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I Was Hitler's Boss

By A FORMER OFFICER OF THE REICHSWEHR

[Because so much that has been written about Hitler is inaccurate or exaggerated or entirely false, the following article is printed as a contribution toward a truthful account of the Nazi leader. Inquiries made by the Editor show that the author is a trustworthy witness, though naturally the way he tells his story is his own. A German army officer before and during the First World War, he subsequently served in the Reichswehr. There, as he explains, the position he held enabled him to obtain first-hand knowledge of Hitler that other writers have lacked. For obvious reasons he prefers anonymity, nor is it yet advisable to disclose what led him to become a refugee in the United States.]

For fifteen months I was in daily contact with Hitler, and I believe I know this strange man as well as, if not better than, anyone else. I knew him before he had to pretend and put on a leader's mask, sometimes even to the so-called men around him. After the First World War he was just one of the many thousands of ex-soldiers who walked the streets looking for work. For him it was especially hard, since he had not quite recovered from his war injuries and was without a family to which he could go back.

At this time Hitler was ready to throw in his lot with anyone who would show him kindness. He never had that "Death or Germany" martyr spirit which later was so much used as a propaganda slogan to boost him. He would have worked for a Jewish or a French employer just as readily as for an Aryan. When I first met him he was like a tired stray dog looking for a master. However fancifully writers describe him now, at that time he was totally unconcerned about the German people and their destinies.

Not long after the war, as soon as he was released from the hospital, Hitler tried to enter the postal service as a mail-carrier. His services were refused, because he was unable to pass the intelligence test. His school education in his Austrian village would have been quite sufficient, but his mental capacity suffered after he was gassed in the war.

I first met Hitler in 1919 when the Soldiers' Councils (Red Army) in Munich were smashed. Members of these councils disappeared from their barracks and offices, but it was known that they met secretly, and that they were far more numerous than their ene-

my, the newly organized Reichswehr. The Reichswehr was not exactly an army in the usual sense of the word, but rather a police force to protect citizens from terror groups. To forestall a surprise attack from its adversaries, the Reichswehr created an intelligence service. I was at the time an infantry captain and detailed to organize and supervise what was called the instruction department. I picked a handful of non-commissioned officers with exemplary war records; among them was Hitler.

The duties of these men were to organize patriotic lectures in the barracks and to attend labor meetings in civilian clothes, mingling with the workers and listening to their talk. I had an office in the officers' mess. My only assistant was a young sergeant who acted as my secretary. Twice a day my men reported to me and we discussed their findings.

Hitler was at first quartered in the same room with two other instruction officers, but not for long. His room-mates complained about his physical habits, and that he talked and walked in his sleep and made himself generally a nuisance. We put Hitler in a small room on the second floor, with barred windows, which had been used until then as a lumber room. He seemed to be happy in this cubicle, and stayed there until he had to resign from the Reichswehr on June 10, 1920.

Inside the barracks Hitler had no friends. He was shy and self-conscious. The reason for this was probably the deformity (described in his medical report) that made

him unlike other men. In my opinion it was this affliction that made Hitler a lone wolf and outsider. He felt keenly that he was different. That was also the reason why he was rated as permanently unfit for military service on his reporting, in 1911, as an Austrian conscript. This pariah was wild with joy when, after the outbreak of the war in 1914, the Germans disregarded his deformity and found him eligible to serve in the German Imperial Army. But I doubt if his army life was a happy one. A soldier has not the privacy that his deformity made him seek, and so he was continually chaffed by his comrades.

After the World War former officers were considered small potatoes in Germany. Their epaulettes were torn from their shoulders by the workers, and it was not safe to wear war decorations in the street. Ludendorff and his friends, former high officers and capitalists, met once a week in the "little conference room" at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich. There they were their former selves, wore their medals, clicked heels and saluted one another. They mourned over their past splendor, deplored their present condition and dreamed of a glorious future. Here in the Vier Jahreszeiten they talked about a Germany greater than ever and about the terrible revenge they would exact. To get all that another war—and the good-will of the workers to fight that war—was necessary. According to their belief Germany was never defeated.

