



## “If Adolf Hitler had ever had a friend, I would have been that friend!”

Albert Speer is well-known to most people as ‘Hitler’s architect’. Early in his career, he landed a few small commissions for the NSDAP and that might have been the end of it had Hitler not taken a fancy to the bright young man. Under the patronage of Germany’s Führer, he quickly rose within the Nazi hierarchy. He became Hitler’s close confidant and at the peak of his career, he was Minister of Armament and War Production and thus directly responsible for Germany’s ability to wage war; exploiting thousands of slave laborer in the process.

Yet at the postwar war crime trial in Nuremberg he successfully managed to paint an image of himself as a penitent, un-political technocrat who woke up too late to the grim reality of his doings, but tried hard to make amends. In his defense he *did* acknowledge a degree of ‘general responsibility’, but personally, he was not guilty of any atrocities.

That image saved his neck...



**Photo:** Speer, the ambitious youngster and the elderly man, marked by twenty years in prison.

## Childhood and youth

Berthold Konrad Hermann Albert Speer was a ‘middle child’ [out of three boys] born into an affluent family in Mannheim, Baden-Württemberg, in 1905. His father was a successful architect, and the family enjoyed wealth and social standing, if not a particular close inter-family relationship. The children were mostly in the care of nannies, and Speer describes his childhood discomfort with the ‘artificial’ family atmosphere. He was a sickly child who for long periods had to confine himself to the house and he suffered from a feeling of inferiority towards his two stronger brothers.

The family moved to Heidelberg in 1918. Speer’s health gradually improved and he took up rowing sport, working his way up to become so apt an oarsman that he could represent his school in races. He attributes this to be the time where his ambitions and sense of self-discipline was awoken.

At school Speer did well, excelling especially in mathematics. He had his eyes fixed on becoming a mathematician, but on his fathers advice – who said it would be the path to poverty – he studied architecture as his father and grandfather before him, first in Karlsruhe and later at the prestigious University of Munich. In 1925 he shifted to the Technical University in Berlin-Charlottenburg, studying under Professor Heinrich Tessenow.



**Photo:** Albert Speer & Margret. Left, the young couple prewar in a Berlin street, allegedly shortly after their wedding. Right, the elderly Speers some time after Albert’s release from prison.

In 1927 Albert Speer landed a position as assistant to professor Tessenow, the earnings enabling him to marry Margret Weber whom he had known since his early youth. Her father was a master carpenter with a successful business, but the prospect of ‘marrying beneath’ was not immediately appraised by Speer’s class-conscientious mother.<sup>1</sup> Albert wooed Margret<sup>2</sup> nonetheless, and the Speers’ would stick together throughout the prison years, their marriage spawning six children; Albert (1935); Hilde (1936); Fritz (1937); Margret (1938); Arnold (1940) and Ernst (1943).<sup>3</sup>

**NOT WITHOUT A TOUCH** of self-irony Speer recounts how the newlyweds spent their honeymoon boating and camping in the forested chain of lakes in Mecklenburg, launching the boats in Spandau, a few hundred meters from the prison where he would later be spending twenty years.

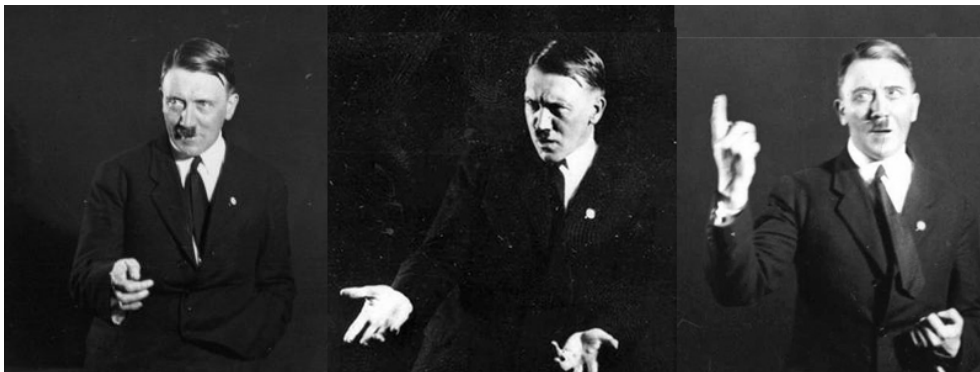
## “One seldom recognizes the devil when he is putting his hand on your shoulder”

