

THE CONFESSION OF ADOLF EICHMANN

THE EDITORS OF LIFE PRESENT A MAJOR HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

EICHMANN TELLS HIS OWN DAMNING STORY

Introduction

November 28, 1960

On the following pages LIFE begins its exclusive publication of the confession of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi who engineered the murder of millions of Jews - and now awaits trial for his crime in Israel.

In this document, Eichmann convicts himself as one of the major Nazi war criminals. Yet he set it down in the belief that his version of the truth would go far to "explain" his actions and even to exonerate him. Several years ago in Argentina, where he had fled after eluding Allied agents and lived under a false name, he began telling his story to a German journalist, talking into a tape recorder for hours at a time. He had finished the account by last May when, in a dramatic cloak and dagger operation, Israeli intelligence agents found him, captured him and carried him off to Israel.

A month later, LIFE came into possession of the huge transcript of Eichmann's words. After six months of translation, editing and research which confirmed the absolute authenticity of the document, LIFE is now able to present, in two installments, Eichmann's own story of his work.

"I was merely a little cog in the machinery," Eichmann argues. Engaged in an effort that dwarfed the exterminations of Genghis Khan or Tamerlane, he preserved the mentality of a competent bookkeeper, eager to please his superiors. He tells how he himself worked out the timetable for the obliteration of Europe's Jewish population and how his men rounded up Jews and put them on the trains that led to deathly sidings at Auschwitz and Maidanek or to the lime pits in Poland.

The question may be asked: why publish this account?

LIFE does not publish it simply as a reminder of the terrible slaughter of European Jewry. The self-told story of Adolf Eichmann is a major contribution to the history of a horrifyingly brutal era, and it has a bitter relevance in our time. Eichmann gave over his conscience to a totalitarian state out of perverted patriotism and in return for the supposed solidarity and security that the state promised him. His deeds, of course, make him an extreme example. But among the Nazis, the Communists and other totalitarians, past and present, he could find a great deal of company: men who totally abdicate their individual sense or morality in favor of a set of instructions and directives.

The Eichmann story reveals how evil can be rationalized because it has been codified. It is not pleasant reading, but it stands as a warning to every member of the human family.

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I.

'I TRANSPORTED THEM ... TO THE BUTCHER'
EICHMANN'S STORY PART I

By Adolf Eichmann

Introduction

How much time fate allows me to live, I do not know. I do know that someone must inform this generation and those to come about the happenings of my era. I am writing this story at a time when I am in full possession of my physical and mental freedom, influenced or pressed by no one. May future historians be objective enough not to stray from the path of the true facts recorded here.

I have slowly tired of living as an anonymous wanderer between two worlds, wanted even by the police of my homeland. At Nürnberg, my most trusted subordinate testified against me. So did others. Perhaps these people referred to me to whitewash themselves. But when such a thing goes on for years and everyone joins in, blaming me for the deeds of all, a legend is created in which exaggeration plays a large part.

In actual fact, I was merely a little cog in the machinery that carried out the directives and orders of the German Reich. I am neither a murderer nor a mass-murderer. I am a man of average character, with good qualities and many faults. I was not "Czar of the Jews," as a Paris newspaper once called me, nor was I responsible for all the good and evil deeds done against them. Where I was implicated in the physical annihilation of the Jews, I admit my participation freely and without pressure. After all, I was the one who transported the Jews to the camps. If I had not transported them, they would not have been delivered to the butcher.

Yet what is there to "admit"? I carried out my orders. It would be as pointless to blame me for the whole Final Solution of the Jewish Problem as to blame the official in charge of the railroads over which the Jewish transports traveled. Where would we have been if everyone had thought things out in those days? You can do that today in the "new" German army. But with us an order was an order. If I had sabotaged the order of the one-time *Führer* of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler, I would have been not only a scoundrel but a despicable pig, like those who broke their military oath to join the ranks of the anti-Hitler criminals in the conspiracy of July 20, 1944.

The order for annihilation

At the Nürnberg trial the world was given a new interpretation of justice. Not one Russian, no Israeli, no Englishman or North American was punished in even a single instance because he carried out commands given to him while he was in an official

position or under military oath. Why should the gallows or the penitentiary be reserved for Germans only?

But I am getting ahead of my story. It is time to outline my rank and duties in the events which I shall discuss, and to introduce myself:

Name: Adolf Otto Eichmann

Nationality: German

Occupation: Lieutenant Colonel SS (retired)

The area of my section's authority was those Jewish matters within the competence of the Gestapo. Originally this centered on the problems of finding out whether a person was a Gentile or a Jew. If he turned out to be a Jew, we were the administrative authority which deprived him of his German citizenship and confiscated his property. Ultimately we declared him an enemy of the state. After the one-time German Führer gave the order for the physical annihilation of the Jews, our duties shifted. We supervised Gestapo seizures of German Jews and the trains that took them to their final destination. And throughout German-occupied Europe my advisers from my office saw to it that the local governments turned their Jewish citizens over to the German Reich. For all this, of course, I will answer. I was not asleep during the war years.

I began my work with the Jewish question in 1935 in Berlin where I had been transferred after service with one of the early SS training companies. My first assignment there had been extremely dull, sorting what ultimately became a huge card index of Jews, Freemasons, members of various secret societies and other subversive elements in the Reich. In time, however, my superiors allowed me to start work on the solution of the Jewish problem.

I must confess that I did not greet this assignment with the apathy of an ox being led to his stall. On the contrary, I was fascinated with it. My chief, General Reinhard Heydrich, encouraged me to study and acquaint myself even with its theological aspects. In the end I learned to speak Hebrew, although badly.

Some of my early work was with the Nürnberg laws, in force since 1935. Under the formula adopted at that time for "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," the laws were intended to drive Jews out of all phases of German life. My experience in this field was often of a confidential and rather embarrassing nature, as when I established that the *Führer's* diet cook, who was at one time his mistress, was 1/32 Jewish. My

immediate superior, Lieutenant General Heinrich Müller, quickly classified my report as Top Secret.

In 1935 after I had been struggling with Hebrew for two and a half years, I had a chance to take a trip to Palestine. We were most interested in the Palestine emigration and I wanted to find out at what point a Jewish state in Palestine might be set up. Unfortunately Palestine was then in turmoil and the British turned down my application for an extended stay. I did see enough to be very impressed by the what the Jewish colonists were building up their land. I admired their desperate will to live, the more so since I was myself an idealist.

In the years that followed I often said to Jews with whom I had dealings that, had I been a Jew, I would have been a fanatical Zionist. I could not imagine being anything else. In fact, I would have been the most ardent Zionist imaginable.

A yellow star on their clothing

In those days before the outbreak of the war, the former government of the Reich hoped to solve the Jewish problem by forced emigration. This was easier said than done, since one had to reckon here the difficulties of emigration as a mass project. The Jewish organizations with the widest experience in this had already been closed down as unacceptable to the government. There was also a tendency among Jews to wait it out on the theory that the Hitler regime would be of short duration. Of the 500,000 avowed Jews who were in Germany in 1933, plus a number who were considered Jews under the Nürnberg Laws, not more than 130,000 managed to leave before 1938.

It may have been the Propaganda Ministry that first thought up the idea of forcing all Jews to wear a yellow star on their clothing. I remember that when Julius Streicher heard about it he whinnied with delight. His newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, devoted an entire issue to this matter, I naturally took part in the administrative details, since as the department head for Jewish affairs in the Gestapo, my countersignature was required. In fact, I recall the day when I received bolts and bolts of yellow cloth to distribute. I issued the cloth to my Jewish functionaries and they trotted off with them.

We did not devise the yellow star to put pressure on the Jews themselves. On the contrary, its purpose was to control the natural tendency of our German people to come to the aid of someone in trouble. The marking was intended to hinder and such assistance to Jews who were being harassed. We wanted Germans to feel embarrassed, to feel afraid of having any contact with Jews. So our administration was quite happy to distribute these bolts of yellow cloth and to regulate the time limit by which the stars would have to be worn.