While in the former enemy countries people thought that Ger-

many was forever crushed, and became careless, here in Munich a group of almost desperate men, their wits sharpened by their misery, prepared. All causes that were responsible for their defeat had to be erased forever in Germany. The principal cause, starvation, would be made impossible if Germany could become self-supporting. But without the support of the workers they were helpless; a few thousand fanatics could not begin another war. The workers had to become war-minded again, but how? In their passion for revenge, this Ludendorff group thought of the most extraordinary ways to regain the good-will of the workers.

One general recalled the theory of Joan of Arc as the illiterate French shepherdess whose outbursts of exaltation were used to convince the common people and the soldiery that a goddess was leading them forward to battle. So inspired were the ignorant French warriors that they drove the English away from Orléans. The ruse worked once; why might it not work again? The Ludendorff group knew that nobody among them could ever influence the masses, let alone inspire them. No, a starry-eyed, more or less crazy girl must be found to bring the German people the glorious message that would inflame them. Ludendorff himself hunted diligently through the Bavarian mountains for a red-headed peasant girl to play the part of a German Joan of Arc who could be sold as a goddess, a divine messenger sent straight from Valhalla to wake up the Germans and save them from their bondage by lead-

ing them to victory and everlasting glory. But no girl was found with the right kind of vitality and glamor to incite the masses.

That is where Hitler came in. In discharging his duties he had visited a meeting of the newly founded German Workers Party. This handful of workers, though most of them were miserably poor, still felt a good deal of respect for the former officers and capitalists. A day or two after I had received a report on this patriotic organization, Ludendorff came into my office to get details. At that time he and his friends were like Hollywood scouts looking for talent, in this case "loyal" workers, and they, too, almost at the same time as Hitler came across these extraordinary patriots of the German Workers Party.

Members of the Reichswehr were not allowed to join political parties, but to please Ludendorff, whose wishes were still respected in the Reichswehr, I ordered Hitler to join the Workers Party, and help to foster its growth. He was allowed at first the equivalent of twenty gold marks in the current inflation money weekly for this purpose.

Of course, other patriotic parties and lecturers cropped up like mushrooms after the war, but none of them attracted the masses. The lecturers were too gentlemanly; their meetings were held in bare, dreary lecture halls with notices, such as "Silence Please" and "Smoking Prohibited" on the walls.

With Hitler a new way of approaching the workers was tried. His meetings were announced in

working-class saloons; there was free beer, and cigars if the funds allowed, also sausages and pretzels free. Instead of "Silence Please" on the wall, there was concertina music, and folk songs, and more free beer. Then when everyone felt happy and grateful, Hitler jumped on a chair or a table and started with "Fellow-workers, Germany, awake!" In such a genial atmosphere it was of course a pleasure for the workers to "awake" and madly applaud everything. The experiment with Hitler was considered highly successful by his sponsors. Ludendorff and many others, who kept carefully behind the scenes at first, now began to associate openly with the Workers Party, or Nazis, as they came to be called.

As the Nazi party grew and became popular in Munich, Ludendorff and his friends decided to put everything on a strict business basis. In fact, they copied American methods of salesmanship. The party in Munich was so organized that its ideas were gradually pushed by political salesmen into every home in Germany. The program was carefully concocted to fit in with the wishful thinking of the majority.

The leaders knew that to please the majority, a minority must suffer, and so the German Jews were made the chief scapegoats because their destruction would gain millions of votes for the Nazis. Small shopkeepers hated Jews, because they owned the chain stores; farmers wished their destruction because they were indebted to Jewish banks; even intellectuals were

jealous because Jews held lucrative positions in the arts and sciences and professions. The Communists also had to be destroyed, but that was because they took their orders from Russia and would never vote for an imperial Germany.

The Nazi salesmen offered anything and everything to make people war-minded. The Christian religion condemned war; so the old German gods, who took their heroes, killed in battle, straight to Valhalla, were peddled. The Nazis knew that few would trouble to fight and kill a beggar even if legally allowed, but most of them would kill a rich man to take his wealth, especially if such a killing were considered honorable and patriotic. Therefore, their sales-talk was: Germany is a have-not country; other nations have all the wealth; Germany must fight them successfully, and so be entitled to that wealth. Thus, in their program the Nazis catered always to the desires of the majority.

