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INTERROGATION SUMMARY)

NUMBER

1)

THE LAST DAYS IN HITLER'S AIR RAID SHELTER

1. SOURCE: Name: Fraulein Hanna Reitsch.

Rank: Flugkapiten (Captain of the Air—Honorary title given for outstanding aeronautical achievement.

Date of Birth: 29 March 1912

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Test-pilot and aeronautical research expert

Citizenship: German

Address: Leopolda Krons Castle, Salzburg, Austria.

Political Status: Non-party member

Decorations: Iron Cross first class.

2. INTRODUCTION: This report is the story of the last days of the War as they were experienced by Hanna Reitsch, the well known German test-pilot and aeronautical research expert. Her story does not pretend to add any sensational details to what is already known of those days; it is rather an eye-witness account of what actually happened in the highest places during the last moments of the War. Her account of the flight into Berlin to report to Hitler and of her stay in the Fuehrer's bunker is probably as accurate as one as will be obtained of those last days, although the "is he dead or is he not dead" fate of Hitler is only answered to the extent of describing the mental state and the hopelessness of the last-minute situation, from which individual opinions must be drawn. Her own opinion is that the tactical situation and Hitler's own physical condition made any thoughts of his escape inconceivable.

3. Her story is remarkable only in that she played a small part in the events of the War's end and that she had personal contact with the top-bracket Nazis as that end descended upon them. It is also of interest as it is likely that Reitsch is one of the last, if not the very last person who got out of the shelter alive. Her information is evaluated as reliable and it is possible that her story may throw some light or perhaps serve as an aid to a fuller knowledge of what happened during the last days of Berlin and of the War.

4. At times she is not certain as to names and specific times. Names escape her. In many cases the contacts herein related were quite limited inasmuch as they have to do only with the last few days. Her

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times may be inaccurate as the events of those days followed each other with such tumult that she is often unable to remember the proper sequence of events.

5. It will be noted that much of the report concerns itself with the Nazi and German interpretation of "honor". Reitsch herself, in answering queries, carefully weighs the "honor" aspects of every remark and then gives her answers carefully but truthfully. The use of the word amounts practically to a fetish complex with the source and is almost an incongruous embodiment of her entire philosophy. Her constant repetition of the word is in no manner as obvious to her as it is to the interrogator, nor is the meaning the same, nor does she recognize the incongruous use she makes of the word. Therefore each time "honor" appears it is apologetically submitted in quotations.

6. She tells her story in conversational form, and although it is, in part, reproduced in that manner here, no pretense is made that the quotations are in all cases exact; they are simply given as she remembers them. If it is kept in mind then that this material is a statement of her own opinions and observations, the information may be considered as completely reliable.

7. THE TRIP TO BERLIN: Hitler had sent a telegram to Munich on the 24th of April to Lieutenant General Ritter von Grein, instructing him to report to the Reichschancellery on a highly urgent matter. The problem of getting into Berlin was then already a very precarious one, as the Russians had practically encircled the city. Grein however, decided that by availing himself of Hanna Reitsch as pilot, the entrance might be accomplished by means of an autogiro, which could land on the streets or in the gardens of the Reichschancellery.

8. During the night of the 25th to the 26th of April Reitsch and Grein arrived at Rechlin, prepared immediately to fly into Berlin. As however, the only available autogiro had been damaged that day, it was decided that a Feldwibel pilot, who had taken Albert Speer to the Fuehrer two days before, should fly Grein in because of the experience the previous flight had given him. Some sense of responsibility to Grein, as his personal pilot and friend, made Reitsch beg to be taken along. A Focke-Wulf 190 was to be used, which had a pig-a-back space for one passenger arranged behind the pilot's seat. Reitsch was stuffed into the tail through a small emergency opening.

9. Forty fighters were taken to fly cover. Almost immediately upon take-off they were engaged by Russian aircraft. A running, hedge-hopping flight got them to the Gatow airfield, the only Berlin field still in German hands. Their own craft got through with nothing more than a few wing shots but the cost was heavy to the supporting fighters.

