

Adolf Hitler

*Monologues at the Führer's Headquarters 1941-1944*

The Records of Heinrich Heim  
Edited by Werner Jochmann



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## A brief foreword

by David Irving

*Hitler's Table Talk* is the product of his lunch- and supper-time conversations in his private circle from 1941 to 1944. The transcripts are genuine. (Ignore the 1945 'transcripts' published by Trevor-Roper in the 1950s as *Hitler's Last Testament*: they are fake.)

The table talk notes were originally taken by Heinrich Heim, the adjutant of Martin Bormann, who attended these meals at an adjacent table and took notes (later Henry Picker took over the job). Afterwards Heim immediately typed up these records, which Bormann signed as accurate.

François Genoud purchased the files of transcripts from Bormann's widow just after the war, along with the handwritten letters which she and the *Reichsleiter* had exchanged. For forty thousand pounds—paid half to Genoud and half to Hitler's sister Paula—George Weidenfeld, an Austrian Jewish publisher who had emigrated to London, bought the rights and issued an English translation in about 1949.

For forty years or more no German original was published, as Genoud told me that he feared losing the copyright control that he exercised on them. I have seen the original pages, and they are signed by Bormann.

'The Table Talks' content is more important in my view than Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and possibly even more than his *Zweites Buch* (1928). It is unadulterated Hitler. He expatiates on virtually every subject under the sun, while his generals and private staff sit patiently and listen, or pretend to listen, to the monologues.

## Introduction to the German edition

Shortly after the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union, *Reichsleiter* (Reich director) Martin Bormann suggested recording Hitler's conversations during breaks in the Führer's headquarters. He was guided by the following considerations: After years of unprecedented restlessness with travels, visits, events, intensive consultations with architects, artists, party leaders, representatives of the state, the economy and the Wehrmacht, and after the major foreign policy actions and the first campaigns of the Second World War, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht was now directing operations against the Red Army with his staff from East Prussia. To preserve for posterity the ideas and conceptions he developed in this seclusion and during the most decisive phase of the war so far, Bormann, as head of the party chancellery, asked his adjutant Heinrich Heim to set them down.

On the way home from a lunch meeting with Hitler at the end of June or beginning of July 1941, Heim reports, Bormann suggested that he

try to write down from memory an omission we had just heard. What I submitted to the Reichsleiter seemed to him to miss what he was interested in; he therefore made a transcript himself and submitted it to me; inwardly I held fast to my idea, even if I could not reprove his.

Some of the difficulties that had been encountered in this accidental recording of Hitler's expositions could be overcome by proceeding according to plan. From then on, Heim concentrated intensively on the course and content of the conversations at the table; as far as possible, he also unobtrusively noted down a few keywords, occasionally even the one or other striking sentence. With the help of these notes, he then immediately dictated his notes of the conversation to one of Bormann's secretaries. During the nightly teatimes, however, to which only a small and intimate circle was invited, there was no opportunity to record even a single word. Since this intimate circle often remained gathered around Hitler

until the first hours of the following day, the record of the course of conversation could only be dictated the next morning. In his casual chats, Hitler frequently changed the subject. Initially, therefore, an attempt was made to systematically summarise remarks on certain problem areas over several days.<sup>1</sup>

However, since this procedure lost the immediacy of the statement and it was also impossible to reconstruct the context in which the remarks were to be placed, it was quickly abandoned. The conversations were recorded in their course and in the order in which they took place. As a rule, Hitler spoke alone, usually choosing topics that moved him at the time. In many cases, however, he evaded the pressing problems by distancing himself from the work of the day, for example, in reports from his school days or the early days of the NSDAP. Not every monologue Heim recorded advances the reader's political insight. But all of them provide an insight into the everyday life of the Führer's headquarters and the mentality and lifestyle of Adolf Hitler.

Martin Bormann was soon very satisfied with Heim's work. He saw a collection of material emerging to which he attached great importance. In a memo to the Party Chancellery in Munich, he wrote on 20 October 1941:

Please keep these—later extremely valuable—notes very well. I have finally got Heim to the point where he is taking detailed notes as a basis for these memos. Any transcript that is not quite accurate will be corrected by me once again!

As far as can be seen, there was little cause for correction. In the record published here, the head of the Party Chancellery added only a few additions, which are marked in the text of the edition. The extent to which individual objections and remarks were already taken into account in the final transcription of the notes cannot be established with certainty. According to Heim's statements, this was not the case, and the findings in the files also speak against it. For each talk note an original was made, which Heim revised and corrected once more. An original with two carbon copies was made of the final version. The first, signed by Heim in each case, was taken by Bormann and the carbon copies were kept by the heads of the political and constitutional

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gespräch Nr. 28, S. 74.

departments of the party chancellery. Some notes dictated and signed by Bormann himself were added to the collection.

### *Heim*

Heim's notes begin on 5 July 1941, are interrupted on 12 March 1942, then continued again from 1 August to 7 September 1942. During Heim's absence, his deputy, *Oberregierungsrat* (Senior Government Councillor) Dr Henry Picker, prepared the talk notes from 21 March to 31 July 1942. At the beginning of September 1942, a serious crisis occurred at the Führer's headquarters. Hitler was disappointed by the lack of success of Army Group A in the Caucasus. He heaped reproaches on the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal List, and his generals. The Chief of the Wehrmacht Joint Staff, Colonel General Jodl, therefore flew to the Field Marshal's headquarters to get information about the situation on the fronts of the Army Group. On his return to the Führer's headquarters on 7 September, he recommended to Hitler a cessation of the attack and a withdrawal of the Mountain Corps, which had been particularly far advanced and weakened by the hard fighting.<sup>2</sup> Hitler reacted angrily and accused Field Marshal List of not following his orders and therefore being responsible for the failure. When Jodl, on the other hand, claimed that the Army Group had strictly followed his instructions and thus indicated that the criticism fell back on Hitler, the rupture was sealed.

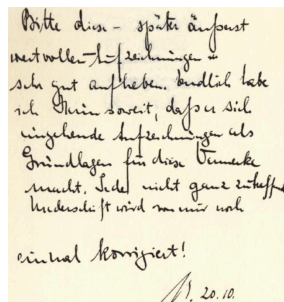
The consequence of this serious conflict was that, from then on, Hitler had the briefings recorded by Reichstag stenographers; did not leave his barracks in daylight for long periods and, in particular, no longer ate with the members of the Führer's headquarters.<sup>3</sup> To what extent his self-confidence received a severe blow from this event, because he realised that his goals in Russia could no longer be achieved, may remain undiscussed in this context. What is decisive is that Hitler henceforth distrusted his officers and showered them with reproaches that shocked even his

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<sup>2</sup> Colonel General Haider: *Kriegstagebuch Vol. III*, edited by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen. Stuttgart 1964, p. 518 f. (8. 9. 1942).

<sup>3</sup> *Notizen des Generals Warlimont. Kriegstagebuch des OKW*, Vol. 2, 1st half volume. Compiled and explained by Andreas Hillgruber. Frankfurt/Main 1963, S. 697.

closest political confidants.<sup>4</sup> Martin Bormann, too, registered with concern that Hitler was closing himself off more and more from those around him.<sup>5</sup> The transcripts end with the abolition of the common table. If there were still conversations in a relaxed atmosphere afterwards, there was hardly any opportunity to record them. The few notes made in 1943/44 by one of Bormann's advisers, who also added them to the collection of Führer conversations, are summarised—released for publication—in the fourth part of this volume. A glance at these few documents reveals the change in atmosphere that had taken place since September 1942. Hitler no longer spoke so freely, most questions were only touched on briefly.



