HERMANN GOERING, AMIABLE PSYCHOPATH

BY G. M. GILBERT
Princeton University

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

HERMANN GOERING’s earliest childhood recollection was bashing his mother in the face with both fists when she came to embrace him after a prolonged absence, at the age of three. This tendency to overt aggression manifested itself very early as one of his chief satisfactions in life, and he undoubtedly laughed in playful glee at his mother’s pained chagrin over his unruliness.—At least, he laughed most heartily in describing this and similar incidents to me in his cell in the Nuremberg jail. This particular incident was on the occasion of the family’s return from Haiti. The father, a typical, stern Prussian, had been a cavalry officer under Bismarck and was Consul General in Haiti at the time of Hermann’s birth. Hermann was the fourth of five children by his second marriage. The mother, a woman of more humble origin (we gather from Goering’s reluctant remarks), had returned to Germany briefly for Hermann’s birth in 1893, and had then left him in the care of her closest friend, Frau Graf of Fürth, until the family reunion which opens our story.

Upon their return, the family moved to Berlin, where the father continued to serve in the foreign office for a time. Here Hermann became fascinated by the military display: the uniforms and parades, the officers barking orders at their goose-stepping soldiers. Prussian militarism appealed to his aggressive temperament in preference to the Bavarian Gemütlichkeit and he soon identified himself with the aspirations common to the offspring of the Prussian Junker caste. He said that there was never a moment’s doubt in his mind that he would become an officer in the Kaiser’s army when he grew up. The reasons were obvious. The lowest second lieutenant, he had learned from his father, took precedence over a minister-of-State in the rules of protocol at the Kaiser’s court—even on the grand march into the ballroom at State receptions. So at the age of five he gleefully donned the Hussar officer’s uniform his father had given him for his birthday, and since that time, he said, he had never been without a uniform in his life (except for the brief period of civilian dress forced on him by the vicious Treaty of Versailles). Thus his natural aggressiveness and exuberance were channeled very early into a passion for things military and bellicose by the cultural values represented by his father’s circle. His childhood play was devoted almost exclusively to waging war, leading his small army of youngsters and toy cannon against imaginary enemies of Kaiser und Vaterland. If there was any question about his leadership (he said this with his usual hearty laugh),

1 Dr. Gilbert served as Prison Psychologist at the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi war criminals. In this capacity he had the enviable opportunity to study at first hand many of the men who precipitated what is perhaps the greatest tragedy in human history. Psychologists who have read Dr. Gilbert’s Nuremberg Diary cannot fail to be impressed by his skill in eliciting the confidence and cooperation of accused prisoners, and in presenting case histories that are convincing and clinically revealing. The case of Goering which Dr. Gilbert here offers utilizes considerable material that he did not employ in the Nuremberg Diary, and contributes much to our understanding of Nazi Number Two.—Editor.
he would bash their heads together and let them know “damn quick” who was boss. For if his beautiful uniforms and his father’s position of authority were not enough to establish his right of dominance over his companions, his ready use of his fists settled any doubts on that score.

When the father was pensioned and prepared to retire to the family castle at Velendstein, Hermann was furious over having to leave his real and make-believe armies in Berlin. He cried for days. But he soon found that the castle at Velendstein provided an excellent setting for his military exploits. He organized new recruits for his war games, bashed some more heads together, and stormed the castle with such dangerous recklessness that he had to be soundly thrashed by his father. Hermann protested the unfairness of this punishment, saying that one who exhibited such courage should not be punished for it. The Spartan element of the Prussian militaristic code was already shaping his ethical values at the age of six or seven, but, unlike the Spartans, he did not take punishment very stoically.

Goering claimed that he was also influenced by his royal heritage, represented by the portraits of his noble ancestors hanging in the halls of the castle. But in telling this he was probably still letting his youthful fantasies run away with him, because the noble war criminal, Baron von Neurath, assured me that Goering had no noble ancestry, but was only an upstart brat whose chief talent was smashing windows. The very fact that Goering sought to impress me with an elaborately printed genealogical table taking the Goerings back to Frederick the Great, Charlemagne, and St. Elizabeth of Thuringen is more significant as a revelation of Goering’s aspiration level and fantasy life than of his actual background.

Another aspect of his personality, insofar as we may extract it from the mixture of fact and fancy that Goering was willing to reveal about his early development, was an apparent love of excitement and insensitivity to danger. He boasted, “Hell, I haven’t been afraid of death since I was twelve or fourteen years old!” and was able to cite several instances to support this. On one occasion he was riding along a road in the Austrian Alps, when an avalanche started. Goering says he just stopped to admire the awesome spectacle of crashing rocks and snow boulders while other people were dashing around in terror, trying to avoid being crushed. One carriage was, in fact, buried under the snow a short distance in front of him. He found it all very exciting, but somehow the personal danger did not seem real to him. On another occasion he was rowing on a lake with some boys, when they began to drift uncontrollably toward a waterfall at the end of the lake. The other boys were panic-stricken, but Goering says he told them, “Stop jabbering! If we go over, we die, and there’s nothing we can do about it, so why get excited?” In examining his feelings about danger, Goering admitted that he just never believed that any harm could really befall him. His fantasy life, it seems, conveniently carried over to real life to protect him from the anxiety of dangerous realities. The insensitive extrovert could thus satisfy his drive for physical stimulation and excitement while acting out his fantasies as a fearless hero who scorned danger. Whatever the reasons, the early signs of aggressive leadership qualities were unmistakable.

But there was an entirely different aspect of Goering’s early aggressiveness which he preferred not to discuss, but which we gather from another authentic source. Even as a child Goering exhibited not a little aggression of the sadistic variety. Not con-
tives of his culture, enhanced by a rich and vivid fantasy life which sometimes blurred the distinctions between reality and fancy; a tendency to domination of the environment with a combination of fancy dress showmanship and brute force; an emotional insensitivity and perverted humor which were at once the seeds of outward physical boldness and moral depravity. His sense of values was also pretty well fixed by this time, being drawn from the cultural complex by his early indoctrination and personal inclinations: a deeply-rooted sense of loyalty and obedience to the sovereign figure of the Kaiser; a sense of the in-group loyalty and solidarity of the German Volk, with chivalrous hostility toward all members of out-groups; an aristocratic anti-democratic bias which recognized “inferior” and “superior” groups and the authoritarian militaristic hierarchy; and an abiding awe for historical greatness rather than humanitarian progress or ethical values as the guiding motivation of mortal existence.

