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RUDOLPH HESS, A STRATEGIC MOVE OR ETHICAL DILEMMA?

BY

COLONEL THOMAS M. DRISKILL, JR., MS

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

RUDOLPH HESS,
A STRATEGIC MOVE OR ETHICAL DILEMMA?

by

Colonel Thomas M. Driskill, Jr. MS

Samuel J. Newland, Ph.D.
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts;
but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in
certainties."

Francis Bacon, 1605

RUDOLPH HESS,
A STRATEGIC MOVE OR ETHICAL DILEMMA?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago I was assigned to West Germany as a First Lieutenant, U.S. Army Medical Service Corps. During my three year tour of duty, Albert Speer published his book, Inside the Third Reich. After reading this book, I became vaguely aware of Rudolph Hess's World War II flight. I gave the matter no further thought until 1987 when I was assigned overseas. In my new position as Deputy Commander for Administration, U.S. Army Hospital, Berlin, I soon learned that the United States was part of a four power (United States, Britain, France, and Russia) custodial group responsible for Prisoner Number Seven, Rudolph Hess, the last remaining prisoner in Berlin's Spandau Prison.

In early August 1987, I joined a select group of privileged officers to witness the Russian/American change of guard inside the walls of Spandau Prison. A few days later, I participated in the monthly Spandau Four Power Medical Conference. Following the conference, I entered the cell block with the American, British, French and Russian Surgeons to examine Rudolph Hess. There, I talked with Hess, and I observed his detailed medical examination. One week after this examination, Hess took his own life at

Spandau and thus carried to his grave answers to World War II's most unusual mystery.

As a result of these personal experiences, I have developed a keen interest in Rudolph Hess. Following Dr. Sam Newland's research guidance and using information available at the U.S. Army War College and the U.S. Army Military History Institute, I have studied Rudolph Hess in an attempt to answer three historical questions: What were his motives for his 10 May 1941 secret flight from Germany to England? Was the flight sanctioned by Hitler? What ethical concerns did he face?

To answer these questions, I will review Hess's early life, address his motives, and review the flight. I will then address both sanctioning and his ethical concerns, provide a summary of my conclusions, and offer addendum comments on Hess's final years.

CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE¹

Who was Rudolph Hess? Was he an extraordinary person or was he an ordinary person living in an extraordinary time? If a man is to be known by his exploits, good or bad, then Hess was truly an extraordinary person with a very unusual early life.

He was born on 26 April 1894 in Alexandria, Egypt. His father, Fritz Hess, was a wealthy import merchant and highly regarded member of the local German Community. His mother, Klara Muench, was the daughter of a German textile manufacturer. Hess was raised with his brother Alfred, three years younger, in a stately lifestyle in Ibrahimieh, a suburb of Alexandria. He attended the German School in Alexandria from 1900 until 1906, then left Egypt to board at the Evangelisches Paedagogium School in Bad Godesberg-am-Rhein, Germany for three years. While there he was harassed by the other students for not being a true German. Consequently, he developed an intense patriotic attitude and special interest in German history. He was also very interested in studying math and science, but his father wanted an heir for the family business.

Following his father's wishes, Hess left Bad Godesberg at the age of fifteen and attended the Ecole Superieure du Commerce at Neuchatel, Switzerland for a year. He then moved to Hamburg and was serving in a commercial apprenticeship when the First

World War began in 1914.

Hess reiterated his loyalty to Germany by promptly volunteering to serve initially in the 1st Bavarian Infantry Regiment and later in the 18th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment. He fought on both the Western and Eastern fronts and was wounded in battle on three separate occasions. He almost died from his third wound, a rifle bullet in the left lung. Following a long convalescence, he volunteered as a fighter pilot. Although he completed his qualification training, the War ended a few weeks after he was assigned to his aviation unit, the 35th Fighter Squadron. He was subsequently discharged as a Lieutenant. At one point during his infantry service, Hess was assigned to the same regiment as Adolf Hitler, but the two men did not meet until after the War.²

As the War ended, the German government was in a chaotic state. This chaos was exacerbated by the Communist revolution in Russia spilling over into a defeated Germany. Bitter over Germany's defeat, and unhappy with the prospects of entering the family business, Hess went to Munich in 1919. There he joined the Freikorps³ and was wounded a fourth time⁴ in fighting against a Communist regime that had taken over the Bavarian government. After the Freikorps overthrew the Communist government, Hess entered the University of Munich. There, he studied under Professor Karl Haushofer,⁵ a professor of geopolitics who became Hess's close personal friend. From this relationship, Hess developed

many of his ideas on political, economic, and military strategy.

While enrolled in the university, Hess was also busy passing out anti Semitic pamphlets and fighting in beerhalls. In the summer of 1920, he went with friends one day to the Sternecker-Brau Hall where he first heard Adolf Hitler speak for the National Socialist Party. He was entranced by Hitler and he soon joined the party as member number sixteen.⁶

Hess believed that Germany must have a strong leader to be great again. For Hess, Hitler was that leader. He subjugated his own ambitions to support Hitler in any way he could. In one particularly vicious beerhall battle on 21 November 1921, Hess intercepted a blow from a beer mug aimed at Hitler.⁷ Hess subsequently helped Hitler organize the Sturm-Abteilung (SA)⁸ and became one of his most loyal supporters. He was deeply involved in the planning and conduct of the unsuccessful Beerhall Putsch on 8 November 1923. When this failed, he took hostages and escaped from Germany with Professor Haushofer's assistance. Hess later returned and surrendered to the authorities so he could join Hitler in Landsberg Prison.⁹

In Landsberg, Hess soon supplanted Emil Maurice, another loyal supporter, as Hitler's principal secretary. There, Hess and Hitler collaborated and wrote Mein Kampf. Professor Haushofer visited Hess several times in prison to discuss geopolitics,¹⁰ and undoubtedly much of his influence moved through

Hess to Hitler for inclusion in Mein Kampf.

Following Hess's release from prison in early 1925, he officially became Hitler's secretary at a salary of 300 Reichsmarks a month.¹¹ Over the next decade, the two men grew extremely close¹² as the Nazi Party developed into Germany's ruling party. Hess wrote propaganda, organized meetings, developed party strategy, and became the visible conscience for the Nazi Party.¹³ In 1932, Hitler placed him in charge of the Central Political Commission. On 21 April 1933, he elevated him to the position of Deputy Führer. Hess achieved cabinet rank of Reich Minister without Portfolio on 1 December 1933.¹⁴

As Hitler moved into the management of the government and armed forces, Hess took responsibility for the Nazi Party. He hired Martin Bormann as his Chief of Staff and engaged Albrecht Haushofer (son of Professor Karl Haushofer) as personal advisor and diplomatic agent. Hess stayed very busy, but as Himmler, Göring, Goebbels and eventually Bormann spent more and more personal time with Hitler, Hess had less exposure. Thus, Hess began to lose his position of prestige. Undoubtedly, his concern increased as his position weakened. On 21 June 1940, Hess was present with Hitler for the French Armistice Ceremony near Compiegne, France,¹⁵ but soon thereafter he began to plan a method to regain favor.

