

Enigma Books

Also published by Enigma Books

Hitler's Table Talk: 1941–1944
In Stalin's Secret Service
Hitler and Mussolini: The Secret Meetings
The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History
The Man Behind the Rosenbergs
Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History
Diary 1937–1943 (Galeazzo Ciano)
Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles
Hitler and His Generals: Military Conferences 1942–1945
Stalin and the Jews: The Red Book
The Secret Front: Nazi Political Espionage
Fighting the Nazis: French Intelligence and Counterintelligence
A Death in Washington: Walter G. Krivitsky and the Stalin Terror
The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Algeria 1955–1957
Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to *Mein Kampf*
At Napoleon's Side in Russia: The Classic Eyewitness Account
The Atlantic Wall: Hitler's Defenses for D-Day
Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals
France and the Nazi Threat: The Collapse of French Diplomacy 1932–1939
Mussolini: The Secrets of His Death
Mortal Crimes: Soviet Penetration of the Manhattan Project
Top Nazi: Karl Wolff—The Man Between Hitler and Himmler
Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini's Conquest of Yugoslavia
The Origins of the War of 1914 (3-volume set)
Hitler's Foreign Policy: 1933–1939—The Road to World War II
The Origins of Fascist Ideology 1918–1925
Max Corvo: OSS Italy 1942–1945
Hitler's Contract: The Secret History of the Italian Edition of *Mein Kampf*
Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust
Israel at High Noon
Balkan Inferno: Betrayal, War, and Intervention, 1990–2005
Calculated Risk: World War II Memoirs of General Mark Clark
The Murder of Maxim Gorky
The Kravchenko Case: One Man's War On Stalin
Operation Neptune
Paris Weekend
Shattered Sky
Hitler's Gift to France
The Mafia and the Allies
The Nazi Party, 1919-1945: A Complete History
Encyclopedia of Cold War Espionage, Spies, and Secret Operations
The Cicero Spy Affair

A Crate of Vodka
NOC
The First Iraq War: Britain's Mesopotamian Campaign, 1914-1918
Becoming Winston Churchill
Hitler's Intelligence Chief: Walter Schellenberg
Salazar: A Political Biography
The Italian Brothers
Nazi Palestine
Code Name: Kalistrat
Pax Romana
Lenin and His Comrades
Working with Napoleon
The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb
Target Hitler
Truman, MacArthur and the Korean War
The Eichmann Trial Diary
American Police: A History, Vol. 1
American Police: A History, Vol. 2
Cold Angel
Alphabet of Masks
Stalin's Man in Canada
Hunting Down the Jews
Mussolini Warlord
Election Year 1968
Spy Lost
Deadly Sleep

Adolf Hitler

Hitler at War

**Meetings and Conversations
1939-1945**

Edited and with an Introduction by Robert L. Miller

Enigma Books

All rights reserved under the International
and Pan-American Copyright Conventions.
Published in the United States by
Enigma Books
www.enigmabooks.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying recording, or otherwise without the written permission of Enigma Books.

Copyright © 2015 by Enigma Books

ISBN: 978-1-936274-78-9
e-ISBN: 978-1-936274-79-6

Printed in Canada
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

[Available on request]

Contents

Introduction

Part I
1939

1. Birger Dahlerus — September 26, 1939
2. Galeazzo Ciano — October 1, 1939
3. Sven Hedin — October 16, 1939

Part II
1940

1. Memorandum by the Führer
2. Sumner Welles — March 2, 1940
3. Sven Hedin — March 4, 1940
4. Colin Ross — March 12, 1940
5. Benito Mussolini — March 18, 1940
6. Pierre Laval — October 22, 1940
7. Francisco Franco — October 23, 1940
8. Philippe Pétain — October 24, 1940
9. Benito Mussolini — October 28, 1940
10. Vyacheslav Molotov — November 12, 1940
11. Vyacheslav Molotov — November 13, 1940

Part III
1941

1. Benito Mussolini — January 21, 1941
2. Matsuoka — March 27, 1941
3. Matsuoka — April 4, 1941
4. Admiral Darlan — May 11, 1941
5. Benito Mussolini — August 25, 1941
6. Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hadj Amin al-Husseini — November 30,
1941

Part IV
1942

1. Table Talk — April 23, 1942
2. Hitler and Mussolini — April 29-30, 1942
3. Hitler and Mannerheim — June 4, 1942
4. Table Talk — September 5, 1942
5. Midday Situation Conference — December 12, 1942

