; England would pull out of the war with Germany and hence out of the councils of Europe. Such a move would also have the advantage of helping to crush the economy of the United States, a nation, which despite protestations to the contrary, was an enemy of Great Britain.<sup>73</sup> As the German dictator succinctly put it: "England and America will one day have a war with one another, which will be waged with the greatest hatred imaginable. One of the two countries will have to disappear."<sup>74</sup>

Hitler's opinion of British soldiery during the Second World War remained essentially what it had been since 1914. He still considered the Tommy to be a dangerous fighter who had been toughened by German blood,<sup>75</sup> and above all was superior to the average American soldier.<sup>76</sup> He felt, however, that British leadership and planning left much to be desired; English generals were often nothing but "military nonentities."<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, it was also true that

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<sup>73</sup>S.C., 24 January 1942, p. 240.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 27 July 1941, p. 43. The Fuehrer once suggested that the German propaganda machine adopt the slogan: "The British Empire is becoming more and more a colony of American Jews." Such a statement, he reflected, would not only be true, but also upset the British. See: S.C., 27 February 1942, p. 233.

<sup>75</sup>General Albert Kesselring wrote in his memoirs: "I recall an interview with him [Hitler] in 1943 when, on my appraising the military achievements of the English, Hitler threw back his shoulders, looked me squarely in the eye and commented: 'Of course, they are a Germanic people too.'," Albert Kesselring, A Soldier's Record (New York, 1954), pp. 61-62.

<sup>76</sup>S.C., 4 January 1942, p. 182.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 18 July 1942, p. 542. On another occasion the Fuehrer stated: "British strategy is founded on hesitance and fear." S.C., 26 August 1942, p. 615.

the organization of the Royal Army was of a superior caliber. "In England," Hitler emphasized, "the rank is connected with the job."<sup>78</sup> There was no such thing as a superfluous honour or temporary rank.<sup>79</sup>

A discussion of Hitler's opinion of the British war effort requires a return to a loose chronological treatment of our subject. When we last left him in his military councils, the Fuehrer was engaged in planning the invasion of Russia. He had convinced himself that even if the English were not yet defeated, they were certainly in no position to block his road to the East. Once Russia had been conquered, of course, he would knock Britain out of the war once and for all.<sup>80</sup>

There were, however, prominent German leaders who could not agree with Hitler's way of thinking. Raeder and Goering, for example, sensed the risks of Operation Barbarossa<sup>81</sup> and suggested a plan whereby England could be further isolated by expulsion from the Mediterranean and Gibraltar. The Fuehrer assented to a further investigation of the plan, but he never gave it much further thought.<sup>82</sup> In fact, he was once heard to remark: "The loss of Gibraltar would be a blow for which the British would never forgive us."<sup>83</sup>

Thus in his mind Hitler preferred to ignore the English war

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<sup>78</sup>Felix Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War (New York, 1950), p. 121.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Ciano's Diary, p. 449; Hesse, op. cit., p. 138; and Bullock, op. cit., p. 587.

<sup>81</sup>The code name for the invasion of Russia.

<sup>82</sup>Martienssen, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

<sup>83</sup>Hesse, op. cit., p. 123.

effort, but this he could not do for long. By late 1941 and early 1942 it was becoming apparent even to the Fuehrer that Great Britain was far from defeated. The British Eighth Army had begun to turn the tide of war in North Africa and the Royal Air Force was unloading thousands of tons of bombs on German cities. Such bombing attacks infuriated Hitler, and he declared that the Luftwaffe would retaliate by indiscriminately bombing English bathing resorts, cultural centers, and cities.<sup>84</sup> "Terror can only be broken by terror," he said, ". . . the English will stop only if their cities are knocked out and for no other reason."<sup>85</sup>

But if the Fuehrer had thus begun to feel the pinch of the British war effort, he refused to admit it. Instead, he continued to insist that England would soon pull out of the war.<sup>86</sup> It was obvious, he asserted, that the British production potential was declining rapidly; steel production, for instance, had fallen at a tremendous rate in 1943. Of course, it was also true, he admitted, that in March 1944 the Anglo-Saxons would launch their invasion of Western Europe.<sup>87</sup> They were afraid, however, that its results would be doubtful, and thus they had been terribly clever by entrusting the leadership of the mission to the Americans. As he emphasized: "If the whole

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<sup>84</sup>Lochner, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>85</sup>Fuehrer Conference of 25 July 1943 in Gilbert, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>86</sup>Fuehrer Conference of 5 March 1943 in ibid., p. 23. Of course, Hitler may have said this simply to reassure his generals.