At that time the Nazi aim was to restore monarchy, a Wittelsbach or a Hohenzollern, then launch a successful war and regain their former splendor and riches. That patriotic slogan, "Everything for Germany," was nothing more than salesmanship; nobody cared in the least what would happen to the rest of Germany, so long as the result would be a restoration of the good old days. Hitler was looked upon as a good salesman for the Nazi ideology, who would be paid off when he was no longer needed.

After the World War Germany swarmed with political adventurers. Roehm, a captain in the

Reichswehr, was one of them. He was shunned by his fellow officers because of his abnormal vices. Nevertheless, he was a clever strategist. Seeing what possibilities the Workers Party had, he set to work to buy Hitler for himself. Hitler was astonished and flattered that a gentleman should offer him friendship and advice. This friendship began under cover as far back as 1920. Hitler, because of his physical defect, was indifferent about Roehm's vices; he saw in Roehm only the distinguished officer. When his friendship with Roehm became known, Hitler had to resign his position in the Reichswehr.

Beginning in 1922, the Reichswehr gradually became alarmed lest the Nazis should grow too powerful and turn against it. Generals von Lossow and von Seeckt therefore decided to advise Goering, who was considered a staunch imperialist, to join the Nazi party and report on its progress to the Reichswehr. But for an ambitious man like Goering it was too great a temptation to remain a spy for the Reichswehr; he soon decided to play his own game. He knew that should monarchy be restored, he would become, with so many princes waiting for glamorous jobs and medals, a mere nobody. On the other hand, if he should throw in his lot with the Nazis, there might be undreamed possibilities for him.

Though it is not generally known, there was a deadly enmity between Roehm and Goering right from the beginning. Each reckoned upon being one day the ruler of Germany and meanwhile waited for any chance to cut the other's

throat. After the putsch in November, 1923, Goering fled from Germany badly wounded, and was not allowed to return until after the amnesty in 1927. During this time Roehm was undisputed ruler of the Nazi party. He put his friends, all riffraff and addicts to the same vices as himself, into the key positions and started organizing his own army, the Storm Troopers. But Goering paid Roehm back when the latter went to South America to "organize" the Bolivian army.

Roehm went to South America because he thought that there he could raise enough money to finance a putsch in Germany with his Storm Troopers and, though it is not well known, he obtained large amounts from Bolivian, Chilean and Argentine Nazi sympathizers. A German brewery in Argentina alone contributed 2,000,000 pesos as a loan. While Roehm was away, Goering discredited him and undermined his power wherever he could.

Why, it will be asked, did Hitler allow all this working over his head? Was he not the leader of the Nazis? The answer is that Hitler never was nor is he now anything of the kind. As a leader Hitler is probably the greatest hoax ever played on the world. The reports that Hitler brought me daily in the Reichswehr were scrupulously honest, but his style and grammar were lamentable. His reports always had to be rewritten before I could file them. His intellect was not higher than that of an eight-year-old child. After he left the Reichswehr, he was completely at the mercy of po-

litical freebooters. Those two would-be dictators, Roehm and Goering with their satellites, fought one another behind the scenes tooth and nail. They even ousted Ludendorff. Finally Goering won the battle in the "Blood Purge" of June 30, 1934.

The way was now clear for Goering and he lost no time. Conscription; occupation of the Rhineland; total rearmament; intervention in Spain; invasion of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and other countries followed. "A bloodthirsty mad ogre," "a superman in leadership and strategy,"—in such terms was Hitler referred to. How little the world knows about the real Hitler!

