
A note to readers. This sample is raw, uncut drafting, and is strictly the copyright of David Irving and his publishers. It is the product of fifteen years' hard work. Any unlawful publication of this material on the Internet or elsewhere will be rigorously prosecuted. Please respect our confidentiality and intellectual property rights. We have deliberately omitted the source notes and preliminaries.

37: *The Big Night*

THE *VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER* buried the story of an attack on a minor German diplomat on an inside page. Anti-Jewish disturbances continued to rumble in the provinces, the distant thunder of departing storms. German propaganda had dropped the ball.

Berlin's police chief Count von Helldorff told the press on November 8, 1938 that in recent weeks the police had seized 3,569 blades and coshes [*Stich- und Hieb Waffen*], 1,702 firearms, and twenty thousand rounds of ammunition from Berlin's Jews. The attention of the Berlin authorities was still focused on the aftermath of the eviction of the Polish Jews. That day the Polish ambassador raised the matter with Ribbentrop's deputy, Ernst von Weizsäcker, but ran into a stone wall. 'One thing we definitely shall not settle for,' dictated Weizsäcker in a note, 'is having a bunch of forty to fifty thousand stateless, formerly Polish, Jews dropped into our lap.' When Lipski talked of the 'sacrifice' it would be for Poland to take them back, Weizsäcker reminded him that these folks were 'Polish property,' and that the Paris shooting might well make things worse for them.

As the life of Grynszpan's victim painfully guttered to an end, Hitler promoted him to Embassy Secretary, to ensure an enhanced pension for his widow – and Dr Goebbels pricked up his ears. There was mileage in this after all. He had travelled down to Munich with

his seedy pal Helldorff for the fifteenth anniversary of the Munich Putsch. With the Party worthies pouring into the Bavarian capital for the ceremonies on November 8 and 9, the press and radio clamour began, with one voice blaming the shooting on the 'international criminal Jewish rabble.' This was Goebbels's doing.

AT THREE P.M. ON November 8 Himmler preached as usual in private to his *Gruppenführer*, in the officers' mess [••• *Führerheim*] of the Standarte 'Deutschland' in the suburb of Freimann. Choosing his words with care even to this invited audience he spoke of his resolve to enhance their nation's bloodstock by •••excreting the bad blood polluting the Reich, namely the Jews, and by bringing in more Germanic blood, by hook or by crook, one might say: 'In fact I intend to go get Germanic blood, robbing and stealing where I can.' It was the kind of sentence that might not ring well when spoke by prosecuting counsel in some later courthouse.

As for the Jews, he warned of ten years of unprecedented ideological battles with the world's Jews, freemasonry, Marxism, and churches. (Heydrich, sitting in the front row, had long recognised the same four enemies, though in the reverse sequence). 'These forces – I consider the Jews to be the driving spirit, the origin of all the Evil – know full well that if Germany and Italy are not eradicated, then *they* will be eradicated. This is a simple conclusion.' In Germany, he said, the Jews would not be able to hold out for ever – it was only a question of time. 'Italy follows the same path, and Poland too.' As for the other states they might not be anti-semitic yet but soon would be, 'the moment our Jewish émigrés arrive there and take up their typical occupations.' The whole of Palestine was already engaged in a desperate struggle against the Jews. 'And so, some day there will be no place in the world left for the Jew.'

The Jew would see only one solution, to ensure that Germany, 'the originating country of anti-semitism' was burnt out and destroyed. Thus, said Himmler, sooner or later Germany would face the decisive battle. 'If we are defeated, there will be no reservation [•••refuge?] remaining for the Germans. . . Starved out and butchered. That will be the fate of everyone, be he now an enthusiastic supporter of the

Third Reich or not – it will suffice that he speaks German and had a German mother.’

Hitler spoke briefly that same day to his disciples in the historic Bürgerbräu beerhall in Munich, without mentioning the Paris shooting. At twelve-ten on the ninth he joined Party veterans for their solemn march from this beerhall, crowding through one narrow archway en route – in retrospect, any hostile sniper’s dream – and then tramping on to the Feldherrnhalle for the memorial service. He followed the same ritual and the same route each year. Himmler joined the front rank with him now. His mind was already fixed on his vacation but this day, November 9, was a big day in his calendar: at midnight he would show off his SS to the world and swear in the new intake, in a stirring ceremony at the Feldherrnhalle. Viktor Lutze, chief of staff of the SA, the Brownshirts, grumbled about it to Goebbels – ‘not entirely unjustly,’ the latter agreed, ‘but it’s part jealousy too. Himmler really has achieved something.’

He was about to spoil it.

Himmler, Heydrich, Karl Wolff and the other SS *Gruppenführer* had checked into the Four Seasons, the city’s five-star hotel, along with Hitler’s staff. Goebbels retired to his room to work on his Hitler biography. He was hoping to get back into Hitler’s favour. That afternoon there were again those rumbles of distant thunder: At three p.m. in Dessau, and four hours later in Chemnitz, somebody had set Jewish buildings on fire. Goebbels noted these reports in his diary retrospectively and without grief.

Later still, word arrived that the Paris diplomat Vom Rath had died of his injuries at five-thirty p.m. ‘That does it,’ he wrote. Goebbels spent the next hours on the telephone and teleprinter. Using the teleprinter network of the Party’s propaganda machine he issued directives to all forty-two gau propaganda agencies to stage demos against local Jewish properties together with Brownshirts in plain clothes. It would be a repetition of his anti-Jewish extravaganza of June 1938, but with icing on the cake: If things went right tonight, he could take the limelight right off Himmler’s midnight SS spectacular.

THE FOUR SEASONS WAS within spitting distance of a synagogue but

Himmler neither knew nor cared. After lunch at the hotel he took Wolff out to Gmund to relax by the lake for an hour or two. The next day, the tenth, he would go on his extended leave: that was a familiar routine, in fact Karl Wolff – Wölfchen – called it Heini's 'hibernation.' As the police chief of Munich, Baron von Eberstein, loftily recalled, Himmler left it to others to raise the SS *Sturmbanne* and regiments, and just turned up to inspect them and satisfy himself they came up to scratch. Tonight's Feldherrnhalle ceremony was the climax – Heini's big night.

Karl Wolff would normally go to the Führer's apartment toward midnight, to escort him to the Residence. On the last stroke of midnight, the great gates would swing open and Hitler would step out for the ceremony. The new SS recruits, trained, drilled, and spotless, had arrived by train and omnibus from all over the country. Graded by size and height, automatons with rifles and helmets, three or four thousand new SS troops would have formed up in this historic square, where the carbines of the Bavarian police had felled sixteen of the Party faithful in 1923.