CHAPTER II ENDNOTES

1. The facts and data pertaining to Hess's childhood, education and participation in WWI were extracted from a combination of four books (unless otherwise indicated):

Eugene K Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolph Hess
J. Bernard Hutton, Hess, The Man and his Mission
David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945
Hugh Thomas, The Murder of Rudolf Hess

2. Hutton, p. 14.

3. Freikorps or Free Corps was a German Bavarian group opposing Communism through armed conflict.

4. Thomas, p. 54.

5. James Douglas-Hamilton, Motive For a Mission, p. 23.

6. Irving, p. 7.

7. Hutton, p. 15.

8. Sturm-Abteilung of Storm Detachment was Hitler's private army originally organized to keep order at Hitler's meetings and later used to enforce National Socialist policies.

9. Douglas-Hamilton, p. 24

10. Ibid., p. 25.

11. Irving, p. 15.

12. In 1927, Hitler played an instrumental role in Hess's proposal to Ilse and he participated in their wedding. Ten years later when Hess's only son Wolf was born, both Hitler and Professor Karl Haushofer were named godfathers.

13. Irving, p. 19

14. Ibid., p. 21.

15. Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 180.

CHAPTER III

MOTIVES?

Why did the Deputy Führer, Leader of the Nazi Party, fly alone, unarmed, in a secret aircraft, into enemy territory, with no introductory documents, descending by parachute (which he had never done before) at night, to see a man he hardly knew, with no assurance the man would be home (or even in the country)? The simple answer is that he was trying to negotiate peace between Germany and England. But, there is nothing simple about the answer or the question. Historians have written many books over the past forty-eight years attempting to explain Hess's motives for his flight. A review of the literature reveals varied and sometimes conflicting opinions. Through my research, I see four constant, overlapping theories developing. I will discuss each individually; but, together, I conclude that these four theories constitute Hess's motivation for his flight. They are: Hess's decline in favor with Hitler, both Hess and Hitler's desire for peace with England, the Haushofer family influence, and Hess's health/psychic disposition.

A: DECLINE IN FAVOR WITH HITLER

Hess, in this writer's opinion, reached the pinnacle of his relationship with Hitler in 1933. He had loyally supported Hitler since they first met in the summer of 1920, and his success

had paralleled Hitler's rise to power. Unfortunately for Hess, in 1934 and 1935, Hitler began to put a large distance between himself and the Party.¹ While Hitler began to concentrate his interests on the government and the armed forces, Hess was primarily occupied with Party business. Thus, Hitler began to draw away from Hess.

Hess's decline with Hitler can be further attributed to his lack of senior managerial ability. In my opinion, Hess exemplified Laurence J. Peter's Principle as he rose in the Nazi hierarchy. Although a disciplined and charismatic person, he was not a strong administrator. Having joined the Nazi Party in its embryonic stage, he was initially able to satisfy Hitler's requirements. But, as the organization and structure grew, Hess was not able to keep pace with his increasing responsibilities.²

By July 1933 Hess needed help, so he engaged the energetic Martin Bormann as his Chief of Staff.³ Bormann was an adept administrator who was both ruthless and power-hungry. Where Hess fell short, Bormann excelled. He gradually usurped authority from Hess while at the same time working himself closer to Hitler. Initially Hess found it convenient to have Bormann close to Hitler, later he would be sorry.⁴

While Bormann was undermining Hess, the other members of the Nazi leadership were ferociously jockeying for position to win Hitler's favor. As Göring, Himmler, Goebbels and Bormann enhanced their standings with Hitler, Hess's position deteriorated.

Although still popular with the public, Hess was well aware of his declining influence. This is evidenced by his inability to stop the Nazi campaign against churches in 1938 and his obvious realization that Bormann was supplanting him.⁵ Confirmation of Hitler's low esteem for Hess is illustrated in his comments after visiting Hess's headquarters in August 1938:

Hess is totally unartistic. I must never let him build anything new. After a while he'll receive the present Chancellery as his headquarters, and he won't be allowed to make the slightest changes in it, because he's completely ignorant on such matters.⁶

On 1 September 1939, Hitler announced at the Reichstag that in the event of his death, Göring would succeed him, if Göring should die too, then Hess would follow as Führer.⁷ Although some historians view this action as a conciliatory gesture by Hitler toward Hess, I do not think Hess received it that way. Even though Hess was losing influence, he still held his title as Deputy Führer. I think Hitler's public decree, that Göring would succeed him if he should die, was a disparaging remark for Hess and further evidence of his decline. This position is supported by Hitler's comment to Göring after the speech:

When you become Führer of the Reich, you can throw Hess out and choose your own successor.⁸

and by Hitler's later comment to his friend Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl:

I only hope he never has to take over from me. I would not know who to be more sorry for, Hess or the Party.⁹

Another example of Hitler's developing disdain for Hess is

exemplified in a 1940 conversation with Albert Speer. Here Hitler compared Göring and Hess when he made the following statement:

When I talk with Göring, it's like a bath in steel for me; I feel fresh afterward. The Reich Marshal has a stimulating way of presenting things. With Hess every conversation becomes an unbearable tormenting strain. He always comes to me with unpleasant matters and won't leave off.¹⁰

Many more examples of Hess's decline are available, but they only suffice to reiterate what I have already stated. Hess was on a downward spiral and he knew it. He needed a big victory to regain Hitler's favor and one way to do that was to give Hitler something that no one else could produce -- England. Hess knew that Hitler needed and wanted peace with England. If he could provide that peace, then he would be on top again.

B. DESIRE FOR PEACE

Hess believed that he could regain his lost prestige with Hitler by making peace with England. This supposition was based on Hess's knowledge that Hitler did want peace with England. Indeed, both Hess and Hitler shared an ideological opposition to conflict with the British. I think that this desire for peace was Hess's second and primary motive for his flight.

Peace with England was not an afterthought for Hitler. He had advocated it for years. As early as his writing Mein Kampf, Hitler had maintained that Germany could only obtain her proper place in Europe through alliance with England.¹¹ As the Third

Reich evolved, Hitler went to great lengths to maintain peaceful relations with England. Three high points of his efforts were the Munich Agreement signed on 30 September 1938,¹² the Reichstag peace conference offer on 6 October 1939¹³ and the famous Reichstag "Peace offer to England" on 19 July 1940.¹⁴ Additionally, Hess maintained (during his later Spandau imprisonment) that Hitler deliberately restrained himself from attacking the British awaiting evacuation at Dunkirk in 1940. His rationale was to avoid a resounding British force annihilation and thus set the stage for possible peace negotiations with England.¹⁵

Just as Hitler had continuously advocated peaceful Anglo-German relations, he had philosophically viewed the Russians and Bolshevism as the real enemy.¹⁶ But, before he could fight the Russians in the East, Hitler needed a cessation of hostilities in the West. Negotiated peace with England was far preferable to conquering the island country. To conquer England would mean a massive invasion effort, high cost in lives and equipment, and a large occupation force that would drain the German force structure. Also, even if England did fall, undoubtedly the rest of her worldwide empire would continue to fight. Certainly a peaceful settlement with England would be the least expensive, fastest way to unleash maximum German forces against Russia. Hess was well aware of and shared Hitler's passion for peace with England. They had discussed this subject many times over the years since they had worked together to produce Mein Kampf. Some examples

of Hess and Hitler's personal conversations on this subject, close to Hess's flight, are: A January 1940 lunch at the Chancellery where Hess asked Hitler, "Mein Führer, do you still think about England as you used to?" Hitler replied, "If the British knew how little I am asking of them!"¹⁷ Later in another conversation, Hess and Hitler were discussing England and the Versailles treaty when Hitler stated, "This war may yet bring about the friendship with Britain that has been my aim all along."¹⁸