It was in 1938, at the reunion of Austria with the German Reich, that General Heydrich gave me the order, in my capacity as a specialist in Jewish affairs, to set the Jewish emigration in motion from Vienna.

I found Jewish life in Austria completely disorganized. Most Jewish organizations had already been closed down by the police and their leaders put under arrest. To speed up emigration I called in local Jewish leaders and established a central office for Jewish emigration. It was located in the Rothschild Palace in the Prinz Eugen Strasse.

As with the other, similar central offices, the Vienna office permitted emigrating Jews to take household goods with them. For the custody and administration of Jewish property so-called administrative and accounting centers were later created which worked with tidy accuracy and correctness. *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, who surprisingly enough often busied himself with the smallest details of the Jewish problem, personally set up the strict administrative standards which were observed in this field. In Vienna alone we were able to prepare as many as 1,000 Jews daily for emigration.

The Jewish SS sergeant

One of the most useful of the Jewish leaders in these days was a Dr. Storfer, a senior civil servant who had been a major in the Austrian army in World War I. I had a weakness for this Dr. Storfer. He never took a penny from his racial comrades and he had a very nice, proper way of negotiating. Unfortunately, years later Storfer made a stupid blunder. He tried to escape. My second in command had never liked him and he had him shot at Auschwitz.

In general we respected Jewish combat veterans of World War I. We even had some Jewish SS men who had taken part in the early struggles of the Nazis - almost 50 of them in Germany and Austria. I remember giving my personal attention to a Jewish SS sergeant, a good man, who wanted to leave for Switzerland. I had instructed the border control to let him pass, but when he reached the Swiss border he apparently thought something had gone wrong. He tried to cross illegally through the woods and he was shot. He was a 100% Jew, a man of the most honorable outlook.

Through all this period I saw the Jewish problem as a question to be solved politically. So did Himmler and the entire Gestapo. It was not a matter of emotion. My SS comrades and I rejected the crude devices of burning temples, robbing Jewish stores and maltreating Jews on the streets. We wanted no violence. One of my former officers was expelled from the SS for beating up four or five Jews in the cellar of our offices. Barring such exceptions, each of us, as an individual, had no wish to harm the individual Jew personally.

For the sake of the truth I cannot refrain from mentioning a small incident in which I myself violated this code of correctness. One day I called in Dr. Löwenherz, whom I appointed director of the Jewish community in Vienna. He answered my questions with evasions and, I believe, untruth. Owing to a temporary lack of self-control, I hit him in the face. I mentioned this affair to Dr. Löwenherz later in the presence of some of my subordinates and expressed my regrets to him over the matter.

As late as 1940, after we beat the French, we were devising plans for further mass emigration of the Jews to Madagascar. I had my legal experts draft a complete law covering the resettlement of the Jews there on territory which was to be declared Jewish. They would live there without restraint except, of course, they would be under the protectorate of the German Reich. Unfortunately, by the time the obstacles created by bureaucracy for this plan had been overcome, the scales of victory were balanced in such a way that Madagascar was out of our grasp.

The final solution: liquidation

The continuance of the war finally changed our attitude on emigration entirely. In 1941 the *Führer* himself ordered the physical annihilation of the Jewish enemy. What made him take this step I do not know. But for one thing the war in Russia was not going along in the *Blitz* fashion the High Command had planned. The ruinous

struggle on two fronts had begun. And already Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the world Zionist leader, had declared war on Germany in the name of Jewry. It was inevitable that the answer of the *Führer* would not be long in coming.

Soon after the order General Heydrich called me to his office in the Prinz Albrecht Strasse. He told me about *Reichsführer* Himmler's order that all emigration of Jews was to be prohibited - with no more exceptions. He assured me that neither I nor my men would have anything to do with the physical liquidation. We would act only as policemen; that is, we would round up the Jews for the others.

By this time the formula "Final Solution for the Jewish Question" had taken on a new meaning: liquidation. In this new sense we discussed it at a special conference on Jan. 10, 1942 in the Wannsee section of Berlin. It was I who had to bustle over to Heydrich with the portfolio of invitations on which he scribbled his "Heydrich", stroke for stroke. So we sent out the whole thing. A few people declined to participate, on grounds principally of other duties.

After the conference, as I recall, Heydrich, Müller and your humble servant sat cozily around the fireplace. I noticed for the first time that Heydrich was smoking. Not only that, but he had a cognac. Normally he touched nothing alcoholic. The only other time I had seen him drinking was at an office party years before. We all had drinks then. We sang songs. After a while we got up on the chairs and drank a toast, then on the table and then round and round - on the chairs and on the table again. Heydrich taught it to us. It was an old North German custom.

But we sat around peacefully after our Wannsee Conference, not just talking shop but giving ourselves a rest after so many taxing hours.

It is not true that *Reichsführer* Himmler set down in writing anything ordering the annihilation of the Jews. Do you think he sat down to write, "My dear Eichmann, the *Führer* has ordered the physical annihilation of the Jews"? The truth is that Himmler never put a line in writing on this subject. I know that he always gave his instructions orally to Lieut. General Oswald Pohl, in charge of the economic administration which ran the concentration camps. I never received any order of this sort.

I would like to stress again, however, that my department never gave a single annihilation order. We were responsible only for deportations. In every European country under our jurisdiction it was the job of the Jewish Adviser (the representative of my office) to work through local officials until he had attained our goal: a roundup of the Jews and their delivery to the transports. I had Captain Richter sitting in Bucharest, Captain Wisliceny in Pressburg [Bratislava], Dannecker in Paris, etc. All

these Jewish Advisers enjoyed the greatest respect, for each of them was really the long arm of Himmler himself. Although I myself had a relatively low rank, I was the only department head in the Gestapo with my own representatives in foreign countries. If one of my specialists got in trouble with a local commander, I would then have my bureau chief, General Müller, give the necessary orders. Müller was more feared than *Reichsführer* Himmler.

I carefully set up my timetables for the transports with the Ministry of Transportation, and the trains were soon rolling. But through the years we met many difficulties. In France the French police helped only hesitantly. After its initial enthusiasm for the project, the Laval government itself became more and more cautious. Italy and Belgium were by and large failures. And in Holland the battle for the Jews was especially hard and bitter. The Dutch, for one thing, did not make the distinction between Dutchmen and Jews with Dutch citizenship. A person was either Dutch, they said, or he wasn't. Denmark posed the greatest difficulties of all. The King intervened for the Jews there, and most of them escaped.

Yet we managed after a struggle to get the deportations going. Trainloads of Jews were soon leaving from France and Holland. It was not for nothing that I made so many trips to Paris and The Hague. My interest here was only in the number of transport trains I had to provide. Whether they were bank directors or mental cases, the people who were loaded on these trains meant nothing to me. It was really none of my business.

In general, I found that there were fewer problems with local authorities the farther east you went - with the exception of the assimilated Jews in Hungary. The Romanian operations went off without friction. Captain Richter in Bucharest was a good man. Eager to strike against these parasites, the Romanians astonishingly enough liquidated thousands and thousands of their own Jews. Slovakian officials offered their Jews to us like someone throwing away sour beer. Tiso, the Catholic priest who ran the government there, was an anti-Semite.

Tiso's attitude contrasted with mine. I am no anti-Semite. I was just politically opposed to Jews because they were stealing the breath of life from us.

The chambers at Maidanek

It was in the latter part of 1941 that I saw the first preparations for annihilating the Jews. General Heydrich ordered me to visit Maidanek, a Polish village near Lublin. A German police captain showed me how they had managed to build airtight chambers disguised as ordinary Polish farmers' huts, seal them hermetically, then inject the exhaust gas from a Russian U-boat motor. I remember it all very exactly because I never thought that anything like that would be possible, technically speaking.