Bitte diese - später anfang  
 metropolen - befehlungen  
 sehr gut aufheben. bündlich beseitigen  
 ich bin sicher, dass es sich  
 eingehende befehlungen als  
 Grundlagen für diese Tunesie  
 macht. Ich nicht ganz zutreffen  
 Bundesrat und man mir noch  
 einmal korrigiert!  
 11. 20. 10

Handwritten note of Martin Bormann from 20 Sept. 1941

Martin Bormann marked his collection of 'Führer conversations' as 'secret' and sent parts of it to his wife for safekeeping. Gerda Bormann left Obersalzberg on 25 April 1945, after the property had been destroyed in a bombing raid, and took not only her husband's letters but also the conversation notes with her to South Tyrol. She died there in a prisoner-of-war camp in Merano on 23 March 1946.<sup>6</sup> After the German surrender, an Italian government official in Bolzano took over the entire collection and

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Hoffmann reports on a conversation with Hitler in late summer or autumn 1942, in which Hitler called his officers 'a pack of mutineers and cowards'. Hoffmann notes: 'I was deeply affected by this abrupt outburst of hatred. I had never heard Hitler talk like that before'. Heinrich Hoffmann, *Hitler, wie ich ihn sah*. Munich-Berlin 1974, page 178.

<sup>5</sup> Bormann in letters to his wife Jochen von Lang, *Der Sekretär*. Stuttgart 1977, page 230.

<sup>6</sup> Death certificate of the registry office I in Berlin. Cf. Joseph Wulf, Martin Bormann. Gütersloh 1962, page 223.

later sold it to François Genoud in Lausanne, who still owns it. It forms the basis of the present edition.

While Henry Picker has meanwhile repeatedly published his conversation notes from the Führer's headquarters,<sup>7</sup> Heim's much more extensive notes have so far only been published in foreign languages. A French edition was produced by François Genoud<sup>8</sup> at the beginning of the 1950s; the English edition, by H. R. Trevor-Roper at the same time. This first English edition was followed by a second in 1973;<sup>9</sup> two American editions identical to the English edition had appeared before that.<sup>10</sup> Since these translations of such a central source are much used by international researchers, it is about time that it is finally made accessible in the original text. This is all the more urgent because specific National Socialist terms and also some of Hitler's linguistic idiosyncrasies can only be translated imperfectly. Attempts to retranslate his remarks have inevitably led to errors that have been detrimental for the interpretation.



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<sup>7</sup> Henry Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941-42* (Hitler's Table Talks at the Fuehrer's Headquarters 1941-42), ed. by Gerhard Ritter, Bonn 1951. The second edition was supervised by Percy Ernst Schramm in collaboration with Andreas Hillgruber and Martin Vogt. It appeared in Stuttgart in 1963 and was followed in 1976 by a third new edition edited by Picker himself, published by Seewald-Verlag, Stuttgart. The edition edited by Ritter was published in Milan in 1952 in an Italian translation: *Conversazioni di Hitler a tavola 1941-1942*. Andreas Hillgruber supervised the edition published by Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, Munich, in 1968, and in 1979 Goldmann-Verlag in Munich published a paperback edition edited by Picker.

<sup>8</sup> *Adolf Hitler: Libres Propos sur la Guerre et la Paix, recueillis sur l'ordre de Martin Bormann*. Paris, 1952 and 1954.

<sup>9</sup> *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-44: His Private Conversations*. London 1953 and 1973.

<sup>10</sup> *Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944*. New York 1953 and 1961.

The majority of Hitler's monologues, which are published in this volume, were handed down by Heinrich Heim (photo in previous page). He was born in Munich on 15 June 1900, and grew up in Zweibrücken where he also attended school.

In keeping with his heritage—Heim came from an old and respected Bavarian legal family (his father was a judge at the Bavarian Supreme Court and from 1918 to 1925 a member of the Bavarian State Court and for a time of the Disciplinary Court)—he studied law at the University of Munich.

Heim met Rudolf Hess at an economics college and through him came into contact with the NSDAP, which he joined as early as 19 July 1920. After passing his exams for the higher judicial and administrative service, the young lawyer set up his own practice in Munich. He worked in an office partnership with Dr Hans Frank, who was already Hitler's and the NSDAP's preferred legal representative at that time. Heim, too, immediately became active as a lawyer for the party. He primarily represented the interests of the NSDAP's relief fund, which was headed by Martin Bormann. This established a collaboration that lasted until 1945.

When Rudolf Hess was appointed Deputy Leader in 1933 and Martin Bormann as his chief of staff, the systematic development of an efficient party headquarters began. Bormann brought Heim onto his staff on 13 August 1933 where he worked, albeit initially on a fee basis without clearly defined responsibilities. Only after the National Socialist party leadership had been given a say in state legislation and namely in the appointment and promotion of civil servants, other lawyers and staff were recruited. In the newly established constitutional law department of the party headquarters, Heim was assigned the handling of all questions concerning the judiciary. He remained in this position of head of the Reich Office until the end of 1939. In 1936 he was appointed senior government councillor, and in 1939 he received the rank of ministerial councillor.

When, at the beginning of the war, Martin Bormann (who had already been in Berlin from time to time and had kept the connection between Hitler and the party leadership) followed the leader of the NSDAP to his respective headquarters, he took Heim with him as his adjutant. He remained in this position from the end of 1939 until the autumn of 1942. After that, when he returned to the Braune Haus in Munich, he headed a newly created department



until the end of the war, in which fundamental questions of a reorganisation of Europe were dealt with.

The decisive factor for Heim's command to the Führer's headquarters was Hitler's wish. If possible, he only wanted to see people he knew in his environment. The fact that Heim was one of his earliest followers (he had the old membership number 1782) also established a special relationship of trust that made him seem suitable to record Hitler's discussions and explanations. As Bormann's adjutant, Heim not only ate regularly at Hitler's table, but he was also frequently invited to the nightly teatimes in the Führer's bunker, which were attended only by the closest political confidants and the secretaries. The circle was rarely larger than six to eight people. The records of these nocturnal monologues by Hitler make up the special value of Heim's collection.

In spring 1942, Heim was commissioned to assist the painter Karl Leipold, to whom he was particularly close, in preparing an exhibition at the *Haus der Kunst*. For the time of his absence from the Führer's headquarters from March to July 1942, Bormann was looking for a substitute. Since no one was available in the party chancellery, he turned to the *Gauleiter* (District leader) of the NSDAP and asked them for suggestions. Among the names he was given was that of Dr Henry Picker, a senior government official. He had been proposed by the Gauleiter of Oldenburg, Karl Rover. The party chancellery made a preliminary selection, and the decision lay with Hitler himself.

Bormann accepted Picker as Heim's representative because the proposal came from an approved Gauleiter and Hitler transferred the recognition he paid to Picker's father to his son. Senator Daniel Picker had already promoted the NSDAP in Wilhelmshaven in 1929 and brought its leader into contact with representatives of the shipyard industry and the navy.<sup>11</sup>

During his visits to the port city, Hitler had repeatedly been a guest in the Picker house. For the sake of clarification, it should be stated that Henry Picker did not come to the Führer's headquarters as a civil servant or lawyer, but served there as Bormann's adjutant on behalf of the Party Chancellery. His permanent duties therefore included recording Hitler's conversations during the official lunch and dinner table.