10. The landing at Gatow was made through further heavy attacks by Russian fighters who were strafing the field when they arrived. What was left of the German planes engaged the Russians while the Grein craft made a successful landing. Immediately attempts were made to phone the Chancellery but as all the lines were out, it was decided to fly an available Fiesler-Storch for the remaining distance and land within walking distance of Hitler's shelter. With Grein at the controls and Reitsch as passenger, the plane took off under a whirling cover of German-Russian dog-fights. At a height of a few meters Grein managed to get away from the field and continue at tree-top level toward the Brandenburger Tor.

11. Street fighting was going on below them and countless Russian aircraft were in the air. After a few minutes of flight, heavy fire tore out the bottom of the plane and severely injured Grein's right leg. By reaching over his shoulders, Reitsch took

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control of the craft and by dodging and squirming closely along the ground, brought the plane down on the East-West axis. Heavy Russian artillery and small arm fire was shelling the area with shrapnel as they landed. A passing vehicle was commandeered to take them to Hitler's shelter, with Grein receiving first aid for his shattered foot on the way.

12. ARRIVAL AT HITLER'S SHELTER: Grein and Reitsch arrived in the bunker between 6 and 7 o'clock on the evening of the 26th of April. First to meet them was Frau Goebbels, who fell upon Reitsch with tears and kisses, expressing her astonishment that anyone still possessed the courage and loyalty to come to the Fuehrer, in stark contrast to all those who had deserted him. Grein was immediately taken to the operation room where Hitler's physician tended the injured foot.

13. Hitler came into the sick room, according to Reitsch, with his face showing deep gratitude over Grein's coming. He remarked something to the effect that even a soldier has the right to disobey an order when everything indicates that to carry it out would be futile and hopeless. Grein then reported his presence in the official manner.

14. HITLER'S DENUNCIATION OF GOERING:

Hitler: "Do you know why I have called you?"

Grein: "No, mein Fuehrer."

Hitler: "Because Hermann Goering has betrayed and deserted both me and his Fatherland. Behind my back he has established connections with the enemy. His action was a mark of cowardice. And against my orders he has gone to save himself at Berchtesgaden. From there he sent me a disrespectful telegram. He said that I had once named him as my successor and that now, as I was no longer able to rule from Berlin he was prepared to rule from Berchtesgaden in my place. He closes the wire by stating that if he had no answer from me by nine-thirty on the date of the wire he would assume my answer to be in the affirmative."

15. The scene Reitsch describes as "touchingly dramatic", that there were tears in the Fuehrer's eyes as he told them of Goering's treachery, that his head sagged, that his face was deathly pallid, and that the uncontrolled shaking of his hands made the message flutter wildly as he handed it to Grein.

16. The Fuehrer's face remained deathly earnest as Grein read. Then every muscle in it began to twitch and his breath came in explosive puffs; only with effort did he gain sufficient control to actually shout:

17. "An ultimatum!! A crass ultimatum!! Now nothing remains. Nothing is spared me. No allegiances are kept, no 'honor' lived up to, no disappointments that I have not had, no betrayals that I have not experienced, and now this above all else. Nothing remains. Every wrong has already been done me."

18. As Reitsch explains it, the scene was in the typical "et tu Brute" manner, full of remorse and self-pity. It was long before he could gather sufficient control to continue.

19. With eyes hard and half-closed and in a voice unusually low he went on: "I immediately had Goering arrested as a traitor to the Reich, took from him all his offices, and removed him from all organizations. That is why I have called you to me. I hereby declare you Goering's successor as Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe. In the name of the German people I give you my hand."



20. "TO DIE FOR THE HONOR OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE": Grein and Reitsch were deeply stunned with the news of Goering's betrayal. As with one mind they both grasped Hitler's hands and begged to be allowed to remain in the bunker, and with their own lives atone for the great wrong that Goering had perpetrated against the Fuehrer, against the German people, and against the Luftwaffe itself. To save the "honor" of the flyers who had died, to reestablish the "honor" of the Luftwaffe that Goering had destroyed, and to guarantee the "honor" of their land in the eyes of the world, they begged to remain. Hitler agreed to all of this and told them they might stay, and told them too that their decision would long be remembered in the history of the Luftwaffe. It had been previously arranged with operations at Rechlin that an aircraft was to come in the next day to take Grein and Reitsch out of Berlin. Now that they had decided to stay it was impossible to get the information out. Kochlin, in the meantime, was sending plane after plane, each shot down in turn by the Russians. Finally on the 27th a JU 52, loaded with SS guards and ammunition, managed to land on the East-West traffic axis, but because Reitsch and Grein had intended to stay, was sent back empty. (The order cashing Goering was released from the underground headquarters sometime on the 23rd of April.)