Part V
1943

1. Hitler's Military Conferences: Stalingrad — February 1, 1943
2. The Conference at Feltre and the Fall of Mussolini — July 19, 1943
3. Hitler's Military Conferences: The Italian Crisis — July 26, 1943

Part VI
1944

1. Hitler's Military Conferences July 31, 1944 — The Valkyrie Plot
2. Hitler's Military Conferences — August 31, 1944
3. Hitler's Speech to Division Commanders — December 12, 1944
4. Hitler's Meeting with Colonel General Blaskowitz — December 28, 1944: The Battle of the Bulge

Part VII
1945

1. Hitler's Military Conferences: Endgame — April 23, 25, 27, 1945

Notes

Introduction

This selection is based on documents from several published archives, and historical reconstructions in an effort to provide an accurate picture of the plans, thoughts, and objectives of Adolf Hitler at various key moments of the Second World War. The archival texts are reprinted in their entirety with minimal commentary and bibliographical suggestions. The military conferences, on the other hand, include the notes by German historian Helmut Heiber and American military historian David Glantz. The full account of each meeting offers the best insights into Hitler's thinking and reactions to major events as he issued fateful orders that were immediately carried out by his adjutants.

The selected documents are roughly divided into two broad areas: the early part of the war from September 1, 1939 to June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and the period from the attack on the Soviet Union to the collapse of the Third Reich in May 1945.

The first section includes mostly political and diplomatic conferences with foreign leaders and diplomats. The final period from July 1941 to April 1945 is mostly centered on military operations concerning the war in Russia. A large sub-section is assigned to the Italian crisis from July to September 1943, triggered by the invasion of Sicily and the overthrow of Mussolini. Those dramatic events constituted a major blow to Germany's prestige, sowing doubt in the minds of the German people, along with the many Nazi collaborators and sympathizers in Europe and elsewhere.

This documentary record of the meetings and conversations held by the Nazi dictator from September 1, 1939 to April 27, 1945, is a selection and remains necessarily incomplete. The transcribed daily military conferences alone, of which only a little more than 1,000 pages remain, represents a mere ten percent of the estimated total. The bulk of that archive was burned by the SS in May 1945. At times additional documents have been authenticated and added to the existing collection.

Hitler was far more explicit than one may expect in his conversations with various personalities. While several important texts help us understand the evolution of the politician and the war leader over a relatively short period, many important areas remain unknown. The twelve-year Third Reich reached its apex in the summer of 1942, when the overextended Wehrmacht was stopped in its advance into the Caucasus and at Stalingrad on the Volga River. The defeat at El Alamein in November 1942 ended the winning streak of Rommel's Afrika Korps at that same moment. With the

surrender of von Paulus at Stalingrad in February 1943, the Supreme Warlord, while forever in denial, had to know that full victory was no longer within his grasp.

In the fall of 1942 Hitler ordered that stenographers keep an accurate record of the daily military conferences that he chaired at OKW headquarters. The purpose of that record was to document the discussions and decisions made for posterity, given the strategic and tactical disagreements that had surfaced within the High Command.

As Gerhard Weinberg explains in his preface to *Hitler and His Generals*:

As he was being told that the German army was unable to punch through Red Army resistance in the western Caucasus on the road to Tuapse, while at the same time the German forces heading toward the main oilfields at Grozny and Baku, as well as those heading for Stalingrad, were making very slow progress—if any—Hitler blew up. He temporarily took over command of Army Group A in the Caucasus himself; he replaced the chief of staff of the German army; and he considered replacing his immediate assistants in the High Command of the Armed Forces [Oberkommando der Wehrmacht—OKW].*

The workings of a global conflict of almost unlimited proportions have Hitler directing operations on a daily, and hourly, basis. In innumerable meetings, long nightly monologues, critical military conferences, the character, motivations, thoughts, and actions of the one man who wanted the war at all costs, emerge providing a chilling picture of the ruthless manner in which the German army was ordered to fight the war.

During those conversations, and conferences, the inner workings of the Nazi regime, the leadership of the German Army, the strategic and tactical vision behind the war in victory and defeat, and the ways by which Hitler used and exploited his allies and collaborators are revealed. The picture becomes more complicated as the documents move from the discussion of a peace offer to Great Britain and France in September 1939, just two weeks after the war started, to a tense conversation with American Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles in February 1940 about Germany's objectives, while Hitler was at the same time persuading Mussolini to enter the war. These were followed by the invasion of Denmark and Norway, the triumph over France, the failure of the meetings with Franco, Pétain, and Mussolini who couldn't be stopped from marching head-on into catastrophe in Greece. The revealing conversations with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Matsuoka, Molotov, Mannerheim, and Ciano would also follow.