Technology was considered pivotal in the rising Third Reich and the Technical University in Charlottenburg attracted many young students who were followers of Hitler. These students in Speer’s class eventually managed to persuade him to attend a meeting in a Berlin beer-cellar where Hitler was to speak. Apprehensive at first, Hitler’s demeanor and initial calm serenity took him by surprise and left a kind of vague sympathy;

*“Hitler entered and was tempestuously hailed by his numerous followers among the students. This enthusiasm in itself made a great impression upon me. But his appearance also surprised me. On posters and in caricatures I had seen him in military tunic, with shoulder straps, swastika armband, and hair flapping over his forehead. But here he was wearing a well-fitted blue suit and looking markedly respectable. Everything about him bore out the note of reasonable modesty. Later I learned that he had a great gift for adjusting - consciously or intuitively - to his surroundings.*

*As the ovation went on for minutes he tried, as if slightly pained, to check it. Then, in a low voice, hesitantly and somewhat shyly, he began a kind of historical lecture rather than a speech. To me there was something engaging about it - all the more so since it ran counter to everything the propaganda of his opponents had led me to expect: a hysterical demagogue, a shrieking and gesticulating fanatic in uniform. He did not allow the bursts of applause to tempt him away from his sober tone.*

*It seemed as if he were candidly presenting his anxieties about the future. His irony was softened by a somewhat self-conscious humor; his South German charm reminded me agreeably of my native region. A cool Prussian could never have captivated me that way. Hitler's initial shyness soon disappeared; at times now his pitch rose. He spoke urgently and with hypnotic persuasiveness. The mood he cast was much deeper than the speech itself, most of which I did not remember for long.”*



**Photo:** Hitler, the speaker. Photos are from a series that he made with the help of Heinrich Hofmann, the Munich photographer where Hitler met Eva Braun. The purpose was to hone the gestures of Führer in spe to attain maximum persuasiveness and effect on the audience.

Speer had read Spengler’s 1918 dystopian ‘Untergang des Abendlandes’ [Decline of the West] with its prediction of the upcoming end of Western civilization and he was tormented by sinister visions of Germany’s future. Hitler’s words seemed to alleviate his anxiety and show a way out of the predicament.

## The Devil's Architect

Eventually, Speer joined the NSDAP with membership no. 474481.<sup>4</sup> A few commissions, small and unpaid, first for Karl Hanke, then for Göbbels [May Day Rally in Berlin] paved the way to the 1933 Nuremberg Rally job, which, albeit being more decoration than architecture, established Speer's position. He recounts the meeting with Hitler in his memoir;

*"I had a letter of introduction with me, since I was still completely unknown outside of Berlin. It seemed that headquarters took architecture, or rather festival décor, with extraordinary seriousness. A few minutes after my arrival I stood in Rudolf Hess's luxuriously appointed office, my folder of drawings in my hand. Hess did not give me a chance to speak. 'Only the Fuehrer himself can decide this sort of thing.' Hess made a brief telephone call and then said: 'The Fuehrer is in his apartment. I'll have you driven over there.' For the first time I had an intimation of what the magic word 'architecture' meant under Hitler.*



**Photo:** For obvious reasons there are no photos of Speer's first encounter with Hitler, so the left photo is a later one; probably taken in his mountain study adjacent to the Berghof. On the right photo yours truly is standing in front of Prinzregentenplatz 16, where the meeting took place in Hitler's second floor apartment.

