

The Deputy Führer

Rudolf Walter Richard Hess, an early follower of the Nazi movement and an old crony and cellmate of Adolf Hitler, was in many ways a tragicomic figure in the Nazi pecking order. Originally appointed ‘Stellvertreter des Führers’ [Hitler’s deputy and designated successor], he gradually slid into obscurity and lost all political influence; elbowed out by more energetic pretenders.

Then he ventured on a utter futile mission to make peace between Nazi Germany and England and instead found himself incarcerated for the remainder of the war. Albeit surviving all other members of the Nazi court, he would spend more than half his life in prison until his suicide at the considerable age of ninety-three.

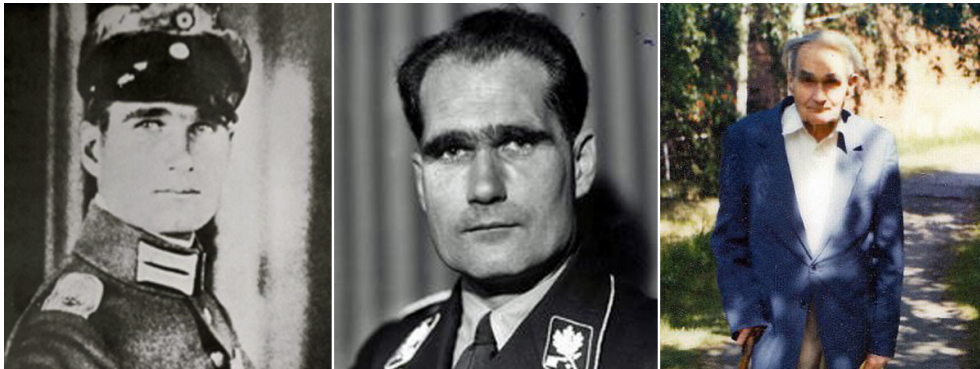


Photo: A young Hess during the Great War; at the pinnacle of his Nazi career and as an old man in the Spandau Prison.

LIKE HIS FÜHRER, Hess was born outside Germany, seeing his first light of day in Alexandria, Egypt in 1894 as the eldest of three children. His father, Fritz, was a successful German businessman from Bavaria and had retained a glowing love for his faraway 1871 Imperial Germany and its Emperor.¹ This love and respect for country and leader, Rudolf would later confer to Hitler.

Hess senior was not a family tyrant per se, but excelled the kind of authority that was typical in Wilhelmine Germany with obedience, discipline and dutifulness as the uppermost values. With military firmness² he was grooming his son to take over the family business. Hess’ mother was, like the mother of Hitler, the tender caring soul in the family, shielding her children and showering them with motherly affection.

From his mother, Hess inherited a love for nature, confidence in herbal medicine and an interest for astrology; qualities and ideas that would later be very prominent in his behavior. As a young man Hess was leading an exemplary life that would have thrilled any preacher; he did not smoke or enjoyed alcohol and he seemed to avoid the company of women.

The family was well off and capable of extended visits to their German country house in Reicholdsgrün during summertime and thus the children picked up the German tongue and culture.³ The Hess family moved back to Germany in 1908, where Rudolf attended the Evangelical School in Bad Godesberg. Rudolf was never a shining star in school, but did get good

marks in science and mathematics and had his eyes fixed on becoming an engineer. His father, however, wanted him to attend a Swiss commercial school instead of taking his 'Abitur'. Reluctantly Hess obeyed and had the war not gotten in the way, he might have turned into an able businessman.

“Like Hitler, his political Master, Hess was a war veteran”

However, as the Great War broke out in 1914, he, now twenty years old, enthusiastically, and for the first time acting against his father's wishes, enlisted in the 7th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment. Displaying bravery on the battlefield and wounded more than once,⁴ he was awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class in 1915 and made a lieutenant in 1917. As the war dragged to its close, Hess was training to become a fighter pilot, but saw only modest real action in that capacity.