It is well to bear this pattern in mind, for, like the typical psychopath, Goering never outgrew the uninhibited acting-out of these infantile ego-drives. Although more wholesome environmental influences might well have directed his life into more constructive channels, he was not constituted to resist the temptations presented by the social conflicts and anarchisms of his time, but rather to exploit them with unconscionable avarice.

The Young Militarist and Revolutionary

At the age of sixteen Goering entered the officers’ academy of Lichterfelde near Berlin, the West Point of the Prussian military caste. Somewhat estranged from his family by now, he made his emotional transference all the more to the military authoritarian hierarchy with the Kaiser at the top. Although he resented his father’s failure to get him into those receptions at the Kaiser’s court with his classmates (for even the officer-candidates marched ahead of most of the civilians), his role as Junker-officer-in-the-making satisfied his status needs. More than that, it satisfied the heroic fantasies that had long since fixed the pattern of his desired way of life. However reluctantly he submitted to stern discipline, the religion of unquestioning obedience to superiors, of loyalty to Kaiser und Vaterland, the ramrod posturing and goose-stepping, the punishments for small offenses were all accepted as part of the code worthy of one who was destined to follow in the footsteps of Bismarck, Clausewitz, and Moltke. For there could be no doubt in his mind that, just as he now showed rigid subservience to his superiors, he would some day be able to demand the same from his inferiors when he rose in rank, in keeping with the dual tradition of subservience and arrogance dear to the Prussian military tradition.

But there was also much in the life of a cadet which satisfied the amiable prankster in him. He dared not show the slightest disrespect for the officer-instructors at the academy, but the poor civilians who taught certain subjects were the constant butt of practical jokes and outlets for rowdiness in the classroom. The reason, Goering explained quite simply, was that the officers could punish you, while the civilians could only threaten you, or, what was even siller, appeal to your moral sense. Then there were the good old war games with real soldiers, swords, and guns, with no father to punish you for reckless daring in storming a stronghold. On the contrary, the Kaiser liked good officer material with plenty of daring. Finally, by way of relaxation, there were the usual student pranks of carousing late at night with his buddies in the very exclusive Kadettenkorps to which he belonged (the most exclusive one, Goering assured me), and plotting to sneak past the guard to be in the barracks before reveille. All in all, a way of life made to order for Hermann Goering.

He had hardly graduated from Lichterfelde in 1913, when his father died. The following year, with the outbreak of World War I, he was committed to the front as a lieutenant in an infantry regiment. In discussing his war career, Goering glossed over his activities as an infantry officer, saying that he was more interested in aviation. No doubt it appealed more to his individualistic and recklessly demonstrative inclinations, but he also admitted suffering from claustrophobia in a tank, submarine, or Zeppelin gondola. He became a fighter pilot in 1916, was wounded and hospitalized for three months, then resumed his aviation career. He acquitted himself quite well as a pilot, running up a total of twenty-eight planes shot down, receiving the high decoration, Pour le Merite, and taking over command of the Richthofen squadron upon the latter’s death late in the war.

Aside from the glory which his reckless physical courage earned him, Goering had little to say about his activities as an officer. Again, the reason becomes clear when we go to secondary sources on Goering’s career. It seems that, like certain other darlings of the new-born Luftwaffe, Goering found his influence in choice of planes and engines very profitable, and he was not so much a sentimentalist or devotee of Prussian incorruptibility as to resist temptations of bribery. Nor was he averse to a little business interest on the side, a partnership in a shoe factory for army orders with his fellow-officer, Prince Philipp of Hesse, in the middle of the war. He also enjoyed for a time the gay life at the notorious headquarters of Prince Wilhelm at Charleville, where his bold con-viviality no doubt endeared him further to the Junker clique.

At all events, during World War I Goering made the dangerous and fascinating discovery that war could bring both glory and profit to one who was sufficiently reckless, unscrupulous, and amiable.

Germany’s defeat brought an abrupt end to his heyday of glory and libertinism. The flight of the Kaiser destroyed some of the heroic illusions he had built up about this figure of supreme authority. Finding Germany a barren wasteland of hunger and ruin with the people in revolt against their own military leaders, he used his aristocratic connections to roam the greener fields of Denmark and Sweden. In Sweden he met and married the rich aristocrat, Baroness Carin von Kaniwitz, overlooking her epileptic affliction in the interest of financial security. He returned to Germany around 1921, taking up brief studies at the University of Munich in political science—a new interest growing out of the troublesome times.

He described his own political attitudes and ventures in the seething unrest of post-war Munich and his meeting with Adolf Hitler as follows:4

...The idea of a democracy was absolutely repulsive to me. How ever heard of a new Head of State every few years and elected representatives to tell the President what he could do and couldn’t do? It was
only the election of Hindenburg that made the Republic even half-way tolerable.

Anyway, I had tried to found a revolutionary party myself among the officer veterans. I remember a meeting at which they discussed getting meals and beds for veteran officers. You damn fools!! I told them, "You think an officer who is worth his salt can’t find a bed to sleep in, even if it happens to be the bed of a pretty blonde? Dammit, there are more important things at stake!!" Somebody got fresh and I barked my head off—Well, of course the meeting broke up in an uproar. I never did get anywhere in trying to get a following for my revolutionary party...

Then I remember the first time I saw Hitler. That was in 1922. There was a protest meeting in Munich against the demand to extradite some of our generals. Some little nationalistic parties were represented, and Hitler was just one of the audience. I was there too, because I considered it outrageous that Germany should be so humiliated and treated as inferior to foreigners. They were making nationalistic speeches—I should say bourgeois-nationalistic. Everyone in a while somebody would run up to Hitler and ask him if he wanted to speak, but he said he didn’t want to. I observed that he was, and somebody asked me that was Hitler, leader of the National Socialist Party, who was against Versailles, etc. That interested me immediately and I asked where I could hear him speak. They told me I could hear him Monday at the Cafe Neumann. So I went there the following Monday. I just sat unobtrusively in the background. I remember Rosenberg was there. Hitler explained why he didn’t speak at the other meeting. He said he didn’t want to disturb the unity of the other meeting, but he did not approve of such weak protests. No Frenchman is going to lose sleep over that kind of harmless talk, he said. You’ve got to have bayonets to back up your threats. Well, that was what I wanted to hear tonight. I went up a Party that would make Germany strong and smash the Treaty of Versailles. "Well," I said to myself, "that’s the party for me!"