At midnight Himmler would recite the oath to them, line by line, swearing them to undying loyalty to the Führer, and in chorus the thousands would roar the words back to him. Then these new regiments would march off, to the banging of drums and the blare of trumpets, under the admiring eyes of Hitler and thousands of fiancées, parents, and spectators – the diplomats and the wealthy industrialists and Friends of the Reichsführer had of course privileged viewing stands. Like any trooping ceremony or passing-out parade, it was timed to the minute. It would normally roll out like clockwork.

EARLY THAT EVENING there was a banquet for the Party's Old Guard and Lutze's Brownshirt veterans in the Old City Hall. It was an exclusive event. Hitler did not intend to stay long. He had little time for the Party now: he would be overheard saying to Martin Bormann, Rudolf Hess's successor, in 1941, 'Your job is to keep the gauleiters off my back.' He found such gatherings tedious, and he was glad to get some rest. Heydrich and the younger SS generals did not qualify to attend. Himmler could have come – he had had a small part in the

1923 putsch – but he was no more fond of these Party grizzlies than was Hitler. Goebbels did come however. A messenger brought word to him confirming that Vom Rath had died. He whispered something to Hitler, perhaps about the fresh demonstrations in the provinces.

What was Hitler's response? Before he left the hall, Hitler ruled, according to the Goebbels Diary, that the demonstrations should run their course and the police be pulled back. If really used, the latter phrase, '*Polizei zurückziehen*,' could have had uglier connotations, but *holding* police back is standard in some mob-violence scenarios, to avoid pouring oil on flames. Later signals that night show police authorities as late as four a.m. ordering their officers *held in readiness*, 'That is proper,' noted Goebbels, commenting in his diary on this response. 'I issue appropriate directives to the police and Party at once.' (These words also need careful parsing. Goebbels could not issue directives to the police.) His possible motives were clear: not only might he upstage Himmler's midnight ceremony but, by one spectacular deed, he might possibly restore his relations with the Führer soured by his adulterous affair.

SO GOEBBELS LEFT HITLER in the dark, and Hitler gave the matter no further thought. He was not a witness of the fiery harangue which Goebbels now delivered to this rambunctious audience of beer-sozzled Party and Brownshirt veterans at the City Hall. Calling for silence above the hubbub, the minister announced the death of their diplomat in Paris, blamed an international Jewish conspiracy, referred approvingly to the day's demonstrations of 'spontaneous' public anger, and asked the Party to organise more, while keeping a low profile. The Jews were fair game, he suggested, and the SA Brownshirts would have a free hand against them. (He had not consulted Lutze about using the SA any more than he had consulted Himmler before 'issuing directives' to the police.) The Jews, he frolicked, should be given a taste of popular anger for once. 'Storms of applause,' he told his diary. 'Everybody makes a beeline for the telephones. Now the people will act.'

There were, he noticed, some voices of disapproval from 'a few wimps,' but 'I whip them all on.' Munich's gauleiter Adolf Wagner,

who was certainly no angel, was one who got cold feet and trembled for 'his Jewish shops,' as Goebbels sneered. The chief of the Party court, Walter Buch, Himmler's friend and neighbour at Tegernsee, was another – he listened briefly then slipped out 'because things were getting too gaudy for my liking,' as he recalled years later. The most gnarled of these old veterans, referred to by Goebbels as 'the Hitler squad' (the original *Stosstrupp Hitler* had long ago been disbanded) tumbled out into the streets and looked for a synagogue to attack. Writing it up the next day, still smarting from a scolding by Hitler, Goebbels adds a romance which is certainly not true: 'I try to save it from the flames. But fail.' [••*Ich versuche sie vor dem Brand zu retten. Aber das mißlingt.*] He put through a phone call to Werner Wächter, the chief of his Berlin propaganda agency, to destroy the biggest synagogue at No. 79 Fasanenstrasse, and that ancient building was shortly being consumed by flames.

The Party's Supreme Court, which was seized with this matter later, found that at this dinner Goebbels had issued 'oral instructions' which officials present had understood to suggest that he had Hitler's authority to act, and that this provided sufficient mitigation in law for the atrocities which followed. The remaining boozy Party leaders stumbled out into the night to put their heads together at various hotels, including the Schottenhimmel and Rheinischer Hof. An unnamed member of the *Reichsleitung*, the Party's national directorate, assembled gauleiters at the first of these taverns and issued more detailed directions. At ten-thirty p.m. one of them, the porky gauleiter of Schleswig-Holstein, Hinrich Lohse, telephoned his chief of staff in Kiel: 'A Jew has fired a shot. A German diplomat is dead. There are in Friedrichstadt, Kiel, and Lübeck wholly superfluous places of congregation; and these people are still trading in shops in our midst. We don't need either the one or the other. There's to be no plundering. There's to be no manhandling either. Foreign Jews are not to be molested. If there's any resistance, use your firearms. The whole operation is to be in plain clothes and is to be over by five a.m.'

Goebbels went over to the Party's local headquarters and issued more instructions, 'setting out what can be done and what not.' The Party's propaganda office, the *Reichspropagandaleitung* (RPL),

started issuing orders for a general pogrom. Some subsequent SA orders even used Hitler's name ('The Führer wants the police not to intervene'). The Munich state police (Gestapo) office received one such RPL order and, evidently perplexed, called Heydrich at the Four Seasons. No less baffled, the *Gruppenführer* hurried up to Wolff's room looking for Himmler.

Himmler was not there, however – he was across the city in Hitler's apartment.

'Wölfchen' set out by car to ask him what was going on. Then Prinz-Albrechtstrasse stirred, startled by the same RPL instruction from Munich. A *Blitzfernschreiben* carrying *Standartenführer* Heinrich Müller's name and addressed to every district Gestapo office in the Reich went out at five minutes before midnight, ordering Stapo officers to keep out of the demonstrations, while protecting Jewish property from looters. The telegram added a command reminiscent of Heydrich's orders to round up every communist immediately after the Reichstag fire in 1933: 'Stand by to take about twenty to thirty thousand Jews into custody, primarily selecting wealthy Jews. Further instructions will be issued during the night.'

HEINRICH HIMMLER HAD driven over to Hitler's Munich apartment an hour or so ahead of his midnight SS ceremony. He was already packed and ready to go on leave, but already the tectonic plates beneath their feet were beginning to move.

Hitler's apartment was at No. 16, Prinz-Regentenplatz. On the ground floor, to the left, was housed his police unit; his adjutants were housed on the floor above, and Hitler's own apartment above that. His original seven rooms had been redesigned by the Troosts and knocked together with the apartment next door. It had simple carpets, but its walls were hung with paintings by Spitzweg, Grützner, and Waldmüller. There was a library with works on architecture and art, and the piano he had played until Geli Raubal's death – in fact he had sentimentally left her room unchanged since then.

