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REPORT ON ARTHUR POPE'S SECOND INTERVIEW WITH PUTZI HANFSTAENGL.

Here is the second installment of Arthur Upham Pope's recent interview with Putzi. Pope, who has known Putzi since 1905, is favorably impressed with his attitude and general utility as a point of reference to Nazi official psychology and European reactions.

J.F.C.
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By Deputy Archivist of the U.S.
By W. J. Stewart Date MAY 1 1972

MEMORANDUM ON AN INTERVIEW ON NOVEMBER 11-12, 1943

I spent the last 24 hours with our informant which included approximately 8 to 10 hours of conversation on a great variety of topics.

I had not seen him for nearly five years and was surprised to find a very great improvement in coherence, intellectual responsibility, continuity of attention, good sense in successful correlation of a very varied background of facts, personal experience and reading.

He is emotionally more mature than I have seen him since student days. While he deeply resents his imprisonment, he acknowledges that he has learned a great deal from it and admits certain wholesome corrections to his general outlook.

His resentment of his imprisonment is not so much in the terms of personal hardship or even discomfort or limitation of freedom, although all these things counted, as much as it was resentment over the diminution of his importance. It has naturally been very difficult for him to accommodate himself to being a nobody after having exercised great power and there is no doubt that he had information and ideas which could have been of great use to the British authorities.

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He does realize that his aggressive and contemptuous manner naturally alienated the sympathy of British Officials with consequent neglect, which was very humiliating. But he was agitated and angry because his advice was not sought even in the most casual manner when Hess arrived. He said, "I was the only man who could throw any real light on the total situation. After all, I had seen and observed Hess closely for a good many years and knew about his relations, and I could have given them some very excellent advice as to how to extract the greatest value out of Hess' trip. But the British handled the whole matter with incredible stupidity"; and it was rage at this stupidity as much as anything that disturbed him. He insisted the British were clumsy and short-sighted and had thrown away remarkable opportunities because of the neglect of obvious procedures which should have followed the landing.

The story of Hess' landing was relatively completely published at the end of the first 48 hours. In that time the Berlin radio revealed consternation and confusion in German high quarters with its random beating around for plausible explanations which were self-contradictory, but which were also very revealing of the internal situation.

Our informant is quite convinced that Hess' flight was motivated by fear of his life. Hitler's manner to Hess during the preceding month had certain features in common with his attitude to others whom Hitler had marked for death.

Our informant thought that the proper procedure should have been that at least ninety days' silence be followed by false reports of landing in southern Ireland-- a maneuver which, properly handled, would have exposed the hand of Nazi agents in De Valera's Eire. After this rumor had extracted all that was possible it could have been followed by the statement that a wrecked plane had been found in the Orkneys with personal effects showing that Hess had been lost. This would have brought a new flood of explanations from Berlin.

There are other provocative rumors which could have produced revealing reactions from Berlin. He was quite ready to elaborate indefinitely on these possibilities of evoking these self-revealing explanations.

He is fundamentally bitter and contemptuous of Hitler, but deeply and I think permanently pro-German. He even thinks there is a possibility he might sometime have a rôle to play in German reconstruction. This is obviously a hope which he has turned over in his mind often and derived from it a certain consolation.

His acceptance of the news is tinged with a pro-German feeling. He takes a discernible satisfaction in German news reports that show that the German line is holding. He kept saying last night, "They are holding, no break...." He evaded my request for a concise comparison of the German communiqués with other Official reports, saying they were both summaries anyway and that differences were unimportant. He obviously preferred to believe the best face the German communiqués put on the news.

He did say, however, that he was definitely and completely committed to the United Nations and America. When his son entered the U.S. Army that finally closed things for him and automatically excommunicated him from the society of German prisoners, and that his pro-Americanism nearly got him lynched in the prison camp in Canada.

Of Hitler he said that he had only once seen him in a wild rage; often excited and declaring fire and fury against all his enemies, but only once in a real destructive madness.

Of many revealing remarks he made about Hitler one was that his emotional drive had over-simplified his whole program.

Everything Hitler planned, while it might be in great detail, took insufficient account of other realities. Concrete situations that were not in the program were not only ignored but positively obliterated from the picture. There was very little awareness or calculation of imponderables and insufficient adjustment for the unexpected.

In a burst of vivid and audacious eloquence which cannot be entirely recaptured, he said that Hitler was like a man trying to play Tristan without using the black notes; "that he just would not have chromatism; that all of it had got to be straightforward in the key of C major; that he would take a big pair of pliers, castrate the damned pianoforte and tear the black keys out of the keyboard. They were non-Aryan anyway. Then he could play Tristan on the white keys alone."

Again he, in an oratorical outburst that had in it some really hard and honest thinking, declared that German culture of the present had resulted in the creation of a nation of Machine-Beasts whose operations could be counted upon, who could be controlled like machines and driven to ferocious and destructive extremes. He believes that this was not peculiarly German but that the modern man and the modern age everywhere contained this potentiality

only it had been carried out with greater thoroughness and to a greater extreme in Germany than anywhere else. Perhaps that was in the German character. He stated that this had been impressively revealed to him through his association with hundreds of German war prisoners, whom he has observed with some care and with a sense of historical perspective. He found in them all this virile and robust element which made them marauders at heart and this marauding temperament had been evoked and developed with skill and ruthlessness.