21. HITLER SAYS THE GERMANS ARE LOST: Later that first evening Hitler called Reitsch to him in his room. She remembers that his face was deeply lined and that there was a constant film of moisture in his eyes. In a very small voice he said, "Hanna, you belong to those who will die with me. Each of us has a vial of poison such as this", with which he handed her one for herself and one for Grein. "I do not wish that one of us falls to the Russians alive, nor do I wish our bodies to be found by them. Each person is responsible for destroying his body so that nothing recognizable remains. Eva and I will have our bodies burned. You will devise your own method. Will you please so inform von Grein?"

22. Reitsch sank to a chair in tears, not, she claims, over the certainty of her own end but because for the first time she knew that the Fuehrer saw the cause as lost. Through the sob she said, "Mein Fuehrer, why do you stay? Why do you deprive Germany of your life? When the news was released that you would remain in Berlin to the last, the people were amazed with horror. 'The Fuehrer must live so that Germany can live', the people said. Save yourself, Mein Fuehrer, that is the will of every German."

23. "No Hanna, if I die it is for the 'honor' of our country, it is because as a soldier I must obey my own command that I would defend Berlin to the last. My dear girl, I did not intend it so. I believed firmly that Berlin would be saved at the banks of the Oder. Everything we had was moved to hold that position. You may believe that when our best efforts failed, I was the most horror-struck of all. Then when the encirclement of the city began the knowledge that there were three million of my country-men still in Berlin made it necessary that I stay to defend them. By staying I believed that all the troops of the land would take example through my act and come to the rescue of the city. I hoped that they would rise to super-human efforts to save me and thereby save my three million country-men. But, my Hanna, I still have hope. The army of General Wenck is moving up from the South. He must and will drive the Russians back long enough to save our people. Then we will fall back to hold again."

24. It appeared almost as if he believed this himself and as the conversation closed he was walking about the room with quick, stumbling strides, his hand clasped behind him and his head bobbing up and down as he walked. Although his words spoke of hope, Hanna claims that his face showed that the War was over.

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25. Hanna returned to Grein's bedside, handed him the poison, and then decided with him, should the end really come, that they would quickly drink the contents of the vial and then each pull the pin from a heavy grenade and hold it tightly to their bodies.

26. Late in the night of 26th to 27th of April the first heavy barrage bracketed the Chancellory. The splattering of heavy shells and the crashing of falling buildings directly above the air-raid shelter tightened the nervous strain of everyone so that here and there deep sobbing came through the doors. Hanna spent the night tending Grein, who was in great pain, and in getting grenades ready in the event that the Russians should enter the Chancellory grounds before morning.

27. HITLER'S GUESTS IN THE SHELTER. The next morning she was introduced to the other occupants and learned for the first time the identity of all those who were facing the end with the Fuehrer. Present in the elaborate shelter on the 27th of April were Goebbels and his wife with their six children; State secretary Neuman; Hitler's right hand, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann; Hevel from Ribbentrop's office; Admiral Vosz as representative from Doenitz; General Krebs of the infantry and his adjutant Bourgdorf; Hitler's personal pilot, Hansel Bauer; another pilot Baez; Eva Braun; SS Obergruppenfuhrer Fegelein as liaison between Himmler and Hitler and husband of Eva Braun's sister; Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Stumpfegger; Oberst von Below, Hitler's Luftwaffe Adjutant; Dr. Lorenz representing Reichspresse chief Dr. Dietrich for the German press; two of Hitler's secretaries, a Frau Christian, wife of General der Flieger Christian and a Fraulein Kreuzer; and various SS orderlies and messengers. Reitsch claims that these composed the entire assembly.

28. A regular visitor during the last days was Reichsjugendfuhrer Axman who was commanding a Hitlerjugend division committed to the defense of the city. From Axman came current information as to the ground situation against the Russians which was well mirrored by the increasingly despondent manner of each visit.