Fully arrayed in ceremonial uniform, complete with sword and dagger, Himmler chatted politely with his Führer, keeping an eye on the time. Across town, in the chill darkness of the night,

the SS regiments were still packing into the square in front of the Feldherrnhalle and forming up with polished helmets, black finery, and military precision, standing on the hallowed ground where the Ludendorff–Hitler putsch had sown those Dragons' Teeth fifteen years before. Occasionally word came to the apartment that everything was going to timetable. Given Himmler's obsession with timekeeping and planning it would be surprising if it did not.

At eleven-thirty p.m., there was an urgent knocking on the door, and he heard Hitler's housekeeper Mrs Winter saying: 'The Reichsführer? He is here with the Führer.' Himmler will have recognised the slightly nasal *Hochdeutsch* of Karl Wolff: 'Would you be so good as to tell him, that I'd like to speak with him urgently for a moment.'

Leaving Hitler for the moment, Himmler stepped out into the corridor. Wolff saluted, arm stiff and outstretched at the prescribed angle. He was on hot bricks. He had hurtled over from the Four Seasons at the urgent request of Heydrich. There was disturbing news from Prinz-Albrechtstrasse, he said, reports of mayhem up and down the Reich – hundreds of Jewish buildings were being wrecked by street mobs and set on fire. The violence was clearly orchestrated.

Himmler reeled back. '*Ach, du lieber Gott!*' he exclaimed – 'For God's sake!' He was chief of police. People would be blaming him.

SS *Standartenführer* Müller in Berlin, continued Wolff, was inquiring the Führer's pleasure, as Hitler's name was being bandied about.

'Wait here,' said Himmler, 'I'll speak with the Führer.'

He swung on his heel, only to reappear at once beckoning Wolff inside. Wolff repeated it all to Hitler: so far it appeared to be the handiwork of the Party and the SA Brownshirts. Probably none of these three men yet really grasped the scale of the rampage.

Himmler glanced at the clock. It was coming up to midnight.

It was a tough decision for Hitler. He had turned the SS loose on the SA once before, he said, in 1934, the Night of Long Knives: he could not do that again. He loped up and down, snapping his fingers, a habit he had formed whenever he had to think something over. If there was mayhem on the streets the mob would not heed orders. Quite apart from anything else, the reputation of the SS and his own aura of infallibility was at risk. He turned to Himmler: 'Keep my SS

right out of this.’ Then, after more finger-snapping: ‘Make sure the fires are contained and don’t spread out of control.’

Further than that, it seemed, he dared not go. The news after that just got worse. Hitler’s slightly-built adjutant Nicholas von Below came [••• or *phoned?*] upstairs and said that the Four Seasons had just phoned suggesting that the adjutants come and retrieve their baggage, as the synagogue next door was on fire. Hitler’s phone did not stop ringing. More calls came in from all over Munich.

Hitler sent for Baron Friedrich von Eberstein. He trusted this SS *Obergruppenführer* for the quiet efficiency he displayed on occasions like Mussolini’s 1937 state visit. ‘What’s going on?’ rasped Hitler. ‘Find out! I have to know what’s going on.’ With evident rising anger, as Below described to us, Hitler exclaimed: ‘I demand that order is restored at once!’ He phoned Goebbels and demanded answers. He sent Schaub out to stop the looting and ordered him to see that Bernheimer’s, the antique dealers, was afforded special protection.

Himmler checked the time. The minutes were spinning past. In Berlin, Munich, Kassel and other cities Brown mobs were in the streets, and senseless flames were licking into ancient buildings, devouring priceless archives and religious artefacts before the Gestapo or regular police could ‘rescue’ them. Ordinary Germans stood by, aghast at what they were seeing. The shrill clatter of broken glass was punctuating the night, and cries of human pain too.

AT MIDNIGHT, HIMMLER PRESIDED over the annual ceremony with the SS troops and Death’s Head units at the Feldherrnhalle. This was to have been a glimpse of Germany’s future – these fine, fit, eager young men that he was presenting to his Führer. Now however a far uglier future seemed to be flickering and leaping above the rooftops of most every city in the country.

With an eye for the romantic Goebbels told his diary that it was only as he was leaving Himmler’s ceremony that he noticed the glare of flames curling into the Munich sky. He went to the Party headquarters instead of the hotel, to read (and gloat over) the first reports coming in – fifty synagogues ablaze, then more. ‘The Führer has ordered the immediate arrest of twenty to thirty thousand Jews,’

he scribbled in his diary pages. Hitler was demanding to speak with him. 'In every German city the synagogues are ablaze,' rejoiced the minister before speaking with Hitler. He added a more chastened note, evidently after they had spoken: 'German property is not endangered.' It was an indication that he was hearing wiser counsels.

HIMMLER WAS BACK in his suite at the Four Seasons around one a.m. According to one source he had ordered all SS units confined to barracks. He dictated to Rudi Brandt a cautiously phrased four-page order for Heydrich to telex immediately to all Gestapo offices: their men were to be limited to arresting looters and safeguarding lives and Jewish assets. It explained that Goebbels's agencies were running this show. Where synagogues were already burning, fire-brigades were to protect neighbouring buildings and non-Jewish shops. The SD were to take to safety the valuable historical materials of synagogues and Jewish communities. The police were to escort into custody as many fit young male Jews as they had room for, preferably wealthy (and they were not to be 'maltreated' either). 'This came much too late,' testified Schallermeier, Wolff's personal assistant, 'as the public rampage had already begun.' Heydrich telephoned the lengthy order to his local Gestapo teleprinter room. It went out from Munich over his signature to every Gestapo and SD sub-office at 1:20 a.m.

After that, Himmler called all the SS district commanders (*Oberabschnittsführer*) to his suite and repeated the orders to them. Over the next hour, until two-thirty a.m., these officers, all *Obergruppenführer*, took turns using the phone in Schallermeier's room to pass it to their home areas. (His later memory was that the Himmler order stressed the protection of Jewish persons as well as their tangible possessions. This is not borne out by the surviving documentation.)

It is not easy to untangle the jumble of signals flashing across Germany that night. In none of them is Hitler or Himmler seen encouraging any pogrom. Heydrich and Müller both belatedly realised that somebody was playing fast and loose with them. During the night Hitler's controlled fury became evident. The headquarters of his deputy, Rudolf Hess, telexed a terse three-line ordinance, No. 174/38, at 2:56 a.m. to every provincial Party headquarters: 'On

express orders issued at the very highest level,' which was Party jargon for Hitler himself, 'there is to be no arson or the like, whatever, under any circumstances, against Jewish businesses.'