In September 1940, Hess stated to a confidant, "The Führer never wanted to batter the empire to pieces, nor does he want to now. Is there nobody in Britain willing to make peace?"¹⁹ In 1941 after one of his unsuccessful flight attempts, Hess made the following explanatory statement to his Adjutant, Captain Karlheinz Pintsch, "Thus, if anyone should know exactly what Hitler wants, I should be that man. Hitler wants a strong England. And he wants peace with England."²⁰

Finally just six days before Hess's flight on 10 May 1941, he spoke with Hitler privately for one half hour. Although no record survived that conversation, Hitler disclosed later that,

on this occasion Hess persistently inquired whether he, the Führer, still stood by the program he had set forth in Mein Kampf -- of marching side by side with Britain; and that he had confirmed that he did.²¹

On 9 October 1941, well after Hess's mission had been deemed a failure, Hitler still commented in a secret but recorded conversation,

For England, the First World War was a Pyrrhic victory. To maintain their empire, they need a strong continental power at their side. Only Germany can be this power.²²

Both Hitler and Hess wanted peace with England. If Hess could give Hitler that peace, he thought he could regain his lost favor. Their strong feelings on this subject are closely related to my third theme for Hess's flight motive -- the Haushofer family influence.

C. THE HAUSHOFER CONNECTION

Professor Karl Haushofer was born on 27 August 1869. As a patriotic German, he served in the Imperial German Army for many years. After several different assignments, he was posted to Tokyo in 1908 as Military Attaché where he served three years. In 1913, he obtained his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Munich. During the First World War he rose to the rank of Major General, then after the war he instituted the science of political geography (geopolitics) at the University of Munich.²³

When Hess entered the University of Munich in 1920, he was intrigued by Professor Haushofer's lectures and volunteered to serve as his unpaid assistant. The Professor took Hess into the family and a close father-son relationship developed. They went everywhere together and never tired of talking geopolitics.²⁴

Soon Hess met Hitler and was caught up with his nationalistic ideas. Hess's admiration for Hitler did not diminish his entrancement with Haushofer's teaching. Rather, Haushofer's

influence over Hess contributed markedly to Hess's relationship with Hitler.

Hess was a well educated, former officer while Hitler was a poorly educated, Bavarian Corporal. Hitler respected Hess's ideas and many of them came directly from Professor Haushofer. Thus, Haushofer had a major impact not only on Hess, but through Hess on Hitler too.

Haushofer had developed the belief that a nation's struggle for survival was nothing more than a contest for space on the globe. In the face of Germany's First World War defeat, he had a vision that land where Germans had settled should be German, and areas where German was spoken should be German.²⁵ A key tenet in Haushofer's philosophy was that Germany must maintain a peaceful coexistence with England.²⁶

I think this last point was extremely important to both Hess and Hitler. Haushofer was totally opposed to involving Germany in a war with England.²⁷ He admired the liberal ideals of the English people and he noted that both races had developed from a common Germanic strain. Based on his travels and experience, his greatest wish was to avoid war against the only other European country with whom the Germans had much in common -- the English.²⁸

Even while Hess was expending most of his time and energy in behalf of Hitler, he maintained a close association with Professor Haushofer. In 1923, when Hitler's beerhall putsch failed,

Hess turned to Haushofer for a safe place to hide and assistance in escaping to Austria. After Hess returned for trial and subsequent internment in Landsberg Prison, Haushofer stayed in contact with him by frequently visiting the prison.²⁹ In the writer's opinion, much of the thinking for Mein Kampf was generated during Haushofer's visits with Hess at Landsberg Prison.

After leaving prison in late 1924, Hitler began his rise to power and Hess (released in early 1925) supported him with total devotion. At the same time, the Nazi policy of Aryan Supremacy began to pose serious obstacles for the Haushofer family. Professor Haushofer's wife Martha was half-Jewish thus his two sons Albrecht and Heinz were part-Jewish too. Finally, in 1933, after being identified as a marked family and having their home ransacked by a Nazi gang, Hess intervened in their behalf. He personally signed a letter of protection. He appointed Professor Haushofer to preside over the new Volksdeutscher Council (an organization to pursue non-Party policies), and he even orchestrated an appointment for the Professor's son Albrecht to the Chair of Geopolitics at the Berlin College of Politics.³⁰

Under Hess's protection, the Haushofer family survived. Albrecht began to serve Hess as an emissary abroad and thus was able to promote Hess and Professor Haushofer's fundamental desire for continued peace with England.³¹ Through his various diplomatic duties, Albrecht made many acquaintances with key English statesmen, among them, the Duke of Hamilton.³² This particular

acquaintance played a major role in Hess's flight to England.

On 31 August 1940 Hess had an eight hour meeting with Professor Haushofer concerning the need for negotiating peace with England.³³ Hess then met with Albrecht and eventually they decided that Albrecht should attempt to contact the Duke of Hamilton in Hess's behalf. He selected the Duke of Hamilton because he was close to the Prime Minister as well as the King, and Hess had met him during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.³⁴ On 23 September 1940, Albrecht forwarded a letter to the Duke requesting a meeting in neutral Portugal. Unfortunately, the letter was intercepted by the British Secret Service and the Duke never responded. Thus Hess continued to plan his personal peace mission.³⁵

Professor Haushofer had another major influence over Hess in addition to his years of friendship and geopolitical concepts. The Professor is reputed to have possessed psychic powers, and he often experienced premonitions which guided his actions.³⁶ In the early 1930s, Hess developed unusual health problems and sought treatment from the occult. Thus, Professor Haushofer's psychic activities greatly impressed him. His health problems and his belief in supernatural or psychic solutions provide a fourth and final theory for Hess's flight motive.

D. HEALTH/PSYCHIC DISPOSITION

As previously indicated (see Chapter III endnote 2), Hess was unable to keep pace with his increasing administrative responsibilities. These additional responsibilities undoubtedly produced extra stress. By 1933, he was frequently spending weekends at a Bavarian clinic where he complained of terrible abdominal cramps.³⁷ Although Martin Bormann was initially a great help to Hess, he must have been a major cause for later anxiety since he was consistently enhancing his own position while undermining Hess. In spite of Bormann, the key turning point for Hess's health may have been the Night of the Long Knives and associated events.

By the summer of 1933, Ernst Röhm and his two million strong Sturm-Abteilung (SA) Army was out of control. While this paramilitary arm of the Nazi Party had assisted Hitler in his rise to power, it had by this time become an embarrassment and a threat to Hitler.³⁸ Hess tried time after time to modify Röhm's actions, but his efforts had no effect. By March, 1934, Hess had positive information the Röhm was planning to overthrow the regime. Having unsuccessfully tried to contain Röhm, Hess begged Hitler not to shed blood. The final result was a 30 June 1934 massacre where Röhm and many others died. Not only did Hitler fail to heed Hess's appeal for leniency, but after the massacre, he left Hess to soothe the Party.³⁹ These events, plus Hess's other work-related stresses, may have proven too much for him to

handle.