Photo: The Lieutenant at the controls of a German fighter plane. He started his training in the spring of 1918, inspired by aces like Richtshofen and Göring, and displayed good pilot skills.

That the war ended with Germany's defeat and humiliation came as a stunning blow to Hess, and he quickly subscribed to the 'stab-in-the-back' myth and put the blame on the treacherous 'lefties' back home. The only thing that kept him going, he would later state, was the hope that 'revenge' would materialize in a not too distant future.

**“History is not ended. It will sooner or later
take up the threads apparently broken off forever
and knit them together in a new pattern.”**

Postwar Hess, taking advantage of the benefits for veterans which enabled them to attend the university without an Abitur, enrolled at the University of Munich, focusing on geopolitics as a student of Professor Karl Haushofer, a retired general whose ideas about 'Lebensraum' would eventually form part of the Nazi ideology.⁵

The eager student soon became the professor's assistant and a guest in the respected man's home, and Haushofer the authoritarian figure Hess needed in his life; a role that would later be taken over by Hitler.

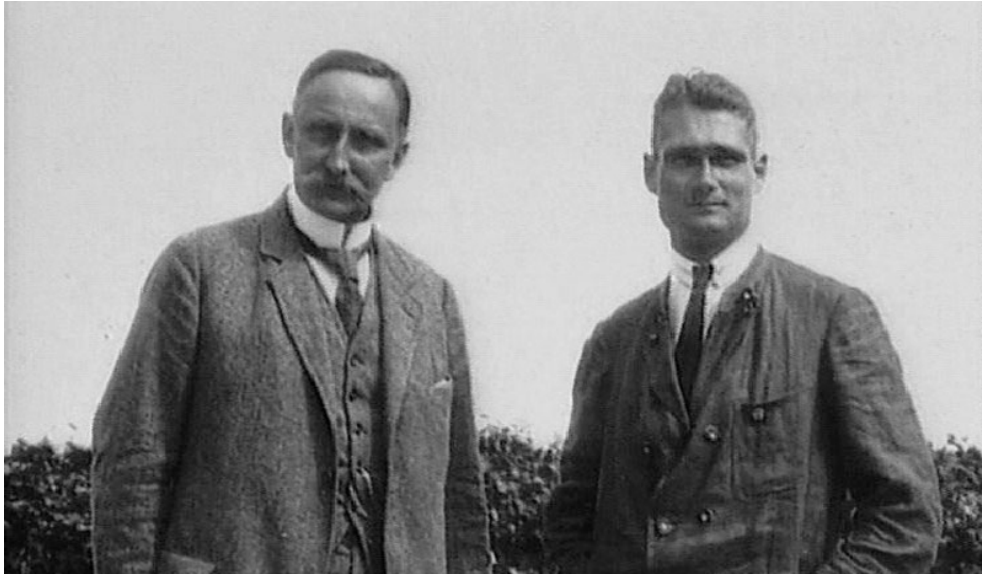


Photo: Hess with his spiritual mentor, professor Haushofer; a new father figure. Haushofer's views on Geopolitics strongly influenced Hitler's thinking and strategies. Postwar, being scrutinized by the Allied authorities for complicity in war crimes, Haushofer and his wife both committed suicide.

Simultaneously Hess had taken contact to likeminded, disgruntled former soldiers in a group with the inconspicuous name, the 'Thule Society'; allegedly with the goal of studying ancient Germanic rites. It was nonetheless a congregation of right-wing radicals, plotting a coup d'état. Hess would be the handyman; a provider of weaponry and leading men in street-fights.

Around the same time [1927], he married. Being somewhat shy and awkward, 20-year old Ilse Pröhl, whom he had met in 1920, was the first woman in his life. The daughter of wealthy, conservative physician she shared his political views and was one of the first women to study at Munich's university and one of the first to join the NSDAP. The couple would have one child, Wolf-Rüdiger⁶, born in 1937.