Not long afterward Heydrich had me carry an order to Major General Odilo Globocnik, SS commander of the Lublin district. I cannot remember whether Heydrich gave me the actual message or whether I had to draw it up. It ordered Globocnik to start liquidating a quarter million Polish Jews.

Later that year I watched my first execution. It was at Minsk, then recently come under German occupation. I was sent by my immediate superior, General Müller. Müller never stirred from behind his desk at Gestapo headquarters but he knew everything that went on in Europe. He liked to send me around on his behalf. I was in effect a traveling salesman for the Gestapo, just as I had once been a traveling salesman for an oil company in Austria.

Müller had heard that Jews were being shot near Minsk, and he wanted a report. I went there and showed my orders to the local SS commander. "That's a fine coincidence, " he said. "Tomorrow 5,000 of them are getting theirs."

When I rode out the next morning, they had already started, so I could see only the finish. Although I was wearing a leather coat which reached almost to my ankles, it was very cold. I watched the last group of Jews undress, down to their shirts. They walked the last 100 or 200 yards -- they were not driven -- then they jumped into the pit. It was impressive to see them all jumping into the pit without offering any resistance whatsoever. Then the men of the squad banged away into the pit with their rifles and machine pistols.

Why did the scene linger so long in my memory? Perhaps because I had children myself. And there were children in the pit. I saw a woman hold a child of a year or two into the air, pleading. At that moment all I wanted to say was, "Don't shoot, hand over the child...." Then the child was hit.

I was so close that later I found bits of brains spattered on my long leather coat. My driver helped me remove them. Then we returned to Berlin.

The Gestapo chauffeurs did not like to drive me, principally because I rarely spoke more than 20 words during a 12-hour trip, as for instance the long haul from Berlin to Paris. On this trip back from Minsk I spoke hardly a word. I was thinking. Not that I had become contemptuous of National Socialism after watching this previously unimaginable event. I was reflecting on the meaning of life in general.

Having seen what I had in Minsk, I said this when I reported back to Müller: "The solution, *Gruppenführer*, was supposed to have been a political one. But now that the *Führer* has ordered a physical solution, obviously a physical solution it must be. But we cannot go on conducting executions as they were done in Minsk and, I believe, other places. Of necessity our men will be educated to become sadists. We cannot solve the Jewish problem by putting a bullet through the brain of a defenseless woman who is holding her child up to us."

Müller did not answer. He just looked at me in a fatherly, benevolent fashion. I never could figure him out.

Later in that same winter Müller sent me to watch Jews being gassed in the Litzmannstadt [Lodz] area of central Poland. I must stress that the gassing was not done on his orders, but Müller did want to know about it. He was a very thorough government official.

Arriving at Litzmannstadt, I drove out to the designated place where a thousand Jews were about to board buses. The buses were normal, high-windowed affairs with all their windows closed. During the trip, I was told, the carbon monoxide from the exhaust pipe was conducted into the interior of the buses. It was intended to kill the passengers immediately.

A doctor who was there suggested that I look at the people inside one bus through a peephole in the driver's seat. I refused. I couldn't look. This was the first time that I had seen and heard such a thing and my knees were buckling under me. I had been told that the whole process took only three minutes, but the buses rode along for about a quarter of an hour.

We reached our destination and hell opened up for me for the first time. The bus in which I was riding turned and backed up before a pit about two meters deep. The doors opened. Some Poles who stood there jumped into the buses and threw the corpses into the pit. I was badly shaken by what I then saw. Another Pole with a pair of pliers in his hand jumped into the pit. He went through the corpses, opening their mouths. Whenever he saw a gold tooth, he pulled it out and dumped it into a small bag he was carrying.

When I reported back to Müller in Berlin, he chided me for not having timed the procedure with a stop watch. I said to him, "This sort of thing can't go on. Things shouldn't be done this way." I admitted I had not been able to look through the peephole. This time, too, Müller behaved like a sphinx. He forgave me, so to speak, for not having looked. Perhaps "forgive" sounds like an odd expression here.

The executions at Litzmannstadt and Minsk were a deep shock to me. Certainly I too had been aiming at a solution of the Jewish problem, but not like this. Of course, at that time I had not yet seen burned Germans, Germans shrunken like mummies in death. I had yet to see the heavy, imploring eyes of the old couple in a Berlin air raid shelter who lay crushed beneath a beam, begging me to shoot them. I couldn't bear to shoot them, but I told my sergeant to do so, if he could. If I had known then the horrors that would later happen to Germans, it would have been easier for me to watch the Jewish executions. At heart I am a very sensitive man. I simply can't look at any suffering without trembling myself.

The gas chambers at Auschwitz



I never had anything directly to do with the gas chambers, which evolved from early measures like those at Litzmannstadt. But I did visit Auschwitz repeatedly. It had an unpleasant smell. Even today I do not know how the gassing was carried out. I never watched the entire process. Even a man like Hoess, the commandant at Auschwitz, described the matter to me in a rather rose-colored way.

I knew Hoess well. He did his duty at Auschwitz, as any other man would have done it. It was Hoess who once told me that *Reichsführer* Himmler, taking a personal look at the entire liquidating action, had declared that this was a bloody fight which our coming generations would need to fight no more. I valued Hoess as an excellent comrade and a very proper fellow. He was a good family man, and he held the Iron Cross from the first World War.

Since the war I have read that two and a half million Jews were physically liquidated under Hoess's command. I find this figure incredible. The capacity of the camp argues against it. Many of the Jews confined there were put on work details and survived. After the war the Auschwitzers sprouted like mushrooms out of the forest floor after a rain. Hundreds of thousands of them are today in the best of health.

Along with the liquidation camps we continued to maintain the ghetto system. I would not say I originated the ghetto system. That would be to claim too great a distinction. The father of the ghetto system was the orthodox Jew, who wanted to remain by himself. In 1939, when we marched into Poland, we found a system of ghettos already in existence, begun and maintained by the Jews. We merely regulated these, sealed them off with walls and barbed wire and included even more Jews than were dwelling in them.

The assimilated Jew was of course very unhappy about being moved to a ghetto. But the Orthodox were pleased with the arrangement, as were the Zionists. The latter found ghettos a wonderful device for accustoming Jews to community living. Dr. Epstein from Berlin once said to me that Jewry was grateful for the chance I gave it to learn community life at the ghetto I founded at Theresienstadt, 40 miles from Prague. He said it made an excellent school for the future in Israel. The assimilated Jews found ghetto life degrading and non-Jews may have seen an unpleasant element of force in it. But basically most Jews feel well and happy in their ghetto life, which cultivates their peculiar sense of unity.

Revolt of Warsaw Jews



The [uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto](#) in 1943, however, taught us a bitter lesson about putting excessive numbers of people into these enclosures. Not long after this uprising I received in my office a photo album with an accompanying memo from *Reichsführer* Himmler, the album showed the phases of that battle, whose severity surprised even the German units fighting in it. I still recall today how we in the SS and the *Wehrmacht* suffered disproportionately high casualties putting down this revolt. I could not believe, seeing the pictures, that men in a ghetto could fight like that.

During this great blood-letting in Warsaw the order went out to the German occupation authorities to comb the country relentlessly. This was done so thoroughly that after a while there was no more Jewish question in Poland at all.

Elsewhere, even inside the Reich itself, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising had its effect in stringent measures against those Jews still engaged in forced factory labor. It was not in vain that Himmler put his entire weight behind this severity. Previously the directors of the big German factories, even Göring himself, the administrator of the Four Year Plan, had intervened on behalf of sparing Jews for the labor force. Now we in the Gestapo said simply, "Very well, you take the responsibility that things do not come to an uprising like the Warsaw Ghetto." When we said that, the urge to intervene left them.