As Hess's medical concerns persisted, he completely lost faith in allopathic medicine and began to take the advice of nature healers. Years later, when he was interned in Nuremberg for the Military Tribunal, Hess indicated to his physicians that he still suffered from stomach cramps which had been treated for years by "astrologers and quacks without success."⁴⁰ He also indicated that he had "always been a great believer in the occult phenomena, astrology, faith-healing and nature-healing."⁴¹

Up until his flight to England, Hess continued to seek help from unorthodox healers. His mystic beliefs were manifested in his strange behavior. Some examples are: Per Felix Kersten, Himmler's physiotherapist, one day he "found Hess with a large magnet swinging over his bed -- to draw away the malign influences which always threatened him."⁴² Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, Hitler's associate, commented

He [Hess] would not go to bed without testing with a divining rod whether there were any subterranean water courses which conflicted with the direction of his couch.⁴³

Not only did Hess exhibit eccentric behavior when going to bed, but he also developed very strange eating habits. Albert Speer reported that Hess began to use a tin vessel to sneak his own food into Chancellery luncheons with Hitler. Hitler was most upset when he discovered what Hess was doing. Hess tried to explain that "the components of his meals had to be of special biodynamic origin. Whereupon Hitler bluntly informed him that in

that case he should take his meals at home. Thereafter Hess scarcely ever came to the dinners."⁴⁴

Along with Hess's unusual sleeping and eating behavior, another example of his extreme beliefs is an examination of the drugs he carried on his person when he made his flight to England. At the time he surrendered, Hess carried a gall bladder elixir from a Tibetan lamasery, opium alkaloids, atropine, pervitin, barbiturates and a number of unknown mixtures made up along homeopathic lines. A medical report on his pharmaceutical assemblage noted "It seems quite clear from the remarkable collection of drugs, that [Hess] was intent on protecting himself against all assaults of the devil so far as his flesh was concerned...."⁴⁵

Dreams also played an important part in Hess's life. Prior to Hess's flight to England, Professor Haushofer told him about some dreams he had experienced. In these dreams he saw Hess piloting an airplane to an important destination. Also, he had seen Hess walking in a castle with tartan tapestries hanging on the walls.⁴⁶ Based on Hess's bizarre behavior and psychic beliefs, I can only surmise that Professor Haushofer's dreams had a tremendous impact on his flight planning.

As least one historian maintains that "the clinching reason for his [Hess] making the trip was a recurrent dream in which he was flying over water on an errand of great importance."⁴⁷ This would imply that Hess was personally experiencing psychic dreams

and/or closely identifying with those experienced by his mentor. Albert Speer further supports this point when he reports that twenty-five years after the flight, in Spandau Prison, "Hess assured me in all seriousness that the idea had been inspired in him in a dream by supernatural forces."⁴⁸

Based on this evidence, I think that Hess's continuous health problems, his increasing reliance on nonconventional medicine, and his psychic beliefs had a major impact on his actions. These factors along with Hess's decline in favor with Hitler, a desire for peace which he felt Hitler shared, and the Haushofer influence are, in my opinion, the foundation for Hess's flight motivation.

CHAPTER III ENDNOTES

1. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 24.
2. James Douglas-Hamilton, Motive for a Mission, p. 125.
3. Irving, p. 19.
4. Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 87.
5. Irving, p. 42.
6. Speer, p. 137. (Coming from Hitler, a negative comment on a person's artistic abilities/concepts should be viewed as extremely critical).
7. Irving, p. 46.
8. Ibid., p. 47.
9. Douglas-Hamilton, p. 125.
10. Speer, p. 175.
11. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 618-620.

12. Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 111.
13. Douglas-Hamilton, p. 127.
14. Schmidt, p. 185.
15. Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolph Hess, p. 252.
16. David Irving, Hitler's War, pp. 133-135.
17. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 50.
18. Ibid.
19. David Irving, Hitler's War, p. 153.
20. James Leasor, Uninvited Envoy, p. 66.
21. David Irving, Hitler's War, p. 242.
22. Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 42.
23. Douglas-Hamilton, pp. 21-22.
24. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 7.
25. Douglas-Hamilton, pp. 21-22.
26. Peter Allen, The Windsor Secret, p. 238.
27. J. Bernard Hutton, Hess, the Man and his Mission, p. 24.
28. Leasor, p. 41.
29. David Irving , Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 12.
30. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
31. Ibid.
32. Eugene Davidson, The Trial of Germany, Nuremberg 1945-1946, p. 113.
33. Douglas-Hamilton, p. 132.
34. Davidson, p. 113.
35. Albrecht Haushofer mailed his 23 September 1940 letter to the Duke of Hamilton via a contact in Portugal. After interception, the British Secret Service held the letter for five

months then brought it to the Duke's attention in March 1941. Before a decision could be reached on how to respond to the letter, Hess made his final flight. Douglas-Hamilton, pp. 146-151.

36. Hutton, p. 23.
37. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 25.
38. Ibid., p. 21.
39. Ibid., p. 22.
40. COL Burton C. Andrus, I Was the Nuremberg Jailer, p. 92.
41. Ibid., p. 167.
42. Davidson, p. 109.
43. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 340.
44. Speer, pp. 119-120.
45. Leasor, p. 30.
46. Ibid., p. 57.
47. Davidson, pp. 113-114.
48. Speer, p. 176.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLIGHT

The title of this Chapter, "The Flight," is misleading because it implies that there was only one flight. Actually, Hess made at least two previous attempts¹ and some historians maintain that he made three attempts² prior to his final flight on 10 May 1941. In any event, the previous attempts were not successful due to either aircraft malfunction or weather.

In September 1939, Hitler had passed a general order forbidding Nazi leaders from piloting their own planes. This order carried a one year expiration date. Although Hitler appeared to have forgotten the matter when the prohibition expired in September 1940, Hess did not. He approached Ernst Udet, Göring's Quarter-Master General, and asked that a plane be made available at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport. Udet refused to comply without Hitler's written permission. Hess was reluctant to confront Hitler with this request, so he turned instead to his friend Willi Messerschmitt at the Messerschmitt Airplane Factory in Augsburg. Messerschmitt was happy to comply with the Deputy Führer's wishes. He pulled a ME110, twin-engined fighter plane, out of the production line and offered it to Hess.³

Under the guise of recreational flying, Hess made approximately thirty flights from Augsburg during the later part of 1940

and the early months of 1941. He even persuaded Messerschmitt to modify his aircraft with additional fuel tanks and a highly sensitive radio.⁴ Thus he was ready for a long flight.

After multiple aborted attempts, Hess flew out of Augsburg for the last time at approximately 1800 hours, 10 May 1941. On his departure, Hess directed his loyal Adjutant, Captain Karlheinz Pintsch, to deliver a letter of explanation to Hitler the next day.⁵ As his twin 1000-horsepower Daimler-Benz engines carried him toward the English coast, Hess had no knowledge that the German Luftwaffe was launching a massive bombing attack against London.⁶

While bombs rained destruction on London, Hess flew over the English Channel heading for Dungavel House, the Duke of Hamilton's residence near Glasgow, Scotland. On his approach to the coast in his unarmed ME110, he avoided Royal Air Force (RAF) interception by diving through the clouds and exercising nape-of-the-earth tactics.⁷ Although he initially intended to land his plane near the Duke's residence, he ultimately parachuted to the ground several miles from his target. After a hard landing on a farm worked by David McLean, he was taken into custody by the Home Guard then turned over to the Army.⁸ At last Hess was on the ground in Scotland and ready to embark on his peace mission. The question remains, was the flight sanctioned?