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<sup>11</sup> Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (op. cit.), page 12.

Picker pointed out in the introduction to the edition of his *Table Talk* that, apart from short walks, Hitler ‘only found the necessary mental and spiritual relaxation in private conversation at his table, i.e. in talking in a personal, convivial atmosphere’.<sup>12</sup> This purpose was best achieved the further the respective topic of conversation led away from the pressing tasks and decisions of the day. Since every effort and concentration was to be avoided, the guests refrained from deepening or continuing a topic by asking questions or raising objections. In addition, the commander-in-chief, who was cut off from many contacts and isolated from the people in his headquarters, also monologued to gain clarity for himself. He found it particularly helpful when the guests were open-minded and joined in. During the war, the small dinner party replaced the population, whose response Hitler had always so urgently needed for his decisions and whom he could not entirely do without.

The need for communication became even more obvious at the nightly teatimes. Hitler didn’t retire after the evening briefing to relax or reflect on current events, but invited a few confidants to his bunker, which also served him as a workroom, to shed the burden of the day and gain new energy. He attached particular importance to the presence of his secretaries because he felt stimulated by this, but at the same time the informal atmosphere was preserved. Very different topics were often discussed than in the conversations of the larger circle.

When assessing Hitler’s monologues, these aspects will always have to be taken into account. It corresponded to the need for relaxation and repression that in the winter months of 1941/42 the serious crisis on the Eastern Front, the hardships of the population in the increasingly severe war, the supply difficulties and the looming weakness of Italy, weren’t mentioned at all. No less visible is the need for recreation in the reminiscences of a special past, the reports of interesting encounters and experiences, and discussions about questions of art. This is often matched by the style of relaxed chit-chat, whereby the topics changed quickly and easily and undoubtedly not every word and every opinion should be weighed on the gold scales.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

Hitler sought contact with his aides and collaborators when fundamental questions of worldview and politics moved him and he wanted to gain clarity about his course of action, especially about the possibilities and limits he had for his actions during the war. The frequent discussions on questions of faith, the vitality of Christianity in Germany and Europe, the position of the churches on National Socialism and politics in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe belong in this context; and the same for his remarks on the administration of justice and the special problems of the penal system under the exceptional conditions of war. Hitler sensed in his conversations with the few people around him in the Führer's headquarters that the readiness to take tougher and more uncompromising action against outsiders or enemies of the regime grew the more severe as the war unfolded, and the sacrifices it demanded. Even in the seclusion of his headquarters, he still had a feeling for the mood in the country and the state of consciousness of the individual groups and classes. Hence his repeated harsh criticism of the administration and its schematism, which was shared by parts of the population, his mockery of the concerns and objections of the experts in all areas of public life, and his anger at the Germans who showed fear and disgust given the deportations of Jews and the persecution measures in the occupied territories.

#### *Picker*

Now, admittedly, the records convey only an inadequate picture of Hitler's remarks. Heim did take notes at lunchtime and in the evening during the talks in the larger circle 'to have a basis for the most important details'. But even then, after the board had been removed, he was only able to summarise on a few pages what sometimes had been discussed in great detail. For the very long monologues during the nightly teatimes, he had to rely entirely on his memory.

Furthermore, Bormann's adjutant, who was interested in problems of art, refrained from the outset from 'recording statements on military and questions of technology' because he wasn't competent and knowledgeable in this regard. He did this in wise self-restraint, although conversations about these topics at the table took up a great deal of space and Hitler had considerable knowledge in these areas. But beyond that, Heim didn't jot down anything unless he was sure 'that he had grasped the gist of it'.

When reading these notes it must always be borne in mind that they contain by no means everything that concerned Hitler and what he talked about.



Henry Picker

Nevertheless, the transcripts presented here are of great value because the man who made them, as a convinced National Socialist, tried to capture the ‘train of thought and the quintessence’ of what he heard. Particularly short, striking statements and remarks on ideological and political issues, that were familiar to Heim as an old party comrade, stuck with him. When talking about less familiar topics or events that were off the beaten track, on the other hand, sentences were sometimes recorded that no longer allow a full reconstruction of the course of the conversation and the train of thought.

No matter how hard Heim tried to convey the words of his leader as faithfully and accurately as possible, they remain subjectively filtered. Here, too, what Baroness Spitzemberg noted in her diary about a long conversation with Bismarck in Friedrichsruh after his resignation is true: ‘In writing all this down immediately after hearing it, with no other intention than to entrust the great man’s words to this book, I realise how inevitable the errors are... When I read over what has been written, I am well aware that I have not written anything wrong; but some things have nevertheless been left out, through the different order or it doesn’t appear as it

was intended. Perhaps I put a different meaning in the prince's words!' <sup>13</sup>

To leave no doubt that it was always only a summary of Hitler's remarks, Heim introduced each interview note with a sentence such as: 'According to the meaning, the chief expressed himself in approximately the following lines of thought', or: 'Among other things, according to the meaning, the chief expressed himself as follows...' This practice was also adhered to by Bormann's adviser, who recorded the few statements from the years 1943/44. His notes always began with the formula: 'Today the Führer said roughly the following...' This makes it clear that it is merely a reproduction, that long discussions were summarised, and that occasionally less important or very specific statements were omitted.

This finding must be particularly emphasized because Picker described Heim's thirty-six conversation recordings, which he included in his edition of the *Tischgespräche*, as 'original shorthand'. <sup>14</sup> This claim may be in private interest—shorthand notes are not protected by copyright to the same extent as memorial transcripts and memos, but it doesn't serve the needs of science and the interested public at all. After all, there is a serious difference between a verbatim reproduction of Hitler's remarks and a summary of his monologues.

Moreover, Picker's assertion that he had received the express permission of Hitler and Bormann to take his own and some selected notes of Heim's must also be questioned. According to Heim, Hitler knew nothing at all about his notes. He can therefore—at least in the case of Heim's texts—hardly have had material at his disposal of which he had no knowledge. Furthermore, it is not evident why Bormann treated the Führer's talks as a 'secret' party matter and carefully kept them safe, if at the same time he expressly released them as a private work.

For the evaluation of the source, it is of great importance whether Hitler carefully checked his statements in the knowledge of the transcripts and only said what was allowed to become known,

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<sup>13</sup> *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg*. Ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Rudolf Vierhaus (*The Diary of Baroness Spitzemberg*. Selected and edited by Rudolf Vierhaus). Göttingen 1976, p. 291.

<sup>14</sup> Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 33.

or whether he was able to speak freely and relaxedly in a circle of confidants about questions that shouldn't leak out, to which he didn't yet have a clear answer. All the information suggests that the latter was the case. In any case, Hitler didn't expect that what he said at the nightly meetings in his study would be recorded in writing. In this relaxed atmosphere he expressed himself more openly and informally than at the lunch and dinner table. Picker was well aware of this, because during his work on Bormann's staff he mainly procured copies of these notes. Of the thirty-six notes he took from Heim's inventory into his edition, thirteen alone refer to the nightly teatimes, to which he was never asked.