Down with the Treaty of Versailles, god-damnit! That’s my message.

So a few days later, I go down to party headquarters—quite modestly—and fill out a membership application. Well, of course there is something of a sensation when they see who I am, because I can say without vanity that among the young officers I was still something of a leader. You know, I succeeded Baron von Richthofen—we were classmaters at Lichterfelde. Anyway, somebody tells me that Hitler would like to see me immediately. He tells me that it was a stroke of Fate that I should come to him just as he was looking for somebody to take charge of the SA. He wanted an energetic young veteran officer and I was just the man he was looking for. We agreed to postpone the announcement a month, but I started right in to train the SA as a military organization—Military!—I’ll tell the world it was military.

Goering’s motives in joining the Nazi Party were quite uncomplicated. It sounded like a good chance to satisfy his aggressiveness, greed, status-striving, and militant nationalistic ego-involvement all at once. In his words, "For men like me it was a chance to wipe out the disgrace of Versailles—the shame of the defeat, the Corridor right through the heart of Prussia. It was pure patriotic idealism." On a less idealistic plane, it meant a chance to restore the power, glory, and material gains of military ascendency which he had tasted during World War I. But, as much as anything else, it was the very revolutionary nature of Hitler’s program that attracted this restless, aggressive psychopath. "I joined the Party precisely because it was revolutionary, not because of the ideological stuff. Other parties had made revolts, so I figured I could get in on one too!" These were the purposes that suited his own.

The truth is that Goering had neither the intellectual pretenses nor the basic convictions for a fanatic ideologist. Aside from his nationalism, the only part of the Nazi ideology about which he had any convictions was its anti-Communist stand—and that on the basis of his aristocratic and individualistic leanings. Any idea of opposing the ‘Jewish-Masonic world conspiracy to subjugate the master race’ was the farthest thing from his mind. Not only were some of his best friends Jews, like so many of the other Nazi leaders (in spite of his Jew-baiting he did, in fact, maintain a certain protective loyalty to a few Jews who had helped him), but he missed being ideologically ineligible for party membership by the merest chance, according to his own account:

I had a date to meet some friends to join the Freemasons in 1919. While waiting for them, I saw a pretty blonde pass by, and I picked her up. Well, I just never did get around to joining the Freemasons. If I hadn’t picked up that blonde that day, it would have been impossible for me to get into the Party, and I wouldn’t be here [in jail] today.

There is perhaps an additional explanation on a psychodynamic basis. After the defeat and flight of the Kaiser, Goering’s essentially infantile emotional dependence was left without an authoritarian figure to cling to. In Hitler he recognized such a potential figure—one who stood for dictatorial authority and rule by force, a chieftain of the German tribal in-group, who would restore the national strength and pride and provide Hermann with real soldiers, guns, and airplanes to play with. Goering did not make the emotional transference at once. There was some emotional resistance to overcome toward this ‘vagabond from a Viennese café,’ as Goering referred to Hitler, etc. Hitler behind his back in the early days. He did not make it until he was quite sure that this Kaiser-substitute would really succeed in satisfying his ego-needs. But the need and the possibility of fulfillment were clearly present from the beginning.

Hitler, on the other hand, knew that in Goering he had a man who could not only contribute wealth and a following among the frustrated Junker-officers of the defeated Wehrmacht, but one who also relished the use of force to achieve his ends, and would not be restrained by any squeamish respect for law and order. He was not mistaken. In a short time Goering’s flair for showmanship, uniforms, and military discipline, as well as his penchant for bashing heads, had whipped the Storm Troops into shape as an efficient street-fighting organization. By this means Hitler was assured of ample opportunity to hold his speeches without too much interference from opposing parties, while effectively breaking up his opponents’ meetings with a respect-able toll of broken heads and smashed furniture.

By 1924 Hitler felt that the time was ripe for his revolution and staged his famous beer-hall putsch. Goering was wounded and escaped to Italy, leaving Hitler and the other Nazi leaders to face the music. At that time he undoubtedly gave up the Nazi venture as a bad job. Later, however, he claimed that Hitler wanted him to remain on the outside to keep the home fires burning for Hitler’s return. If this was so, Goering was very slow about it, for he was not in Germany to receive his beloved Führer upon the latter’s release from prison in 1925, and he did not return until Hitler’s star was once more in the ascendant. In the meantime, he languished in and out of hospitals in Italy and Sweden from 1924 to 1927, by this time a confirmed drug addict. Goering admitted that he had resorted to morphine to deaden the pain of his wound, and that he continued to use drugs off and on to deaden pain. It requires very little clinical intuition to see that it was not only physical pain that made Goering resort to narcotics. Ever since child-
hood, Goering had demonstrated his need for satisfying physical stimulation and his inability to stand punishment or frustration. All through his life he was to resort to drugs and other devices to divert his mind from anxiety-provoking situations which he did not have the moral strength to face.

In 1927 he began to take up again with the Nazis in Germany. Apparently Hitler welcomed back the prodigal son because he could still use him, after exciting a pledge of undying loyalty to the Führer in the future. Goering resumed his political activities and was elected Nazi representative to the Reichstag in 1928. The Party was proving to be a “good bet” after all, and Goering henceforth devoted himself to it with renewed zeal. A sidelight on the “pure patriotic idealism” which motivated him is given in a statement that Gregor Strasser, one of the early Party leaders, made at about this time, when he complained to Hans Frank that the Party was going to the dogs: “Goering is a brutal egotist who doesn’t give a damn about Germany as long as he can amount to something!”