CHAPTER IV ENDNOTES

1. James Leasor, The Uninvited Envoy, p. 72.
2. David Irving, Hitler's War, p. 244.
Hugh Thomas, The Murder of Rudolf Hess, p. 73.
3. Ilse Hess, Prisoner of Peace, p. 16.
33. 4. J. Bernard Hutton, Hess, The Man and His Mission, p. 32-
5. Leasor, p. 133.
6. David Irving, Göring, A Biography, p. 323.
7. Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolf Hess, p. 16.
8. Douglas-Hamilton, p. 157.

CHAPTER V

SANCTIONED BY HITLER?

Whether or not Hitler sanctioned Hess's flight (officially, unofficially or covertly) is extremely controversial. Historians argue strongly on all facets of the issue. As discussed in Chapter III, Hitler wanted peace with England; therefore, a natural assumption is that Hitler sanctioned the flight. As with determining motives, this situation is not that simple. It would serve no purpose to delineate every historian's position then cross index or refute based on other historian's opinions. Rather, I will highlight some prosanction details, and some nonsanction details, and I will draw my own conclusions.

In support of the sanction position, several historians point out that a man in the Deputy Führer's position literally could not embark on such a long flight over forbidden territory without the Führer's knowledge and permission.¹ Others maintain that Hess's flight was just another leg of a continuum of peace initiatives that he was conducting with senior English statesmen for Hitler.² Still others think that Hitler had full knowledge of the plan except for the actual date and time.³

A particularly controversial point supporting the conclusion that Hitler sanctioned the flight was made by Adolf Galland, former Commander, Luftwaffe Fighter Command. In his memoirs Galland stated that Göring called him on the evening of 10 May

1941, told him the Deputy Führer was flying to England, and directed him to bring the Deputy Führer down.⁴ This statement indicates that Göring had knowledge of the flight and thus implies that Hitler knew too. However, a review of Göring's detailed biography indicates that, according to David Irving, Göring had no knowledge of the flight until summoned to the Berghof and informed by Hitler at 2100 hours 11 May 1941.⁵

No matter whether Göring did or did not have prior knowledge of the flight, I think that he must have been most pleased with Hess's action. Clearly he stood to further enhance his power base by Hess's demise. Göring's treatment of Willi Messerschmitt in this matter further substantiates his personal delight and the likelihood that he had no prior knowledge. On 13 May 1941, instead of castigating Messerschmitt for releasing one of Germany's latest fighters, Göring asked him a few questions, laughed at his response then told him "Alright, Professor. You concentrate on aircraft production. If the Führer feels you're to blame in any way, I'll smooth it over for you."⁶ For Messerschmitt that was the end of the matter. I think that such a light treatment of Messerschmitt, indicates no personal concern or need to cover up by Göring. He does not appear to be a direct participant in Hess's scheme.

As is so often the case when reviewing the literature on Hess, contradictory items keep emerging. Another perspective on the Galland call is derived from a historian's interview with

Pintsch, Hess's Adjutant, after the war. Pintsch maintained that a little while after Hess left Augsburg on 10 May 1941, he (Pintsch) placed a telephone call to the Air Ministry in Berlin asking that a directional radio beam be sent out (to help Hess).⁷ In my review of the literature, I can find no record to document this call going to Berlin; therefore, I think the possibility exists that Pintsch's telephone call on 10 May 1941 may be related to Galland's incoming call, i.e. Pintsch may have called Hitler, Göring or he may have even called Galland and posed as Göring on the telephone.

In any event, just as points can be made to support the conclusion that Hitler did sanction the flight, many points can be raised to support a conclusion that Hitler had no foreknowledge of the flight. One such area is an assessment of Hitler's reaction upon notification that Hess had flown to England. On the morning of 11 May 1941, Pintsch arrived at the Berghof and was eventually able to hand Hess's two page letter to Hitler.⁸ Although several accounts of Hitler's response are available, I think that David Irving in his book, Hitler's War best describes the scene as follows:

Suddenly he slumped into a chair and bellowed in a voice that could be heard all over the house: "Oh my God, my God! He has flown to Britain!"...Hitler swung around on Bodenschatz. "How is it, Herr General, that the Luftwaffe let Hess fly although I forbade it? Get Göring here!"⁹

After reading many different accounts of this scene, I think that Hitler was honestly shocked by the news. Indeed, Hitler was

a great actor and this might have been another of his dramatizations; but, I do not think he was acting because the accounts of his response demonstrate too much surprise. Several other points support his nonsanction of the flight.

Raymond E. Lee was a United States diplomat in London at the time of Hess's arrival in England. A review of his unpublished papers shows that he did not regard Hess's flight as part of a grand German scheme. He said,

The most interesting thing to me is the confused, contradictory and halting explanation given by the Germans. Here was something against which they had not planned and their efforts to meet it have been stupid and confusing.¹⁰

G. M. Gilbert was a German-speaking U.S. Army Military Intelligence Officer and Ph.D. Psychologist who served as Commandant's Interpreter and Prison Psychologist during the Nuremberg Military Tribunal. Having had free access to the prisoners, he studied them individually through numerous personal conversations and observations. In his book Nuremberg Diary, he concludes "All except Schacht believed that Hitler had not sent him [Hess] on that mission, and that it was an irresponsible dramatic gesture."¹¹

Lieutenant-Colonel Eugene K. Bird (U.S. Army Retired) was U.S. Commandant of Spandau Prison from September 1964 until March 1972. When he published his book, Prisoner #7, Rudolf Hess, he opened with the comment,

As the American Director of Spandau I have been closer to Rudolf Hess than any other person. I believe I am the only living person Hess had taken into his confidence since 1941.¹²

Then, in his book, Bird recounts a conversation with Hess in January 1970 where he asked a question directly pertaining to sanctioning. The question and response were:

Bird, "Did Hitler know you were going to fly to England?"
Hess, "NO. He didn't."¹³

In his two page explanatory letter to Hitler, Hess had suggested that if his mission failed, Hitler should declare him mentally ill. Hitler ultimately accepted this suggestion and a Munich radio announcement on the evening of 13 May 1941 stated in part,

On Saturday, May 10, Rudolf Hess set out on a flight from Augsburg, from which he has not so far returned. A letter which he left behind unfortunately shows by its distractedness traces of mental disorder, and it is feared that he was a victim of hallucinations.¹⁴

I am sure that after hearing this announcement, many of the German people must have asked themselves the questions -- If Hess was suffering from a mental disorder, why had not someone in the Nazi leadership already dealt with the situation? If Hess was insane and no one knew it, what did that say about Hitler, Göring, Himmler and the other Nazi leaders?

Calling Hess mad was Hitler's selected alternative for dealing with the situation, but it was far from a perfect resolution. Second and third order effects from Hess's flight, such as German public reaction, must be considered. It seems

illogical that Hitler would sanction an action which could potentially create such a negative public image of the National Socialist leadership.