*We stopped at an apartment house in the vicinity of the Prinzregenten Theater. Two flights up I was admitted to an anteroom containing mementos or presents of low quality. The furniture, too, testified to poor taste. An adjutant came in, opened a door, said casually, 'Go in.' and I stood before Hitler, the mighty Chancellor of the Reich. On a table in front of him lay a pistol that had been taken apart; he seemed to have been cleaning it. 'Put the drawing here,' he said curtly. Without looking at me, he pushed the parts of the pistol aside and examined my sketches with interest but without a word. 'Agreed.' No more. Since he turned to his pistol again. I left the room in some confusion."*

From thereon Speer was on an updraft, taking on more and more important jobs including an almost monstrous pavilion for the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris, culminating with the commission for the New Reichs Chancellery in Berlin. He received the assignment in January 1938 and made a promise to Hitler that the building would be ready by the same time in 1939 thus limiting the entire time from draft to inauguration to one year, and he beat his own deadline by 48 hours.<sup>5</sup>





Photo: Exposition Internationale 1937 in Paris with the participation of fifty-two countries. The upcoming clash between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia is represented almost symbolically by the confrontation of the respective pavilions; Nazi's (designed by Speer) left of the Eiffel Tower and Communists right.

Speer's building style was heavily influenced by the great ruins of Greek and Roman times, and the marriage with the ideals of national socialism created what is often referred to as 'brutalism' or 'intimidating architecture'; tall, looming buildings in stonework, granite or marble adorned with bronze railings and barred windows, designed to let the spectator feel small and insignificant in the face of supreme power. Not unlike medieval cathedrals, but without their elaborate, intrinsic beauty.

**DIE RUINENWERTTHEORIE.** An important element in Speer's architectural thinking and design was how the buildings would present themselves a thousand years forth. He claimed ownership to this concept in his 'Theory of Ruin Value', although the original idea was much older. The notion that magnificent ruins should form a bridge to the glorious past for future generations went down well with Hitler, who liked to say that 'the purpose of his building efforts was to transmit his time and its spirit to posterity', pointing to the fact that all what remained of great men of any epoch was the ruins they left behind.<sup>6</sup>

Speer thus fitted neatly in as Hitler's great 'Baumeister', responsible for transforming the Führer's ideas into tangible reality. He put the final touch to the 'Olympiastadion'<sup>7</sup> in Berlin and designed the 'Zeppelinfeld' Grand Stand in Nuremberg. During this period their friendship and mutual admiration grew<sup>8</sup> and the crown of their cooperation, had the war not gotten in the way, should have been the remodeling of Berlin into 'Germania', the capital of world capitals and the hub of a Nazi-controlled Europe. To that end, grandiose plans were elaborated; the Siegessäule was moved to its present position; models were shaped and hundred of Berlin apartments were demolished to make way for splendid avenues and imposing buildings in the typical Nazi style.

However, as war broke out most plans had to be shelved and for a time, Speer focused on repair of bomb-damaged buildings and the construction of bunkers and air-raid shelters.<sup>9</sup>

## The Bergvolk

As a rising star in the Nazi hierarchy, and because Hitler had taken a personal liking to him, Speer and his wife Margret soon became regulars at the Führer's Berchtesgarden mansion, the Berghof; part of the inner circle

including people such as Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitlers photographer, Eva Braun, his mistress, ‘Leibarzt’ Dr. Theodor Morell, Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below and his wife<sup>10</sup> and many more old cronies and favorites.

Speer acquired a house close to the Berghof and even had a small study built within walking distance where he and his Master<sup>11</sup> could muse over building plans for Germany and Austria.



Photo: Speer with kids; photos looking somewhat ‘arranged’. An enthusiastic automobilist since his youth and a member of the NSKK [Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps] with his kids, he would now and then take the children for a ride, going at high speed to their delight.

Eva Braun was a keen amateur photographer and many photos and footage exists of the Speers and their children visiting Uncle Hitler. Speers oldest, also named Albert [† 2017] and an architect like his father, claimed total amnesia for these visits, not even recalling riding the Führers knee. And he was seven or eight years at the time.