The Warsaw Ghetto uprising had an equally strong effect with authorities in the other occupied countries. Every national leadership was anxious to remove factors of unrest. My advisers now had a perfect entree in the countries where they were

assigned. We could and did use the Warsaw example like a traveling salesman who sells an article all the more easily by showing a special advertising attraction.

With Hungary we were particularly concerned. The Hungarian Jews had lived through the war relatively untouched by severe restrictions. Now Himmler made it clear that he wanted Hungary combed with a tremendous thoroughness before the Jews could really wake up to our plans and organize partisan resistance. For this reason, he chose me to lead the march into Hungary in person.

Before dawn on March 19, 1944, I was leading an SS convoy from the Mauthausen concentration camp toward Budapest, on these orders from *Reichsführer* Himmler to clear the Jews out of Hungary. My men were equipped with combat gear in case in case the Hungarians resisted. We had several air-raid warnings along the way. Suddenly my advance guard halted. The column came to a stop. Tipped off probably by one of my assistants, the unit commanders gathered around my personal truck and drank a toast to me with the rum they were issued for the march. It was my 38th birthday, my seventh as an SS officer. On a Sunday morning in brilliant sunshine we crossed the border into Hungary. Instead of rifle fire or rebellious shouts we were greeted with cheers by the villagers and treated to white bread and wine. We put away our small arms then, because it was obvious there would be no resistance. That afternoon we rolled into Budapest and I immediately set up a small office in a corner of my bedroom in one of the great hotels.

I worked almost all that night putting out decrees calling the Jewish political officials to the first conferences the following day. I had already given orders to collect these Jewish officials in advance. Because I planned to work with them, I wanted to insure that they would not be harmed by any right-wing hysteria.

In Hungary my basic orders were to ship all Jews out of the country in as short a time as possible. Now, after years of working behind a desk, I had come out into the raw reality of the field. As Müller put it, they had sent me, the "master" himself, to make sure the Jews did not revolt as they had in the Warsaw Ghetto. I use the word "master" in quotation marks because people used it to describe me. I did not use it first.

Since they had sent the "master", however, I wanted to act like a master. I resolved to show how well a job could be done when the commander stands 100% behind it. By shipping the Jews off in a lightening operation, I wanted to set an example for future campaigns elsewhere.

The shipments to Auschwitz



All told, we succeeded in processing about half a million Jews in Hungary. I once knew the exact number that we shipped to Auschwitz, but today I can only estimate that it was around 350,000 in a period of about four months. But, contrary to legend, the majority of the deportees were not gassed at all but put to work in munitions plants. That is why there are thousands of Jews happily alive today who are included in the statistical totals of the "liquidated." Besides those we sent to Auschwitz, there were thousands and thousands who fled, some secretly, some with our connivance. It was child's play for a Jew to reach relative safety in Rumania if he could muster the few pengö to pay for a railroad ticket or an auto ride to the border. There were also 200,000 Jews left in a huge ghetto when the Russians arrived, and thousands more waiting to emigrate illegally to Palestine or simply hiding out from the Hungarian Gendarmerie.

It is clear from statistics, then, that our operation was not a battle fought with knives, pistols, carbines or poison gas. We used spiritual methods to reach our goal. Let us keep this distinction clear, because physical liquidation is a vulgar, coarse action.

Soon after we arrived in Budapest I met a Dr. László Endre, then a Budapest country official, who was eager to free Hungary of the Jewish "plague," as he put it. One evening he arranged a little supper for me and my assistant, Captain Deiter Wisliceny. Two or three other Hungarian officials were present and an orderly in livery who stood at Dr. Endre's side. On this evening the fate of the Jews in Hungary was sealed.

As I got to know Dr. Endre, I noticed his energy and his ardent desire to serve his Hungarian fatherland. He made it clear that in his present position he was unable to do positive work toward solving the Jewish question. So, I suggested to Major General Winkelmann, the ranking SS officer in Hungary, that Dr. Endre be transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. The transfer took several weeks, which I spent conferring with various Jewish officials and learning about Jewish life in

Hungary. Then one day Dr. Endre became second secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, and a certain László Bakay became first secretary.

Over the years I had learned through practice which hooks to use to catch which fish, and I was now able to make the operation easy for myself. It was clear to me that I, as a German, could not demand the Jews from the Hungarians. We had had too much trouble with that in Denmark. So I left the entire matter to the Hungarian authorities. Dr. Endre, who became one of the best friends I have had in my life, put out the necessary regulations, and Bakay and his Hungarian Gendarmerie carried them out. Once these two secretaries gave their orders, the Minister of the Interior had to sign them. And so it was no miracle that the first transport trains were soon rolling toward Auschwitz.

The Hungarian police caught the Jews, brought them together and loaded them on the trains under the direct command of Lieut. Colonel László Ferenczy of the Gendarmerie, who came from an old, landed family. If I may digress for a moment, I remember that he invited me once to his country estate, where we had a little Hungarian snack of slices of bacon and onion stuck on sticks and roasted over a fire. We ate them with wine from the lieutenant colonel's vineyards. I since have read that he was hanged after 1945.

I never watched the Jews being loaded onto the trains. It was a minor matter for which I had no time. Since the job was the responsibility of the Gendarmerie, it would have constituted an interference with the internal affairs of Hungary if I had even observed the loadings. After all, the Hungarian government was still a sovereign power, although it had reached certain agreements with the Reich.

Himmler's instructions were for me to comb the Jews out of eastern Hungary first. The two secretaries gave the appropriate orders to the Hungarian police. I was also instructed to send almost all transports to the railroad station at Auschwitz, and I ordered Captain Novak to draw up a timetable and arrange for the necessary trains from the Reich's transportation ministry. To each train I assigned a squad of *Orpos* - uniformed German police - from the several hundred assigned to me.

My men had as one of their basic orders that all necessary harshness was to be avoided. This fundamental principle was also accepted by the Hungarian officials. In practice they may not have adhered to it 100%. But that did not and could not interest me, because it was not my responsibility.

Inhumanity among the Hungarians

There were, however, individual cases where my men were shocked by the inhumanity of the Hungarian police. Wisliceny reported to me that the Gendarmes were driving the Jews into the cars like cattle to a slaughterhouse, not everywhere but in some districts. Several times I reminded the Hungarian government in writing --- nothing was done orally in my office --- that we did not want to punish individual Jews. We wanted to work toward a political solution.

Nevertheless, even as our own units were guilty of roughness here and there. I once saw a soldier beat a frail old Jew over the head with a rubber club. I spoke to the soldier, reported him to his commander and demanded he be punished and demoted. Himmler would not stand for that kind of thing. That is sadism.

I would like to add here that when millions of Germans were deported by the Allies after the war from Eastern Europe to Germany, the operation was not carried out the way we did it with Prussian exactness about provisions and transportation. Although we had the greatest difficulty in obtaining trains, the Jews were always shipped in covered, not open cars, and always by the quickest possible routes.

In Hungary it sometimes happened that there were too few slop buckets on the trains, too little drinking water or no drinking water at all, or that the provisions were bad or stolen during the loading. The Gendarmes sometimes overloaded the cars to empty the debarkation camp as quickly as possible. You can imagine how it was when the Hungarians peremptorily ordered "Everybody in, in, in. The border comes in 240 kilometers, and then Germany. Let the Germans finish things up."

Matters were different on Reich territory where we had full powers. The lieutenant of the guard, for example, could hold the train up until fresh water was provided and the slop buckets emptied and cleaned out, if only to avoid epidemics. After all, we were supposed to bring the material to the concentration camp ready to start work, not sickly and exhausted.