Herein lies the crux of my conclusion concerning sanctioning. Historians have established many key points both for and against sanctioning; however, I think the real answer lies in the impact of second and third order effects. As I have indicated, it seems illogical that Hitler would intentionally create a situation where he would have to declare his own Deputy insane. Such an action would and did cast a disparagement on the entire Nazi leadership. I think this insight is important, but two more second/third order concerns are even more relevant to my conclusion.

First I do not think that Hitler would sanction Hess's flight without taking some preparatory action to forewarn his allies. Hess's surrender to the British provided a great propaganda opportunity to drive a wedge between the Axis powers. Not only could his flight be interpreted as a sign of German weakness, but also as an attempt by Germany to unilaterally conclude a secret peace with England.

Hitler was clearly aware of the potential damage to his allied relations which might result from Hess's actions as evidenced by a conversation with Albert Speer on 11 May 1941. Speer was present at the Berghof when Hitler was notified of Hess's flight. After Hitler regained his composure, he expressed

his concern to Speer by asking,

Who will believe me when I say that Hess did not fly there in my name, that the whole thing is not some sort of intrigue behind the backs of my allies?¹⁵

In my opinion, Hitler would not send Hess on a peace mission without prior allied coordination. In that regard, I am unable to locate any reference to advance diplomatic notice of Hess's flight. On the other hand, Hitler did demonstrate a knee jerk response upon notification by hurriedly sending Ribbentrop (his Foreign Minister) and Schmidt (his Interpreter) off to Italy to calm Mussolini. In his book, Hitler's Interpreter, Schmidt comments,

Early in May 1941, I was sent with Ribbentrop on a hasty journey to Rome, to give the Duce an explanation of Rudolf Hess's surprising flight to England. Hitler was as appalled as though a bomb had struck the Berghof. "I hope he falls into the sea!" I had heard him say in disgust. When we reached Rome Hess had arrived in England. "He's mad," Ribbentrop told Mussolini.¹⁶

When Ribbentrop spoke to Mussolini, Count Galeazzo Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law and Foreign Minister) was also present. Ciano made the following entry in his diary on 13 May 1941,

Von Ribbentrop arrives in Rome unexpectedly. He is discouraged and nervous. He wants to confer with the Duce and me for various reasons, but there is only one real reason: he wants to inform us about the Hess affair.... Ribbentrop's conversation is a beautiful feat of patching things up...¹⁷

I think that potential damage to key allied relations is a second order effect that must be taken into account when deducing Hitler's sanction or nonsanction of Hess's flight. Based on the absence of advance diplomatic coordination and Hitler's hasty

attempt to reconcile the situation with Mussolini, nonsanction appears even more likely. My final consideration in this deduction process revolves around the question of Hess having prior knowledge of Operation Barbarossa.

On 22 June 1941, Hitler launched a massive surprise attack against Russia on his eastern front. This attack was code named Barbarossa. The primary reason for this attack's initial success was secrecy. The Russians were caught off guard and consequently suffered staggering losses.

Because of the secrecy surrounding Barbarossa, I do not think Hitler would have intentionally allowed Hess to fall into English custody if Hess possessed prior knowledge of the pending plan. The obvious question is, did Hess know about Operation Barbarossa when he made his flight to England?

In January 1941, following one of Hess's incomplete flights, he stated to Pintsch in close personal conversation,

Our enemy now is not in the West but in the East.
That's where the danger is. That's where the Führer's
thoughts are gathered.¹⁰

Although no copies of Hess's explanatory letters to Hitler at the Berghof have survived, multiple sources document that in his two page letter, Hess promised not to "betray Barbarossa to the British."¹¹

Walter Schellenberg, Hitler's senior intelligence officer, recounts in his memoirs this statement following the Hess affair,

I was convinced, I said, that because of his fanatical devotion, Hess would never betray the details of our

strategic planning to the enemy, though certainly he was in a position to do so.... However, it seemed to me very doubtful whether the English would be prepared to send a specific warning to the Russian leaders as a result of the first interrogation of Hess.²⁰

Fritz Hesse, Ribbentrop's Press Officer, relates in his book, Hitler and the English, a conversation that took place between himself, Ribbentrop and Himmler soon after Hess's flight. During this conversation, Himmler expressed concern over Hess's knowledge of Barbarossa when he asked Hesse, "Do you mean that Hess might betray any of the Führer's intentions about Russia?"²¹ Although Ribbentrop later indicated that he did not think Hess was fully aware of the Führer's plans, this question would seem to indicate that Himmler thought otherwise.

Lastly, in 1972, Eugene Bird, former U.S. commandant of Spandau Prison, recorded the following conversation with Hess pertaining to Barbarossa:

Bird, "Do you realize what you are saying? You are admitting to me that you knew about Barbarossa before you flew off to Scotland."

Hess, "Colonel -- I am asking you to leave what you had originally written."

Bird, "Then you did know about Barbarossa?"

Hess, "Yes, I did."²²

Based on this information, with particular emphasis on Hess's reassurance to Hitler that he wouldn't betray Barbarossa to the British (and his admission years later to Eugene Bird) most information seems to indicate that Hess had knowledge of Barbarossa prior to his flight. Following this logic, I think that Hitler could not disregard the tremendous second and third

order impacts from Hess's action. The potential for damage was so great as to far outweigh Hess's small, if any, chance of success. I must then conclude that Hitler did not sanction Hess's peace mission on 10 May 1941. With this conclusion in mind, his flight must have posed a serious ethical dilemma for Hess. This ethical dilemma of a man once so close to Hitler must be examined in some detail.

CHAPTER V ENDNOTES

1. J. Bernard Hutton, Hess, the Man and His Mission, p. 21.
2. Peter Allen, The Windsor Secret, p. 234.
3. James Leasor, The Uninvited Envoy, p. 131.
4. Adolf Galland, The First and the Last, pp. 71-73.
5. David Irving, Göring, a Biography, p. 323.
6. Hutton, pp. 68-69.
7. Leasor, pp. 86-87.
8. It is interesting to note that a bulky packet containing a fourteen page explanation of the flight had been sent from Hess to Hitler by some other means. The packet had arrived at the Berghof on the evening of 10 May 1941, but Hitler failed to open it assuming it was more of Hess's rambling memoranda. This packet was eventually opened after Hitler received Hess's two page letter from Pintsch on 11 May 1941. David Irving, Hitler's War, p. 144.
9. Ibid.
10. Raymond E. Lee, Unpublished Papers, Vol. III, 4/8/41 - 7/1/41, entry for May 13, 1941.
11. G. M. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, p. 127.
12. Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolf Hess, p. 2.

13. Ibid., p. 184.
14. Leasor, pp. 136-137.
15. Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 174.
16. Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 233.
17. James Douglas-Hamilton, Motive for a Mission, p. 199.
18. Leasor, p. 66.
19. Willi Frischauer, The Rise and Fall of Herman Göring,
p. 219.
David Irving, Hitler's War, p. 244.
David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 82.
20. Walter Schellenberg, The Schellenberg Memoirs, p. 201.
21. Fritz Hesse, Hitler and the English, p. 125.
22. Bird, pp. 260-261.

CHAPTER VI

ETHICAL DILEMMA?