Hinting at a widening discord between Himmler and the all-powerful Party leadership, his Gestapo issued a telex from Berlin to its sub-offices at 3:45 a.m. demanding instant compliance with an order of Heydrich, which laid down:

1. Subsequent to the latest orders, all and any [*jegliche*] acts of arson are to be prevented, in conformity with political leaders.
2. All relevant orders already issued or being issued are to be classified as SECRET.

All sub-offices were to acknowledge receipt of this telex to his teleprinter in Munich (No. 47,767), and submit two detailed situation reports to Section II in Prinz-Albrechtstrasse by five and seven a.m. that same morning.

SOME AUTOPSIES ARE more difficult to perform than others. Conformist historians conveniently disregard documents, like these ones timed 2:56 a.m. and 3:45 a.m., if they don't fit preconceived notions. They willingly ignore the elements of time and distance in reconstructing events. That night, November 9–10, 1938, chaos was spreading like a bloodstain across Germany's police networks, as a babel of conflicting orders and reports tumbled to and fro by radio, telephone, and teleprinter, typed, retyped, encoded, decoded, and copied to lesser units, held up by system-delays, and then found to be at variance with later and conflicting orders arriving faster by different channels or from other authorities.

That Goebbels, on his authority as a *Reichsleiter*, had used the Party networks to issue orders to Himmler's police made things worse. Müller had already issued orders to his Gestapo sub-offices, and these were still trickling down to units like Krefeld two hours later, at two a.m.; but now everything was being thrown into reverse. 'The order for cessation of protest demonstrations is expected very shortly,' read one signal signed by Müller in the morning hours. 'Arrests by the

State Police will continue however and means will be assured for the speediest transfer of prisoners to the concentration camps.'

At about three a.m., Himmler stalked into Schallermeier's room and dictated an extraordinary *aide mémoire* on the evening's events. This was its gist: 'On November 9, I was with the Führer when toward eleven-thirty p.m. *Gruppenführer* Wolff came to me and informed me of orders issued by the Gau Propaganda Office in Munich.'

It continued,

I asked the Führer what orders he had for me. The Führer replied that the SS should keep out of this *Aktion*. The Stapo offices were to take care of safeguarding Jewish property and the protection of the Jews. The Regular SS who remained in barracks were to be called in for protective measures only if necessary. I immediately passed on this Führer order to *Gruppenführer* Heydrich for the Stapo offices and to the *Oberabschnittsführer* for the Regular SS.

When I asked the Führer, I had the impression that he knew nothing about all this. The order came from the Reich Propaganda Directorate and I suspect that it is Goebbels, in his empty-headedness [*Hohlköpfigkeit*] and lust for power (which has been obvious to me for some time), who has triggered this action right now, at the worst possible time from a foreign policy standpoint.

Schallermeier typed it up. Himmler signed it, folded it into an envelope, sealed it with his signet ring, and handed it to the young man for safekeeping: so Schallermeier later testified.

HAVING FIXED THE BLAME on the 'empty-headed' Goebbels, Himmler washed his hands of the affair and went on leave to Austria. We need not in this biography therefore concern ourselves with more than an outline of the rest of this appalling story.

Still in turmoil over the matrimonial warfare and Himmler's sniping, and shocked at the universal condemnation of his night of activism, Goebbels painted into his diary a fictitious picture of a Führer encouraging the anti-Jewish outrages in advance and endorsing them in hindsight. The opposite is evident. Synagogues had

been torched – nine in Berlin alone – businesses wrecked, and acres of plate-glass smashed at an unbearable cost in foreign currency, as it was all imported from Belgium. German insurers would be called on to pay for the damage. Homes had been invaded, ninety people murdered, women raped.

If Goebbels thought it could get no worse as Germany picked up the pieces on the morning of the tenth, he was wrong. Hitler ordered him to come and see him at the Osteria Bavaria, his regular Munich watering-hole. Hitler instructed him to call a halt to his ghastly handiwork. To his diary, Goebbels lied. 'He is in agreement with everything,' he recorded (unusually writing it up immediately, instead of on the next day). 'His views are quite radical and aggressive. The *Aktion* itself went off without a hitch. A hundred dead. But no German property damaged.' (Each of these five sentences was untrue).

Shaken by the frostiness of his reception by Hitler, the minister spent the morning trying to stuff the vile genie he had unleashed back into the bottle. Fritz Wiedemann, one of the older adjutants, saw him on the phone frantically trying to halt the conflagration – but such things are easier to start than to stop. At half-hour intervals throughout the day the radio broadcast orders for the mayhem to stop. Goebbels issued a directive to all gauleiters stating: 'The anti-Jewish operations must now be switched off with the same rapidity as they erupted. They have fulfilled the desired and expected purpose.'

IT WAS OF COURSE a terrible setback to a nation's history. It had all gone so well until now. In five years, Adolf Hitler had achieved a string of diplomatic triumphs for Germany: although but a lowly Austrian, he had reunited the people of this divided nation; he had by a simple plebiscite regained the Saar territory, he had revived conscription, he had defied their manifold enemies by remilitarising the German Rhineland, and he had resumed rearmament. Impartial as between German or Jewish or Negro contestants, Hitler had presided over the famous 1936 Berlin Olympiad; he had rejoined Austria with Germany, and wiped out crushing unemployment, and he had only recently retrieved for Germany her amputated Sudeten territories. Now a brainless mob – hiding Brown shirts and Party emblems on

the orders of his crippled minister of propaganda Dr Goebbels – had permanently trashed National Socialist Germany's reputation with one nocturnal rampage of homicidal violence, and this would go down against him, as its Führer, for all time.

As for Himmler, the Reich chief of police, the image he had been building of the strong, orderly, prosperous, law-abiding new country, in which the criminals had been locked away and the usurers and fraudsters deprived of their liberty, was *bouleversé*. If he consoled himself that Goebbels had surely hammered the last nails into his own coffin, he was rudely cheated of this expectation. Goebbels would creep back into Hitler's good favour again, but later. What was this hold that Goebbels had over his Führer?

Arriving back in Berlin after the pogrom, Hitler told Hermann Göring to find a solution to this intractable conundrum, the Jewish Problem. 'The Jewish question must now, once and for all, be co-ordinated or solved in one way or the other,' were the words Hitler used to him.

Ribbentrop tried, and failed, to repair the damage that Goebbels had done abroad. Goebbels called a press conference in Berlin on the eleventh, and ran the gauntlet of a hundred and fifty jeering foreign journalists. He wrestled with his own diary, trying to find ways of concealing the personal disaster from posterity. He continued to pretend that he had Hitler's backing. In one telling *faux-pas*, he scribbled in his handwriting on November 17 after Hitler returned to Berlin. 'He's in fine fettle. Sharply against the Jews. Thoroughly endorses my, and our, policies' - he had written *my* before he could stop himself, and to have altered it to *our* would have given the game away. This is not the only time that we shall find that the original document unwittingly reveals more than its printed version.