Hess the National Socialist

Hess joined the infant national socialist movement in 1920 after listening to Adolf Hitler speaking at the 'Sterneckebräu'. Hess was flabbergasted (albeit he could not remember the speaker's name); Hitler's views on the 'stab-in-the-back' myth was gist to his mill, and, returning from the lecture he ecstatically confided to Ilse; "*This man will bring us redemption from the humiliation of Versailles!*". Hess partook in the failed 'Bierhalle Putsch' in Munich⁷, November 1923 and followed Hitler into jail at Landsberg. Here, he took down in writing the ramblings of the would-be Führer that would later become the infamous book; 'Mein Kampf'⁸

Hitler and Hess were in many ways kindred spirits and developed a close friendship with Hess being first secretary, then adjutant to the Führer. After the Nazi takeover of power in 1933, Hess was appointed Hitler's deputy and stand-in as a speaker⁹ at rallies.



“The party is Hitler, Hitler is Germany, and Germany is Hitler! Sieg Heil!”

In the hierarchy, he was second only to Göring and Hitler himself. However, over the course of time, Hess, who was motivated solely by his personal devotion and loyalty to Hitler, seemed to lack any real lust for power. He was not, like i.e. Göring, interested in self-aggrandizement and earthly pleasures; lived modestly and, most important to the coming erosion of his position, neglected to build his own power base at the Nazi court.

As Hess rose in rank, if not in importance, his former role as Hitler’s personal secretary, and thus the closeness to the Führer, was gradually taken over by Martin Bormann, initially hired as secretary to Hess. A Machiavellian workaholic, this outwardly harmlessly looking viper soon began inching his way to the top, ruthlessly disposing of opponents as he went.¹⁰

Hess was no match for the sly Bormann and thus sidelined, of little recognition amongst the other Nazi thugs and basically disagreeing with Hitler’s policies towards England, Hess decided to take matters in his own hand and seek an understanding with the Britons that he envisioned would end the war.

Hess the odd bird

Not questioning his zealotry or commitment to the Nazi course – Hess after all did not falter in his conviction through decades of imprisonment – he always *was* an odd bird in the upper Nazi echelon.

Lacking the psychopathic iron will and flamboyance of a Göring; the eloquence in oratory that Goebbels mastered or the cunning Machiavellianism of the weasel Bormann, Hess, an unpractical naïve dreamer and – in terms of personal conduct and lack of ambition – probably an ‘honest’ man, was bound to fall behind in the power struggle at the Nazi top.

His eccentric behavior didn’t help. Hess had a strong leaning to astrology,¹¹ he was a teetotaler and he didn’t smoke. He was a firm believer in homeopathy and herbal remedies and regarded established medical treatment with contempt. Hess was a vegetarian¹² and, obsessed with his health to the point of hypochondria, he embraced all sorts of peddlers of

quackery; fortune tellers, divining rod and pendulum handlers and dream interpreters in his efforts to alleviate his many imagined ailments.¹³

HIMMLER'S MASSEUR, though doctor may be a more apt designation for Felix Kersten, treated, on the Reichführer's insistence, a host of Nazi bigwigs including Hess. He offers this observation of the Führers Stellvertreter:

"It was a year ago [May 1940] that Himmler asked me to examine Hess; since then I have treated him too. I established that he was suffering from trouble in the gall-bladder and stomach pains."

"Hess was a good and helpful person, very modest in his way of life. He was a vegetarian, surrounded himself with clairvoyants and astrologers and despised official medical views. He was constantly saying that he could not go on with this existence. He was firmly resolved to stake his life on a great deed in the service of Germany."

"Another time he told me that he had to concentrate all his powers and harden himself – he needed all his strength for the deed which would secure the salvation of Germany. When I asked what he meant by this 'salvation', Hess replied that he could not tell me, but he was preparing for an act of historic importance."

[The Kersten Memoir, p. 89]

This conversation took place shortly before Hess' flight to England, and Kersten thus – unwittingly – caught wind of what was to happen. On May 14, he was arrested and interrogated by Heydrich himself on suspicion to have aided Hess in the planning but released shortly after on strict orders from Heinrich Himmler.