Photo: The (in)famous Berghof terrace in its heyday, Speer sitting on the parapet, entertaining the ladies. Right; what is left of it today [2010], hidden on the overgrown mountain side, not too far from the Hotel Zum Türken. Visiting the place today, you can get access to (a part of) the vast, underground tunnel system. The lower stories are flooded.

## Minister of Armaments

The decisive turning point in Speer’s career, and the moment he took the step from ardent follower to actual culprit, came when he took over the position as Minister of Armament, following the death of Fritz Todt on February 15, 1942. Todt’s plane crashed on take-off from the Rastenburg airstrip – Speer was supposed to have been on the plane, but cancelled his flight after a prolonged meeting with Hitler the night before – and in the

morning the Führer, post crash, summoned Speer and appointed him Todt's successor. Göring, the architect of the four-year plans and second man in the Reich, had rushed to the Wolfsschanze, expecting to be the chosen one, but alas. That would later create some rivalry between him and Speer, albeit they also found it useful to cooperate to stem the influence of Hitler's Grey Eminence; Martin Bormann.

On Hitler's direct order, Speer thus took the reins of all weapons production in Germany and with his remarkable organizational talent production soon soared. He discovered that weapons production was running after prewar principles, with only one shift, and that – unlike in Britain – women had not been mobilized into the workforce. Further, production of consumer goods had not been significantly diminished and thus took a great toll on overall production capacity.

### “Speer, I will sign anything that comes from you”

Centralizing war economy under his own aegis, Speer developed a system where production was specialized in factory units, each responsible for their part of a weapons system. He preferred to put technical experts rather than party apparatchiks in charge<sup>12</sup> (and thus alienated the Gauleiters and Bormann), and managed to keep production output rising throughout the war, peaking in 1944, in spite of increasing shortage of raw materials and incessant Allied bombing. Albeit he at this point in time had realized that the war was lost for Germany, he carried on tirelessly;

>> **BY THE END OF 1944** Speer was working at full stretch in two almost diametrically opposite directions. On the one hand, even though he knew that the end was imminent and that Hitler's programme was evil, he continued his efforts to produce arms for his war. He undertook three trips to the West, combining bolstering visits to industrial centres and conferences with the generals at the front. *“How can one describe it?”* said Hupfauer, the head of Speer's ministry's Central Planning Board, to me. *“He cajoled, he reassured, he urged them to hold out and advised them how to go about it. I never understood it, but he carried us all along - the generals, the industrialists, the workers. He gave people the feeling that they were winning in defeat. I think he saved our self-respect.”* He smiled briefly. *“I don't think anybody would have described Speer as an endearing or lovable man. He was too lofty for that. But in those months, people, all of us, felt something akin to love for him.”*

[‘Speer, his Battle with Truth’, Gitta Sereny]

In the face of severe manpower shortage in the industry due to the millions of men drafted into the service, Speer turned to other solutions. Via Fritz Sauckel, by Hitler appointed General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment, Speer requisitioned more and more workforce for his factory, and Sauckel met the demands by simply rounding up men and women in Nazi-occupied countries and (most often forcibly) transport them to Germany.

As Allied bombing gradually flattened Speers factories, he simply moved the most important of them underground. Germany already had numerous disused mines in its mountainous regions, and with the help of Sauckel's

‘volunteers’, many of these facilities were converted into weapons factories, providing shelter for the bombs – and horrific conditions for the workers.



**Photo:** The remains (a tiny part) of the underground V1/V2 factory at Dora Mittelberg. Left: remnants of the production. Middle: amenities for the guards, the workers had to use a cut-over oil barrel. Right: sleeping quarters behind the pillars. The tunnels ran for more than twenty kilometers and the slaves worked and lived for months in this clammy, unhealthy environment; poorly clad, malnourished and brutally punished for the slightest misdemeanor.

The extensive use of slave labor under appalling circumstances he thus furthered, remains his dire responsibility (albeit he to a degree managed to dodge it at the Nuremberg Process and pin it on his deputy, Fritz Sauckel) and one that will forever taint the posthumous reputation of this talented, but weak and subservient man.<sup>13</sup> In the end, Speer undoubtedly prolonged the war by months, perhaps years, by his organizational skills and cynical exploitation of human resources.