29. ANOTHER BETRAYAL: Late in the afternoon of the 27th Obergruppenfuhrer Fegelein disappeared. Shortly thereafter it was reported that he had been captured on the outskirts of Berlin disguised in civilian clothes, claiming to be a refugee. The news of his capture was immediately brought to Hitler who instantly ordered him shot. The rest of the evening Fegelein's betrayal weighed heavily on the Fuehrer and in conversation he indicated a half-way doubt as to Himmler's position, fearing that Fegelein's desertion might have been known and even condoned by the SS leader.

30. OBSERVATIONS ON SHELTER OCCUPANTS: Reitsch had little contact with most of the people in the shelter, being mostly occupied in nursing von Grein, but she did have the opportunity to speak to many of them and observe their reactions under the trying conditions of the last days in the bunker. It is believed that she attempts to relate her observations truthfully and that her reactions are honestly conceived. It must be remembered that prior to her arrival in the bunker Reitsch had but small contact with most of these individuals and that her previous opinions regarding them were at a rather low level. Of the people she was able to observe closely the Goebbels family probably stands out.

31. DOCTOR GOEBBELS: She describes Goebbels as being insanely incensed over Goering's treachery. He strode about his small, luxurious quarters like an animal, muttering vile accusations concerning

the Luftwaffe leader and what he had done. The precarious military situation of the moment was Goering's fault. Their present plight was Goering's fault. Should the war be lost, as it certainly now seemed it would be, that too would be Goering's fault.

32. "That swine", Goebbels said, "who has always set himself up as the Fuehrer's greatest support now does not have the courage to stand beside him. As if that were not enough, he wants to replace the Fuehrer as head of the State. He, an incessant incompetent, who has destroyed his Fatherland with his mishandling and stupidity, now wants to lead the entire nation. By this alone he proves that he was never truly one of us, that at heart he was always weak and a traitor."

33. All this, as Hanna saw it, was in the best theatrical manner, with much hand waving and fine gestures, made even more grotesque by the jerky up-and-down hobbling as he strode about the room. When he wasn't railing about Goering he spoke to the world about the example those in the bunker were setting for history. As on a platform and gripping a chain-back like a rostrum he said:

34. "We are teaching the world how men die for their 'honor'. Our deaths shall be an eternal example to all Germans, to all friends and enemies alike. One day the whole world will acknowledge that we did right, that we sought to protect the world against bolshevism with our lives. One day it will be set down in the history of all time."

35. It appears that Goebbels exercised his greatest ability to the very last. The rooms of Goebbels and Reitsch adjoined each other and doors were usually open. Through them the Goebbels oratory would sound out at any hour of the day or night. And always the talk was of "honor", of "how to die", of "standing true to the Fuehrer to the last", of "setting an example that would long blaze as a holy thing from the pages of history."

36. One of the last things Reitsch remembers hearing from the lips of the propaganda master was: "We shall go down for the glory of the Reich so that the name of Germany will live forever." Even Reitsch was moved to conclude that the Goebbels display, in spite of the tenseness of the situation, was a bit overdrawn and out and out theatrical. She claims that in her opinion Goebbels, then as he always had, performed as if he were speaking to a legion of historians who were avidly awaiting and recording every word. She adds that her own dubious opinions regarding Goebbels' mannerisms, his superficiality, and studied oratory, were well substantiated by these outbursts. She claims too, that after listening to these tirades she and von Grein often asked each other, with a sad, head-shaking attitude, "Are these the people who ruled our country?"

37. FRAU GOEBBELS: Frau Goebbels she describes as a very brave woman, whose control, which was at most times strong, did break down now and then to piteful spasms of weeping. Her main concern was her children and in their presence her manner was always delightful and cheery. Much of her day was occupied in keeping the children's clothes clean and tidy, and as they had only the clothes they wore this kept Frau Goebbels occupied. Often she would quickly retire to her room to hide the tears. It appears from Hanna's description that Frau Goebbels probably represented the epitome of Nazi indoctrination.

38. If the Third Reich could not live she preferred to die with it, nor would she allow her children to outlive it. In recognition of the example she embodied of true German womanhood, Hitler, in the presence of all the occupants of the bunker, presented her with his personal golden party insignia. "A staunch pillar of the 'honor' upon



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which National Socialism was built and the German Fatherland founded", was his approximate remark as he pinned it to her dress.