The flight that put Hess in the history books

Alongside his engagement in political work, Hess had kept his interest in aviation alive. He owned several airplanes himself, partook in flying contests and, through contact to the Messerschmitt factories, he familiarized himself with the latest developments in technology and would often take off for a test flight in a new machine from the factory airstrip at Augsburg.

In the evening of May 10, after several earlier, futile attempts, Hess threw the dice. He left a letter to be handed to Hitler by his aides, allegedly explaining his reasons for the flight, and during his subsequent long flight managed the – with the equipment of the day - considerable feat to navigate to Scotland. Hess parachuted from the plane over Renfrewshire, and was taken prisoner by the local Home Guard.

After a final check of the weather reports for Germany and the North Sea, Hess took off at 17:45 on 10 May 1941 from the airfield at Augsburg-Haunstetten in his specially prepared aircraft [radio compass, modifications to the oxygen delivery system, and large, long-range fuel tanks]. Wearing a leather flying suit with a Flight-Captains insignia he brought along a supply of money and toiletries, torchlight, camera, maps and charts, and a collection of herbal medicines as well as dextrose tablets to combat fatigue.



Photo: The crash site in Scotland and newspaper front. "Circling low over Northern Scotland, Hess, at 22:35 was nearly out of fuel, so he climbed to 6,000 feet (1,800 m) and parachuted out of the plane at 23:06. He injured his foot, either while exiting the aircraft or when he hit the ground. The aircraft crashed at 23:09, about 12 miles (19 km) west of Dungavel House, his intended target." [Source: Wikipedia.]

Back in Berchtesgaden, upon reading Hess' letter, Hitler was furious and ordered the messengers arrested.¹⁴ Luftwaffe experts estimated that it would be impossible for Hess to navigate properly and that he would most likely ditch the plane in the North Sea, but for safety reasons a press statement was issued, claiming a case of 'sudden insanity' with the Deputy Führer.

Fantast or emissary?

Theories about the background for Rudolph Hess' flight to Scotland and Hitler's possible involvement or knowledge have been plentiful ever since he took off; predominantly circulating around whether it was a clandestine peace-feeler to the Britons and Hess thus in reality an emissary from the German Führer.

Albert Speer, chief 'Baumeister' of the Third Reich and later Minister of Armaments, happened to be with Hitler, when trembling adjutants of Hess' delivered the message from the Deputy Führer, and he, Speer, furthermore spent twenty years as Hess' prison buddy, hearing the full story from 'the horses' mouth'.

In a world thronged with zealous conspiracy theorists, this may not suffice to convince, but personally I find Speer's memoir insightful and quite convincing on matters that doesn't concern his personal knowledge of the atrocities committed in the Reich or his involvement therein. In the case of Hess' flight to Scotland Speer would have had little inclination not to tell the story truthfully as he experienced it first hand;

"EVEN WHEN HITLER WAS DEEP IN THE PLANS FOR THE Russian campaign, his mind was already dwelling on theatrical effects for the victory parades of 1950, once the grand boulevard and the great triumphal arch had been completed. But while he dreamed of new wars, new victories and celebrations, he suffered one of the greatest defeats of his career. Three days after a talk with me in which he had outlined more of his conceptions of the future, I was called to Obersalzberg with my sketches [on May 11, 1940]. Waiting in the anteroom at the Berghof, pale and agitated, were Leitgen and Pintsch, two of Hess's adjutants. They asked if I would let them see Hitler first; they had a personal letter from Hess to transmit to him. At this moment Hitler descended from his room upstairs. One of the adjutants

was called into the salon. While I began leafing through my sketches once more, I suddenly heard an inarticulate, almost animal outcry. Then Hitler roared: "Bormann, at once! Where is Bormann?" Bormann was told to get in touch with Goering, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, and Himmler by the fastest possible means. All private guests were commanded to the upper floor. Many hours passed before we learned what had happened: Hitler's deputy had flown to hostile England.