**THE WAR ALSO TOOK A TOLL** on the Speer family and Albert was not without blame. His younger brother Ernst who served at the Eastern Front and was among the some 300.000 men encircled in Stalingrad. When he fell ill with jaundice, he asked his brother to use his influence to facilitate a transfer back home. Speer, however, unwilling to go against Hitler’s orders that high-ranking government officials were not to extend special privileges to relatives, hesitated. When he finally moved via contacts in the Luftwaffe, it was too late; Ernst was no longer to be located and at Stalingrad the end was neigh. The incident must have haunted Speer ever after.

## The faithful Paladin

Not until the closing days of the war did Speer rebel against his Master and even then his motives are veiled. Was he, as he claim, outraged by the recklessness with which Hitler was steering Germany towards a Wagnerian end? Was the technocrat appalled by the squandering of resources, expressed in Hitler’s ‘Nero Befehl’ of March 19, 1945, demanding a scorched earth policy on German soil in the advance of the enemy? Was he tormented by the late realization of the human hardship and suffering he had caused?<sup>14</sup> Or had this clever man simply foresight enough to plan for his own survival and a postwar life in a conquered Germany?

A little of each, likely, and at the end of the day, Speer may claim some vindication through his efforts to counter Hitler’s madness. No doubt, he took a great personal risk with these actions, persuading Gauleiters and Army officers to ignore orders and thus, albeit late, did some good for his fellow countrymen.



**“A passionate love of one's country  
could no longer be reconciled  
with a leader who seemed to hate his people.”**

On April 23, 1945, Speer ventured by plane into besieged Berlin and the Führerbunker, allegedly to confess his clandestine, yet blatant disregard of Hitler's demolition orders, and, if requested, to stay in the Bunker with his Master to the end. To his own surprise, he got clean away with it:

*“In this state, I confessed to him in a low voice, to my own surprise, that I had not carried out any demolitions [as ordered in the Nero Decree] but had actually prevented them. For a moment his eyes filled with tears. But he did not react. Such questions, so important to him only a few weeks before, were now remote. Absently, he stared at me as I faltered out my offer to stay in Berlin. He did not answer. Perhaps he sensed that I did not mean it.”*

[Inside the Third Reich, p. 639-40]



His memoir describe a vivid and emotional account of this last conversations with the Führer, where Speer, in spite of his insubordinate actions, assured Hitler of his unwavering personal loyalty and faithfulness, but as no one else was present, and Hitler was dead at the time of publishing, Speer could say pretty much what he wanted to.<sup>15</sup>

Leaving Berlin the following morning, he went about some personal business, eventually ending up in Flensburg where he briefly joined the short-lived Dönitz administration as Minister of Economics. He was arrested there along with the rest of the provisional government by British troops on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1945.

**“If Speer had said as much in Nuremberg,  
he would have hanged”**

During the Nuremberg Process, Speer, a polite, cultivated and well-mannered man quite different from the crude, average Nazi thug, made an impression on the court by – as the only top Nazi – making an (at least partial) confession and admittance of guilt. Thus, he managed to brand himself as ‘the good Nazi’, an image he would continue to hone in many future interviews. Undoubtedly this display of penitence and apology, combined with his carefully crafted story, saturated with, if not ‘suggestio

falsi’ then lots of ‘suppressio veri’, contributed to his relatively mild sentence; twenty years imprisonment.<sup>16</sup>



Photo: The defendants at the bench during the Nuremberg Trials; Göring at the extreme left, Speer as the last (visible) man to the right, second row. Right: Speer taking the stand.

**THROUGHOUT HIS PRISON TIME**, Speer made the best out of a bad situation. He was an insatiable reader and he completed well over 500 books in the first three years at Spandau alone. He also found time to – clandestinely – take notes for a future memoir. The notes, written on every scrap of paper he could lay his hand on, were smuggled out of his cell in the care of his friend Rudolf Wolters.