The No. 2 Nazi

Strasser’s statement was prophetic. Goering became Reichstag President in 1932 only for the purpose of hastening the death of the Weimar Republic, which he detested. His political machinations helped Hitler to power in 1933 and his reward was a number of new titles and positions of power, including Reich Air Minister, Prussian Minister of the Interior, etc. The Reichstag fire, which he and Goebbels apparently engineered as a propagandist tour de

force,” gave him and Hitler a free hand to suspend all constitutional guarantees and throw all “communists” (i.e., all political opponents and personal enemies) into concentration camps without legal process. At the same time it assured them a rubber-stamp Reichstag which would soon pass its own death warrant. Neither of the top leaders of the Third Reich had any use for democratic laws or representatives who could tell them what to do and what not to do.

For his part, the head-bashing problem child and gang-leader-turned-statesman lost no time clarifying his psychopathic conception of statecraft. In a radio broadcast during the reign-of-terror following the Reichstag fire Goering blustered forth his pure patriotic idealism: “I am not here to exercise justice, but to wipe out and exterminate.” The frustrated masses had regressed to the aggressive-submissive modes of behavior of their authoritarian culture, clamoring for strong-arm leadership—and Goering was not one to disappoint them.

For strong action had to be taken to get rid of even the rivals for power among the gangsters within the Party. Ernst Roehm, who had taken over Goering’s command of the Storm Troops, also had some ideas about sharing power in the new Party dictatorship. The “Roehm blood purge” revealed Goering at his gangster best. In connivance with Himmler he convinced Hitler that the unruly homosexual SA leader would have to be liquidated immediately with his whole gang. In the blood bath that followed, Goering managed to include a goodly number of his own personal enemies, including Gregor Strasser and General von Schleich, as well as those SA men who knew too much about the Reichstag fire. In describing the purge to me in his Nuremberg cell years later, Goering naturally glossed over his private murder motives, but could still muster a show of righteous indignation at the mention of Roehm’s name: “Roehm! Don’t talk to me about that dirty homosexual swine! That was the real clique of perverted bloody revolutionists! They are the ones who first made the Party look like a pack of hoodlums, with their wild orgies and beating up Jews on the street and smashing windows . . . What a gang of perverted bandits that SA was! It was a damn good thing I wiped them out or they would have wiped us out!”

These were, of course, the very same hoodlums whom Goering had trained in street-fighting. Now that they had served their purpose—“We had to get rid of them to build up the Party and the State.” In describing one personal encounter during the purge: “I made no bones about it. I just told my men to take the bastard out and shoot him!” Admittedly, Goering was no slouch when he could resolve his anxieties by overt aggression. But old von Hindenburg was no psychologist and actually legalized the blood bath on the basis of suppressing a revolution. Goering emerged more powerful than ever before, though with a new rival and partner in crime, Heinrich Himmler.

In 1935 Goering was proclaimed chief of the new Luftwaffe in open defiance of the Versailles Treaty. When he was asked whether he wasn’t toying with war, he boisterously replied that he sure wasn’t running a girls’ finishing school. To clear up any doubts as to who was top dog in the Nazi Reich—next to Hitler, Goering was designated as Hitler’s deputy and eventual successor (he significantly referred to himself as the “crown prince” in describing his position in the government). Quite incidentally, the President of the Reichstag, who wasn’t interested in the Party’s ideology, presented the Goebbels-sponsored “Nuremberg Laws” to the Reichstag for their rubber-stamp approval, thus sealing the fate of Germany’s Jews.

Goering was indeed “amounting to something” over the dead bodies of his rivals and the end of peace and justice in Germany.

In the same year, at the height of his pomp and power, he married the beautiful actress, Emmy Sonneman. (His first wife had died four years earlier of heart failure.) With his new diamond-tiara’d queen the crown prince held court in his sumptuous palace in Prussia, called Karinhall, displaying the lavish opulence, revelry, and comic opera costumes of a Roman emperor. Not unlike the crown princes and heroes of old, he allowed his faithful subjects in Bavaria and Prussia to give him rich estates and to appropriate huge sums out of the taxes for their upkeep.

In the national interest and in keeping with his regal showmanship, he also became a patron of the arts—a new interest which was not without its consequences to the art collections of Europe. Although he was loved by his wife, it is doubtful whether Goering’s romantic inclinations ever went beyond the narcissistic level. If this was generally true in Prussian culture, it was doubly true of Hermann Goering. When I sought to draw him out on his relationship to his wife, after I had visited her, Goering’s reaction was an indulgent smile. “She could have her way in the household, in getting me to do lots of things for her, but when it comes to these basic things in a man’s life, it is not a woman’s affair.”

6 Quoted from essay on the Hitler movement written for the writer by Hans Frank before his execution.

6 Goering continually brushed this off as “tumor,” but the evidence is fairly convincing. Cf. Nuremberg Diary, pp. 182, 298.
By this time his narcissism and greed were running amok. Titles, powers, medals, and graft were amassed with truly psychopathic avarice, and he gorged himself with esoteric foods until his medal-bedecked corpulence became symbolic of the character of Germany's leadership. In 1936 his designation as Plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan opened up new industrial fields for power and graft. Profits from the Hermann Goering Werke, bribes from industrial leaders for tax exemption and armaments orders swelled his coffers by the millions of Reichsmarks. His greed was equaled only by his lust for power. In the industrial field he would not tolerate the rivalry of even the financial wizard, Hjalmar Schacht. Since Goering was the more ruthless psychopath in a psychopathic government, Schacht had to go. In the military field, not content with being chief of the Luftwaffe, he set about plotting to gain supreme command of the Wehrmacht. In an attempt to achieve this, he plotted frame-ups to get rid of General von Fritsche and General von Blomberg by getting them involved in private scandals while still posing as a friend. This craven hypocrisy was quite typical of the man bent on satisfying his lust for power with a minimum of damage to his outward popularity and patriotic pose. Goering achieved the shock of the high command which he had sought, and which fitted in with Hitler's plans anyway; but Hitler would not trust the execution of his plans for aggressive war to a crony who had grown flabby with corruption and gluttony and was despised by most of the General Staff on whom he had to rely.