In spite of all our efforts Commandant Hoess at Auschwitz often complained about the condition of the Jews who arrived from Hungary. This proves that Auschwitz was not primarily a death camp. If Hoess simply sent the Jews into the oven, it would not have made any difference to him. He would not have complained to General Pohl, his chief, when a few corpses were lying around in the cars because people had given them too little to eat or drink. And Pohl would certainly not have asked to see me, making the complaints known to me in rather blunt terms. I replied of course that I

was not really responsible because the Hungarian government had arranged the details of the loading.

As the transport trains rolled into Auschwitz, sometimes bringing as many as 10,000 units a day, the camp staff had to work day and night. I was on close, comradely terms with Hoess and he told me he could not understand why I showed absolutely no consideration for him and his staff. But how could I? I was just as limited a specialist in my own sector as he was in his. Yet I liked to visit him. He lived with his wife and children in a five-room house on the camp grounds. It was a homey place, clean and simple and furnished in SS-style natural wood.

The charred mountain of corpses

I remember clearly the first time he guided me around the camp. He showed me everything, and at the end he took me to a grave where the corpses of the gassed Jews lay piled on a strong iron grill. Hoess's men poured some inflammable liquid over them and set them on fire. The flesh stewed like stew meat. The sight made such an impression on me that today, after a dozen years, I can still see that mountain of corpses in front of me.

Hoess may have seen disgust in my face, but I spoke to him sternly: "When I see your corpses, I think of those charred German bodies in the air-raid shelters in Berlin."

Once the deportations to Auschwitz were running smoothly, I turned to concentrate on negotiations with the Jewish political community officials in Budapest. In this I was carrying out the second basic objective of *Reichsführer* Himmler: to arrange if possible for a million Jews to go free in exchange for 10,000 winterized trucks, with trailers, for use against the Russians on the Eastern Front.

II.

'TO SUM IT ALL UP, I REGRET NOTHING'

EICHMANN'S STORY PART 2

By Adolf Eichmann

Nazi who had millions of Jews killed tells of cruel barter attempt and a fantastic last stand

Only Heinrich Himmler could turn off the liquidation machine. It was in 1944, the year of the assassination attempt on Hitler, when *Reichsführer* Himmler took over as commander of the Reserve Army, that he authorized me to propose an exchange: one million Jews for 10,000 winterized trucks with trailers. The world Jewish organization could decide for itself what Jews it wanted to choose. We asked only that they get us 10,000 trucks. Thanks to Himmler's directive, I could assure them, on my word of honor, that these trucks would be used only on the Eastern front. As I said at the time, "When the 10,000 winterized trucks with trailers are here, then the liquidation machine in Auschwitz will be stopped."

In obedience to Himmler's directive I now concentrated on negotiations with the Jewish political officials in Budapest. One man stood out among them, Dr. Rudolf Kastner, authorized representative of the Zionist movement. This Dr. Kastner was a young man about my age, an ice-cold lawyer and a fanatical Zionist. He agreed to help keep the Jews from resisting deportation and even keep order in the collection camps if I would close my eyes and let a few hundred or a few thousand young Jews emigrate illegally to Palestine. It was a good bargain. For keeping order in the camps, the price of 15,000 to 20,000 Jews - in the end there may have been more - was not too high for me.

Except perhaps for the first few sessions, Kastner never came to me fearful of the Gestapo strong man. We negotiated entirely as equals. People forget that. We were political opponents trying to arrive at a settlement, and we trusted each other perfectly. When he was with me, Kastner smoked cigarets as though he were in a coffeehouse. While we talked he would smoke one aromatic cigaret after another, taking them from a silver case and lighting them with a little silver lighter. With his great polish and reserve he would have made an ideal Gestapo officer himself.

Dr. Kastner's main concern was to make it possible for a select group of Hungarian Jews to emigrate to Israel. But the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian fascist party, had grown strong and stubborn. Its inspectors permitted no exceptions to the mass deportations. So the Jewish officials turned to the German occupation authorities. They realized that we were specialists who had learned about Jewish affairs through years of practice.

Immensely idealistic Zionists

As a matter of fact, there was a very strong similarity between our attitudes in the SS and the viewpoint of these immensely idealistic Zionist leaders who were fighting what might be their last battle. As I told Kastner: "We, too, are idealists and we, too, had to sacrifice our own blood before we came to power."

I believe that Kastner would have sacrificed a thousand or a hundred thousand of his blood to achieve his political goal. He was not interested in old Jews or those who had become assimilated into Hungarian society. But he was incredibly persistent in trying to save biologically valuable Jewish blood, that is, human material that was capable of reproduction and hard work. "You can have the others," he would say, "but let me have this group here." And because Kastner rendered us a great service by helping keep the deportation camps peaceful, I would let his groups escape. After all, I was not concerned with small groups of a thousand or so Jews.

At the same time Kastner was bargaining with another SS official, a Colonel Kurt Becker. Becher was bartering Jews for foreign exchange and goods on direct orders from Himmler. A crafty operator, Becher had come to Hungary originally to salvage a stud farm which the SS wanted. He soon wormed his way into dealings with the Jews. In a way, *Reichsführer* Himmler was Becher's captive. Becher showed me once a gold necklace he was taking to our chief, a gift for a little lady by whom Himmler had a child. There were other agencies, German and Hungarian, which tapped Kastner for foreign exchange in return for Jews, but I held aloof from money affairs and left the material transactions to Becher.

Men under Becher's command guarded a special group of 700 Jews whom Kastner had requested from a list. They were mostly young people, although the group also included Kastner's entire family. I did not care if Kastner took his relatives along. he could take them wherever he wanted to.

The gentleman's agreement

This is how most of the illegal emigrations were arranged: a group of special Jews was taken into custody and brought together in a place designated by Kastner and his men, where they were put under SS guard to keep them from harm. After the Jewish

political organizations arranged transportation out of the country, I instructed the border police to let these transports pass unhindered. They travelled generally by night. That was the "gentleman's agreement" I had with Kastner.

After leaving Hungary, the Jews could then travel through neutral foreign countries or stay hidden, usually in Romania, until the necessary steamships arrived to take them on board. When they reached Israel, the ships waited off shore until a few courageous Jews helped the passengers land against the orders of the British mandate authorities. Since the refugees had no valid papers, the Jewish organization must have spent enormous sums of money to bribe Romanian officials, who did not do these favors for nothing. All this went on with Himmler's permission. I would never have dared to dance to my own waltz. If I demanded rigid obedience from my own subordinates, I had to be just as rigid in carrying out my own superior's orders. Otherwise I would have been a bad SS commander, and I think I was a good SS commander.

By the same token, my relationship with Dr. Kastner was strictly correct. He never saw me or my subordinates ever drink a single glass of wine or *Schnaps*, and there were certainly never any drunken orgies with Jews. If anything like that had happened, I would have heard of it and I would have punished the offenders the way I punished my chauffeur, who once unscrewed a toilet lid from my office because he needed a new toilet seat for his rented room. He was expelled from the SS. Once, when the same man fell asleep while driving my car, I made him march on foot all the way from Dresden to Berlin. That is how I would have treated any of my men who got drunk or even had a drink with a Jew.

All my own agreements with the Jewish officials were more or less side-transactions to the exchange of the million Jews for 10,000 winterized trucks with trailers. Becher and I were twice ordered to Himmler in Berlin to discuss it. Whether Himmler settled the actual terms of the exchange or whether he left it to me, I do not remember. When I think back though, it seems to me that Himmler may have authorized the offer for an "appropriate number," and I set the figure at 10,000 to one million because I was an idealist and wanted to accomplish as much as possible for the Reich.

It was clear to me that for lack of numbers I could never have squeezed a million Jews out of Hungary. But it was obvious that Jews were piled on Jews in Auschwitz and the various concentration camps. So I assumed that we could easily produce a million Jews. Jews from Hungary supplemented with Jews from Germany, from Austria, from wherever they wanted to take them. It would be a tragedy if the international Jewish community was not able or willing to accept them.