Picker's selection and reproduction of the sources also give rise to objections. For example, he included a document under number 6 in his edition of the table discussions that is missing from Bormann's collection. It does not belong to the conversation notes, nor was it recorded and handed down by Heim. Record 7—number 16 in the present edition—is incorrectly dated. Picker adds two sentences to the note of 21 July 1941 at the end which do not exist in the original. There is no space here to register all the carelessness that Picker committed in transcribing Heim's texts. Henceforth, the originals from Bormann's collection published in this volume should be used in any case, especially since Picker has occasionally even compromised the substance of the statement in his transmission. According to Picker's text, Hitler declared on 13 December 1941: 'The war will come to an end. The last great task of our time is then to be seen in still settling the church problem'.<sup>15</sup> In Heim's original, on the other hand, the passage reads: 'The war will come to an end, and I shall see my last task in life in settling the church problem'.<sup>16</sup> It is surely significant that Hitler himself still intended to fight the battle against the churches.

But Picker was not only negligent in transcribing other people's texts; he also failed to take the necessary care in reproducing his notes. In the note of 2 July 1942, for example, he says: 'After reviewing the report, the chief remarked that one could not, however, have expected such a rapid write-off of Egypt by the English'. The following sentence in Picker's publication reads: 'Besides, the lies show that once Churchill is dead, we will have to

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., doc. 11, 13. 12. 1941, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Document 65 of this issue, see p. 150.

make sure that his unshakeable loudmouthedness does not live on'.<sup>17</sup> This sentence is missing from the original version of the Bormann Collection signed by Picker. Finally, a trivial sentence is inserted at the end of the document, which is also missing from the transcript given to the client. It is also unacceptable that Picker occasionally mixes his observations and comments with the interview transcripts, so that Hitler's statements are not clearly distinguished.<sup>18</sup>

If this rather light-hearted handling of the texts—and the examples could be multiplied—already suggests restraint about Picker's tradition, the critical reserve is reinforced by two marginal notes by Bormann. In Picker's record of the conversation of 12 May 1942<sup>19</sup> the head of the Party Chancellery complains: 'This transcript is in many cases quite inaccurate, since Dr Picker, when he took notes during the very long conversation, did not add to them who held this or that view!' Quite obviously, then, Picker does not seem to have been sufficiently successful in reliably distinguishing Hitler's views from those of his dinner guests or of party leaders not present who were quoted during the conversation. Even if the validity of the statement can no longer be verified, it must in any case call for caution. There is no evidence in the available material for Picker's assertion that Bormann 'blatantly corrected' his notes. The objections are measured rather than sharp and unobjective. For example, Bormann found the note of the conversation of 4 July 1942 'in many cases not quite accurate', for in a conversation about the Concordat, Hitler had stated: 'In the case of a Reich regulation, we would have to go by the area that was furthest behind ideologically, i.e. particularly favourable to the enemy'. Picker must have considered this correction by Bormann to be justified, because he included the sentence in his text in a slightly modified form—without, of course, marking it as an addition by another hand—which in no way made the passage in question more precise or unambiguous.<sup>20</sup> In other respects, too, Picker seems to have found notes dictated by Bormann worthy of attention, for he incorporated them very generously into his edition of

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<sup>17</sup> Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespräche* doc. 165, p. 406.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Doc 49, p. 151; Doc 50, p. 154.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., doc. 114, p. 283.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., doc. 168, p. 414.

the *Tischgespräche* and did not always mark them as someone else's intellectual property.<sup>21</sup>

Since Picker considers his transcripts made for the NSDAP party chancellery to be private property, a historical-critical edition of all the records from the Führer's headquarters, as Eberhard Jäckel and Martin Broszat have repeatedly called for, is not to be expected in the foreseeable future. Given the deficiencies of Picker's records, such an edition would be urgently desirable in the interest of international research.

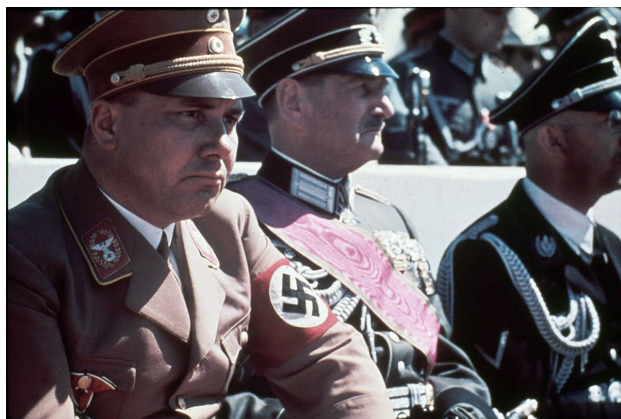
### *Bormann*

A discussion of the insightful value of the source must first start with the motives that determined Martin Bormann to have Hitler's monologues recorded. When he took over as head of the party chancellery after Hess's flight to England in May 1941, he was aware that the political influence of the NSDAP in the country had dwindled because it lacked ideological unity and a clear course. He wanted to remedy this. Since he knew the close ties between the National Socialist elite and Hitler and was well aware that even the Reichsleiter and Gauleiter had not developed an independent position, only the party leader himself came into question as an interpreter of the world view. Bormann hoped that by fixing Hitler's statements he could create a kind of compendium for the intellectual-political orientation of the NSDAP. Based on the party leader's comments on concrete events and his declarations of intent in connection with domestic and foreign policy decisions, he wanted to coordinate and activate party work. To secure for the NSDAP the role of the 'will bearer of the nation', which was always aspired to but never achieved, Bormann tried to immediately translate Hitler's thoughts and views into political practice and incorporate them into the decrees and directives of the Party Chancellery. In possession of clear directives, the political leaders in the country had to succeed, he hoped, in emphatically reasserting their claim to leadership vis-à-vis state authorities, offices of the Wehrmacht and influential business circles.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., doc. 43 (24. 2. 1942), p. 135, clearly bears Bormann's dictation mark.





Martin Bormann, left.

In some cases, the head of the party chancellery passed on Hitler's statements as directives. For example, Alfred Rosenberg, Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, received by letter on 23 July 1942 everything that Hitler had developed in conversation shortly beforehand in terms of views on Ostpolitik.<sup>22</sup> In another case, there is evidence that a note by Heim was made available to the responsible Reich Minister. Following the reception of the newly appointed Minister of Justice, Thierack, and his State Secretary at the Führer's headquarters on 20 August 1942, Hitler abandoned the customary practice of not discussing at the table the matters under discussion. He criticised the administration of justice, which in his opinion was due to a lack of political insight, and then very firmly formulated his views and demands. Bormann gave the monologue transcript prepared by Heim to the minister so that he could familiarise himself in detail with his Führer's thoughts and make them the guideline for his actions. This is what happened; in any case, Hitler's formulations can be found in the speech that Thierack gave to the directors of the higher regional courts and the attorneys general on 29 September 1942.<sup>23</sup> What effect this speech had, whether it impressed or even influenced the judges, cannot be

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<sup>22</sup> This was first pointed out by Alexander Dallin: *Deutsche Herrschaft in Russland 1941-1945*, Düsseldorf 1958, pp. 15 and 469/70. Letter from Bormann to Rosenberg, 23 July 1942, ND-NO 1878.

<sup>23</sup> Detailed references in Lothar Gruchmann, *Hitler über die Justiz*, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 12, 1964, p. 91.

proven. Doubts are permitted here, because Hitler was repeatedly dissatisfied with the judiciary even later.