Goering continued to play his cards with a double deck. The Nazi ideology, in which he really had no interest, proved again and again to be a convenient springboard for his personal ambitions and private gain. The making and breaking of the Munich Pact, to which he amiably contributed the blackmail threat of bombing beautiful Prague, gave him virtual control of Skoda and other munitions plants. In 1938 he initiated the march into Austria to prevent a plebiscite and to assert "the German people's right of self-determination"—but also in the nick of time to break up the scheduled convening of a military court-of-honor which would have cleared and rehabilitated his rival, General von Fritsche. The organized pogrom against the Jewish population in retaliation for the slaying of von Rath later that year, while strictly the work of propagandist Goebels, provided Goering with a golden opportunity. Never one to overlook a good bet for large-scale loot, the Plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan imposed the preposterous fine of one billion Reichsmarks on the entire Jewish population (although he did let some of his "best friends" escape). The "aryanzation" of Jewish property and business which followed on the heels of this confiscatory measure became a lucrative source of graft for the Party machinery and for Goering's interest in business and art.

But Goering never lost his sense of humor or "patriotic idealism." He flippantly declared to Heydrich that he would have preferred the killing of 200 more Jews during this pogrom to the destruction of so much property which Germany needed. When the question of heavy insurance payments came up for the destruction of this property, Goering forbade the payments to the injured parties, but offered to let the treasury split the proceeds with the insurance companies. He exclaimed with his ever-ready jocularity that surely the insurance companies would not object if a fat angel in the person of Hermann Goering made them a present of half of the legalized loot. He also enjoyed practical jokes like loading bricks instead of guns on a shipment destined for the loyalists in Spain. In 1939, when Roosevelt's letter demanding a declaration of Germany's peaceful intentions was read in the Reichstag, Goering led the assembly in uproarious laughter until his sides shook.

For Goering's Kaiser-substitute had already decided that the time was ripe to strike the final blow for hegemony in Europe, and Goering's real soldiers, guns, and planes were poised for the biggest and most exciting war-games of all time. Still a little ambivalent about the material risk involved, Goering made one feeble attempt to see if they could not still eat their cake and have it without too much exertion. He secretly sent a Swedish businessman to propose another amiable "Munich Pact" over Poland. As this same intermediary later testified, Goering was already groveling at Hitler's feet "in a crazy state of intoxication" over the impending aggression, and he should have realized that the mediation could not possibly have succeeded.

The question of Goering's desire for war is worth considering, since some of his greatest admirers (his wife, his adjutant, and himself) assured me that he was too full of the joy of living to want war. This would not be entirely out of keeping with his character. He was undoubtedly ambivalent about the glory of war on the one hand and the soft living made possible by domestic racketeering on the other. Left to himself by Hitler's death in 1938 (as Goering speculated somewhat wishfully), he might conceivably have been content with the latter. But the decisive factor was his subservience to Adolf Hitler in spite of his otherwise aggressive and domineering personality. In the "peck-right" of the Nazi hierarchy, there was no doubt that Hitler out-pecked Goering. Besides this, Hitler's violently obsessed and ascetic messianic complex was more than a match for Goering's heroic play-acting. We have already seen how Goering's early indoctrination and emotional development had preconditioned him to accept blindly the authority of a military dictator. But Goering was also committed body and soul to the support of the Führer by every practical consideration. As Schacht explained, Hitler had tolerated Goering's corruption in exchange for his vociferous support, and the more Goering's influence grew, the more inordinate grew his groveling homage to the Führer. Just to cite one example from a Reichstag speech in 1938 (interestingly enough, the last session of the Reichstag):

How shall I say, my Führer, what emotion fills me? How shall I find words for your deeds? Has ever a mortal been so loved as you, my Führer? Was ever a belief so strong as that in your mission? God sent you to us for Germany. You rescued the German people from darkest night and brought the Reich to the glowing light. . . . All Germans thank you with overflowing hearts: Thanks to our Führer! All Germans cry in this momentous and historical hour with fervour and passion: Hail to the saviour of Germany! Hail forever and ever to the heart-loved Führer who has once more made life worth living!

Even allowing for a certain amount of typical German sentimentality, it must be said that some of the more sophisticated Nazi leaders found Goering's overdriven protestations of devotion to the Führer a little too sticky. The Germans have a word for it, and this word was often used (after it had become safe) to describe Goering's relationship to Hitler: Aroch-lecher. But
Hitler wanted it that way and it was an easy price for the emotionally underdeveloped Goering to pay for his position in the Third Reich. He even admitted that he had agreed never to disagree with Hitler in the presence of others. After so many years of such bombastic and widely publicized devotion to the Führer, even if he did have any momentary misgivings about embarking on a dangerous adventure, he was psychologically incapable of rendering opposition to Hitler without completely losing face. Neither did he possess the moral courage that such opposition would have entailed. Anyway, the alternative—blind support of the Führer in his reckless plans for conquest which had brought them power and wealth already—was far too easy psychologically and had far too many attractions for Goering to have caused him any real hesitation.

Thus, at a decisive moment in world history, the only man in Germany who had sufficient power and popularity to curb the destructive maeniac who was about to immerse Europe in its greatest blood bath, had renounced his uniform and medals, shouted orders to his generals, quenched his courage with another shot of morphine, fawned over his commander “in a state of crazy intoxication,” and laughed.

**The War Criminal**

The exploits of Goering's Luftwaffe are of more historical and military significance than psychological. Suffice it to say that in the beginning Goering performed his function in the war machine aggressively and efficiently. The bombing of Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Coventry were all, in a literal psychological sense, child's play. But with these easy victories Goering grew more and more careless in his play. The world was proving too easy prey to the aggressive psychopaths who ruled Germany and were destined to inherit the earth. As Luftwaffe prisoners later revealed, Goering concentrated too much on uniforms and showmanship and not enough on meeting the enemy's technological challenge. The task of bombing London and Moscow into submission proved to be more than child's play. But Goering was already too far gone in his infantile avarice to sacrifice his lust for new titles and still more wealth to the more arduous tasks of warfare. Art treasures from the collections of occupied Europe began to find their way to Goering's palatial estates by the carload, while their owners were frequently among those herded into concentration camps. To the newly created rank of Reichsmarschall (about a six-star general) Goering had to add President of the Reich Research Council, Head of the Reich Defense Council, etc.