Motorize the divisions

I do remember Himmler specifically saying to me, "Eichmann, motorize the 8th and 22nd Cavalry Divisions". This indicated the personal concern of Himmler, who was soon to take over the Reserve Army, in receiving those trucks. They were far more important than the lives of individual Jews. What did he care about a million Jews? His concern was his divisions. He apparently did not want to motorize these two divisions, but rather to equip them for use as a sort of fast-moving task force. It was for this that he gave instructions to Lieut. General Oswald Pohl, who was in charge of the concentration camp system, to kill no more Jews, to save them up, more or less.

After I received Himmler's authorization I told my assistant Krumei to bring me Joel Brand, a Hungarian Jew whom we had chosen to send to Palestine to take a proposal to the Jewish leaders. Brand left on his trip some time before the grain was high, as an old country boy I remember the time well. Krumei brought him to Vienna, had him furnished with the proper papers and shipped him by plane to Istanbul, because Turkey was still neutral. When he got as far as Syria, he was arrested by the British, interrogated, and imprisoned in Cairo. The Jewish leaders never accepted our proposal [see box page 148].

I knew at the time that Brand was being held by the British because Kastner was giving me constant reports. But when I let Brand leave the country, I had made sure his family stayed in Budapest so that I could have a guarantee of his return. Then as the weeks went by I said to Kastner, "Kastner, you know what we agreed. Brand's family stays here because he must return. Why doesn't he come back?" And so for the first time I did use family pressure, but I never turned pressure into practice because Dr. Kastner's reports still held out some hope. I never took any steps to keep Brand's family from emigrating illegally. If they had, I would never have known it.

Meanwhile the deportations had to continue in spite of our pending deal. But the Jews were to a certain extent "put on ice, held in a camp ready to be moved at any time. Suppose Brand had come back and told me, "Obersturmbannführer, the matter is settled. Five or ten thousand trucks are on their way. Give me a half million or a million Jews. You promised me that if I brought you a positive report, you'd send 100,000 Jews to a neutral country as a deposit." Then it would have been easy for us to ship the Jews off.

If the deal had succeeded, I believe I could have arranged to ship the first 20,000 Jews in two days via Romania to Palestine or even via France to Spain. If there had been any delay it would have come from the side of the receivers. The plain fact was that

there was no place on earth that would have been ready to accept the Jews, not even this one million.

We had a hearty, comradely relationship with the Hungarian secret police until they learned that we were letting Jews emigrate behind their backs. The gentlemen reacted strongly. They refused to visit or consult with us, and it became my job to smooth things over. Fortunately I had formed a warm friendship with Dr. László Endre, the second secretary in the Ministry of the Interior. I had even given him my own machine pistol as a gift (naturally with the approval of my superiors). The two of us managed to restore good relations, and I even spent a few weeks on Dr. Endre's country estate. At the time I was virtually out of work for lack of further numbers to deport.

Meanwhile, as the Russians advanced and the first symptoms of the coming chaos were noticeable, the transports were halted. A series of Allied air raids had torn up the Budapest-Vienna railroad track so that for a time no trains could get through. This made Dr. Endre impatient. He wanted to get on with the solution of the Jewish problem. "So I resolved to teach our opponents a lesson, to say, Look, it does you no good when you bomb out our railroads, because your allies, the Jews, have to endure the consequences." I proposed a forced march of the Jews to the Reich's border. General Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the new chief of the Security Police and the Security Service, gave me orders to that effect.

To preserve appearances

As it turned out, the march cost more trouble than if I had sent 100 n. 500 trains to Auschwitz. Hungary was the window that showed the Reich to the neutral foreign countries, and we Germans had accordingly to preserve appearances. "You smashed our transportation routes but we will carry on in the most elegant manner." That was what the trek was for. The actual number of marchers was so unimportant that I have forgotten it. In any case it was less than 20,000.

The plan was for the Jews to march to the border at Burgenland, about 180 kilometers away. Every day a unit of 2,000 Jews began the march, and then in ten or twelve days the first of the marchers must have reached the border. Everything possible was done to make the trip hygienic and safe. I drove the route once myself, and on the whole distance I saw only two corpses. They were old people. It is clear, as they say, that

where planing goes on, chips will fall. The over-all natural decrease on the trek, however, was only one per cent. When the groups arrived on the border, they were put to work helping German women, children and old people digging tank traps to defend the Reich.

With the march over, Dr. Endre congratulated me on the splendid fulfillment of the mission, and I must admit, we had a drink to celebrate, a kind of *Schnaps* called "mare's milk" which I had never drunk before. It was excellent.

With the Russian advance moving closer, conditions in Hungary became more and more chaotic. In Budapest the situation was tense. My old friend and comrade, Major General August Zehender, commander of the 22nd SS Cavalry Division, which we had hoped to motorize, was defending Budapest as the Russians drew near it. Then his artillery ran out of shells. Zehender's position was near a streetcar station on the east side of the city, but his ammunition depot was several kilometers beyond the last streetcar stop to the west. He told me in despair that the Russians were about to attack his division and he had no ammunition for his hundred guns.

A living chain for shells

I proposed a living chain of Jews to carry shells from the depot and load them on streetcars at the west end station. The streetcars could carry them through the center of Budapest to the eastern end of the line where his own units could move them to the front line. My idea worked. We made a living chain of them, six or eight kilometers long, to carry the shells from the depot to the station. Then dozens of streetcars, one after the other, sped across Budapest to meet Zehender's men in the east. The guns blazed away.

As Christmas approached, I had nothing more to do in Hungary but no orders to withdraw. I was having a drink with Zehender one day when he told me that many of his officers had been killed and a whole company had gone over to the Russians.

"Give me a squadron," I told my friend, "and I'll stay here through New Year's Day." Then, in the presence of my aide, Zehender telephoned Kaltenbrunner, who had replaced Heydrich as Himmler's deputy. I put my head close to his ear to hear what my chief said, but Zehender broke the news: "Kaltenbrunner tells me it's impossible.

You are too valuable. Himmler would have his head." And so my last attempt to see some action was reduced to absurdity.

One or two days before Christmas Eve, 1944, all the German police units were ordered to withdraw, except for one Gestapo group which stayed behind as a gesture to the Hungarians. They were all killed. So was my comrade Zehender, shot as he fought off the enemy with his machine pistol. I left Budapest at 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve, the last member of the German police to leave the city. As my Mercedes raced westward, the road was already under Russian artillery fire. A great flood of refugees streaming toward Vienna had choked the highway for days, but now it was suddenly empty. It was as though the road had died.

I made my last report to Himmler less than a month before the final surrender of Germany. The Reichsführer had been for some time negotiating with Count Bernadotte about the Jews. He wanted to make sure that at least 100 of the most prominent Jews we could lay our hands on would be held in a safe place. Thus he hoped to strengthen our hand, for almost to the end Himmler was optimistic about making separate peace terms. "We'll get a treaty," he said to me, slapping his thigh. "We'll lose a few feathers, but it will be a good one." It was then mid-April 1945.

Himmler went on to say that he had made some mistakes. "I'll tell you one thing, Eichmann," he said, "if I have to do it over again, I will set up the concentration camps the way the British do. I made a big mistake there." I didn't know exactly what he meant by that, but he said it in such a pleasant, soft way that I understood him to mean the concentration camps should have been more elegant, more artful, more polite.

During those last days I called my men into my Berlin office in the Kurfürsten Strasse and formally took leave of them. "If it has to be," I told them, "I will gladly jump into my grave in the knowledge that five million enemies of the Reich have already died like animals." ("Enemies of the Reich," I said, not "Jews.") I spoke these words harshly and with emphasis. In fact, it gave me an extraordinary sense of elation to think I was exiting from the stage in this way.