39. Frau Goebbels often thanked God that she was alive so that she could kill her children to save them from whatever "evil" would follow the collapse. To Reitsch she said, "My dear Hanna, when the end comes you must help me if I become weak about the children. You must help me to help them out of this life. They belong to the Third Reich and to the Fuehrer and if those two things cease to exist there can be no further place for them. But you must help me. My greatest fear is that at the last moment I will be too weak."

40. It is Hanna's belief that in the last moment she was not weak.

41. Conclusions that can be safely drawn from Hanna's remarks is that Frau Goebbels was simply one of the most convinced subjects of her own husband's rantings, the most pronounced example of the Nazi influence over the women of Germany.

42. THE GOEBBELS CHILDREN: The Goebbels children numbered six. Their names and approximate ages were: Hela, 12; Hilda, 11; Helmut, 9; Holde, 7; Hodda, 5; Hoide, 3. They were the one bright spot of relief in the stark, death shadowed life of the bunker. Reitsch taught them songs which they sang for the Fuehrer and for the injured von Grein. Their talk was full of being in "the cave" with their "Uncle Fuehrer", and in spite of the fact that there were bombs outside, nothing could really harm them as long as they were with him. And anyway "Uncle Fuehrer" had said that soon the soldiers would come and drive the Russians away and than tomorrow they could all go back to play in their garden. Everyone in the bunker entered into the game of making the time as pleasant as possible for them. Frau Goebbels repeatedly thanked Reitsch for making their last days enjoyable, as Reitsch often gathered them about her and told them long stories of her flying and of the places she had been and the countries she had seen.

43. EVA BRAUN: It seemed to Reitsch that Hitler's "girl friend" remained studiously true to her position as the "show-piece" in the Fuehrer's circle. Most of her time was occupied in finger nail polishing, changing of clothes for each hour of the day, and all the other little feminine tasks of grooming, combing, and polishing. She seemed to take the prospects of dying with the Fuehrer as quite matter of fact, with an attitude that seemed to say: "---had not the relationship been of 12 long years duration and had she not seriously threatened suicide when Hitler once wanted to be rid of her. This would be a much easier way to die and much more proper---". Her constant remark was, "Poor, poor Adolf, deserted by everyone, betrayed by all. Better that ten thousand others die than that he be lost to Germany."

44. In Hitler's presence she was always charming, and thoughtful of his every comfort. But only while she was with him was she completely in character, for the moment he was out of ear-shot she would rave about all the ungrateful swine who had deserted their Fuehrer and that each of them should be destroyed. All her remarks had an adolescent tinge and it appeared that the only "good" Germans at the moment were those who were caught in the bunker and that all the others were traitors because they were not there to die with him. The reasons for her willingness to die with the rest were similar to those of Frau Goebbels. She was simply convinced that whatever followed the Third Reich would not be fit to live in for a true German. Often she expressed sorrow for those people who were unable to destroy themselves as they would forever be forced to live without "honor" and reduced instead to living as human beings without souls.

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45. Reitsch emphasizes that Braun was very apparently of rather shallow mentality, but she also agrees that she was a very beautiful woman. Beyond fulfilling her purpose, Reitsch considers it highly unlikely that Braun had any control or influence over Hitler. The rumor of the last-minute marriage ceremony Reitsch considers as highly unlikely, not only because she believes that Hitler had no such intention but also because the circumstances in the bunker on the last days would have made such a ceremony ludicrous. Certainly, up to the time Reitsch left the bunker, hardly a day before Hitler's death was announced, there had not been the slightest mention of such a ceremony. The rumor that there had been children out of the union, Reitsch quickly dismisses as fantastic.

46. MARTIN BORMANN: Bormann moved about very little, kept instead very close to his writing desk. He was "recording the momentous events in the bunker for posterity." Every word, every action went down on his paper. Often he would visit this person or that to scowlingly demand what the exact remark had been that passed between the Fuehrer and the person he had just had an audience with. Things that passed between other occupants of the bunker were also carefully recorded. This document was to be spirited out of the bunker at the very last moment so that, according to the modest Bormann, it could, "take its place among the greatest chapters of German history."