Foreign diplomats in Berlin unanimously exonerated Himmler and blamed Goebbels. Count Welczek, recalled to Düsseldorf for the state funeral of Vom Rath – which might so easily have been his own – told the British ambassador on his return to Paris that Goebbels was the culprit, and that even Himmler was opposed to this persecution of the Jews: 'Count Welczek said he had heard this from several well-informed sources in Germany.' The British consul

in Geneva said that Goebbels had hoped to regain the political limelight, which Göring had monopolised at the Munich conference. The British consul in Munich reported that Goebbels and Gauleiter Wagner had arranged twenty mass meetings against the Jews in Munich for the night of the tenth, but that the Gestapo had objected. The well-informed British consul-general in Cologne reported that the pogrom was ‘engineered by the Party, assisted by a mob who are always willing to loot.’

The American consul in Leipzig challenged the official version (‘spontaneous indignation’) and described a public ‘benumbed and aghast’ at the unprecedented acts. Many had known by nine p.m. of the events due to start after midnight, he said: ‘Several . . . stayed up purposely in order to witness it.’ Describing the wholesale arrests, this American described how ‘the insatiably sadistic perpetrators threw many of the trembling inmates into a small stream that flows through the Zoological Park, commanding horrified spectators to spit at them, defile them with mud, and jeer.’

Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes reported that every Berliner he met had disapproved. His colleague in Munich echoed this. ‘A holder of the *Blut-Orden* [a Nazi award] met a Jewish friend . . . stopped him [and] shook hands. The Jew suggested that this was indiscreet and his friend might lose his *Blut-Orden*. The other said: “I resigned from the Party yesterday” and produced from his pocket a copy of his very strongly worded letter of resignation.’ This Munich diplomat knew of cases where SS and SA men had sheltered Jews, to show that ‘das Deutsche Volk’ had no part in it – ‘it is only Goebbels and his gang.’ ‘A childlike faith in the Führer and a conviction that he had nothing to do with the Pogrom subsists,’ reported the Englishman to London.

In northern cities like Hamburg, where the young gauleiter Karl Kaufmann was more civilised, the Party had ignored Goebbels’s call for violence. The British consul-general reported that all classes there had expressed disgust. ‘No attacks were made on Jewish homes and very few cases of personal violence are reported. In making arrests the police [were] . . . polite and in some cases almost apologetic.’

THE RAMPAGE had created serious disruptions for the SD. Among

those taken into temporary custody during the night – they were released over the next weeks – were not only individual Jews like Oscar Gerstle, the Munich lawyer to whom Himmler had delivered his father's letter in 1922, but the directors of all the Jewish retraining camps [*Umschulungslager*] which the SD had established to qualify Jews for a new life in Palestine. The national Jewish body pleaded for their release, and Heydrich's Section II agreed, 'as we must without fail maintain the prerequisites and preparations for an orderly emigration procedure.' By the end of 1938 more than half of the young Jews in Germany had been retrained for emigration as artisans, manual workers and farmers.

In Vienna, many of Eichmann's Jewish collaborators had again been swept off into prison, and their offices, foreign correspondence, and card indexes destroyed by the mobs; the Vienna tax authorities forbade Jews to withdraw more than four hundred marks a month, making it impossible to emigrate. Eichmann secured the release of his collaborators and started all over. By December 15 his now three-month old emigration agency in Vienna had 'helped' 66,848 Jews to leave. The residue in Austria was dwindling at the rate of six hundred per day. By January 1, 1939 the number who had left Austria would total eighty-five thousand.

By October 1940, when the emigration programme was halted, Hitler's Reich had cleansed itself of two-thirds of its Jews, including 300,000 from Germany, 130,000 from Austria, and thirty thousand from Bohemia and Moravia. They had been relieved of much of their treasure in the process, on one pretext or another, including their share of the collective punishment imposed on their community. As things turned out, these who had fled would prove more fortunate than those who stayed behind.

SPEAKING IN HIMMLER'S name, Karl Wolff left nobody in doubt of the SS view on all this. To Hafiz Khan, the British vice-president of the Muslim League, he said that Germany had morally 'lost a battle' that night. He repeated his disgust in mid-November 1938 to Professor Carl Burckhardt: when Burckhardt, the High Commissioner in Danzig, called at Prinz-Albrechtstrasse to express his fears of a

pogrom in that territory too, Wolff spoke frankly, as the Swiss diplomat recorded: ‘Something will have to happen,’ he said. ‘The one responsible is Goebbels, who has an intolerable influence on the Führer. We had hoped . . . for some time to bring him down [*zur Strecke zu bringen*] and this time we were sure we had him, but once again the Führer has saved him. Things cannot go on like this. We’ll have to deal with him.’

Addressing a Nazi political academy (Napola) in December, Heydrich made no secret of the Reichsführer’s anger that Goebbels had blithely issued orders to *his* police. Kurt Daluege, chief of the regular police, told Hess that there was now ‘nationwide antipathy’ to Goebbels. Hess ‘pointed to Goebbels as the actual originator,’ as the former ambassador Ulrich von Hassell noted in his diary, ‘Goebbels has seldom found less credibility than for his claim that a “spontaneous outburst of public rage” led to the violence.’ ‘Is Goebbels losing touch with reality?’ speculated Darré, a few months later. Not one minister defended Goebbels. ‘Even at home, opinions diverge sharply,’ wrote Lutze. But the Brownshirts had tasted blood, and continued to raise havoc against the Jews in Hanover and other cities. Despite what Hitler had ordained in his apartment, the SS now prepared to use force against the Brown thugs again. [•••*I will get the actual document.*]

IMPERVIOUS TO THE documentary evidence, a platoon of conformist historians has maintained that Hitler’s hand lay behind all this. Those who write otherwise in modern Germany risk imprisonment. The conformists have failed to prove their case, as Professor Hans Mommsen has commented. Hitler wasted not one word on the pogrom in his secret speech to the newspaper editors on the tenth. His undoing was his failure to rein in those whom Himmler called the ‘empty-heads.’

Hitler had stayed clear of the pogrom, but he could not duck responsibility. It had happened on his watch; worse, he signally failed to reprimand Goebbels in public, he was willingly seen with him over the next few days and even stayed briefly at his Berlin villa while the Chancellery underwent renovations.

THERE WAS A postscript to all this. With little difficulty, a disgruntled Swiss theology student, a twenty-two year old, had obtained a ticket to the Press stand just before the narrow archway in Munich through which Hitler's procession passed on November 9, 1938: perfect for an assassin, as we remarked. The student, Maurice Bavaud, had taken his seat in the front row, pretending to be a journalist, with a Schmeisser semi-automatic pistol in his pocket. At the last minute, as the Führer marched past, the SA men lining the street raised their arms in salute, denying Bavaud the clear shot he needed.