In general, the political effectiveness of the system should not be inferred from Bormann's intentions and restless activity. The head of the party chancellery by no means immediately transformed every thought Hitler expressed into an order,<sup>24</sup> but kept precisely to the limits Hitler set for him. Thus, among other things, he was fundamentally forbidden to take a harder line against the churches, as he wished. The Reichsleiter also had no power of action in personnel policy. Hitler reserved the right to decide in all important cases. The Gauleiters of the NSDAP in particular, as well as the leaders of the branches and affiliated associations, knew this and therefore decided very high-handedly whether to heed or ignore Bormann's directives. For example, the Gauleiter and *Reichsstatthalter* (Reich governor) of Hamburg, Karl Kaufmann, weakened Hitler's criticism of the judiciary by explaining to the judges in his Higher Regional Court district that they had given no cause for complaint, that the criticism was primarily directed at the Ministry and not at the individual judge.<sup>25</sup> But precisely in this way he contradicted the opinion of the party leadership, without being reprimanded for it. He was not required to drop the considerations and steer a harder course.

Bormann's intimate knowledge of Hitler's views undoubtedly enabled him to reinforce the party's influence in important decision-making processes at the highest level. However, he was not able to bring the party onto a unified and clear political course. The distance from the Führer's headquarters to Berlin and the Gau capitals was too far for that, and the war in any case considerably narrowed the scope for action. Joseph Goebbels, the Gauleiter of Berlin, later gave vent to his growing annoyance in his diary: 'Bormann has turned the party chancellery into a paper office. Every day he sends out a mountain of letters and files that the Gauleiter, who is now in the thick of the fight, can practically

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<sup>24</sup> Jochen von Lang: *Der Sekretär*. Stuttgart 1977, p. 229.

<sup>25</sup> Werner Johe: *Die gleichgeschaltete Justiz. Organisation des Rechtswesens und Politisierung der Rechtsprechung 1933-1945*, dargestellt am Beispiel des Oberlandesgerichtsbezirks Hamburg. Frankfurt/Main 1962, p. 176.

no longer even read through'.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, precise knowledge of Hitler's worldview was primarily to Bormann's advantage in that he strengthened his reputation by expressing the same views. Despite his restless zeal and the comprehensive information he received, he remained Hitler's first assistant until his death.

### *Hitler*

A detailed discussion of the content of Hitler's monologues can be dispensed with in this context given the extensive recent Hitler research. However, even in the context of a brief sketch, references to facts that belong to the secured state of knowledge cannot be avoided.

First and foremost, Hitler bears witness to himself in his discussions, especially during the long evening and night hours when he spoke his thoughts 'into the impure'. The man who was at the zenith of his power, who dominated large parts of Europe and directed the deployment of his armies in Russia, who could look back on a series of steady successes lasting more than ten years until the crisis of the winter of 1941/42, undoubtedly possessed high intellectual abilities. With his present knowledge in the field of military affairs, armament and technology, he always made a strong impression on those around him. This was no less true for problems of art and especially history and politics. On the other hand, he showed much less interest, as a long-standing confidant confesses, in questions of the 'humanistic field of knowledge'.<sup>27</sup> Thanks to his extraordinary memory and remarkable knowledge of literature, Hitler achieved insights and findings in specialised fields that commanded the respect of many experts. He was usually superior to them in his ability to grasp the core of a problem immediately and to reduce complicated relationships to a simple denominator. Above all, Hitler not only knew but, according to the testimony of Grand Admiral Raeder, 'formed views and judgements from it that were often remarkable'.<sup>28</sup> He was able to think in large

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Goebbels: *Tagebücher 1945. Die letzten Aufzeichnungen*. Hamburg 1977, p. 514. Similar complaints from other Gauleiters are also available from earlier times.

<sup>27</sup> Heinrich Hoffmann: *Hitler, wie ich ihn sah*. Munich-Berlin 1974, p. 160-161.

<sup>28</sup> Erich Raeder: *Mein Leben*. Vol. 2, Tübingen 1957, p. 110.

contexts and was in many respects far ahead of his advisers, for example on the question of motorizing the German army.<sup>29</sup>



Hitler's monologues at his headquarters bear witness to these abilities only to a limited extent. Examples are his terse remarks on questions of environmental protection, the warning against the consequences of unrestrained exhaustion of the earth's reserves of raw materials (table talk #1), the demand for better utilisation of the countries' natural resources (table talks #15 and 16) or even the realisation, by no means common at the time, that the automobile would overcome borders and link peoples together more strongly than before.

For Hitler, motorisation was an important step 'on the way to a new Europe' (table talk #2). The correctness of these and other insights are not affected by the fact that he hindered this development through his policies. Knowledge, worldview and political practice collided.

The extent to which the Führer and Reich Chancellor was aware of this tension will not be clear. Even during his monologues at the Führer's headquarters, he never forgot the necessary restraint regarding his intentions and plans. Even in the smallest of circles he

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<sup>29</sup> Fritz Wiedemann: *Der Mann, der Feldherr werden wollte*. Velbert and Kettwig 1964, p. 102.

did not betray any secrets, did not reveal doubts or uncertainty. At no time did he weigh up the pros and cons with his advisors before making major decisions, nor did he make it clear what the motives were for his actions in concrete political and military situations.

Heim's notes testify to Hitler's great self-control, but also his suspicious reserve. The guests at the table were given no indication of the information coming from Germany and abroad, how the German people reacted to the sacrifices and deprivations, and what repercussions the severe crisis of the winter of 1941/42 had on the population of the occupied territories and the allied states. In general, Hitler's thoughts were far more on the past or the future than the present. With great willpower, he repressed the problems and worries of everyday life at the dinner table and acted as an attentive host, casually talking about Bruckner and Brahms or appropriate nutrition or reporting on events or figures from the early days of the NSDAP.

In this behaviour, however, another trait of Hitler's becomes visible. He was not a political pragmatist who concentrated on solving the issues of the day, but the representative of a world view that he wanted to help to achieve victory. That is why he looked to the future, especially in times when a lot was coming at him. Convinced that he knew the 'eternal law of nature' (table talk #117) and that his mission was to help it come to fruition, he made great efforts to free himself from burdens and difficulties, to defy resistance and often even facts that did not fit into his concept. He knew very well the limits imposed on human action, but believed that through energy, especially through an unshakeable and uncompromising belief in his mission, he could push them far out and force people as well as powers under his spell.

Hitler was convinced that the epoch of the bourgeoisie was over and that the bourgeois nation-states would not survive the war. In his opinion, in the world war of the present day, they would inevitably disintegrate—since they lacked inner strength and a unifying force—and the vital and unconsumed layers of the nations would then strengthen the camp that fought with particular determination and faith. Just as National Socialism had prevailed in the internal political struggle against far superior forces of the parties and the means of the power of the state, so it had to assert itself in the war with the utmost determination and readiness to

believe. Not the superior weapons, but the more devout fighters would ultimately bring about the decision.

On 27 January 1944, Hitler very clearly and firmly told the field marshals and commanders that it was precisely this devout readiness of each soldier that mattered.