In the meantime, years of corrupt patronage and bureaucracy, as well as a crippling ideology, were beginning to take their toll in the Luftwaffe. Scientific air crew selection and training was thrown out of the window. Scientific research was in a hopeless hodgepodge with Goering and Himmler and dozens of other dilettantes dabbling in its patronage. Sadistic experiments on human freezing and brain measurement were performed on Nazi victims and the data collected in the archives of aviation medicine. If much of this was done without Goering's knowledge, the more damning is the evidence of his callous negligence.

As London withstood the worst that the Luftwaffe had to offer and Moscow refused to fall, Hitler's fury vented itself more and more on his errant Luftwaffe chief. "In fact, he would scream about the inefficiency and uselessness of the Luftwaffe with such contempt and viciousness, that I would actually blush and squirm and preferred to go to the front to avoid these scenes," Goering related. "But then he ordered me to be present at his staff conferences at GHQ just as if to say, 'Stand there and take it, damn you!'"

With that kind of viciousness! The account is undoubtedly accurate except for Goering's pathetic pretense of going to the front. Those who were familiar with the situation told me that Goering just disappeared for long periods of time, sulking in his palace, hunting, or "doping himself up with morphine and stealing art treasures from all over Europe when Germany was in agony" (Speer).

The amiable dashing hero of World War I was indeed deteriorating physically and morally. Years of soft living and corruption had brought about a degeneration until he neither looked nor acted the part. Paroxysmal tachycardia, neuralgia, and other psychosomatic complaints plagued him more and more. Inspiring leadership turned to terrorization and brutality, for, just as Hitler cursed him, he cursed and mistrusted his subordinates. In a desperate attempt to salvage his standing with the Führer, Goering went so far as to forbid one of his ace generals to reveal to Hitler the real danger of enemy air power, and demoted him to private for doing so. At the same time he assured the Führer that secret wonder-weapons, which would turn the tide, were just around the corner. Goering's protective fantasy was still running away with him. Again, as his frustration increased, the need to escape into another fantasy world through drugs also increased. Karinhall became reminiscent of the decadence of Rome.

When he did show up at meetings of the Reich Defense Council, Speer said, his speech was often so irrational that it could be explained only on the basis of a morphine jag. It became common practice for the war leaders to ignore him and do what they could to save the tottering Reich, over his head.

But there was probably another reason for Goering's panicky flight from reality: mass extermination! Not that Goering was one to suffer acute anxiety reactions to the murder of political rivals, the shooting of hostages, the bombing of open cities, or the starvation of conquered populations. But his perverted sense of values had set certain limits to the acting-out of his psychopathic fantasies. The killing of enemies in time of war was all in good form; he could even shrug off the mass murder of thousands of "communists" and Jews on the eastern front by Himmler's Sonderkommandos, or the murder expedition euphemistically referred to as the "suppression of the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto." These things were a little crude, perhaps, but then Himmler was such a crude man and so overzealous in carrying out the Party ideology. But it was not until the talk and progress reports went around in high Party circles concerning the evacuation and extermination of entire Jewish populations—men, women, and children, by the thousands, by the hundreds of thousands, by the millions that Goering fully appreciated the implications of the fanatic ideology with which he had identified himself.

For this was something his playfully heroic and chivalrous concepts of war and even his callous disregard for human life had never encompassed. Not without some pathetic earnestness did Goering try to impress the distinction on me:
There is just one thing I want you to know.—Really—can believe it or not—but I must say in dead earnest—I have never been cruel. I'll admit I've been hard; I do not deny that I haven't been bashful about shooting a thousand men for reprisals, or hostages, or whatever you please.—But cruel—torturing women and children?—Du lieber Gott! That is so far removed from my nature.

It would not be distorting the clinical picture too much to grant a certain amount of validity to Goering's self-characterization. Again, the reasons are both practical and psychodynamic. He could handle his anxieties and aggressions in the military sphere, to a certain extent. Killing enemies, bullying his under-dogs, believing in wonder-weapons, all provided certain outlets and defenses; anyway, win, lose, or draw, the rules provided chivalrous treatment among warlords between wars, and Goering's amiable disposition would always get him by. But Genocide was something that was not even in the books—something that shattered hope of redemption, even the romantically desirable last resort, a hero's martyrdom. The alternatives of being shot as a blundering fool and traitor by his own incredibly murderous Kaiser-figure on the one hand, or being tried and hanged as a war criminal by the enemy on the other, was too shattering to his ego-structure to contemplate. That the problem was causing him some concern is indicated by a remark which Speer heard him make toward the end of the war: "These atrocities will cost us dearly one day." But, until that day, it was better not to think about it—and so, charismatically, Goering brushed aside the dangerous reality; when it became too much for him on top of Hitler's violent attacks, the drugs provided a reliable escape.

We shall never know for certain what emotions possessed Goering as he drugged the atrocities out of his mind. Perhaps for the first time in his life Goering experienced fear. Not merely the ordinary fear of death, which was suddenly becoming more real to him, but the atavistic fears of unknown horrors beyond his ken—not unlike the fear of unknown destructive forces which terrifies superstitious primitive savages far more than the wild animals or tribal warriors they can see and fight; or the panic-reaction of severe neurotics, when not only their ego-defenses but their entire conscious frame of reference collapses in the face of new overwhelming conflicts. For it is altogether likely that, in helping to seal the fate of Europe's Jews and stealing the property of those who ended in suicide or concentration camps, Goering had not visualized the gas chamber extermination of millions of naked women and children, the packing of their hair for mattresses, the extraction of their gold teeth and gold wedding rings for gold deposits in the Reichsbank. His revolutionary Kaiser-figure had turned out to be a hideous Minotaur who violated all the self-protective rules of chivalry, murdering women and children and even devouring the youth of his own tribe. Hitler and Himmler had run amok with their damned ideology and converted his romantic world to a Walpurgisnacht of unspeakable horrors, to which all exits were sealed. All except one—the drugs and the poison he kept about him. Such might have been Goering's feelings, based on our understanding of his personality, system of values, and the total situation. We shall never know for certain, because Goering naturally refused to discuss it, though he betrayed his reactions frequently during the year in which we observed him.