Undismayed, Bavaud tried again a few days later on the Obersalzberg – his quarry was known to walk down the hill to meet locals and tourists as they trooped past; but Hitler was back in Berlin.

A penniless failure, Bavaud headed back to Switzerland, only to be arrested at Augsburg for travelling without a ticket. A loser, by any account, he was unable to explain the empty envelope addressed to the Führer, or for that matter the pistol in his pocket. He confessed that he had hoped to get close to Hitler with the one, and shoot him with the other, 'as a danger to Roman Catholicism.' Hitler pontificated later about 'these fanatics who have been groomed to their actions by dastardly priests.' The guillotine at Plötzensee abbreviated the would-be assassin's life on May 14, 1941.

At about the same hour as Himmler's railway police were making that arrest in Augsburg, another malcontent, a Swabian cabinet-maker, was stalking round the deserted Bürgerbräu beerhall in Munich. He found it surprisingly easy to get in: there was no guard at night. The cabinet-maker noticed a hollow, wood-panelled pillar just behind where Hitler always spoke. That seemed quite inviting.

38: *Elegant*

Himmler was over the hills and far away. He had gone on vacation, leaving Hitler to tear strips off Goebbels in the Osteria. On Thursday, November 10, 1938 he and Marga checked into a suite at the 'Österreichischer Hof' in Salzburg for a week, and on Friday we find them strolling round the romantic city until her feet hurt. On Saturday he was going up the Gross-Glöckner; on Sunday he was dropping in on Adolf Rehr's farm in Fridolfing, where he had worked as an apprentice eighteen years before – 'very nice,' she commented, with perhaps a touch of sarcasm. On Monday the fourteenth he was off hunting on the Krupp preserve while Marga stayed in her room, fretting about him and reading and sewing.

He was well out of it. In his absence, Göring banged heads together in Berlin, as Hitler had demanded. The pogrom night had seen violence, murder, arson, and property-damage right across Hitler's domain, in Germany, Austria, and the Sudeten territories too.

In private, Hitler expressed renewed concern over any undisciplined approach to 'the Jewish problem.' He telephoned Göring, demanding that all the key measures be centralised in one hand. The field-marshal convened a conference on Saturday the twelfth, two days after Himmler went on leave. Heydrich ordered Eichmann, his emigration expert, to come too. Every relevant minister was present,

and Göring lectured them like schoolboys: 'I am sick and tired of these demonstrations,' he cried. He did not spare feelings. 'I buy most of my works of art from Jewish dealers,' he bellowed at Goebbels. The mobs had trashed over seven thousand Jewish stores, which would mean a major shortfall of tax revenue from them. German insurers would have to pay for the wreckage, and the looted merchandise was often German-owned, too. 'I wish you'd done in two hundred Jews and not destroyed such assets.'

'Thirty-five,' corrected Heydrich coldly: 'It's thirty-five dead.'

'The problem [is],' he explained, 'not how to get the rich Jews out, but the Jewish *mob*.'

He warned of a ten-year plague of unemployed Jews and demanded that at very least they be required to wear distinguishing badges.

'My dear Heydrich,' scoffed Göring, 'you're not going to get anywhere without the large-scale erection of ghettos in the cities.'

He signed a slew of decrees that day. With Hitler's approval, he levied a collective fine of one billion marks on the German and Austrian Jewish communities for the murder of Vom Rath – which might seem excessive and unjust, given that his murderer was a Pole living in France; but the Reich needed the money. Goebbels and Helldorff followed with ordinances of their own, banning Jews from theatres, concerts, lectures, movies, and dances, and declaring their tenancies no longer protected. Darré heard Göring call the pogrom 'a bloody outrage.' Göring's sister Ilse heard him blame Dr Goebbels. 'The rest of them are tolerable. Himmler himself is quite unimportant and basically harmless.'

UNIMPORTANT THE YOUNG Reichsführer was not. His special forces were already quietly infiltrating Slovakia in preparation for Hitler's next move. He was rising in Hitler's esteem. On December 19, 1938 Hitler would sign in his familiar blue-black ink a parchment certificate awarding Himmler the SS Service Badge II, 'in recognition of twelve years' loyal service.' Without him Hitler would have no *Leibstandarte*, no praetorian guard. Equally, the Reichsführer drew all his power from Hitler. Each was significantly less without the other.

‘H.’S IDEA OF A HOLIDAY,’ Marga wrote in her diary as that exhausting November 1938 vacation continued, ‘is to do something different every day.’ She was uncomfortable with herself; she felt tired, but she was sleeping badly. ‘My feet are unsightly now,’ she moaned, if only in those silent pages. ‘That’s from the work I’ve had to do. When I was young I probably cursed all the work, but today I am roundly convinced that I’ve earned my place in the sun and the happiness and love that go with it. So here’s what I say to the youngsters . . . you’ve got to earn it, nothing’s going drop into your lap.’ ‘When I was young’: she was feeling menopausal, she already saw her life behind her. For Heini, prematurely balding but just thirty-eight, the best years were still to come.

They talked endlessly that month. Heini read, while Marga, keen to please, studied English. ‘Lots going on sometimes, and we did not have time to play bridge.’ They went to the movies and theatre, and after driving on to Wiesbaden they visited General Walter Schroth, nearly twenty years Heini’s senior, and SS-Gruppenführer Richard Hildebrandt, chief of the SS-*Oberabschnitt* Rhine. Once they phoned Gudrun, but their little girl just burst into tears: ‘She can’t live without us,’ boasted Marga, filled with maternal satisfaction. ‘We can be so proud.’ Writing that had reminded her of the ever-present danger of assassination, and she realised that she feared every day for the child’s life as well as Heini’s.

Early on December 7 they left Wiesbaden, winding up their vacation, and drove over to Würzburg; they stopped at Pottenstein around five p.m, where a little cluster of experts was waiting to show them over the famous caves – Professor Wüst of the Ahnenerbe, Professor Hans Brand the speleologist, and others – and for three hours the Reichsführer explored the underground tunnels, including the latest caverns that Brand had discovered. The Himmlers bedded down at the Hotel Bube in Berneck – Hitler’s favourite hotel whenever he was visiting Bayreuth – and drove on the next day, the eighth, to Quedlinburg for Heini to inspect the recent excavation works on the cathedral and castle, and to wallow in royal nostalgia about Heinrich the First. At five-thirty they drove on to Berlin, and their month-long

holiday was over. Marga was again seized by fears that these happy days might be the last. As they arrived back in Dahlem, they found Gudrun at the front door, the picture of childish joy. They were in every other way such an ordinary German family.