It is completely unknown to many how far this fanaticism goes, which in the past moved so many of my party comrades to leave everything behind them, to allow themselves to be locked up in prisons, to give up a profession and everything for a conviction... Such a thing has only happened in German history in the time of the religious wars, when hundreds of thousands of people left their homes, farm and everything and went far away, poor as church mice, although they had previously been wealthy people—out of a realisation, a holy conviction. That is the case again today.<sup>30</sup>

There is no doubt that the National Socialists had an advantage over the bourgeois parties of the Weimar Republic because of their readiness to believe and devote themselves. And Hitler certainly helped his party overcome defeats and serious crises by never giving up, showing confidence especially in difficult situations and thus lifting his followers. Part of his strength lay in this steadfastness and belief in his mission (table talk #32). In the same way, Hitler also tried to convey to the German people during the war the feeling of superiority and the conviction of final victory. This undoubtedly succeeded to a great extent, as long as the expectations did not contradict the realities. In the long run, however, willpower and strength of faith were not enough to withstand the growing pressure of the war opponents. Among the concrete power factors on the opposite side that became more and more apparent was the internal stability of the Soviet Union, the efficiency of the Red Army and the economic strength of the country, the unity and willingness to resist of the British population, the industrial potential of the USA and the will of the nations of Europe conquered by Germany to live and to be free.

It cannot be assumed that Hitler failed to recognise these realities, as his statements in the Führer's headquarters would lead one to believe. Even in the conversations in his inner circle, he did

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpts from this speech can be found in the appendix to the collection of Bormann's Führer Talks.

not lose sight of the psychological effect of his words. Remarks such as that the Americans are 'the dumbest people imaginable' (table talk #82), assertions about England's growing difficulties (#81 and 88) or Germany's perpetual superiority in weapons technology (#84) were intended first and foremost to strengthen the self-confidence of those around him. He felt it necessary to counteract the sober assessments of the situation by his political advisers who, in his opinion, inhibited the momentum of the soldiers and the population through their restraint and caution. Hitler was convinced that he had only achieved so much thanks to his 'mountain-moving optimism' (#79).

More fundamental importance is attached to the statements on questions of domestic policy and worldview. The leader of the Third Reich was a bitter enemy of the revolution with its egalitarian and democratic driving forces. In his opinion, it was destructive and its bearers belonged to the negative selection of the people. Again and again one finds the assertion that the judiciary had nurtured criminality during the First World War, that in 1918 it was only necessary to open the prisons and already the revolution had its leaders (table talks #18, 52 and 60). In other contexts, however, the achievements of the revolution are praised. It did away with the princes (#20), broke up the class state, challenged the monopoly of the educated and propertied bourgeoisie and thus opened up opportunities for advancement to empower people from the lower classes (#26, 50 and 56). Sometimes even credit is given to the revolutionaries. Given the 'stupid narrow-mindedness' of the Saxon bourgeoisie, for example, the influx of workers to the KPD in that country was very understandable (#13), just as communists like Ernst Thälmann generally elicited much more sympathy from him than aristocrats like the Austrian Prince Starhemberg, who had even taken part in the 1923 putsch in Munich in his entourage.

In all this, however, Hitler left no doubt in his discussions about how closely he felt bound to the nation-state tradition of the 19th and early 20th centuries and intended to complete what had been developed and propagated before him in the way of large-scale concepts and imperial ideas. However, he was convinced that he would only achieve this goal if he could rely on a broader, more powerful and more vital support class. The bourgeoisie and the old ruling classes seemed unsuitable for this. In unusually harsh terms, he criticised the former German ruling houses as well as the ruling

princes of Europe (table talks #9, 20 and 55), the nobility, the officer corps (#13, 28 and 31), the diplomats (#121), civil servants and lawyers (#14, 48 and 130), the intellectuals and scientists. Again and again, the bourgeoisie *in toto* is accused of half-heartedness, cowardice and incompetence (#13 and 20). The capitalist system is not spared either (#15). 'The economy', Hitler declared bluntly, 'consists everywhere of the same scoundrels, ice-cold money-earners. The economy only knows idealism when it comes to workers' wages' (#39).

Well-known representatives of German industry and some bourgeois experts who heard such and even harsher statements by Hitler considered him a radical zealot or even a Bolshevik in disguise.<sup>31</sup> This view, however, does not get to the heart of the problem any more than the opposite view, which wants to conclude from words of appreciation for entrepreneurs and praise for the efficiency of the German economy and its promotion that Hitler was dependent on these circles. In these monologues there is no evidence that Hitler wanted to serve the interests of capital. He did not bind himself to any class, he hardly took into account the interests of certain groups and strata. In the National Socialist state, classes were to be eliminated and thus all the forces of the people were to be set free, and all sections of the population were to be given opportunities for advancement and activity. All groups were to be united in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Folk Community, a new higher unit.

However, since in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* the rights and functions of the social groups were not finally defined, nor were the NSDAP and its branches assigned any clearly defined tasks, it functioned as long as everyone derived advantage from it and saw part of their interests and demands realised. As the demands grew, there were signs of fatigue, resignation and communal refusals. Hitler increasingly found himself criticising state organs (table talk #107), civil servants (#41 and 59), judges (#130 and 177), party leaders and ministers for being too lenient towards individual and group interests. However, as long as there

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<sup>31</sup> Walter Rohland: *Bewegte Zeiten. Erinnerungen eines Eisenbüttenschmieds* (Memories of an Ironworks Expert. Stuttgart 1978, p. 82) reports on a statement of displeasure by Hitler during a meeting. Afterwards he had declared, 'If only I had destroyed the entire intelligentsia of our people like Stalin, then everything would have been easier!'



was still a basic consensus among the majority regarding the goals for which they were fighting, the state and party leader imposed his will unchallenged in all decisive questions.

That this succeeded so unreservedly was undoubtedly due to the dynamism that the leader of the NSDAP had unleashed in Germany. He did this based on the realisation that in times of social upheaval, economic and political change, authorities and institutions reacted too slowly and sluggishly, that experts in all fields had insufficient answers and solutions to offer, and that as a result of the confidence in the state and its organs was severely shaken. If unconventional methods were practised in such situations, if alternatives were developed with unused forces, then these would receive an advance of confidence from the outset. Hitler built on this. Through the establishment of special offices, the granting of special powers and special orders, the National Socialist regime gained a remarkable momentum, initially even a momentum that lasted in some areas into the first years of the war.

However, this process also caused considerable difficulties. A seemingly endless chain of competence disputes and rivalries developed leading to friction, disorganisation and, in many cases, failure. Hitler, to secure the support of all forces for the speedy implementation of his plans, triggered this dynamic and held on to the system even when the disadvantages became openly apparent. David Irving concludes, therefore, that he was far from being the all-powerful leader and that his influence over those directly under him diminished, especially under the extreme stresses of war.<sup>32</sup> This thesis is correct insofar as Hitler's will did not always and in all areas penetrate to the lowest state and party organs, and was also interpreted and understood differently due to a lack of ideological unity in the party. In the monologues presented here, he complains about the failure of the SA leaders (table talk #79), the high-handedness of individual Gauleiters, and the inadequate implementation of his orders. But it is wrong for Irving to conclude that the conduct of the war so absorbed Hitler's strength and concentration that he left the areas of domestic and occupation policy to his responsible ministers and confidants, especially Himmler, Goebbels and Bormann. The reader of these monologues can convince himself of the opposite.

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<sup>32</sup> David Irving: *Hitler's War*, London 1977, p. XV.

Without him, the Führer and Reich Chancellor believed, Germany could pack up (table talk #79), and important decisions had not been made (#32). Hitler was also convinced of his indispensability at his headquarters; he was excellently informed and did not fail to intervene wherever he thought it necessary. He criticised clumsy formulations in an editorial by Reich Minister Goebbels, registered events in individual districts, paid attention to the promotion of the arts, forbade attempts at administrative simplification in the war, ordered the shooting of the arsonist of the 'Bremen', supervised and reprimanded the judgements of German courts, and took note with indignation of the sermons of the Bishop of Münster. As the minutes of the Speer Ministry meetings and many other testimonies show, Hitler allowed himself to be informed down to the last detail and made his own decisions, especially in domestic matters. No one knew better than he that the war could only be fought if a majority of the people followed it, or at least accepted the inevitable. For this very reason, he devoted extraordinary attention to the tasks of domestic policy, especially domestic security.