Superficially, Hitler soon appeared to have regained his usual composure. What bothered him was that Churchill might use the incident to pretend to Germany's allies that Hitler was extending a peace offer. "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?" Japan might even alter her policy because of this, he fretted. He put through a phone call to Ernst Udet, the famous First World War fighter pilot and now technical chief of the air force and wanted to know whether the two-motored plane Hess was using [Me 110] could reach its goal in Scotland and what weather conditions it would encounter. After a brief interval Udet called back to say that Hess was bound to fail for navigational reasons alone; because of the prevailing side winds he would probably fly past England and into empty space. For a moment Hitler regained hope: "If only he would drown in the North Sea! Then he would vanish without a trace, and we could work out some harmless explanation at our leisure." But after a few hours his anxieties returned, and in order to anticipate the British in any case he decided to announce over the radio that Hess had gone mad. The two adjutants, however, were arrested - as the harbingers of bad news used to be at the courts of ancient despots.

A rush of activity began at the Berghof. Aside from Goering, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop, Ley, various Gauleiters, and other party leaders arrived. Ley, as organizational chief of the party, made a bid to take over Hess's duties. In organizational terms this was no doubt what should have happened. But Bormann now showed for the first time how much influence he had over Hitler. He made short work of fending off Ley's proposal, and took the post for himself. Churchill commented at the time that this night showed the presence of a worm in the German apple. He could not possibly have guessed how literally this phrase applied to Hess's successor.

Henceforth, Hess was scarcely ever mentioned in Hitler's entourage. Bormann alone looked into the affairs of his former superior and showed great zeal in visiting the sins of her husband on Frau Hess. Eva Braun tried to intercede with Hitler on her behalf, but unsuccessfully; later she gave her a small allowance behind Hitler's back. A few weeks later I heard from my doctor, Professor Chaoul that Hess's father was dying. I sent him flowers, though without disclosing myself as the sender.

At the time it appeared to me that Bormann's ambition had driven Hess to this desperate act. Hess, also highly ambitious, could plainly see himself being excluded from access to and influence over Hitler. Thus, for example, Hitler said to me some time in 1940, after a conversation with Hess lasting many hours: "When I talk with Goering, 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 unbearably tormenting strain. He always comes to me with unpleasant matters and won't leave off." By his flight to England, Hess was probably trying, after so many years of being kept in the background, to win prestige and some success. For he did not have the qualities necessary for survival in the midst of a swamp of

intrigues and struggles for power. He was too sensitive, too receptive, too unstable, and often told all factions they were in the right, in the order of their appearance. As a type he undoubtedly corresponded to the majority of the high party leaders; like him, most of them had great difficulty keeping the ground of reality under their feet.

Hitler put the blame for Hess's flight on the corrupting influence of Professor Haushofer. Twenty-five years later, in Spandau prison, Hess assured me in all seriousness that the idea had been inspired in him in a dream of supernatural forces. He said he had not at all intended to oppose or embarrass Hitler. "We will guarantee England her empire; in return she will give us a free hand in Europe." That was the message he took to England - without managing to deliver it. It had also been one of Hitler's recurrent formulas before and occasionally even during the war.

If I judge correctly, Hitler never got over this 'disloyalty' on the part of his deputy. Some while after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, he mentioned, in the course of one of his fantastic misreadings of the real situation that among his conditions for peace was the extradition of the 'traitor'. Hess would have to be hanged he said. When I told Hess about this later, he commented: "He would have made it up with me. I'm certain of it. And don't you believe that in 1945, when everything was going to smash, he sometimes thought: 'Hess was right after all'?"

[Inside the Third Reich, p. 250 ff]

Supporting Speer's observations concerning the flight, the memoir of Hans Baur, Hitler's personal pilot, offers some explanatory technical comments:

"One evening I was in Vienna strolling along the Kärntner Ring, when Flight-Captain Stöhr, Messerschmitt's chief test pilot, who was sitting outside a café, called out to me. I joined him, and he told me he was on his way to Tokyo to demonstrate Messerschmitt's to the Japanese. In conversation he mentioned that Rudolf Hess frequently came to the Messerschmitt works in Augsburg to try out the new Me 210, the very latest two-engined plane, a very swift job which had not yet become operational.