On his desk Himmler found a four-page report from Heydrich on what his men had so far found in captured Austrian files. The very next day, December 9, he was gone again, heading down to Vienna to see Kaltenbrunner, and two days passed before he even phoned Marga again. He probably also took up a nasty little matter affecting the local gauleiter: Odilo Globocnik had been appointed gauleiter of Vienna two months after the *Anschluss*, replacing Josef Leopold. Accused since then of currency speculation, setting up a secret account for cash extorted from Jews, and embezzling Party funds, Globocnik would be forced out of office on January 30, 1939 and posted to the SS *Verfügungstruppe* – the later Waffen SS – to ‘work his passage’ back into favour. Austrian army officers in Vienna told the British consul that Globocnik would not be missed. They spoke of his ‘elimination,’ but he was not finished: not by a long chalk.

Marga’s diary had lapsed, but she re-opened it for a brief entry when December 3 came: it would have been her late mother’s birthday, she reminded Heini, relentlessly. ‘If only she had lived to enjoy all the happiness she was entitled to,’ she observed, pushing onto him the familiar guilt of a daughter now seeing better times. Her father would soon be dead too. Heini’s had been gone for two years, but he was still conscious of the old man’s paternal glare. ‘She’s looking down from above,’ said Heini on an impulse. ‘She can see it all.’

HIS ENEMIES LIKED TO call the SS a godless movement, but there were these stray clues that he had not wholly shed the snakeskin of Catholic piety he had acquired as an infant. The oath intoned by every young SS recruit at that midnight ceremony ended with the ancient German invocation: ‘So help us God!’ and every one of them had at some time been asked: ‘Do you believe in a God?’ to which the SS creed required the answer, ‘Yes, I believe in a Lord God!’ On every SS man’s index card was entered the confession, *gottgläubig* – believer. Only His identity was left unspecified. Godless they weren’t,

but it was an unidentified religious belief that bound together these men in black, and the journalists instructed to celebrate Himmler's tenth year as Reichsführer in January 1939 reminded their German readers of that.

Marga's own religious beliefs were unwavering: she remained a Protestant, and each December brought her and Gudrun the usual Christian delights of gifts and family games, and lighting the Christmas tree. This year there were more gifts than usual, even for the luckless foster-child Gerhard, since his school report card was improving; in March 1939 he would pass the entrance exam to become a cadet at the Napola academy (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt*) at Spandau. Among the Yuletide gifts which Himmler distributed was one for Adolf Hitler, a book entitled *Death and Immortality in the Weltanschauung of Indo-Germanic Thinkers*, unwrapping which, he hoped, would be a high point of Christmas jollity at the Berghof.

The gifts addressed to Heini were more pedestrian. Four winters later would see his agricultural boffins discreetly inquiring his car's vital statistics, because they were making up a gift-set of tyres from the latex of the kok-sagys dandelion – they wanted it to be a Yuletide surprise. They were raising an experimental kok-sagys harvest in their research section attached to Auschwitz, a sprawling new camp in Silesia. The inquiry was dated two weeks before the cruel tide of History began to turn at Stalingrad, dandelion-tyres or not.

LOOKING BACK OVER 1938, Marga was as usual dissatisfied. When Christmas came, an upset stomach packed her off to bed. There had been problems with the Dahlem villa, and of course with the servants: 'Servant problems have been a catastrophe,' she moaned on the last day of December: 'What I have been through this last year just doesn't bear thinking of.' (Sadly, we do not have the servants' view.) She was with difficulty running a household of half a dozen; Heini was commanding a quarter of a million SS men, and his police forces and the law courts had ruthlessly restored order to the previously riot-torn streets of Weimar-ruled Germany. Prison camp and labour service, guillotine and gibbet, his preferred instruments of discipline and order, were shrinking the pool of hardened criminals.

There were however disturbing signs that absolute power was beginning to corrupt. More of his relatives and in-laws were finding lucrative niches in government and industry. Was he now locking away the merely awkward and the inconvenient? Beside the chronic alcoholics and the enemies of state and hotheads like Pastor Niemöller, there were already some unexpected misfits in his camps.

In 1939 the word went round prisoners in Buchenwald that Himmler's chauffeur had joined them. Hans (his name is of no importance, but it was apparently not Hans Bastian), told them he was twenty-eight and had an attractive wife and two children 'outside.' The Reichsführer had taken to visiting them, he said, and his wife to sending Hans off on some errand or other. He told his fellow-prisoners that he guessed they were having an affair. 'Toward the end of 1942,' related one of them in February 1945, 'he was sent for and shown a note from Himmler . . . he could be released providing he signed an undertaking not to return to Munich.' Hans's pals in Buchenwald, named as Michel and Philipp Graudenz, advised him to sign, or the camp's political department would get rid of him. 'Then go and find yourself another wife!' He took their advice.

There is no evidence supporting the man's story, but that he was recklessly spreading it might explain why he landed in Buchenwald. Himmler himself was scrupulously honest, in small things anyway: The bigshots go free, is the German saying, it's the small fry who get hanged. Thus starting in January 1939 he ordered every cigar he smoked over lunch or supper in his private mess to be put on his tab and paid for. More than once a cop stopped him for speeding – he was criminally reckless at the wheel – and realised too late who he was. But Himmler was already jovially extracting banknotes from his wallet: 'What are you waiting for?' Every offender had to be fined, he said, 'even if it's God himself' – whom he still saw as a superior, at least to the officer. As for women, like any normal thirty-eight year old he surely hankered after a real physical relationship; in the SS those who were abnormal mostly went before the firing-squad. But other men's wives were off-limits, at least in his particular moral hemisphere.

HE WAS STILL A GOOD father, if not the most attentive husband. He opened the New Year, 1939, building a snowman with Gudrun down at Gmund, interrupted by the occasional visitor like the Schirachs, or Fritz Kranefuss who ran the Friends of Himmler support fund, or others soliciting his friendship. A dutiful son too – in January 1939 he flew to Munich for his mother's birthday, then back to Berlin.

He already had ten years to look back on as Reichsführer SS. Back in July, Heissmeyer had reminded Wolff of the anniversary falling on January 6, and Wolff has asked the top half-dozen *Gruppenführer* to come up with ideas. They came (dress: 'long trousers, white shirt') to Himmler's sanctum, the Villa Lindenfycht, at three-thirty p.m. on the fifth and gave him a presentation album. Bound in black leather and embellished in silver, it complemented the SS uniform rather well. In 168 pages of memoirs and photos the album charted the expansion of the SS from 1929, with fawning contributions from the heads of all five SS Main Offices – Heydrich, Wolff, Daluge, Heissmeyer, and Günther Panke, and the chiefs of all fourteen SS regions, the *Oberabschnitte*. Hildebrandt's contribution was executed in stylish calligraphy. Among the mementoes was a green handbill put out in Ellmendingen in 1927 announcing a talk by 'Mr Himmler, B.Sc (Agric.)' Few of those who autographed this album would survive the next six years, because Mr Himmler's was the kiss of death.