### *Master Plan East*

Even more important is another consideration. Hitler waged the war because it was the consequence of his worldview: the living space of the German people was to be conquered and secured for many generations. He spoke about this very forcefully again and again in his headquarters. Only this gain of land would create the prerequisite for solving the social question. By offering each individual the opportunity to fully develop his abilities, the National Socialist programmer hoped to reduce or eliminate the tensions and rivalries in the community (table talk #140). In this war of worldviews, Hitler did not lose sight of the goals for which he was waging it. The most important was the consolidation of National Socialist supremacy in Europe and the expansion of German influence in the world. General questions of occupation policy in East and West, as well as cooperation with allied states and peoples, belonged in this context. In Hitler's view, German rule could only be secured if it succeeded in winning over as many people of 'Germanic blood' in the world as possible (#125). The prerequisite for strengthening one's nationality, however, was the repression and elimination of all those who were considered inferior

and alien to the community: Jews, Slavs, Gypsies and others. Finally, it was a question of suppressing the influence of those circles that did not recognise war as the 'law of life of peoples', that did not want to accept the 'right of the strongest' in social coexistence, nor race and descent as criteria in professional competition: Christians, Marxists, pacifists. In these areas Hitler never delegated responsibility, but reserved every fundamental decision for himself. Irving's assertion that Hitler was not informed about essential measures precisely in this area, which was central to him, cannot be substantiated. An analysis of the monologues points' in the opposite direction.

In his *Anmerkungen zu Hitler*, Sebastian Haffner argued that the character of the National Socialist leader was determined early on and 'astonishingly always remained the same'. This is especially true of the basic ideological positions.<sup>33</sup> The proof was provided by Eberhard Jäckel in his study, *Hitler's Weltanschauung*.<sup>34</sup>

Here we will only briefly touch on the thoughts that Hitler developed in the monologues recorded by Heim. The defeat of 1918, he thought, and the harsh terms of the peace treaty so wounded the national pride and self-confidence of the German people that they exerted all their strength to get out of the distress. Without the uncompromising attitude of the victorious powers of the First World War, it would never have been possible to inflame the national passions to such an extent, to achieve the will tension to regain the former world status. Hitler, in contrast to many of his followers and voters, sought it, however, only as a prerequisite for the establishment of a larger Reich, which at the same time was to become the organising power of a new Europe. To achieve this goal, no state should be in a position to oppose these aspirations. Hitler was deeply convinced that the land 'according to eternal natural law' belonged to the one who conquered it, 'because the old borders did not offer sufficient possibilities for the growth of the people' (table talk #117).

According to Hitler's worldview, the first and most important prerequisite for the expansion of Germany's sphere of power was the strengthening of the people's vital energies, and the

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<sup>33</sup> Sebastian Haffner: *Anmerkungen zu Hitler*. Munich 1978.

<sup>34</sup> Eberhard Jäckel: *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft*. Tübingen 1969.

mobilisation of their readiness to fight. Since Hitler could not imagine history without war, he considered it necessary to educate the people to affirm the struggle for existence. He therefore consistently wanted the German people to wage war every fifteen to twenty years (table talk #17). Only in this way would they be able to summon up the utmost strength and maintain the necessary toughness. To get young and old, poor and rich, citizens and workers to identify with the National Socialist regime, to get them to unreservedly link their private existence with that of the state, privileges were abolished; discrimination ended, and educational and promotional opportunities improved. Above all, the entire population was to be given access to the nation's cultural assets. However, the National Socialist leadership reserved the right to determine what art was, and which works of music, poetry and painting corresponded to the consciousness of the people. In addition, Hitler expected everyone to take advantage of their opportunities, to make full use of the possibilities offered to them. If he failed to do so, if he deliberately withdrew from the struggle for life as demanded by the state, all support and tolerance would be withdrawn. The same applied to the people as a whole. Hitler spoke of them with appreciation and respect, and praised their diligence, loyalty and many other positive qualities. But he demanded that they accept the struggle and prove themselves in it. If they did not fight resolutely and bravely, if they showed symptoms of weakness, there was no excuse: 'If the German people are not prepared to stand up for their self-preservation, fine: then let them disappear!' (table talk #114)

### *Final solution*

Hitler himself spared no effort and no means to increase the strength and readiness to fight, but above all the inner unity of the nation. This was served by the attempt to bring as many people of German nationality as possible into the Reich from the occupied areas of Europe and other states, to have ethnic Germans or volunteers from related nations fight in units of the Wehrmacht or the Waffen-SS, and to enlist minorities or individual members of foreign nations, as far as they were considered assimilable, for cooperation.

The declared enemies of the regime were fought with the same uncompromising zeal that was used to select those who were

considered useful and qualified according to ideological principles. These included, among others, Czechs, Poles, Russians and, first and foremost, the Jews. Hitler repeatedly emphasised with emphasis that there was no leniency for 'aliens in the community'. It has recently been claimed that the deportation and murder of the European Jews took place without the knowledge of the German head of state.<sup>35</sup> According to another view, the order to kill them was only given after the conflict between rival forces had become so disastrous that there was no longer any alternative.<sup>36</sup> In my opinion, both theses are untenable. The assumption that the decision to the 'final solution to the Jewish question' in Europe was taken by Hitler in the face of the realisation that the war could no longer be decided militarily<sup>37</sup> is not confirmed either in these records or in other sources.

Hitler was the undisputed leader, he made or approved all essential decisions, including the most momentous of the whole war. The 'removal' of the Jews from Europe corresponded to the consistency of his worldview, as all his statements on this subject show. And the consequence of his actions from 1939 to 1941 can also be seen in the orders and measures he gave. The *Einsatzgruppen* that followed the German armies into Russia had clear instructions. On 31 July 1941, Heydrich was instructed to develop a concept for the removal of the Jews from the entire German sphere of power and influence. The fact that expulsion was no longer on the agenda is shown by the impediment and, from October 1941, the ban on all emigration. On 15 October the systematic deportation of Jews from Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia began. Ten days later, on 25 October, Hitler declared in the presence of Himmler and Heydrich at the Führer's headquarters: 'Before the Reichstag I prophesied to Jewry that the Jew would disappear from Europe if the war was not avoided. This criminal race has on its conscience the two million dead of the World War, now hundreds of thousands again. Don't

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<sup>35</sup> David Irving believes that Bormann, Himmler, Goebbels and others ruled the Reich while Hitler waged his war (*Hitler's War*, p. 251). However, he fails to provide any convincing evidence for this.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Broszat: *Hitler und die Genesis der »Endlösung«* (Hitler and the Genesis of the 'Final Solution'). On the occasion of David Irving's theses. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25, 1977, p. 746 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Haffner: *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (op. cit.) p. 157.

tell me: We can't send them into the mire! Who cares about our people? It is good if we are preceded by the terror of eradicating Judaism. The attempt to found a Jewish state will be a failure' (table talk #44). Without a doubt, all the fundamental decisions were made at this time. Heydrich then made the technical and organisational arrangements so that in November he could invite the state secretaries of all the ministries involved to the house on Wannsee for a meeting on 9 December 1941. The date for the conference had to be postponed given the events on the Eastern Front, but the 'Final Solution' was not. It began in December 1941.