The Nazi boast, "Tell people the most senseless lie again and again and they believe it to be sure and certain truth," has a right to stand after the world acknowledged Hitler as Germany's leader. As a rabble-rouser of the highest order Hitler was and still is of extreme value to the Nazis. So many people believe that without him Germany would have become a peace-loving country. Little do they know the true character of the Germans. Let the war bugle sound and show them a uniform, and they will follow their officers as the children followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

If all Germans had not more brains than Hitler, they would be a harmless lot. It is people with brains who use Hitler for their own ends that are dangerous—those who try to build their own prosperity and well-being upon the misery of others. Hitler has never been capable of making a decision of his own. He certainly never wrote a

line of *Mein Kampf*; he merely signed his name to it. Many writers had their fingers in the *Mein Kampf* pie. Ludendorff, Rosenberg, Haushofer, Streicher, Epp, Eckart and probably several others contributed material for the book. Hess collected all their stuff, chose suitable parts fit for printing, and so *Mein Kampf* came into existence.

The chapter of *Mein Kampf* in which British-German collaboration is advocated was written by Hess himself. To attract the curiosity of the man in the street, the opinions of the political adventurers who collaborated were written in the form of Hitler's autobiography. Hitler, the man with the mind of a fourth-grade scholar, was of course proud to sign his name as author of a book.

Hess was Hitler's first and most successful mentor. Born in a British protectorate, and with his best friends amongst members of the British upper classes, he developed Anglomania. In his opinion a Germany allied with Great Britain could easily smash the rest of the world. Goering's belief was that Germany alone was qualified to rule the world. Hess's plane trip to Scotland last May was, in my opinion, for the purpose of trying to find a solution that would end the war between Germany and Britain.

A dabbler in mesmerism and faith healing, Hess certainly was most successful with Hitler. Before every important speech Hitler was, sometimes for days, closeted with Hess who in some unknown way got Hitler into that frenetic state in which he came forth to address the public. Just before Hit-

ler had appointments to receive statesmen or foreign correspondents, he was minutely coached as what to say. Sometimes when unexpected questions were put to him, he just walked away, or started his senseless political rantings.

At times Hitler sulks like a bad-tempered child; he locks himself up for days and holds conversations with himself, and his public speeches and receptions have to be postponed. When in such moods, music often has a soothing effect on him. He does not care what type of music it is so long as it is noisy; he is not in the least musical; he like's Wagner's music because it is loud. As a rule his coach has to play the piano wildly, while he makes weird noises in his mouth, imitating a trumpet, and bangs his fists on tables and chairs. Such concerts can last for hours before Hitler falls into a tranquil sleep.

Germany has many Fausts, but their Mephistopheles is Goering who was able, through crafty propagandists like Goebbels, to sell Hitler to the entire world as a patriotic superman. Goering alone engineered the burning of the Reichstag and had a feeble-minded boy executed for it. He arranged the "Blood Purge" of June 30, 1934; it was he who saw that Hitler got the false material to convince him that Roehm intended to kill him unless he killed Roehm first. Goering's references to Hitler as "My Fuehrer, the greatest living German of the ages" and his placing of Hitler's bust all over his house are sheer hypocrisy, designed to mislead public opinion.

Those who call the present war "Hitler's war" or who say "We must defeat Hitlerism" do not know what role Hitler plays in Germany. Posed photographs in which Hitler is seen signing an agreement or, surrounded by generals, placing a finger on a war map are reproduced by the most serious newspapers as important documents and are regarded by the readers with awe.

Yet the real power is Goering. If that is so, then why, it may be asked, does not Goering get rid of Hitler and take his place? Because the time has not yet come. Hitler is still a useful pawn in Goering's hands. If Germany loses the war, Goering can hypocritically declare: "Let us have an honorable peace. We Germans never wanted this war. It is this Austrian madman who is to blame. We will send him to a sanatorium for life." But if, on the other hand, Germany should win, Hitler will have outlived his usefulness. He will die and Goering will come into his inheritance.

Goering will even make use of Hitler when dead. Hitler would be declared the greatest of all German saints and heroes. Thousands of faithful Aryans would every year make a pilgrimage to his tomb. German theatres would boom by producing saintly Hitler plays, Joan of Arc style. The throne would be restored in Germany, with Goering as monarch. To rule over Europe would not satisfy his vanity; he would strive to bring the whole world under his imperial sway.