At all events, Goering was paralyzed into inaction. Faced with a clear decision to back up his "pure patriotic idealism"—even his desire to avoid a disgraceful death himself—by overthrowing the now unmistakable maniac who was wantonly ruining his own country, he shrank into seclusion. The would-be hero, as Speer told me, failed his country in her greatest hour of need—because he was fundamentally a moral coward.

Just before the final collapse, Goering made a premature suggestion to succeed the Führer in anticipation of his death. He was arrested and ordered killed with his family for his pains. His wife described the last scene of the war: Goering cursing the leader who had turned on him, in the vilest language of which he was capable, while bombs were falling all around the terrified family, and SS men were deliberating over the execution order.

It was in this demoralized and exhausted state that Goering was finally relieved and decided to surrender to the American authorities. The newspaper item in this No. 1 captive was balm to his aching ego, but as the prison commandant described it, "When Goering came to me at Mondorf, he was a simpering slob with two suitcases full of paracodine pills. I thought he was a drug salesman. But we took him off his dope and made a man of him."

We now enter the last act of the Goering drama: his trial and death as a war criminal. His reactions throughout the entire last year of his life are reported in detail in the Nuremberg Diary. They are merely summarized here to bring his case history to a close. The significance of this last episode is that, under observation in the limited environment of the Nuremberg jail, he exhibited on a small scale the very same personality pattern which he had displayed on a grand scale in the life history we have reconstructed.

Relieved of his drugs, Goering was once more alert and responsive. Before the trial started he presented a front of utter amiability and good-humored bravado to the American officers, whom he was obviously trying to win over, though he could not conceal his inordinate egotism. Rapport was easily established for the psychological testing which was conducted while the prisoners were still in solitary confinement. On the IQ test Goering responded like a bright and conceited schoolboy who was showing off before the teacher. Being led to believe that he had the highest IQ among the Nazi war criminals (IQ 138), he praised the excellent discrimination of American psychometric methods. When he heard that Schacht and Seyss-Inquart had outdone him, he scorned the unreliability of the test. He continued to belittle the other Nazi leaders and to react to the slightest pricks to his sensitive ego, but in general exhibited a most disarming amiability.

As soon as the trial started, Goering's domineering aggressiveness came to the fore. The challenge of acting out a new last act of the Nazi drama before the audience of the world press was as exhilarating as a shot in the arm. He immediately took charge of the prisoners' dock and began to dictate the strategy of defense. He declared, rubbing his hands enthusiastically, that he was the captain of the first-string team and was going to give the opposition and the audience a run for their money; the second-stringers were the prisoners on the upper tiers of cells, but they were no good because they lacked leadership. The trial, like everything else in Goering's life, was still a game of play-acting in which he
played the leading role. Even the evidence of atrocities and other war crimes could be evaluated only for its effect on the audience. This was strikingly illustrated early in the trial when American films of the concentration camps were shown in court. Many of the defendants broke down and cried in shame; others hotly protested their innocence of these crimes, when I saw them later in their cells (Nov. 29, 1945). But not Goering:

As for Goering, he was apparently disturbed because it had spoiled his show. "It was such a good afternoon too, until they showed that film. — They were reading my telephone conversations on the Austrian affair, and everybody was laughing with me. — And then they showed that awful film, and it just spoiled everything."

Goering continued to brush off the atrocities just as he had done previously. He urged the others to stick together and the worst that could happen to them would be exile; when this attack didn't work he made another appeal on the basis of his projected fantasies, lending them with the prospect of heroic martyrdom including marble caskets in a national shrine, if they would stick with him in loyalty and patriotism. At the same time his humor revealed itself behind the scenes in all its crude cynicism. A Diary note of Jan. 7, 1946, records one of the daily lunchroom experiences:

"It makes me sick to see Germans selling their souls to the enemy!" he fumed at lunch . . . "I just detest anything that is undignified!" . . . Then he turned to the audience in general, and said out loud, banging his fist on the table, "Damn it, I just wish we could all have the courage to confine our defense to three simple words: Lick my ass!"

. . . He repeated the proposed defense with great relish, telling how Goetz had said it, how another general had said it, and how he would say it.

When the time came for his defense, Goering did not display such crude cynicism, but showed himself to be a master of evasion, and played the role of loyal patriot for all it was worth. He had decided quite early in the trial that the best line to follow for the sake of his public and for German history was to maintain his loyalty to the Führer and to stick to it to the bitter end. He admitted quite candidly that his role in German history was more important to him than anything else, and that this was the way to play it. Granting the narcissistic basis of his values, I asked whether he thought that the German people would admire him for maintaining loyalty to a leader who had ruined them with mass murder and war. Goering assured me that he knew his people better than I did, and that German tradition demanded a show of loyalty to the bitter end. When I asked for further explanation of this point after one of his grandstand plays during his defense, he revealed how his youthful fantasies were still dominating his behavior: he related the story from the Nibelungen Lied, telling how Hagen had killed Siegfried, and how Krimhilde's brothers had refused to take revenge for Siegfried's death, because Hagen had only acted out of loyalty to his king. By analogy, therefore, any murder committed at Hitler's wish was not disgraceful in German eyes.

As for guilt for the Nazi atrocities, Goering testified under oath that he had not even known about them "to that extent," because like all good Germans he had obeyed the ban on listening to the foreign radio. This argument was all the more ludicrous to me in view of his repeated protestations that he had not believed all the atrocity reports he had heard on the foreign radio, and the fact that the Reich Research Council actually functioned as Goering's private intelligence agency. Besides, Goering had already given a slight but highly significant clue to his real reaction to the blood on his hands during the Rorschach test which I had administered to him shortly after the beginning of the trial. He had again blocked on the interpretation of the red splashes on Card III, scowling, "—But these red spots— I can't figure out what these things are— damned if I know—" and then he tried angrily to brush them off with his finger. He could not have betrayed his anxiety to rub out the "damned spot" more effectively.