My immediate superior, General Müller, had just said to me: "If we had had 50 Eichmanns, then we would have won the war." This made me proud even though, ironically, he spoke on the same day that I learned all was finally lost. By that time my department was one of the few offices which was not burned out from the bombing. I had set my subordinates like bloodhounds on the trail of every incendiary

bomb. I helped them myself. So the office was in good condition. Later the whole Gestapo head office moved in and squeezed me out.

Each one of the Gestapo officials was now out to select a civilian firm for which he could say he had worked during the last few years. He could receive employment certificates, "instructions" or correspondence from the company, in a word, anything that would permit him to hide his real job from postwar investigators. There were hundreds of civilian letterheads on file in that office, and if a particular one was not available, we could always have it printed.

You could see how closely they crowded around the official in charge, who made detailed notes on how each man wanted his faked papers to read. The press was so thick that Müller and I had a large space in the back of the room where I used to play music with my subordinates. (I had played second violin: my sergeant played first violin - he was a far better musician than I.) "Well, Eichmann," Müller said, "what's the matter with you?" Since my return from Hungary I had carried a Steyr army pistol. I said to Müller, indicating the gun: "Gruppenführer, I don't need these papers. Look here, this is my certificate. When I see no other way out, it is my last medicine. I have no need for anything else."

This is the truth: of all the Gestapo department heads in Berlin, I was the only one who spat on these false certificates. Müller must have known I was a regular guy.

Resistance in the Alps

My last journey was to Prague, where I visited Karl Hermann Frank, the SS commander there. He told me I could not go back to Berlin. "Nothing is left in Berlin," he said, "the Russians have broken through somewhere."

I was finally able to get through to Kaltenbrunner. He ordered me to proceed to the resort town of Altaussee in the Austrian Alps. I arrived there, accordingly, at about the beginning of May and went directly to the slopes of the Loser, the mountain above the village. In one of the tidy summer villas in the Loser's slope, the chief of the Security Service was quartered.

I was received by his aide, an old and trusted friend of mine, Major Scheidler. I walked into the next room to report and found Kaltenbrunner himself sitting behind a table, clothed in the uniform blouse of an SS general and some wedge-shaped ski

pants tucked into some wonderful ski boots. It was an odd costume for the "Last Days of Pompeii" feeling that then oppressed us all, at least it did me. It was after lunch and he was playing solitaire, with a small cognac on the table. I asked him how things had come out. "It's bad," he said, "the solitaire, I mean."

He had Scheidler bring me a cognac, the usual orderly was not around. The white snow of the Loser slope gleamed through the window. It had snowed heavily in the region, which would not be clear of snow until the end of May. The room was comfortably warm. The cognac tasted tasted awfully good despite my gloomy mood.

"What are you going to do now?" Kaltenbrunner said. You must realize this was not like those occasions when I had been ordered to report in the line of duty. Now the die had been cast and all these matters had become of secondary importance. One's brain was in a sense only half present. It was hard to concentrate on what was happening at the moment. This was the beginning of that nervous shock which a few days later hit me like a hammer. For it was now a fact that the Reich, for which we had feared and cared so much, was smashed in pieces.

Answering Kaltenbrunner's question, I told him that I was going into the mountains. "That's good," he said. "Good for *Reichsführer* Himmler, too. Now he can talk to Eisenhower differently in his negotiations, for he will know that if Eichmann is in the mountains he will never surrender, because he can't."

So we concluded our official business and I went off to become a partisan chief in Austria. I took my leave formally without any personal overtones, as did Kaltenbrunner. He remained sitting at his solitaire, only his expression revealing a certain friendliness to me. "It's all a lot of crap. The game is up." These were the last words I ever heard from my good friend Kaltenbrunner.

I had quartered my people at one of the large resort hotels in Altaussee. The hotel proprietor years afterward kept railing against "that dog Eichmann" who requisitioned his hotel and let his gang run it, inflicting all sorts of fancied damages. The complaint was merely something rooted in his wretched shopkeeper's mind. By no means did we wreck everything in his hotel. On the contrary, I finally yielded to the pressure of the doctor in charge of the neighboring field hospital, who had tearfully begged me to take my combat troops out of Altaussee so that he might declare it an open city. So we evacuated. Before my troops left, I personally saw the Red Cross nurses scrubbing and cleaning up, room by room, since the overcrowded hospital had to expand into this pig's hotel. It was set up as a hospital annex. The beneficiary of all this clean-up operation was thus enabled to feather his own nest.

Since Kaltenbrunner had given his orders, I collected all the heavy equipment we had there and set out to organize a resistance movement in the Totes Gebirge, above the town. The whole thing had now been dumped in my lap. Besides, the regularly assigned people in my department, I had some groups of *Waffen* SS soldiers and a wild bunch from Schellenberg's Intelligence Section of the SS. Schellenberg's crowd had been burned out of the Kremsmünster monastery. I think they set it on fire themselves, but they managed to get a few truckloads out with them. In the trucks were scattered piles of uniforms, all kinds of uniforms except winter equipment and ski gear. Instead they had down sleeping bags and emergency rations -- chocolate, hard sausage, etc., of the sort we hadn't seen for a long time. They also bought a small chest full of dollars, pounds and gold coins.

Snow on the mountains

I decided to head for the Blaa-Alm, a stretch of mountain pastureland about an hour's march from Altausee. Suddenly it began to snow heavily. I had the *Bürgermeister* order out 150 of the Hitler Youth - they were all we had - to shovel the snow out of our path. It was already one or two meters deep in spots. At least we could get through with the vehicles.

There was only one inn on the Blaa-Alm, and I requisitioned a room from the innkeeper to store the weapons and the uniforms. An old party man in the town had warned me about the innkeeper. He said I would do well to have the traitorous anti-Nazi cleric done in, and I decided to do so. (It was the time when everybody was doing everybody else in.) But when I saw him, a little sausage of a man, I said to myself: "No, you don't need to do away with him." And so we didn't.

The SS boys had brought a barrel of wine with them from the Kremsmünster storehouse. I set it upon the street so that all the soldiers coming up to the mountain could stop for a few glasses before going on. I allowed each man only a five-minute stop. The barrel was soon empty.

At sun-up on the first day after we reached the mountain, one of the officers from the Intelligence Section came up to get some emergency rations "by order *Obergruppenführer* Kaltenbrunner." He was a fresh, arrogant fellow, and my Captain Burger said to me, "Shall I rub him out." I told the man he could have half a case and

no more. "Otherwise," I said, "I'll you done in." So he took off somewhere with a half suitcase full of chocolate and hard sausage, perhaps to Switzerland.

Another SS man came four or five times with a note saying that we should deliver a quantity of gold to him. The signature always Ernst Kaltenbrunner's. I knew the writing and it seemed genuine to me, although I had no reason to test its authenticity. In any case gold or money meant nothing to us in the mountains, while bread and emergency rations were everything. Although I was harsh to this fellow at first, I finally had Hunsche, who was acting as our paymaster, pay out the gold that he requested, thus translating Kaltenbrunner's wish into the fact.

The next morning I heard loud noises and confusions outside my window. There was Burger boxing a civilian's ears. Through an orderly I ordered Burger to report to me in my room. He told me the man was a teacher from one of the villages in the valley who was trying to male off with the supply of lard in one of the trucks. Burger was giving him a tangible answer for his conduct. I told Burger that an officer never hits anybody. If the man was looting, he should be hauled before a court martial and shot but never beaten up.

Fighting a war on the Blaa-Alm

What a bunch of good-for-nothings you have here, I said to myself. There were guys from the *Waffen* SS, who probably were just out of hospital and at the disposal of almost any unit, rounded up and turned over to me by the Security Police; this absolutely insubordinate gang from the Intelligence Section, a few women, my own men. And add to this 150 Hitler Youth. Then there were some Romanians on my neck, too. With this I was supposed to fight a war.