Everyone knew that Hitler didn't like Hess flying, and had forbidden him to fly alone - he always had to have a full flight-captain with him. However, Hess went to Messerschmitt, who, of course, knew all about the prohibition, and declared that he had a special mission about which he was unable to talk ... Messerschmitt let him have his way"

"Hess had a number of changes made to the plane. For example, he had the radar apparatus so installed that he could use it without assistance."

"Four weeks after that I happened to meet Hess in Hitler's apartments, and he came straight up to me and declared bluntly: 'Baur, I want a map of the forbidden air zones.' ... And with that map, his training on the Me 210 and his industrious studying of instrument and blind flying, Hess was in a position to fly out of wartime Germany."

[I was Hitler's Pilot, p. 124-25]

These accounts leave in my view little left to ponder over. The 'mysterious' flight, which is actually the most interesting aspect in the life of Hess, was no more a mystery than the man who flew the plane. A masterpiece in aerial navigation - Hess later said that he considered this achievement to be the

proudest moment of his life - it was nonetheless a futile mission concocted in a confused brain and with no hope of success.

And gravely had Hess to pay for it; more than forty years spent in Spandau Prison, twenty of those in solitude.

Upon parachuting into Scotland, spraining an ankle in the process, Hess, presenting himself as 'Hauptmann Alfred Horn', requested to see the Duke of Hamilton¹⁵. He was taken to a nearby police station and there from to the Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow. The next morning, the Duke visited him, Hess revealed his true identity, and they spoke at length.

In the days to follow, Hess was meticulously debriefed about his mission by British intelligence, but his repeated requests to meet with high-ranking British officials to talk about peace with Germany were ignored and he was incarcerated in the Tower of London, ordered by Churchill to be isolated, but 'treated with dignity'.

"My coming to England in this way is, as I realize, so unusual that nobody will easily understand it."

Hess spent the war in British custody, in his own view still as a faithful paladin to his Führer. In prison, he wrote a farewell letter to Hitler and then tried to commit suicide by throwing himself down a stairwell. He got off with a broken leg.

Hess at the Nuremberg Trials

American war correspondent and author of the acclaimed 'Rise & Fall of the Third Reich' was present during the trials in November 1946 and offers vitriolic descriptions of the defendants appearance in court. On Rudolf Hess he wrote:

"Next to Göring sits Rudolf Hess, the number-three man of the Third Reich until his ridiculous flight to England. How on earth, you ask again, could that man have been one of the top leaders of a great nation? Here is really a broken man, his face so emaciated it looks like a skeleton, his mouth twitching nervously, his once bright eyes staring vacantly and stupidly around the courtroom. It is the first time I have ever seen Hess out of uniform. In the black coat of the SS he always seemed a strapping fellow. Today in a threadbare civilian suit he looks small and wizened. Unlike the others, he pays little attention to what is going on and sits for the most of the time reading a novel balanced on his knees. We know that he claims to have lost his memory,¹⁶ but he seems to be to behave normally enough. He was never very bright and he certainly does not appear bright today. It is his deterioration that startles you. Here is the wreck of a man whom Hitler not so long ago wanted to succeed him as dictator of Germany."

[End of a Berlin Diary, p. 294-95]

AS THE NUREMBERG TRIALS commenced in November 1945, Hess was transferred to the prison where the other defendants were held. He initially claimed amnesia, loss of memory, and therefore unable to contribute to the trial, but later gave up the charade and cooperated, showing no signs of

remorse. He spent most of the sessions doodling without paying attention and seemed to be lost in speculations over the past. As the defendants were invited to give a closing remark on August 31, 1946, Hess sealed his fate with the words;

"I was permitted to work for many years of my life under the greatest son whom my people has brought forth in its thousand year history. Even if I could, I would not want to erase this period of time from my existence. I am happy to know that I have done my duty, to my people, my duty as a German, as a National Socialist, as a loyal follower of my Führer. I do not regret anything. If I were to begin all over again, I would act just as I have acted, even if I knew that in the end I should meet a fiery death at the stake. No matter what human beings may do, I shall some day stand before the judgment seat of the Eternal. I shall answer to Him, and I know He will judge me innocent."