This "marauding" element was certainly characteristic of the German youth of today and it was the pivot, the fulcrum, the Archimedian point which Hitler used to pry up the Old Order. And it was used to great advantage because he was clever enough to seize on this insight and to understand that if properly used it would enormously fortify his power, and the force that he exerted on this Archimedian point was all derived from one source--his vocal chords.

The Nazi regime was made possible by the adroit utilization of the fulcrum provided by the marauding temperament, and the lever was Hitler's oratory. If one of Hitler's vocal chords had ever been cut, his lever would never have worked.

He gave an excellent description of Nazi mentality, containing nothing really new, but very picturesque and characteristic interpretations of their susceptibility to display of force, confidence and resolution. He made it the cornerstone of his own policy to try to effect some rapprochement between the new German regime and the United States. His policy was to try to convince Hitler and the Nazis of the immense power of America, that it ultimately would decide any issue of a general war, and if the Nazis were reckless and unreasonable, there was not the slightest doubt that America would, as before, come in against Germany with irresistible force.

Hitler, however, he said, was constantly listening to Chicago Germans who were strongly infected with isolationism, and who were quite unrealistic as regards both Germany and the United States, in the Doctor's opinion. If our State Department, the Doctor said over and over again, had only supported some of his policies, taken the hints he was trying to give, and had played a strong hand in Germany, he believed there would have been no general war. This ran into long discussion, and more details can be given if needed.

Briefly, he reported that the Nazis were both resentful and contemptuous of the weak showing that we

made at Berlin. We took over an old palace on the Pariserplatz, and did not even freshen up the façade, but left it shabby. This was a real monument in one of the most critical spots in all Germany. The Germans resented American parsimony as an insult. They said it was the kind of Legation you would expect of the Yugoslavs-- but not from the United States. And from this, the Germans both high and low, found it easy to accept the slogans of effete, timid and penny-pinching democracy--the very façade of the building proved it!

He insisted the Legation should have been at least five or six times as large--better, ten times as large; instead of two automobiles, they should have kept at least a dozen Cadillacs and Packards, rolling around Berlin, to be seen everywhere. The Embassy should have been staffed with strong and resolute men and lots of handsome, robust women--preferably the Mae West type!

Moreover, he said, Dodd was the last man who should have been sent to Germany then. We should have looked for some hard-boiled business man who had the force of Theodore Roosevelt, who could stick to big issues and hammer them with big blows, and be not afraid of straight, strong talk. The Doctor thinks it a thousand pities that the American rearmament program was so slow in getting under way, and that the President could not have done even more than he did in building up the Navy.

The Ambassador should have said in firm tones at least as far back as 1936: "If Germany starts a new war, be absolutely certain that America is coming in and coming in hard. . . . While you think we have only six battleships, I can tell you privately, Herr Hitler, that we have fourteen building." Even though a bluff, the bluff would have worked.

I contested this interpretation, and these posthumous recommendations, in a variety of ways, urging that Hitler's motivations were of such compulsive, not to say even convulsive character, that his whole emotional life as well as his program insatiably demanded aggression and expansion; and that if blocked by the United States, he would still have found some way to wreak his conquering will on suffering, cringing people; that this was a compulsion he could never resist.

To which the Doctor replied: "Yes, madman he is-- but don't forget that a madman, particularly a madman like Hitler, understands perfectly the muzzle of a gun when it is held up to his face. He knows what is behind that little circle; and however wild and incoherent he is, or how intense his motivation, the cocked and loaded gun is even more powerful."

He is certain that even Hitler could have been stopped. Naturally, he thinks he was frustrated in a

great effort to save the world from a world war. But this is not a post hoc thought or ambition.

Dr. Phyllis Ackerman had some long talks with him in Berlin in 1933, in which he elaborated this point, said that his function was to restrain and try to civilize the new régime, that it was wild and violent but that it could and would quiet down and become more reasonable. That was his job and he had to exercise a good deal of skill in trying to carry it through. He repeated a good deal of this to me in 1937. I believe it represents a sincere and genuine policy of which he was pretty clearly aware at the beginning.

Of Ambassador Dodd he was particularly scornful. He said he was a trivial, pedantic "professor"--the last person in the world who could have any effect on the Nazis. That he could not speak German and should not have tried. That he only annoyed and confused people. The Doctor had arranged for him a two-hour secret interview with Hitler; he coached Dodd in advance, urging him to impress Hitler with the stupendous power of America, and that it would inevitably become involved in any world conflict. No one knew about this appointment except Hitler and Dodd, but Dodd talked throughout the interview as if he had a hot potato in his mouth; his mushy enunciation particularly annoyed Hitler, his

fumbling for words still more. And the pedantic and dreary detail which he could not follow reduced him to fury and contempt. Hitler told the Doctor afterward, "I scarcely understood anything this man said"--and then imitated his enunciation.