47. ADOLF HITLER: Throughout Hanna's stay in the bunker Hitler's manner and physical condition sank to lower and lower depths. At first he seemed to be playing the proper part of leading the defense of Germany and Berlin. And at first this was in some manner possible as communications were still quite reliable. Messages were telephoned to a flak tower and from there were radioed out by means of a portable, balloon-suspended aerial. But each day this was more and more difficult until late on the afternoon of the 28th and all day on the 29th communications were almost impossible. On about the 20th of April, at what was probably the last Hitler war-council in the Reichschancellery, the Fuehrer is said to have been so overcome by the persistently hopeless news that he completely broke down in the presence of all the gathering. The talk in the bunker, where Hanna heard of the collapse, was that with this display even the most optimistic of Hitler's cohorts tended toward the conviction that the War was irretrievably lost. According to Reitsch, Hitler never physically nor mentally recovered from this conference room collapse.

48. Occasionally he still seemed to hold to the hope of General Wenck's success in breaking through from the South. He talked of little else, and all day on the 28th and 29th he was mentally planning the tactics that Wenck might use in freeing Berlin. He would stride about the shelter, waving a road map that was fast disintegrating from the sweat of his hands and planning Wenck's campaign with anyone who happened to be listening. When he became overly excited he would snatch the map from where it lay, pace with a quick, nervous stride about the room, and loudly "direct" the city's defense with armies that no longer existed (as even Wenck, unknown to the Fuehrer, had already been routed and destroyed).

49. Reitsch describes it as a pathetic thing, the picture of a man's complete disintegration. A comic-tragedy of frustration, futility, and uselessness. The picture of a man running almost blindly from wall to wall in his last retreat waving papers that fluttered like leaves in his nervous, twitching hands, or sitting stooped and crumpled before his table moving buttons to represent his non-existent armies, back and forth on a sweat stained map, like a young boy playing at war.



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50. THE POSSIBILITY THAT HITLER STAYED ALIVE: The possibility that Hitler might have gotten out of the bunker alive, Reitsch dismisses as completely absurd. She claims that she is convinced that the Hitler she left in the shelter was physically unable to have gotten away. "Had a path been cleared for him from the bunker to freedom he would not have had the strength to use it", she says. She believes too, that at the very end he had no intention to live, that only the Wenck hope stayed his hand from putting the mass suicide plan into operation. News that Wenck could not get through, she feels, would immediately have set off the well rehearsed plans of destruction.

51. When confronted with the rumor that Hitler might still be alive in Tyrol and that her own flight to that area, after she left the bunker, might be more than coincidental, she appears deeply upset that such opinions are even entertained. She says only, "Hitler is dead! The man I saw in the shelter could not have lived. He had no reason to live and the tragedy was that he knew it well, knew it perhaps better than anyone else did."

52. HANNA'S OPINION OF THE FUHRER: It is apparent from Reitsch's conversation that she held the Fuehrer in high esteem. It is probably also true when she says that her "good" opinion suffered considerably during the closing stages of the War. She is emphatic when she describes the apparent mismanagement she observed and learned of in the bunker. For instance Berlin had been depleted of arms to hold the Oder. When that line fell it appeared that no coherent defense plan of Berlin had been prepared, certainly adequate arrangements had not been made to direct the defense from the bunker. There was no other communication equipment available than the telephone that led only to the flak tower. It appears that only in the last moment had he decided to direct the battle from the shelter and then did not have the first tools with which to operate. No maps, no battle plans, no radio. Only a hastily prepared messenger service and the one telephone were available. The fact that unknown to Hitler, the Wenck army had been destroyed almost days before was only one example of the inadequacies. All of which resulted in the Fuehrer of Germany sitting helplessly in his cellar impotently playing at his table-top war.

53. Reitsch claims that Hitler the idealist died, and his country with him, because of the incompetence of Hitler the soldier and Hitler the statesman. She concludes, still with a faint touch of allegiance, that no one who knew him would deny his idealistically motivated intentions nor could they deny that he was simply infinitely incompetent to rule his country, that one of his great faults was proper character analysis in the people about him which led to the selection of persons equally incompetent to fill important positions. (Most important example: Goering).