<sup>87</sup>Fuehrer Conference of 20 December 1943 in ibid., p. 76.

thing fails, the Americans will be responsible. If it should fail under English command, they will be responsible."<sup>88</sup>

The "whole thing," of course did not fail. By December, 1944 the Anglo-Americans were encamped on the German border poised for the final drive into the heart of the Third Reich.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

V

Defeat and Retrospection  
1945

If Hitler's last months on earth were months of disaster, they were also months of reminiscences and speculation. Between the air raids, the staff conferences, and the confusion, the Fuehrer still found time to voice his opinions of politics and world affairs. His attitude toward England in this period had changed but little except that it was now more pessimistic and harsh. "We can with safety make one prophecy;" he said in February, "whatever the outcome of this war, the British Empire is at an end. It has been mortally wounded. The future of the British people is to die of hunger and tuberculosis in their cursed island."<sup>1</sup>

Already, the Fuehrer continued, people in the United Kingdom were beginning to ask: "What was the point of this war anyway?"<sup>2</sup> The answer, he insisted, was simple: Europe was being "bolshevized" and England was now too weak to prevent it.<sup>3</sup> What Germany should do, he mused, was to announce that the Russians had formed a Communist

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<sup>1</sup>The Testament of Adolf Hitler; The Hitler-Bormann Documents: February - April 1945 (London, 1961), 4 February 1945, p. 34. (Cited hereafter as Hitler-Bormann.)

<sup>2</sup>Fuehrer Conference of 27 January 1945 in Gilbert, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Speech to the General Staff of 28 December 1944 in ibid., pp. 159-160.



government within the Reich; "That will make them [the English] feel as if someone had stuck a needle into them."<sup>4</sup>

Thus in the Fuehrer's view the Second World War had gained Britain nothing. She had fought the Third Reich to prevent German expansion into Russia, and now Russia was expanding toward Britain. Neville Chamberlain, of course, had been partly responsible for this. He might have prevented the war had he known the full extent of France's spiritual and military decadence in 1938. His trip to Munich had not been to settle matters peacefully, but to gain time so that he might wage war all the more effectively against Germany.<sup>5</sup>

Winston Churchill, on the other hand, had not only led Britain into war but down the road to ruin as well. He seemed to fancy himself another Pitt, maintained Hitler, although in actuality there could be no comparison between the two statesmen. Pitt had been a young virile man of genius who had saved Europe from being dominated by Napoleon. In so doing he had not only ensured Britain's nineteenth century role as arbiter in world affairs but had also paved the way for her supremacy in global trade.<sup>6</sup>

Churchill, however, was nothing more than an enfeebled old man who was barely able to carry out the orders of his master Roosevelt. It was true, Hitler continued, that he viewed foreign affairs with the

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<sup>4</sup>Fuehrer Conference of 27 January 1945 in ibid., p. 118.

<sup>5</sup>Hitler-Bormann, 21 February 1945, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 4 February 1945, pp. 29-31. (Hitler never said to which Pitt he was referring but it is obviously William Pitt the Younger.)

same eye as Pitt, but he also failed to realize that the world had changed since 1800. Instead of encouraging the rivalries of European nations in order to maintain a balance of power, Churchill should have seen that Europe was losing its strength and prestige to the new super-states - the United States and Russia. By encouraging and supporting the unification of the continent under German leadership he could have maintained Britain's dominant position as arbiter instead of leading her in a policy of suicide. Pitt Certainly would have recognized the foibles of Churchill's ideology, concluded the Fuehrer, for he would have made peace with the Reich and boldly launched Britain on a new course in global politics.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that there had been no popular reaction to Churchill's maniacal errors, Hitler asserted, showed that the British no longer deserved to be world rulers. Their aristocracy had declined to the point of being useless and the entire nation was obviously about to succumb to the forces of world Jewry.<sup>8</sup> "I had underestimated the power of Jewish domination over Churchill's England,"<sup>9</sup> he said. The United Kingdom obviously rather preferred to be destroyed by Jews than to recognize and accept National Socialism. ". . . Our absolute determination to eradicate Jewish power, root and branch, throughout the world," the Fuehrer concluded, "was far too strong meat for their delicate stomachs to digest."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-34.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Britain had had several excellent opportunities to pull out of the war and save herself, reminisced Hitler. By making peace after the fall of Poland or the defeat of France she could have withdrawn with hardly a scar on her record, although it might not have been too honorable for her to do so. "But in matters of this kind," continued the Fuehrer, "the British sense of honor is not too particular. All she had to do was to place the blame for her defection squarely on the shoulders of her ex-allies. . . . We ourselves would have helped her to save face."<sup>11</sup>

An even better time to have negotiated peace would have been after the Battle of Britain. "In the skies over London," Hitler stated, she [England] had demonstrated to all the world her will to resist, and on her credit side she had the humiliating defeats which she had inflicted on the Italians in North Africa. The traditional Britain would have made peace. But the Jews would have none of it."<sup>12</sup>