Dodd, again seeing Germany through student eyes, trying to recall the intellectual Germany he had known in his youth, which was grotesquely out of place in the brutality and madness that was riding hard in Berlin, invited a number of officials to an affair at the Embassy on Lincoln's Birthday, where he gave again a two-hour typically professorial pedantic disquisition, with many fine hair-splitting points that nobody in his audience understood, and certainly cared nothing about--but which might have made an impression, if the work of a Ph.D. candidate appealing for professorial approval. Dodd seems to have thought this affair a success. The Doctor says it was a grotesque failure.

This series of weak and unrealistic approaches and experiments convinced Hitler and others in the Nazi high régime that America was nothing to be feared and need hardly be taken into serious account as a potential enemy, though others in the German Intelligence service had different views and did report on at least the potential power of America. But the dominant conclusion

seems to have been (if the Doctor is right) that this time America would do nothing; that she was too disillusioned by the last war, too shocked by her own economic problems and politically divided; and too indolent and too selfish to care much about Europe and the rest of the world.

After the Dodd interview, of which Hitler told Neurath, Neurath exploded in wrath and lamentations, saying to the Doctor--"How could you ever do such a terrible thing to me?" The Doctor replied that he ought to be on his knees thanking him for what he was doing-- saying in effect, "I am fighting your battles. I told Dodd to put it up strongly to Hitler that America had both the power and the will, and any aggressive expansion would ultimately bring an avalanche upon us"-- (words to that effect). He said Neurath seemed a little mollified.

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The Doctor says he never once called Hitler "Der Fuehrer." He did not believe in the fuehrer principe and thought it was full of danger. He, of course, had to salute--"Heil Hitler"; but he did it with the old crooked-arm salute, not with the more fanatic straight-arm gesture.

And on other occasions when he had to use the most formal address, he always used "Herr Reichskancellor."

Apparently, he was the only man in the immediate entourage who withheld the preferred title.

HITLER'S METHOD OF SPEAKING

Each point is written down on a separate sheet of paper. At the top of each sheet is about fifteen words. Then he elaborates that and goes on to the next point. Each speech has to cover the ground that was given in his preceding speeches and perhaps give a new point; but he always has to start at the beginning in order to get under way and consequently in speeches like his last, four-fifths or nine-tenths is old stuff.

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The Doctor still seems a bit "whacky" about the Jews. He always was resentful of them, although he says there are some very fine ones and among them he has real friends. The sources of resentment are some of them normal and understandable. They stem from a conflict with certain standards of honor which the Doctor holds primal and constitutional. He cites instances out of his own experience of Jews double-crossing one another,

or selling one another out; and has a very amusing story about a Jew who said to one of the Nazi big shots, "You don't know how to put on a really effective anti-Semitic campaign. You have got to get a Jew to run it for you."

There is no question whatever that Rosenberg is partly Jewish, and associated with Jewish women constantly, though perhaps not for the last year or so, because several times he got himself into dangerous situations. The fact was known to Hitler and conclusive evidence several times set before him.

But the Doctor is less agitated and less unreasonable about the Jews than he was in 1925, when I first discussed with him in Munich and the problem of the Jews in German life. In his copy of the recently published translation of Borchardt's Force and Freedom, which he lent me, he has underlined in red every derogatory reference to the Jews.

It seemed to me, however, that his attitude toward the Jews, while expressing more emotion than fact or reason, had no morbid or irrational character. Whereas in previous years he wanted to hammer at length on the subject, he was at this time ready to drop the subject quickly, and just announced certain conclusions, certain attitudes; although he did recur to the subject frequently.

NOTES ON ERNST JÜNGER

1. The Doctor is very much impressed by this man, and insisted almost as a personal favor that I keep this clearly in mind. He acted as if he were telling me something of great importance based on explicit first hand information and of which he was deeply convinced. He is confident that Jünger is the coming man; that he is a man of very strong character, that he is a very able, patriotic, intelligent person and that people regard him with immense respect: that Hitler knows of him and fears him. Although he is known to be in Germany, and in contact with his associates, he moves around a great deal, and the Gestapo have not been able to put their hands on him.

I will pursue this further--but the Doctor insisted over and over again that here was the great and coming man--the man certain to exercise decisive power. It was almost the first thing he said to me when we were alone and the last thing he charged me with, as if he thought I could communicate this where it would count.

2. Our informant repeatedly stressed the importance of Ernst Jünger who, he assures me, is a man of immense character, capacity, influence. He believes he is the

coming man in Germany and that although he is in constant danger, he manages to evade apprehension and is known to a very large number of under-cover, liberal anti-Nazi forces in Germany. He kept recurring to this theme and urged me to pass along his views with any endorsement I could give. He kept stressing that this is the real man and that he is important to know. I didn't press him for details; perhaps they are already known to your office. If I should come again, I'll ask lots of questions. I think I could easily get the whole story.