Being a systematic personage, he found a hobby that combined daily exercise with a kind of mind travel, allowing him to leave the confines of prison on the wings of fantasy. One day as he walked in circles in the prison yard, he conceived an idea; in his mind, he would walk the stretch from Berlin to Heidelberg where he was born; a distance of some 550 kilometers. That concluded, he expanded the concept into what would become a worldwide journey, acquiring travel guide books through the prison library. Thus he was able to visualize in his minds eye the countries and places he walked through on his tours around the prison yard; a journey that took him through Eastern Europe, Asia, Siberia, crossing the Bering Strait and ending up in Mexico.



Photo: Midnight October 1, 1966, Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach were released from Spandau Prison. Speer held a brief press conference after his release. The prison was demolished in 1987 after the death of its last inmate, Rudolf Hess.

Over the years appeals for Speer’s release had come from many sides including American High Commissioner John J. McCloy and French President Charles de Gaulle, but all pleas fell on deaf Soviet ears. Thus, leaving Spandau Prison together with Baldur von Schirach<sup>17</sup> on October 1,

1966, on the stroke of midnight, both men had served to the minute their twenty year prison term. At the brief press conference held, Speer tried to joke about his looks and health, but also found time to send greetings to the now very lonely Rudolf Hess.

## Epilogue

**IS SPEER TRUSTWORTHY?** His two major books about the Third Reich and Spandau; 700 and 500 pages respectively, are major sources and he is often cited by leading historians, so the extend of his veracity is not unimportant. Hugh Trevor-Roper, a primus inter pares in Hitler historians who had no qualms describing other members of the entourage as imbeciles, unfit for quotations, has Speer in a high esteem<sup>18</sup> in that respect;

*“But Speer deserves quotation in his own right. his conclusions are never naïve, never parochial; they seem always honest; they are often profound. If he seems sometimes to have fallen too deeply under the spell of the tyrant whom he served, at least he is the only servant whose judgment was not corrupted by attendance on that dreadful master; at least he retained the capacity to examine himself and the honesty to declare both his errors and his convictions. In the last days of Nazism he was not afraid to tell Hitler of his own acts of defiance; and in Allied captivity he was not afraid to admit, after his searching analysis of Hitler’s character and history, the residue of loyalty which he could not altogether shed.”*

[Last Days of Hitler, p. 67]

**AND WAS SPEER REALLY** the ‘good Nazi’ who genuinely repented his sins and tried to make amends, or was he a skillful actor and a social chameleon, changing his color to suit the present surroundings? Did he thoroughly distance himself from his past and condemned his life and doings under the spell of Hitler or did he secretly yearn for the time where the Devil threw the world at his feet in a Faustian bargain, that would elevate him to the pinnacle amongst his peers and write his name into the history books?

Every person on this planet also has a dark side to him, and these questions are not easily answered. After eighteen years of pondering in Spandau, Speer himself could not:

*“So I ask myself: Would I like to fall out of history? What does a place in it mean to me, slight though it may be? If thirty-one years ago today I had been confronted with the choice of leading a quiet and respected life as a city architect of Augsburg or Göttingen, with a house in the suburbs, two or three decent buildings done a year, and vacations with the family in Hahnenklee or Norderney – if I had been offered all that or else everything that has happened, the fame and the guilt, the world capital and Spandau, together with the feeling of a life gone awry – which would I choose? My head reels when I pose this question. I scarcely dare to ask it. Certainly I cannot answer it at all.”*

[Spandau, the secret diaries, p. 451-52]

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**AFTER HIS RELEASE**, Speer got to live another fifteen years in freedom during which period he published several books about his life at Hitler’s side and his time in prison, an activity that left him financially well-off and capable

of feathering his retirement nest.<sup>19</sup> He also made himself available to historians, gave many interviews and became quite a celebrity; this soft-spoken, cultivated and intelligent man that it was hard to believe once had been Hitler's best friend.