### *Christianity*

Given the uncompromisingness in the implementation of his ideological goals, Hitler encountered permanent resistance from all opposing forces in Europe. The struggle against communists, socialists and pacifists, waged from the beginning, became steadily tougher during the war. More complicated was the confrontation with the liberal and conservative forces of the bourgeoisie, who expressed more and more reservations as the war progressed and circumvented or delayed numerous orders. They could rarely be forced or ousted because they could not be replaced as experts in their fields of activity. Disgruntled by this, Hitler repeatedly criticised civil servants, teachers, professors and intellectuals who did not take into account the requirements of the time.

The intensification of the *Weltanschauungskampf* (worldview struggle) is particularly evident in the accusations against Christianity and the Christian churches. Since Christians fundamentally respect every human being as a creature of God, many of them rebelled against the practices of racial, ethnic and occupation policies when they realised that these were not temporary exaggerations or excesses, but a planned approach. Not only the small group of those who actively resisted became a danger for the National Socialist leadership, but also the constantly growing number of Christians who, out of conscientious objection, repudiated the regime in whole or in part.

The accusations against the churches and Christianity were so sharp not least because Hitler was by no means areligious and believed in a Creator, but in contrast to the Christians was convinced that he knew and could do His will. From his point of view, the churches were acting completely unnaturally by observing

the commandment of love, which included the incurably ill, people of different skin colour and race, and unbelievers. For him, therefore, Christianity was 'pre-Bolshevism' (table talk #40). In Hitler's view, Paul had transformed and used the teachings of Christ to undermine and bring down the Roman Empire from within. Through the demand for equality of all people, the uprising of the lowly and the inferior had been initiated: the ground was prepared for overthrow and destruction. 'Pure Christianity', Hitler concluded, 'leads to the destruction of humanity: it is naked Bolshevism in metaphysical dressing' (#66).

The verbal radicalism of the attacks against Christianity was also determined by the fact that Hitler knew exactly that he could not wage a determined church struggle during the war. He was well aware of the power that the churches still represented. A great conflict, therefore, was bound to lead to deep anxiety among the population and evoke great dangers during the war. Therefore, it seemed advisable merely to register the opposition of the bishops, clergy and church laity and to postpone the reckoning until a later time (# 130).

Hitler's sharp front against Christianity was by no means approved of by all, even within the NSDAP and its branches. Ministers who had gained their office through the party broke ranks. Even in the SS there were still leaders and members who had not left the church and who were bound to come into serious conflict in the event of a dispute. It was no different in the corps of political leaders up to the highest ranks. This example—others could be brought up—shows that the NSDAP was not a monolithic bloc, and that there was no basic consensus even on decisive questions. In the *Weltanschauungskampf* Hitler could not rely unconditionally on his party; rather, he was dependent on other forces and power-bearers to carry out his plans and orders.

But other groups of Germans were certainly not unreservedly prepared to make the goals of the National Socialist state their own. In Hitler's national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), the social contradictions and the old ideals were by no means overcome, as has been shown, but only pushed back; they broke out again when rapid rearmament and military expansion overstretched popular forces. Even before the war began, the enthusiasm of the national bourgeoisie that it had shown in the face of the reintroduction of universal conscription and the foreign

policy successes of the Third Reich was waning. Regimentation, growing restrictions on economic, intellectual and cultural activity and the constant threat of external conflict led to a revival of faded principles. The working class, which to a large extent had recognised the efforts to revive the economy as well as the improvement of social benefits, increasingly rebelled against the restrictions on the choice of employment and the enforcement of their wage demands. The more powerless they felt in the face of decisions to extend working hours and worsen employment conditions, the more they became aware of the disintegration of trade union organisations.

In Hitler's thinking, ideological goals had absolute priority, so he ignored the concerns and wishes of the population as soon as his rule was securely established. His regime became uncompromising, the subordinate leaders and generals were to be 'ice-cold dog snouts' and 'unpleasant people' (#98) when it came to accomplishing the tasks set. Convinced of the rightness of what he was striving for, he allowed no leniency or forbearance. He understood people with their faults and weaknesses, but forbade himself and others to take them into account. His regime was not in the service of the people, but the people were made to serve his worldview.

In recent years, various attempts have been made to revise the image of Hitler. According to them, the leader of the Third Reich appears as the man of peace, the patron of the arts and the builder of a new, more beautiful Europe.<sup>38</sup> Evidence for these theses can certainly be found in the monologues published here. And there is no doubt that Hitler knew how to win over and inspire people for himself and his goals right up to the end. But anyone who reads these conversation notes carefully, cannot ignore the fact that he wanted to build the happiness of future generations on the misfortune of those whom he declared enemies or who did not act and believe as he did. On the way to his future, not only enemies but also enthusiastic followers and faithful followers were left behind as victims.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I will mention here only one book, representative of many others, by the architect Hermann Giesler: *Ein anderer Hitler. Erlebnisse–Gespräche–Reflexionen*. Leoni am Starnberger See, 1978.

<sup>39</sup> *Note by César Tort: I do not agree with this sentence by Werner Jochmann in his introduction to his edition of Hitler's after-dinner talks.*



### *This edition*

The texts published here are all part of Martin Bormann's collection of *Führergespräche* (Führer talks). They are printed in unabridged form, retaining their chronological order. As a rule, Heim summarised the content in a note immediately after each conversation. Only in a few cases did he add statements to later notes, resulting in slight deviations in the chronology (e.g., table talk #91). Only the regularly recurring opening formulas were deleted: 'The boss expressed himself at tea in approximately the following lines of thought' or: 'The boss expressed himself in the sense of, among other things, the following lines of thought'.

Spelling has been normalised; corrections of obvious spelling mistakes, especially in personal names, are not marked. The omissions in the text appear in the original. It is unclear whether Heim left the gaps because he did not remember the information correctly, or whether there are other reasons for the omissions.

The records of Heim's conversations that Henry Picker transcribed and included in his edition of the *Tischgespräche* are all marked with an asterisk after the document number. Given the errors and oversights that Picker made in transcribing or printing his documents, these texts should in future be cited according to the edition available here. The editor did not consider it necessary to point out all the deviations and oversights, as this would have impaired the readability of the source and bloated the annotation apparatus.

The sixth document of 9 August 1941, which Picker included in his edition, is not in the collection of interview transcripts. Nor was it written by Heim, as Picker claims. Whether these *Grundsätze der Offiziers-Ehrauffassung* were formulated based on the keywords and guiding ideas given by Hitler himself must remain an open question. They do not belong in this collection and are not included in the first edition of *Tischgespräche* edited by Gerhard Ritter.

Four of Hitler's monologues (#41, 61, 62 and 213) were recorded by Martin Bormann himself. In character, they are more file notes and were partly dictated as such. However, since the head of the Party Chancellery himself classified them as 'Führer Talks' and placed them chronologically in his collection, they have been included in this edition, as have documents #203 to 212, which

were prepared by one of Bormann's assistants after Heim's departure.

All other documents were dictated and signed by Heim.

Our commentary on Hitler's monologues has been kept deliberately brief. The editor has refrained from interpreting expressions of opinion on questions of history, politics, worldview or art, as this would have more than doubled the annotation apparatus.