Where the majority of defendants were handed capital punishment¹⁷, and some got off with ten to twenty years prison terms, Hess was found guilty on two counts: crimes against peace (planning and preparing a war of aggression), and conspiracy with other German leaders to commit crimes. He was found not guilty of war crimes nor crimes against humanity, but nonetheless sentenced to life in prison.

"On the narrow, winding staircase I meet Hess who is also lugging his table, 'What did you get, Herr Hess', I ask. He looks absently on me. 'I have no idea. Probably the death sentence. I didn't listen.'

[Albert Speer]

The defendants who received prison terms initially stayed in Nuremberg,¹⁸ and the first assignment put to them was to clean up the gymnasium where the executions of their compatriots had taken place. In his 'Secret Diaries', Speer recounts an episode that is quite telling about Hess' attitude:

"In the afternoon brooms and mops are handed to Schirach, Hess and me. We are told to follow a soldier who leads us into an empty gym. This is where the executions took place. But the gallows has already been dismantled, the spot cleaned. Nevertheless, we are supposed to sweep and mop the floor. The lieutenant watches our reactions closely. I try hard to keep my composure. Hess comes to attention in front of a dark spot on the floor that looks like a large bloodstain; he raises his arm to the party salute."

[Spandau, the secret diaries, p.10-11]



Photo: Rudolf Hess as a decrepit, lonely old man, an empty shell, walking the grounds of Spandau Prison. Right; the garden hut where Hess met his demise.

February 16, 1947: We don't know what Hess is up to. Every chance he gets he asks us about things that need doing; he recently questioned Funk about the strengths and

weaknesses of each one of us. *'All his remarks suggest that he is putting together a new government,'* Funk commented. *'What craziness! Just imagine a list of cabinet members being found under his mattress!'*¹⁹

[Entry in Speers diary]

Spandau

IN MID-JULY 1947, THE SEVEN DEFENDANTS from the Nuremberg Process were transferred to the Spandau Prison, northeast of Berlin. Hess, 'Prisoner No 7' [Speer was No 5], would spend the remainder of his life here, half of that time as a loner; the most expensive confinement of one man anywhere in the world. Pleas for a release on humanitarian grounds were repeatedly made, by western governments and by his family, but the Soviet Union categorically vetoed the idea; the odd bird was to stay in its cage.

From October 1966, where his last cellmates were released [Speer and von Schirach], he was thus to be the sole inmate left in Spandau. Albert Speer commented on Hess' demeanor at the farewell:

"He stood up well under the strain of the last few days as he watched us prepare to leave," Speer said to the journalists. "I must pay him a high compliment. He showed strong nerves."

DURING THE FOLLOWING DECADE, restrictions for the last inmate in Spandau were lifted. A pavilion was erected in the garden, where Hess could read and enjoy the sun, and he was permitted more time out of his cell. Hess also had the first visit by his wife and son in 1969 and thereafter on a regular basis. Wolf-Rüdiger worked tirelessly for his fathers early release, but in vain, and eventually, the cup of bitterness ran over for the Deputy Führer.



Photo: Spandau Prison from the air, the white hut apparently that of Hess'. Admittedly quite a facility for the incarceration of one man. After the death of Rudolf Hess, the prison was demolished to avoid the site being turned into a Neo-Nazi shrine. [Photo: Bundesarchiv]. Today, a mall occupies the premises.

Hess died in Spandau in 1987, at the age of 93, leaving a suicide note²⁰ to his family. He was found in a pavilion in the prison garden with an electrical cord wrapped around his neck and the course of death was attributed to asphyxiation.²¹ Hess was buried at Wunsiedel, Bavaria, in the family plot.