But Goering's performance in court won him a good press, all things considered, and he carefully instructed his lawyer on how to interview reporters to follow up this advantage. He also coached other defendants on the proper use of evasive tactics on cross-examination and the importance of making the stuff interesting so that the judges and the reporters would not get bored and try to hurry the trial. Above all, he insisted that they support him in the pose of loyal patriotism. Where humorous cynicism and bravado failed, he resorted to outright browbeating. He could not bash their heads together in the present situation, but his sheer personal dominance and aggressiveness seemed to have an intimidating effect on some of the more submissive defendants. Since he was clearly bent on obstructing justice for his own ends, and some of the defendants were complaining about this, it was my duty to recommend and effect a separation of the defendants outside of the courtroom. This had a salutary effect.

Speer was already in rebellion against Goering's heroic hypocrisy, defiantly insisting that he would tell the truth about the whole rotten business. Others began to waver in their appreciation of Goering's bravado, as it became obvious that his campaign of obstructing the trial was being waged chiefly to suppress any evidence that might be damaging to his own case as a Nazi leader. As the evidence of Goering's major guilt for waging aggressive war, his participation in purges, plots, and scandals, and his large-scale looting came to light, the defense in the ranks grew to open rebellion.

As the trial wore on and Goering's "amiable patriot" mask was stripped to its bare-faced hypocrisy, his Machiavellian cynicism expressed itself more and more openly in our conversations in his cell. On the question of the people's attitude toward war, the Crown Prince's statement was classic:

"Why, of course, the people don't want war," Goering shrugged. "Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when he can get out of it to come back to his farm in one piece. Naturally, the comforted people don't want war, whether it's in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor, for that matter, in Germany. That is understood. But after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a parliament or a Communist dictatorship . . . Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

The raising of moral issues became more and more of a thorn in his side—

"What do you mean, morality—word-of-honor?" Goering snorted. "Sure, you can talk about word-of-honor when you promise to deliver goods in business. — But when it is the question of the interests of a nation? — Phooey! Then morality stops . . . Hengott!" When a
State has a chance to improve its position because of the weakness of a neighbor, do you think it will stop at any squawking consideration of keeping a promise? It is a statesman’s duty to take advantage of such a situation for the good of the country!” (I mentioned something about UNO at this point.) “Ach, we piss on your UNO! Do you think that any one of us takes that seriously for a minute? . . . You Americans are making a stupid mistake with your talk of democracy and morality. Don’t think that Germans have become more Christian and less nationalistic all of a sudden . . . and you can take your morality and your repentance and your democracy and stick it up!”

As one after another of the defendants admitted or were forced to admit the criminal guilt of the Nazi regime and shifted the blame to the top leaders, Goering again recoiled in frustration. Part of his anxiety was converted to his old psychosomatic complaints; more of it found expression in oral and incipient overt aggression. Sweating in his cell as the trial drew to a close, complaining of sciatica and treachery, he gave vent to vile vituperation against his co-defendants as well as some more sympathy-seeking through the divide-and-conquer technique. It was interesting to compare notes with some of the other officers who were seeing him at this time to see how he was maligning the psychologist to the psychiatrist, the chaplains to the psychologist and vice versa, while fawning on each in turn. In the prisoners dock, which was the only place he could meet the others now, he repeated the same process with militarists against civilians, Prussians against Bavarians, Protestants against Catholics, and always vice versa, smiling to each in turn but soliciting sympathy by scorning him behind his back.

He could not ask for drugs now, but we felt that he would have given his right arm for a good shot of cocaine or a big dose of paraconine. He fairly quivered as he struck out in all directions in frustrated aggression. Finally, when Speer made his spectacular denunciation of Hitler and Goering, Goering reacted in typical gangster fashion, threatening to have Speer murdered if he ever got out of the jail alive.

There is little to add to Goering’s case history. His last few weeks were spent in a state of brooding despondency as he contemplated his figure in history. The trial had succeeded in unmasking the amiable patriot; his last-ditch loyalty to Hitler had been exposed as an unconscionable gesture in the light of the denunciations. Brooding in his cell, Goering admitted that his attempt to build a heroic legend had been a failure. “You don’t have to worry about the Hitler legend any more,” he told me. “When the German people learn what has been revealed at this trial, it won’t be necessary to condemn him. He has condemned himself.” Implicit in that statement was Goering’s admission of grave doubts respecting his own position in German history.

The Court finally rendered its verdict:

... Goering was the adviser, the active agent of Hitler, and one of the prime leaders of the Nazi movement. . . . He developed the Gestapo and created the first concentration camps . . . Roehm purge . . . threatened to bomb Prague . . . attack on Poland . . . use of slave labor . . . persecuted the Jews . . . his interest was primarily economic . . . There is nothing to be said in mitigation . . . His guilt is unique in its enormity. The record discloses no excuses for this man.

Sentence: Death by hanging.

I met Goering as he came down to his cell after hearing the sentence. He was trembling and virtually speechless and asked to be left alone for a while. A disgraceful death had finally become a grim reality. Certainly the verdict and sentence were not the stuff of which even German heroes were made. With the two condemned generals he filed a petition for execution by a firing squad. General Jodl explained why this was so important. “There has never been a picture of a German general who was hanged in any German history book.” When the appeal was denied, Goering cursed the Allied spitefulness, their lack of chivalry. But he would still have his picture in those history books and would still make a gesture of defiance to the moralistic-legalistic-religious culture that had branded his heroic acting as murder.

Two days before the scheduled execution he was allowed to check his belongings, which had been locked in the storeroom of the jail. I spoke to him briefly after he had done so, and noticed that he was in a very tense state, whistling nervously for the first time and obviously wishing to bring my visit to a quick conclusion. After I left he called in the chaplain and asked for the rites of the Last Supper, undoubtedly with the suicide poison already in his possession. The chaplain denied the request, saying that he could not perform the ritual merely to satisfy the showmanship of one who had never shown the slightest sign of repentance. Thus Goering was deprived of his final gesture of making a mockery of the moral symbolism of the civilization that had condemned him. But he did achieve the partial success of making the headlines and distracting attention from his guilt for several days. By this final dramatic gesture our amiable psychopath also kept the way open to achieve the supreme goal of his lifelong fantasies: to get his picture into the German history books—either as “a great man or a great criminal,” depending on the cultural values that emerge out of the civilization he helped to destroy.