His new critical attitude towards Hitler and the Nazi regime made many of his former peers and friends turn their back on him, including his otherwise stern supporter Rudolf Wolters. His marriage with Margret had become estranged after twenty years of separation and Speer also found himself unable to re-establish his relationship with his children, even with his oldest son Albert, who had also become an architect. According to Speer's daughter Hilde, the last of the family to retain some contact; *"One by one my sister and brothers gave up. There was no communication."*

His Spandau-written memoir was a great success not least in Germany. Partly, probably, because it in a sense absolved old Nazis from the Holocaust burden; the rationale seemed to be that when Speer, so close to Hitler, could claim ignorance of the extent of the horrors, so could they.

Speer appeared in the 1973 Thames Television documentary; 'The World at War'. Returning to London eight years later to participate in a 'BBC Newsnight' program, Speer suffered a stroke in his hotel room<sup>20</sup> and died 76 years of age in the evening of September 1, 1981, at St. Mary's Hospital. He is interred along with his wife (died December 25, 1987) at Bergfriedhof Heidelberg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

## Further reading and watching:

Speer, Albert: **'Inside the Third Reich'**. © 1995 Phönix

A fantastic peek inside the Hitler Court and the Third Reich. Speer was on numerous occasions a 'fly on the wall', and, where it does not concern details about his own involvement or guilt, he is probably also factual and correct in his recollections.

Speer, Albert: **'Spandau, the secret diaries'**. © 1976 Pocket Book

In this book; the compiled memoirs from his twenty years as a prisoner with ample time to recollect and ponder, the reader gets as close to the 'inner' Speer as he will allow. Alongside, he dissects his relationship with Hitler and the German dictator himself. A compelling, non-stop read.

Sereny, Gitta: **'Speer, his battle with truth'**. © 1996 Picador

To balance Speer's own account, it is probably a good idea to read Sereny's book. After Speer's release in 1981 she spent months in the company of the Speer couple at their home, befriended both of them and interviewed Albert in depth, forcing him to confront his past. A thorough and read-worthy account.

Drama-documentary: **'Speer und Er'**. © 2005 Bavaria Media

A visualization of the life of Albert Speer (aptly played by Sebastian Koch), and a highly recommendable piece of easily absorbable history, toggling between reconstructed scenes of Speer's life and career, original footage and interviews with some of his children, candidly sharing their childhood memories with the viewer.

Quotes: Brainy Quotes [<https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/albert-speer-quotes>]



Several of Hitlers entourage also make references to Albert Speer in their memoirs, i.e. Traudl Junge [Secretary], Hans Baur [Pilot], Rochus Misch [Telephone Operator] and not least Nicolaus von Below, who was Hitlers Luftwaffe Adjutant, but also Speers trustee at the Nazi Court.

## Links

Dönitz Administration aka the Flensburg Government:

<https://bit.ly/2WysVC4>

Wolfsschanze. The Stauffenberg attempt: <https://bit.ly/3mM86OC>

The Flak Towers: <https://bit.ly/3gHt8dy>

Examples of Nazi architecture: <https://bit.ly/3zvXMxT>

BIO Nicolaus von Below: <https://bit.ly/3AU7VaV>

BIO Rudolf Hess: <https://bit.ly/3pRbU1z>



**Photo:** The famous 'Cathedral of Light' at the 1934 Nuremberg Rally. Speer and Hitler preferred to hold such events after dark, allegedly to take advantage of the special emotions and awe, aroused by the night. Another consideration, rumor has it, was to conceal that a majority of the Nazi 'Übermenschen' on the Grand Stand were a bit on the flabby side. Credit: Bundesarchiv.

The central part of the Zeppelin tribune is standing to this day albeit somewhat dilapidated, so if you want to check out Speer's 'Theory of Ruin Value', here is an excellent opportunity.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Speer himself appears to have been conscious of social status as well. Rochus Misch, Hitler's telephone operator, found him arrogant and aloof, not straight forward and well-liked as i.e. Göring, whereas Traudl Junge, Hitler's personal secretary and thus a member of the entourage, describes him as a modest and sympatric man who made a positive impression with his warmth and charm.