Photo: The Hess family grave plot, guarded by German police in order to keep Neo-Nazi demonstrators at bay [Wikipedia]

However, following a series of incidents where Neo-Nazis used the site for yearly gatherings on Hess' birthday, the grave was demolished as the lease ran out in 2011. Hess' remains were exhumed and cremated and scattered at sea by family members.

The gravestone, which bore the epitaph 'Ich hab's gewagt' ['I have dared'], was destroyed.

Notes

¹ Fritz Hess had a large portrait of Emperor Wilhelm II in his study. On the yearly event of his majesty's birthday, Hess senior would have a bottle of wine opened and toast to Wilhelm's health.

² Hess would later say that the tone of his fathers voice, when he commanded the family, could make the blood run cold in his veins.

³ Hess also attended a German language Protestant school in Alexandria from 1900 to 1908, prior to his studying in Germany.

⁴ In 1917, at the Rumanian front, Hess took a near-fatal shot to the lung, but pulled through.

⁵ Haushofer vehemently denied any direct affiliation with Nazi ideology. His ideas concerning 'Lebensraum' seeped into Nazi expansionist thinking largely through Hess. Confronted postwar with the allegations, Haushofer and his wife committed suicide in 1946.

⁶ Hess' son would lead a relentless campaign for the release of this father and, after his death in 1987, a life-long battle to prove that his father was murdered in prison because he 'knew too much'. Wolf-Rüdiger died in 2001.

⁷ This blatant display of dilettantism – which nonetheless was an important stepping-stone in Hitler's way to power – will be dealt with in a separate article.

⁸ Some historians attribute much of the high-flying ranting to Hess himself and I find that highly likely. It's an all but unreadable piece of literature in my opinion, but I willingly confess that I have never managed more than some 40-50 pages before giving up.

⁹ Unlike Hitler, Hess was no loquacious orator. His awkwardness and lack of grip of the audience made him a rather poor speaker. That would also cost him in the internal power struggle among the Nazi bonzes.

¹⁰ His chance came in the aftermath of Hess' flight to England. Robert Lay made a bid for the job, but Bormann, already at that point influential with Hitler, quickly brushed him aside and took the position for himself.

¹¹ Not that this was all that unusual in the Third Reich. Many prominent Nazis had horoscopes laid, including Hitler and Himmler.

¹² Hess would even bring his own food to the Berghof, claiming it was 'biologically dynamic'; a practice that annoyed the Führer so much that Hess eventually became a rare guest at Hitler's dinner table.

¹³ According to Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi ideologist, a 'wise man' recommended that Hess had all teeth in his upper jaw pulled out in order to 'avoid infections'. Allegedly, Hess complied [unconfirmed story]

¹⁴ Unleashing the wrath on the hapless messenger has been a dictator hallmark since ages, and no different with Hitler. The two adjutants were arrested and spent some unpleasant time in Prinz Albrecht Strasse.

¹⁵ Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, the 14th Duke of Hamilton, himself an aviator, was for some unknown reason regarded by Hess as positive towards Nazi Germany and a possible connection to Churchill. Suspicion as to Hamilton's role in the affair spawned an inquiry that acquitted Hamilton from any Nazi affiliation, and Hess' assumptions remain a mystery.

¹⁶ Hess 'miraculously' regained his memory on November 30 and henceforth contributed to his case.

¹⁷ The Russian prosecutor demanded capital punishment for Hess too, but eventually a life sentence was agreed upon.

¹⁸ They were moved to the Spandau Prison on July 18, 1947.

¹⁹ As it turned out, such a list actually

²⁰ Wolf-Rüdiger Hess, his son and an adamant proponent for his father's early release, was, not surprisingly perhaps, convinced that the letter was a forgery.

²¹ I am aware of the controversies regarding the circumstances of Hess' death. People are of course entitled to subscribe to any opinion they wish, be it ever so outlandish, but please familiarize yourself with forum rules before you comment. Thank you.