Considering the testimony given by many of Hess's peers, I have concluded that Hitler did not sanction Hess's flight. Hitler's ignorance of Hess's plans and Hess's loyalty to the Führer must have created serious ethical problems for Hess. I will now discuss his dilemma in some detail.

The first concern that must have leaped into Hess's mind when he initially began to concoct his peace mission was that of being labeled a traitor to his country. Since his early student days, Hess had always been extremely patriotic. He had risked his life many times both during the First World War and later in support of Hitler. Since he viewed Hitler and Germany as the same entity, his devotion to the Nazi Party was, in his mind, synonymous with patriotic support of the Fatherland. While Göring and other Nazi leaders were amassing personal fortunes, grand residences and fine art collections, Hess took nothing for himself.¹ He devoted his life to his work and demanded very little in return. Perhaps no other concern could have weighed heavier on Hess's mind than to be called a traitor unless it was to simultaneously be called crazy.

I think that Hess knew exactly what he was facing when he embarked on his journey to England because he had precisely described his own predicament years earlier in a student essay.

This essay, which Hess wrote in 1921 at the University of Munich, was titled "What Kind of Leader Does Germany Need to Regain Her Greatness?"² Historians often cite this essay as Hess's philosophical vision of Hitler because it is filled with stirring phrases that frame a dictatorial German resurgence. I agree with this assessment, but I see more than Hitler in this essay. I also see Hess and his ethical dilemma when he wrote,

For the sake of the great ultimate goal he is able to endure seeming, temporarily, in the eyes of the majority, like a traitor to his nation.³

Hess reinforced this point for me when he wrote at Nuremberg in 1946 that Haushofer once told him,

that when the stakes were high you must be prepared to be branded as a traitor for a while by your own people -- to which I (Hess) would add: or as a madman.⁴

Years later in January 1970, Hess reiterated this point again in a conversation with Eugene Bird,

Bird, "And yet you did this, knowing it might not succeed. And knowing you could be shot if you returned?"

Hess, "Yes, and be called crazy!"⁵

On 10 May 1941, I think Hess was reliving the words he had written twenty years earlier. Not only was he risking becoming a traitor to his country, but also he had suggested to Hitler in writing that he be deemed insane if his mission should fail. Clearly Hess was taking a tremendous gamble with those things he held most dear.

Hess's concern over being branded a mad traitor goes further than mere semantics. To extrapolate this concern, we need only

refer back to Bird's 1970 conversation with Hess where the threat of being shot was mentioned. I think that Hess faced the genuine concern not only of being called a traitor, but, if returned to Germany, of being put to death as a traitor.

On 13 May 1941, Hitler discussed with his advisors at the Berghof what action to take if the English should return Hess to Germany. During their discussions, Ribbentrop received the impression that Hess would be shot if returned.⁶ Hans Frank, Hitler's personal lawyer and later Nazi Governor General of Poland, quoted Hitler as saying at the time, "This man [Hess] is dead as far as I am concerned: whenever and wherever we find him we will hang him."⁷

Few, if any people, understood Hitler better than Hess, so I think Hess clearly knew he was entering into a win or lose situation. If his mission was not successful, then he probably would pay with his life. There was very little margin.

In her book Prisoner of Peace, Ilse Hess recounted asking her husband, in the winter of 1940-41, about the conditions of receiving the Bavarian Max Josef Order and the Austrian Maria Theresa Order. He explained that,

Both these decorations are given only for acts of bravery carried out on personal initiative. In the case of the Maria Theresa Order something further is required: if one acts independently on one's own responsibility in a manner directly contrary to what has been clearly commanded by one's superiors, and the action is successful then one gets the Order -- but if one is so unlucky as to fail, then one gets shot!"

Ilse then reflected,

It was not until a long time after his flight that I recollected this explanation and the quite remarkable gravity with which it had been given, and realized, with a shock how clearly he had thought on the possible ultimate results of his action.⁸

I think that the taint of madman, the brand of traitor, and the associated death sentence were tremendous ethical concerns for Hess. However, I do not think that potential loss of material goods was a concern for him. He had relatively little to lose in this way. Nor do I think that a potential loss of power or position was a concern for Hess. Although he was still Deputy Führer and Reichminister, in 1941 these were hollow titles compared to his earlier influence. Thus, I think the only other major concern that he had to face was the impact of his decision upon his family.

Certainly Hess must have faced terrible ethical concerns as a husband and as a father. In spite of his job demands, health problems and psychic activities, all indications are that Hess cared very much for his family. He knew that he could not undertake his peace mission and still fulfill his duties and responsibilities as a husband and father. If he died as a result of his mission, he would leave his family without a provider. Worse still, Hess must have entertained the possibility that Hitler and the Nazi leadership would seek retribution from his family and maybe even death.

I have searched definitively to ascertain what preparatory actions Hess took to protect his family before departing on his

flight. To the best of my knowledge he took none. I have found no sequestering of funds or alignment of friends in support of Ilse and his son Wolf. I note only Ilse's comment,

What caused me more surprise than almost anything else during those last weeks was the astonishing amount of time -- and that in the middle of the war -- that my husband spent with our son.⁹

Apparently, Hess did not even reveal his plan to his wife. She introduced her book, Prisoner of Peace, by stating,

Nobody ever believed me when I said that, even as late as May, 1941, I had not the faintest notion of his real purpose.¹⁰

Based on these circumstances, I conclude that Hess decided to protect his family by completely separating them from any involvement in his plan. This is what he appears to have done and it was relatively effective.

Being a principled, family man, I am sure that Hess was fully cognizant of the potential ethical consequences for his family. These concerns, plus his many personal concerns, must have weighed heavily upon his mind, yet he still made the decision to go ahead with his plan.

My conclusions as to why Hess made his flight were provided in Chapter IV, and need not be reiterated here. But, I will say that, on balance, Hess's motives and the associated influences bearing on him seem to have countered his most serious ethical concerns. Having placed his reputation, his life and even the lives of his family on the line, history has proven that Hess thought peace with England was more important. In an attempt to

better understand Hess's rationalization process, I will move to my overall conclusions.

CHAPTER VI ENDNOTES

1. After the War General Bodenschatz made the following statement while in prison, "Hess, was the exception. He had nothing -- no castles, just a simple apartment. He could bring himself to part with his possessions." David Irving, Göring, a Biography, p. 324.

2. David Irving, Hess, the Missing Years, 1941-1945, p. 8.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolf Hess, p. 185.

6. Irving, Hitler's War, p. 248.

7. Ibid.

8. Ilse Hess, Prisoner of Peace, p. 25.

9. Ibid., p. 19.

10. Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I think that Rudolf Hess attempted to improve Germany's war footing through a unilateral action taken without Hitler's sanction. As Hitler's devoted follower and a loyal, German patriot, Hess's decision to make the flight undoubtedly caused him tremendous internal conflict. The risk of being branded an insane traitor by his Führer and by his countrymen must have troubled him greatly. Certainly the associated death sentence that his mission failure might produce was a further burden to bear. On top of these concerns, Hess had to consider the potential impact of his decision upon his family. Not only did they stand to lose their husband/father, but they might even lose their lives.