'Reichsführer!' the album proclaimed on its title page. 'On January 6, 1929 on the Obersalzberg the Führer named you Reichsführer SS. Ten years have passed since then. At that time there were in Germany small, scattered *Schutz-Staffel* squads totalling just 250 men. Today you have at your command a military fighting force of 250,000 men ready for any operation, sworn to the Führer body and soul. . . Today, a mighty force.' Beneath a flattering portrait of Himmler there marched across the parchment his heroic words: 'If Fate should snatch the banner from one man's hand, then step forward the next comrade and pluck up the flag to carry it forth.'

On the sixth itself, the official anniversary, he drove over with Marga to shake hands with Hitler at the Berghof, while that morning's turgid press oozed with unctuous eulogies – effusions as customary in the authoritarian state as in the democratic, though the latter usually

holds back until it is time for obituaries. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* marvelled that he had achieved so much while not yet forty. Writing from the British embassy, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes drew London's attention to the power that Heinrich Himmler already wielded. Despite being by no means popular, Herr Himmler might well rise to 'the highest position,' the Englishman predicted.

Popular or not, Himmler was back in Berlin in time for Hitler's formal New Year reception at midday on January 12, staged in the New Chancellery. Here the unexpected happened, but he may have missed it. As the ambassadors waited in their braided finery to exchange empty felicitations, Hitler *paused* deliberately when he reached the Soviet ambassador Alexei Merekalov, and began a conversation. It was a calculated gesture, as he would himself boast in August: he wanted Stalin to know that he could let bygones be bygones. He was working on a Plan B, to pursue if Poland refused to play ball.

THE NEW CHANCELLERY building was the work of an even younger entry to Hitler's immediate circle, the architect Albert Speer.

Speer was handsome and intelligent, a Henry Fonda among James Cagneys. Five years junior to Himmler, scion of a patrician Mannheim family, he had fallen under Hitler's thrall after hearing him speak to five thousand Berlin students in 1930; he had joined the Party soon after and *half-joined* the SA and SS in 1931. He recalled seeing blood on the floor of a Berlin building on the day after the Röhm Purge, but made nothing of it. Hitler had appointed him Berlin's *Generalbauinspekteur*, or chief architect and town planner, on January 30, 1937. Speer's brother Hermann recalled him mentioning in 1938 that he had suggested to Himmler installing a brickworks in the new KZ in Oranienburg: 'After all,' Albert had said with disgraceful disrespect, 'the Jews already made bricks under the Pharaohs.' As for Dr Goebbels's November 1938 pogrom, Speer found himself stepping over broken glass but again did not get involved. In a frank letter to his daughter much later he would admit only to having 'the slight discomfort all of us sometimes feel' with the Jews. They were after all a different race.

He was careful not to fall out with Himmler. Speaking of him later, Speer echoed Göring's private 1935 assessment: 'He was of course mad, in a way, but he was very, very effective.' Himmler had the patience to listen, the ability to reflect before reaching decisions, and a talent for selecting the right men for his staff. What lesser brains might dismiss as nonsense, Speer chose to indulge – Himmler's more whimsical side, his alleged interest in the occult, the obsession with racial purity, the SS search for ancient Germanic civilisations and the funding of anthropological expeditions to Tibet and Japan. Speaking to large audiences, said Speer, Himmler did not rant but used a scholarly lecture-theatre tone that had his listeners nodding in agreement. Himmler, he insisted with a hint of feline triumph, had no *social* contact with Hitler. He was an outsider – in fact he was outside all other outsiders.

ONE ASPECT TO these months between the November pogrom and the end of 1939 might seem to underline Speer's lofty assessment that Himmler was an 'outsider': Hitler delivered a number of key secret speeches, what one might call 'programme speeches,' to selected audiences of officers and officials, for example on November 10, and then in 1939 on January 18 and 25, February 10, March 11, May 23, and the famous 'plain-clothes' harangue to his generals on August 22, 1939; but Himmler was not present at any of them. He did not need to be. In 1939 he would log over seventy visits to the Führer (compared with seventeen to Ribbentrop and only four to Göring). Hitler was briefing him separately on his strategic plans, and unlike the army generals Himmler found nothing amiss with them.

In January 1939 Marga had taken to bed again, this time with flu; she ran a temperature, and after a week Heini took her out to the clinic at Hohenlychen, outside Berlin, on January 29 and asked Professor Gebhardt to do something about her, curing her bad feet while her flu subsided. On February 23 he talked with Hitler about expanding Hohenlychen and gained his approval, and told Gebhardt this in a letter he dictated to Hedwig Potthast, thanking the professor also for looking after Marga. On March 14 he dictated to Hedwig another amiable letter, thanking him: 'The stay at Hohenlychen has

done my wife a power of good.'

She would stay in the clinic for many weeks. Heini was ever more seldom in Berlin. He had begun a gruelling programme of visits to SS and police units, and conferences with his SS *Gruppenführer*.

HE HAD A DATE WITH Hitler at midday on January 21: the topic of Prague's Jews may have come up, because later that day Hitler brought it up with the Czech foreign minister František Chvalkovský. Hitler, Göring, and Himmler all saw eye to eye on emigration as the solution, so long as Europe was at peace. Göring had boomed at that conference on November 12: 'If at any time in the foreseeable future the German Reich finds itself entering foreign political conflicts, then it is self-evident that we in Germany will apply ourselves, first and foremost, to effecting a grand totting-up regarding the Jews.'

That was vague, but vagueness was increasingly in vogue, to be followed a year or two later by its uglier half-brother, euphemism. Reading a set speech in the Reichstag at the end of January 1939, Hitler uttered an equally opaque but defiant warning, buried in an oration, a triumphant *tour d'horizon* which filled two broadsheet pages of the next day's *Völkischer Beobachter*. How the Jews had scorned his earlier prophecies, he mocked: 'Today I'm going to be a prophet once more: if international Jewish financiers inside and outside Europe succeed once again in plunging the nations into a world war, the outcome will be, not the Bolshevization of the world and with it the victory of Jewry, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe!'

Delphic utterances have been designed since ancient times so that each man can read into them what he wants. Himmler was in the building but evidently missed the 'prophetic warning.' He never mentioned it. Probably he was already feeling ill. Marga wrote in her diary about hearing the Führer's 'grand speech' while out at the Hohenlychen clinic, but she did not notice those words about the Jews either. To Hitler it was useful rhetoric, a crowd-pleasing flourish, addressed less to the Jews of Europe than to those abroad – to 'Wall Street.' Some of his henchmen read the oracle differently: Dr Goebbels selected precisely those three lines for the newsreels, and