<sup>2</sup> Gitta Sereny surmise that Speer was as much in love with the Weber family as with Margret; a warm, welcoming home with laughter and a relaxed atmosphere; so different from his own.

<sup>3</sup> As Speer's younger brother Ernst had perished in Stalingrad a short time before, the child is likely named after him.

<sup>4</sup> In 1931, when Speer joined, the NSDAP had less than two million members. At the end of the war, membership peaked at about eight million, roughly ten percent of the (pre-war) population.

<sup>5</sup> In all truthfulness, Speer was helped by the fact that the northern side of Voss Strasse had already been demolished (1937). It remains nonetheless a remarkable achievement on his part.

<sup>6</sup> Consequently they agreed that steel girders and ferroconcrete should be avoided in public buildings. However, in reality that didn't hold; in the interest of a speedy construction, stone cladding was often used.

<sup>7</sup> Hitler found architect Werner Mach's layout too modernistic, so Speer 'classified' it a bit with sandstone cladding and bronze lamps.

<sup>8</sup> When Speer respectfully greeted his Führer with the obligatory "Heil Hitler", Hitler would often reply humorously with a "Heil Speer".

<sup>9</sup> Although Speer had the overall responsibility for new build within Berlin, it is not he who designed the mighty flak towers in Friedrichshain, Humboldthain and the Zoo. These are the brainchild of Prof. Friedrich Tamms. Hitler did come up with a first sketch, but the final result was much different. See link.

<sup>10</sup> The Below's became close friends of the Speers and the only pre-war friends to hold on after Speer denounced Hitler and the Third Reich at the Nuremberg Trials.

<sup>11</sup> Speer once said that if Hitler ever had a friend, it would have been him. Mutual admiration and parallel interests formed a close relationship; Speer was everything Hitler would like to have been, and Hitler was a father figure to the young man. A wealthy father too, who opened up a treasure trove of opportunities for an ambitious youngster.

<sup>12</sup> It was a caveat that no manager could be older than 55 as older leaders, in Speers view, were prone to arrogance and routine thinking. Speer was 37 at the time.

<sup>13</sup> Speer claims that Dora Mittelwerk was the only concentration camp he ever saw [apart from Mauthausen, but that was in his view a 'labor and reeducation' camp], and that, after his visit, he ordered barracks for the workers built and improvements in their provisions.

<sup>14</sup> Georges Casalis, a protestant Chaplain who was in charge of the spiritual care of the Spandau inmates, considered Speer the 'most guilty' of them all, because he was the most intelligent and because he prolonged the war unnecessarily. On the other hand, Casalis describes Speer as 'the most tormented, guilt-ridden person he had ever seen'.

<sup>15</sup> The scene is depicted in Oliver Hirschbiegel's 'Der Untergang' as Speer recounted it in his memoir. Doubts to the veracity have been raised by Gitta Sereny, author of the autobiography; 'Speer; his battle with truth', concluding that this is most likely how Speer prefers to remember the situation. In reality, the conversation likely never took place.

<sup>16</sup> "Thank God you weren't Robert Jackson"; Speer to Gitta Sereny on several occasions. In 1978, having known Speer almost a lifetime, Sereny finally managed to extract from him, that he did have knowledge about the Holocaust but acted with 'tacit consent'.

<sup>17</sup> Thus leaving Rudolf Hess behind as the sole remaining inmate in Spandau for the next 21 years. On August 17, 1987, at the age of 93 and in an unattended moment, Hess committed suicide by strangulation with a piece of electric cord.

<sup>18</sup> It must be remembered though, that Trevor-Roper wrote his book on Hitler's last days in 1946 and thus not could take later information about Speer into consideration.

<sup>19</sup> Allegedly, Speer donated the majority of this income to Jewish charity organizations. He did this anonymously partly out of fear for rejection, partly not to be viewed as a hypocrite.

<sup>20</sup> Speer, unlike Hess, did not die alone although his marriage was in the shredder. He had befriended an English woman of German origin who was with him at the time of his death.