In spite of these many ethical concerns, Hess still made the decision to go. I am sure that the Haushofers' influence combined with Hess's own health/psychic disposition heavily impacted upon his decision process. Additionally, Hess knew that Hitler secretly still wanted peace with England. He was convinced that if he could deliver that peace to Hitler, he could regain his lost position of favor and save his fatherland at the same time.

It is true that by 10 May 1941, Hitler placed so much trust in his Atlantic Wall that he was willing to open a second front with Russia in the East. Hess had been unable to dissuade Hitler

from planning an attack against Russia. I think that Hess absolutely believed Germany was doomed on entry into a two front European war. Notwithstanding his ethical concerns, Hess felt that he had to attempt to secure peace with England before it was too late.¹

Hess's concern was emphasized when, several weeks prior to his departure, he told Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, Hitler's Minister of Finance, that

The two German nations, England and Germany, were fighting for the benefit of the laughing Bolshevik nation. ...[I]f someone could talk to authoritative Englishmen -- make clear to them the Bolshevik danger to Western culture and the fact that Hitler wanted nothing from England -- an agreement could be reached.²

J. R. Reese provided additional insight into Hess's obsession when he related in his book, The Case of Rudolf Hess, comments by Ingeborg Sperr, one of Hess's former secretaries, concerning Hess's flight to England,

It is characteristic of the man Rudolf Hess that, in his fanatic love for the fatherland, he wanted to make the greatest sacrifice of which he was capable to Adolf Hitler and the German people, namely to leave nothing undone to bring the German people the dearly desired peace with England and, thereby, to risk his life, his family, his freedom and his honorable name.³

As characterized in this last quote, I think that Hess envisioned himself as a lone crusader embarking on a journey to save the civilized world. When confronted by a monumental ethical dilemma, he opted to immolate himself and potentially his family for his cause. However, I see Hess somewhat differently

than he viewed himself.

I think Hess's honest rationalization for his action was balanced between duty for his country, for his Führer, and for himself. I do not want to degrade his idealism, but I must state that I do not see him as a knight in shining armor. On the other hand, I do not think he was totally centered on self-enhancement. Rather, I think that his motives were mixed between these extremes.

Few men have suffered as Hess must have suffered throughout his decision process. And, few men have been held accountable for their actions as Hess was held accountable in the years that followed his last flight. In any event, I do think that he made a bold strategic move in the face of a serious ethical dilemma.

CHAPTER VII ENDNOTES

1. Here, I think it is important to note that Hess's flight took place only ten days after Hitler had set the date for the invasion of Russia. Eugene Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, Nuremberg 1945-1946, p. 124. (And, as already indicated, less than six weeks prior to the actual invasion).

2. Ibid., p. 112.

3. J. R. Reese, The Case of Rudolf Hess, p. 138.

CHAPTER VIII

ADDENDUM

Exactly four years and five months after parachuting into England, Hess was flown back to Nuremberg Germany for trial by the International Military Tribunal. Initially he claimed to be a victim of amnesia. After extensive testing, an international psychiatric team declared that he was not insane and had no disorder of consciousness.¹ Once the team's report was released, Hess stated to the court,

The reasons for the simulated amnesia are of a tactical nature.... I assume full responsibility for everything that I have done, everything that I have signed, and everything I have co-signed.²

Following almost one year of trial proceedings, the court rendered Hess's verdict on 30 September 1946 as:

Guilty of crimes against peace and conspiracy to wage war.
Not guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.³

On 1 October 1946, he was sentenced to life imprisonment with a dissenting Russian judge requesting death.⁴ On 18 July 1947, Hess was moved with six other prisoners from Nuremberg to Spandau Prison in Berlin, a gloomy location where he would spend the remaining years of his life.

Spandau was a red brick, walled prison that was built in 1876 as a military stockade. It could hold approximately 600 prisoners and included both an execution chamber with a guillotine and a strangulation cell where up to eight prisoners could

be hanged simultaneously. During the Nazi reign of terror, Spandau had served as a clearing station for political prisoners on their way to concentration camps. In 1947, under the authority of the Allied Kommandatura, the prison was run by the four powers (United States, Britain, France, and Russia) on a rotating monthly basis. The United States' months were April, August, and December.⁵

At Spandau, Hess was known as Prisoner Number Seven. As the time passed, one day blended into the next, and years passed for prisoners such as Hess. By 30 September 1966, only three inmates remained. On that day, at 2400 hours, Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach completed their twenty year sentences and were released,⁶ leaving Hess as the last remaining prisoner in Spandau.

In response to many requests for Hess's freedom, the British, French and United States authorities had long been willing to release him on humanitarian grounds. Even with three powers agreeing and an increasing annual prison maintenance cost in excess of one million dollars for the Bonn Government, the Russians refused to consider Hess's release. They were adamant that he remain incarcerated to the point that their former leader Leonid Brezhnev stated, "[T]o release Rudolf Hess would be an insult to the Soviet people."⁷

As to this Russian reluctance to release Hess, I think that he served them as a pawn for propaganda. Certainly they wanted to punish him, and his imprisonment afforded them an opportunity

to move troops into and out of West Berlin. But, I think his real value to the Russians was to help them keep their population focused on the losses suffered during their Great Patriotic War.

Nothing has ever galvanized Soviet support for Mother Russia more than their terrible suffering at the hands of the Nazi Germany. As I have traveled through Russia, I have seen the huge national shrines to the more than 20,000,000 Russians who perished between 1941 and 1945. These reminders, plus their history, serve to stimulate government support and distract from Communist failures. Rudolf Hess provided the Russians an additional visible symbol of their sacrifice. He was actually a means of generating Russian nationalism and uniting their people. I strongly disagree with the Russian leaders' decision to keep Hess in prison, but I do understand it.

Finally after forty-six and one half years solitary confinement, Rudolf Hess took his own life on 17 August 1987 during the United States' prison watch. Almost immediately after his death, Spandau Prison was demolished and its bricks buried to preclude it from becoming a shrine for Nazi sympathizers. When Hess, the last ranking Nazi leader died, a turbulent, troubled era died with him.

There are many issues and questions associated with Hess that I have not addressed in this study such as, Was Prison Number Seven the real Hess? and, Did Hess take his own life or was he murdered? Separate studies could be written on each of these

questions alone. I will not analyze these issues, but I will make the following comments based on my own personal involvement with Rudolf Hess: I firmly believe the man I met in Spandau Prison was the real Hess and I firmly believe that he committed suicide on 17 August 1987.

As I searched for a few words to close this study on Rudolf Hess, I finally conceded that nothing I could say would be more apropos than the words of his wife Ilse Hess,

My husband's mouth is closed. He cannot utter the decisive final words about his deed.

On my part, however, I have certain knowledge that my husband desired to make a personal sacrifice without being ordered to do so, without any knowledge of this act so far as Hitler was concerned, and with a clear mind and free will. His motive force and governing idea was simply and solely peace.⁸

CHAPTER VIII ENDNOTES

1. Burton C. Andrus, I Was the Nuremberg Jailer, p. 119.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. J. Bernard Hutton, Hess, the Man and His Mission, p. 238.
4. Ibid., p. XV.
5. Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7, Rudolf Hess, pp. 67-68.
6. Ibid., p. 147.
7. John Greenwood, "The Inmate of Spandau's Last Wish," Time, 31 Aug 87, p. 31.
8. Ilse Hess, Prisoner of Peace, p. 25.

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