There were times, however, admitted the Fuehrer, when he had been wrong in his estimation of England. He regretted, for example, that he had not conquered Gibraltar in 1940, and that he had not seen to it that Italy remain neutral. A neutral Italy would have tied down thousands of British troops in the Mediterranean, he maintained, and would have prevented the Royal Army from achieving such easy victories. Instead, the prolonged war in the Mediterranean had hardened British

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

soldiery and had given it the thrill of victory. As a result the Anglo-Saxons had become masters in the art of modern warfare.<sup>13</sup>

Another mistake had been made in 1938. He should never have listened to Chamberlain, Hitler reflected, but should have started the war immediately with an invasion of Czechoslovakia. "At Munich," he stated, "we missed a unique opportunity of easily and swiftly winning a war that was in any case inevitable."<sup>14</sup>

Aside from these reminiscences, Hitler had no regrets; his opinion of the United Kingdom, he told himself, was basically sound. The outbreak of the Second World War between the Reich and England had not been his fault but that of British politicians, business men, and Jews.<sup>15</sup> So consistent was he that only a week before his death he told Ribbentrop that, after the war, he should try again to reach some sort of an agreement with the English. Anglo-German friendship, he repeated, should still be a prime tenet of world stability and order.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, when the Fuehrer looked back at his fantastic career he saw himself as another Napoleon. Like the Corsican he had been the great architect of a new society, of a unified Europe. He had made and remade the map of the continent and in the end he had been defeated. To be sure, Bonaparte had not been forced to fight the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 17 February 1945, pp. 72-73.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 21 February 1945, p. 84.

<sup>15</sup>"Hitler's Political Testament, April 29, 1945," in Louis Snyder (ed.) Documents in German History (New Brunswick, 1958), p. 478.

<sup>16</sup>Testimony of Joachim von Ribbentrop in N.C.A., B, pp. 1178-1179; and Joachim von Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Moskau (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1953), p. 98.

Jews - in this respect they were different - but had they both not been helped to defeat by the same factor? Perhaps Hitler himself put it best: "And always it has been this Britain who barred Europe's way to prosperity!"<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Hitler-Bormann, 26 February 1945, p. 102.

## VI

### Conclusion

In Mein Kampf Hitler had written: "At that time [referring to his youth in Vienna] I formed an image of the world and a view of life which became the granite foundation of my actions. I have had to add but little to that which I had learned then and I have had to change nothing."<sup>1</sup> In a very real sense the same could be said of the Fuehrer's attitude toward Britain. The image of the island nation which he had first held in a Munich beer hall had changed little through twenty odd years. In this period he had read much about England and he had met and talked with many Britons, but he had never really come to understand the United Kingdom.

Instead, that which he preferred to learn, that which he read served only to confirm his already prejudiced beliefs.<sup>2</sup> He had stated in 1924 that Britain had no interest in European affairs and that an Anglo-German alliance could be the only sure foundation of global stability. When the fallacy of these concepts was driven home to him -

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<sup>1</sup>Mein Kampf., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>"When studying a book, a magazine or a pamphlet, those who master the art of reading will immediately read that which in their opinion is suitable for them - because it serves their purposes or is generally worth knowing." Mein Kampf, p. 49.

during the Sudetin crisis of 1938, in Poland, after the fall of France - he refused to admit that he had been wrong.

Consequently, it was the British who were wrong, or at least misled: they had been duped by Churchill and the Jews. Any sensible Englishman, Hitler consistently maintained, must believe exactly as he: it would be but a matter of time before such sensible people would drive their prime minister and his Hebrew rabble from power. "If Churchill were suddenly to disappear," he asserted as late as February 1945, "everything would change in a flash."<sup>3</sup>

But nothing ever changed - neither England's attitude toward Nazi Germany nor the German dictator's view of Britain. He had never been there, and yet he knew exactly how that country looked. It was a land of vast estates, of wealthy lords, and of extreme poverty. Its people were cold and prudish, devoid of any culture, and yet also a master race. Perhaps this fact, more than any other, explains why Hitler liked England, or at least thought he did: British achievements for him were Germanic achievements. This was the "granite foundation" of his thought, and his other opinions stemmed from it.

Thus what emerged at the end was some sort of weird caricature. The British - who in reality were perhaps the most enlightened of colonial rulers - were to Hitler the most brutal of colonial masters. From their example in India he would pattern his rule of Russia. He had read of how they had suppressed the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, and he was convinced that they still kept the sub-continent in ruthless

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<sup>3</sup>Hitler-Bormann, 6 February 1945, p. 38.

bondage. Here indeed was a clearcut example of the dominance of millions of inferior people by only a few thousand Teutonic Uebermenschen. It all made sense - at least to Hitler - for he never looked beyond that which he wanted to see. As a result he could not understand Britain's concern with Europe, her democracy, or her refusal to be his friend. Nor did he see that the British Empire was becoming a Commonwealth based on ties other than the dominance of one nation by another. In short Hitler's image of Britain was inaccurate, warped and often contradictory in terms. It thus proved a very unreliable guide.



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