With the invasion of Russia in June 1941, most of Hitler's time until the end of the war in April 1945 would be focused on the Eastern front, while the attention paid to other theaters was probably less than ten percent, judging from the volume of the documentation available. The daily military conferences where Hitler directed the war and vented his frustrations to his entourage of generals and admirals, whom he despised as useless uniformed aristocrats, are among the most illuminating of his thinking and style.

Mussolini and a few Nazi leaders, such as Göring and possibly Goebbels, were hoping to persuade Hitler to seek a separate peace with Stalin. Those conversations took place in secret and we only have vague allusions about a possible outcome. The Allied leaders, mainly Churchill and FDR, had anxiously observed the Nazi Soviet

Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, making the two dictatorships virtual allies in the carving up of Poland. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 the Allies remained very much aware of the danger of a possible repeat of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, when Russia dropped out of the First World War in 1918. But none of those dreaded scenarios materialized, although serious doubts persisted—at least up to the Teheran Conference in November 1943.

The rest of Hitler's time was spent with his inner circle and Nazi party officials, notably Martin Bormann, the Nazi Party secretary, Joseph Goebbels, armaments minister Albert Speer, Heinrich Himmler, and others. Of those confidential discussions where presumably the Holocaust and the extermination programs in Poland and Russia were discussed there is little or no trace, only a few allusions.

As for Hitler's ability as a strategist and military leader, Gerhard Weinberg again provides valuable insight into the widely held belief that the Nazi leader was in fact a military genius:

The record shows him as a mean and suspicious individual who made decisions on the basis of preposterous beliefs about such countries as the Soviet Union and the United States.*

The single-minded reliance on his prejudices led Hitler to believe that those ideas were reality, when in fact they were for the most part figments of his imagination. Ideological thinking rather than *realpolitik* ultimately led Germany to disaster.

Robert L. Miller

* H. Heiber and D. Glantz, Eds. Introduction by Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler and His Generals. Military Conferences 1942-1945* (New York: Enigma Books, 2003), p. 13.

* Ibid. p. 16

Hitler at War

**Meetings and Conversations
1939-1945**

Part I

1939

Attempts to quickly end the hostilities as soon as the war broke out on September 1, 1939, with the attack on Poland and the declarations of war by Great Britain and France began almost immediately. By the date of this conversation Swedish businessman and friend of Hermann Göring's, Birger Dahlerus had already traveled to London to broker a truce, and possibly a negotiated peace between Nazi Germany and the British and French Allies. Those efforts were destined to fail, while the tone and outcome of this encounter provides a sense of the atmosphere prevailing during the early weeks of the war. As of September 17 Poland was defeated and invaded from the East by Soviet troops in accordance with the provisions of the Secret Protocol of Nazi Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 24, 1939.

Memorandum of the conversation between the Führer and M. Dahlerus in the presence of Field Marshal Göring

Berlin, September 26, 1939.

[Birger Dahlerus, a Swedish civil engineer and manufacturer, whose efforts as an unofficial intermediary between Britain and Germany during the weeks before the outbreak of war are described in his book, translated as *The Last Attempt* (London, 1947). Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, Counselor, British Legation in Norway, September 1939-February 1940. Dahlerus testified Mar. 19, 1946, before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg that his meeting with Ogilvie-Forbes took place in Oslo, not Stockholm, on Sept. 24, 1939. *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, vol. XXXIV, p. 473. Dahlerus had been in contact in Berlin with Ogilvie-Forbes, who was Counselor of the British embassy until the outbreak of war. See also: Leonard Mosley, *On Borrowed Time* (New York: Random House, 1969); Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's*

Foreign Policy 1933-1939 (New York: Enigma Books, 2010).]

M. Dahlerus pointed out, by way of introduction, that the British, were such great egoists that they were now deliberating, in view of the difficulties of the present situation, how they could extricate themselves from the whole affair. He had told Forbes in Stockholm that, after the speeches of Churchill and Chamberlain, negotiations between the British and the German governments were probably out of the question. Forbes denied this and, on the contrary, took the view that the British government could very well conduct such negotiations with Germany if only a formula were found which assured to the peoples of Europe their territorial integrity and their freedom by means of a treaty among the great European Powers. Poland was considered lost, so they took the position that it was now a matter of at least saving their own skins.