I had plenty of the most modern weapons, however, I had never before seen assault rifles, and now I had piles of them. I had never seen as much ammunition as I had up here - bazookas lying in heaps. Nevertheless I gave the order to evacuate the Blaa-Alm and go farther away to the Rettenbachalm, which lies even higher.

Burger, who was my best skier, I sent on patrol ahead of us to investigate snow conditions and the chances for finding lodging. Meanwhile I had all the weapons we were not using thrown in a stream. I had decided the release the majority of the men. Discipline had suffered irreparably. I had 5,000 *Reichsmark* paid out to each one

against his signature. I was hard and brusque with them. Each man, on hearing he was no longer needed, gladly took off down the mountain without further formalities. I was even hard on a little SS girl, an office worker, who had begged and implored me to take her along. Scorning all her feminine wiles, I said, "Pay out 5,000 marks. Dismissed."

While we were moving, an orderly arrived from Kalternbrunner with a directive from *Reichsführer* Himmler ordering us not to shoot at Americans or Englishmen. I countersigned it and the boy rushed off back to the valley. I later conveyed this order to the men. It looked like the end. The Americans were now sitting in Bad Ischl, not very far away, and we heard that our girls were already dancing with the Americans in the marketplace. Even the huntsmen were hostile to us. Gangs of them - home guardists they called themselves - were crawling around us in the hills, all of them punks. They were probably people who had shouted themselves hoarse yelling *Heil Hitler* in 1938. Now they prowled about us, with weapons of course. Whether or not my men shot at them I did not know, nor do I know now if they ever did. There was shooting everywhere at that confused time.

My driver Polanski asked me if I would give him a car and a truck or two so that he might go off and set up a peacetime trucking concern on his own. It occurred to me that I no longer needed any cars, so I decided to fulfill his wish. After all, he had served me loyally for many years. "Take a truck for yourself," I told him, "or whatever you need from the Blaa-Alm, and make off with my Fiat Topolino"

I later heard that he abandoned the Fiat in a ditch, but he did succeed in taking off with one truck. I wish him success in his trucking business. Ultimately, even my trusty Burger sought me out for a private conversation. "*Obersturmbannführer*," he said, "you are being sought as a war criminal. The rest of us are not. We have thoroughly discussed the matter. We feel that you would be doing your comrades a great service if you would leave us and appoint another commander."

I had already decided the answer myself. "Men," I said, "I will leave you alone on the Rettenbachalm. The war is over. You are not allowed to shoot at the enemy any longer. So take care of yourselves."

Lieutenant Jaenisch, my aide for many years, asked if he might accompany me. We drank a last *Schnaps* together.

There was only one thing I regretted. If I had not been in a state of shock at this time, I would have done more for my wife and children. Unfortunately I did not make provision for them ahead of time, unlike the gentlemen from the Intelligence Section

of Schellenberg's, the so-called kid-glove boys of the SS. I, too, could have had my family securely wrapped in a very comfortable cocoon of foreign exchange and gold. In fact, I could easily have sent them on to the farthest, the most neutral of foreign countries. Long before the end, any of the Jews I dealt with would have set up foreign exchange for me in any country I had named, if I had promised any special privileges for them.

As it was, I was able to give my wife only a briefcase full of grapes and a sack of flour before going into the mountains from Altaussee. I had also given them poison capsules, one for my wife and one for each child, to be swallowed if they fell into the hands of the Russians.

A corporal named Barth

I gave myself up to the Americans under an assumed name. I knew the Allied investigators were searching for Eichmann, but luckily I was always just a shade more clever than the CIC officer who interrogated me. I started off in one small American prison camp, posing as a *Luftwaffe* corporal named Barth.

After studying the psychology of the American CIC, however, I changed my rank from corporal to second lieutenant in the SS. Lieutenant Eckmann, Otto Eckmann, became my name. I moved my birthday back one year to March 19, 1905, and the place to Breslau. I did this so I could remember the figures more easily, avoiding the fiasco a momentary lapse of memory when I was filling out their forms.

Ultimately I was transferred to the large POW collection center at Weiden. By coincidence, my former aide, Lieutenant Jaenisch, had been sent to the same place. I volunteered to head a work detail and in this capacity I was moved to Oberdachstetten in Franconia. It was then August, 1945. I remained there until the beginning of January, 1946.

In these months we were being interrogated by the CIC office in Anbach. I knew that if the interrogations continued I might come under suspicion. So I decided to escape. Due to the fear of reprisals there existed an unwritten code of honor that no officer would escape from a camp without his fellow officers' approval. Since there were about ten officers in the camp, I asked the camp leader, a major, to call an officers' meeting.

I had revealed to the major my real name, rank, and official position. "My dear comrade Eckmann," he said, "I have known that for a long time. Your Lieutenant Jaenish told me about it in confidence. As long as you said nothing to me, I kept the information locked in my heart."

At the officers' meeting I explained merely that I was probably wanted by the Americans because I had been politically active. Nobody asked many questions in those days and the major, as camp leader, gave his approval. It was simply a matter of form. After all, I could hardly imagine that my group of SS officers would have withheld their approval knowing one of their leaders found it necessary to get away.

After leaving the prison camp I managed to procure papers which gave my name as Otto Henninger. I lived on one of the wooded heaths in the Celle area. I was shown a pile of newspapers with articles about me. They were under headlines like "Mass-murderer Eichmann" or "Where is Lieutenant Eckmann hiding out?" The articles noted that I had escaped from the camp.

I started to think about who could have given the name Eckmann to the CIC. There seemed to be only two possible sources for the information. One was my Lieutenant Jaenisch. The other possibility, which seemed highly unlikely, was that the CIC had interrogated the major, who probably reasoned that I was far enough away by then to be safe. I rather think it was Jaenisch who told them. He had a type of pigheadedness peculiar to Lower Saxons.

Through the intervening years since then people searched for me in vain. I would like to find peace with my former opponents. And I would be the first to surrender myself to the German authorities if I did not always feel that the political interest in my case would be too great to lead to a clear, objective way out.

If there had been a trial in 1945, I would have had all my subordinates with me. Today I am not so sure. Some of them maybe serving with the new police. Others may have had a hard life through these years, each damning the stupidity that led him to become a Nazi in the first place. And prosperity and democratic re-education have borne their fruit in Germany, so I would not know today what witness an attorney for the defense might properly call. I believe, in fact, that if I brought on Jews as witnesses for the defense, I would come out almost better than with my own men as witnesses, sad though it may sound. Dr. Kastner, Dr. Epstein, Dr. Rottenberg, Br. Baeck, the entire Council of Elders in Theresienstadt ghetto, all of them I would have to summon. After all, there were also relatively harmless actions which took place under the general heading "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem."

But to sum it all up, I must say that I regret nothing. Adolf Hitler may have been wrong all down the line, but one thing is beyond dispute: the man was able to work his way up from lance corporal in the German army to Führer of a people of almost

80 million. I never met him personally, but his success alone proves to me that I should subordinate myself to this man. He was somehow so supremely capable that the people recognized him. And so with that justification I recognize him joyfully and I still defend him.

I will not humble myself or repent in any way. I could do it too cheaply in today's climate of opinion. It would be too easy to pretend that I had turned suddenly from a Saul to a Paul. No, I must say truthfully that if we had killed all the 10 million Jews that Himmler's statisticians originally listed in 1933, I would say, "Good, we have destroyed an enemy." But here I do not mean wiping them out entirely. That would not be proper - and we carried on a proper war.

Now however, when through the malice of fate a large part of these Jews whom we fought against are alive, I must concede that fate must have wanted it so. I always claimed that we were fighting against a foe who through thousands of years of learning and development had become superior to us.

I no longer remember exactly when, but it was even before Rome itself had been founded that the Jews could already write. It is very depressing for me to think of that people writing laws over 6,000 years of written history. But it tells me that they must be a people of the first magnitude, for lawgivers have always been great.