The Führer replied that the worst of it was that the British had always considered everything pure bluff and immediately interpreted all restraint and patience on his part as weakness. Because he (the Führer) had for years put up with certain things from the Poles, because there was not always immediate resort to shooting, England had come to the false conclusion of mistaking for weakness the considerateness and forbearance of the Führer. The British were now trying something similar with their declaration of a 3-year war. If Germany declared that this threat was a matter of indifference to her that, too, would be considered bluffing. But they should not let themselves be deceived about the Führer; he would soon wage the war toward the West, also, in such a way as to stun the British. He had destroyed Poland in 3 weeks. The British should stop and think what could happen to them in 3 months. The Führer then stressed the fact that he had always come out for friendship with England, but that today an abysmal hatred for England was gradually spreading among the German people. The British were now foolishly also dropping leaflets which bore witness to their absolute ignorance of the German frame of mind. Particularly when they attacked a person like the Führer, to whom Germany looked up full of gratitude, this produced a state of mind in the German people which made agreement with England more and more difficult. The British would by this method finally drive things so far that a rapprochement with England would be impossible because the people would not want it. If the British, instead of a 3-year war, contemplated a 7-year war, or one even longer, Germany would survive it, too, and in the end turn England completely into a heap of ruins.

M. Dahlerus again spoke of the possibility of peace arising out of the egoism of the British. The Führer replied that the British, if they wanted peace, would certainly have to be absolutely clear about the actual facts. Germany had won a victory in Poland which was without precedent in history. In 14 days he had completely destroyed a country of 36 million inhabitants which had an army of 45 divisions, in part well equipped, and whose soldiers had fought bravely. In these circumstances, the Führer had no intention of allowing anyone to interfere in the solution of the Polish question. Moreover, the Russians also had a weighty word to say in the matter. They, too, had occupied large portions of Poland. The Führer pointed out in this connection that in view of the campaign of lies directed against him and Germany because of an alleged

German lust for conquest, he was now completely disinteresting himself in all regions that did not affect Germany's interests. It was a matter of complete indifference to him whether another country appropriated territory anywhere outside the German sphere of interest.

M. Dahlerus then inquired whether in the opinion of the Germans there would be any object at all in the British declaring themselves ready for peace discussions. The Führer replied that a condition for peace discussions would be to allow him an entirely free hand with regard to Poland. If the British still wanted to salvage something of Poland he could only advise them to hasten the peace discussions. Beyond this he was entirely prepared to join in guaranteeing the status quo of the rest of Europe. He had at the time not joined in guaranteeing Czechoslovakia because he had intended to do so only when all her neighbors were prepared to do so. At that time Poland had herself appropriated areas of Czechoslovakia. If the British desired peace in Europe they should make it clearly understood. Germany would in any case be prepared for it, for she needed peace in order to cultivate the newly acquired areas in the East that had formerly belonged to the German cultural sphere. This would require at least 50 years.

The Führer intended to reincorporate into the Reich the former German and former Austrian sections of Poland, as well as strategically important territories. Besides this there was to be a "reshuffling" not only by reuniting once more inside the Reich by large-scale resettlement the scattered Germany minority groups, but also by effecting an adjustment between the thickly populated west, with a population density of 140 persons per square kilometer a condition that could not last and the thinly populated east with a density of only 35 people per square kilometer. To carry out these great plans would require 50 to 100 years, particularly if one considered the tremendous backwardness and demoralization of Poland, in comparison with which the remaining Czechia looked like a veritable paradise. It was insolence for such a debased country as Poland to dare to turn against a country like Germany. M. Dahlerus mentioned in this connection a statement of Lipski, who had declared that the Poles would not yield to Germany, for he knew Germany very well and within a week a revolution would surely break out and force Germany to back down. The Führer then described further his awful impressions of Poland during his trips to the front. The Vistula, supposed to be Poland's great river, was silted up everywhere and navigable only by rowboat. And now for this wretched country millions of Englishmen and Germans were to lay down their lives!

M. Dahlerus stated in this connection that it depended on only one thing: how the British could save face. The Führer pointed out that the Poles had deceived the British, that they had had absolutely no basis for opposing Germany, as they had led the British to believe. M. Dahlerus then brought up the question of the Jews. The British were considering where the Jews were to stay, whereupon the Führer replied that if he should reorganize the Polish state, an asylum could also be created for the Jews. Someone had to see that there was order in the East and convert the condition of complete disorganization into an orderly one. In addition to this there would be the above-mentioned reshuffling of peoples: Germans would be settled in the thinly populated areas in order at least to increase the population density from 35 persons per