54. She repeatedly remarks that never again must such a person be allowed to gain control of Germany or of any country. But strangely enough she does not appear to hold him personally responsible for many of the wrongs and evils that she recognizes completely and is quick to point out. She says rather, "A great part of the fault lies with those who led him, lured him, criminally misdirected him, and informed him falsely. But that he himself selected the men who led him can never be forgiven."

55. A CRIMINAL AGAINST THE WORLD: "Hitler ended his life as a criminal against the world", but she is quick to add, "he did not begin it that way. At first his thoughts were only of how to make Germany healthy again, how to give his people a life free from economic insufficiencies and social maladjustments. To do this he gambled much, with a stake that no man has the right to jeopardize--the lives

of his people. This was the first great wrong, his first great failure. But once the first few risks had been successful, he fell into the faults of every gambler, he risked more and more, and drew time that he won he was more easily led to the next gamble." According to Reitsch it all began with the occupation of the Ruhr. This was the first and most delicate gamble of all and when the world did not answer his Wehr bluff with war every succeeding risk became progressively easier.

56. Each success made the enthusiasm of the people greater and this gave him the necessary support to take the next step. The end result, Reitsch claims, was that Hitler himself underwent a character change that transformed him from an ideologically motivated benefactor to a despotic, scheming despot, a victim of his own delusions of grandeur. "Never again", she continues, "in the history of the world must such power be allowed to rest with one man."

57. RUSSIAN COUNCIL: In the night of the 27th to 28th the Russian bombardment of the Chancellery reached the highest pitch it had yet attained. The shelling, to those in the shelter below, was astounding. It seemed as if each shell landed in exactly the same place as the one before, all dead-center on the Chancellery buildings. As this indicated that the Russian ground troops could overrun the area at any moment, another suicide council was called by the Fuehrer. All plans as to the destruction of the bodies of everyone in the shelter were gone over again. The decision was that as soon as the Russians reached the Chancellery grounds the mass suicide would begin. Last instructions were given as to the use of the poison vials. Reitsch still has hers in her possession. It was examined by the interrogator and found to be a little brass capsule with removable top, containing a fragile, glass bottle filled with about half a teaspoonful of anner liquid. The bottle was to be broken between the teeth and the liquid quickly swallowed).

58. The group was as hypnotized with the suicide rehearsal and a general discussion was entered into to determine in which manner the most thorough destruction of the human body could be performed. Then everyone made little speeches swearing allegiance again and again to the Fuehrer and to Germany. Yet, through it all, still ran the faint hope that Wenck might get in and hold long enough to effect an evacuation. But even on the 27th, Reitsch claims, the others paid lip-service to the Wenck hope only to follow the lead of the Fuehrer. Almost everyone had given up all thoughts of being saved, and said so to each other whenever Hitler was not present. Closing the discussions on the destruction of the bodies there was talk that SS men would be assigned to see that no trace remained. Throughout the day of the 28th the intensity of the Russian fire continued while the suicide talk kept pace with the shelling in the shelter below.

59. THE HIMMLER BETRAYAL: Then on the 29th fell the greatest blow of all. A telegram arrived which indicated that the staunch and trusted Himmler had joined Goering on the traitor list. It was like a death blow to the entire assembly. Reitsch claims that men and women alike cried and screamed with rage, fear and desperation, all mixed into one emotional spasm. Himmler the protector of the Reich, now a traitor was impossible. The telegram message was that Himmler had contacted the British and American authorities through Sweden to propose a capitulation to the San Francisco conference. Hitler had raged as a mad man. His color rose to a heated red and his face was virtually unrecognizable. Additional evidence of Himmler's "treachery" was that he had asked not to be identified with the capitulation proposals; American authorities were said to have abided by this request, while the British did not.

60. After the lengthy outburst Hitler sank into a stupor and for a time the entire bunker was silent.

61. Later came the anticlimactic news that the Russians would make a full force bid to over-run the Chancellery on the morning of the 30th. Even then shell-ann fire was beginning to sprinkle the area above the shelter. Ground reports indicated that the Russians were nearing the Potsdamer Platz and were losing thousands of men as they fanatically prepared the positions from which the attack of the next morning was to be launched.

62. Reitsch claims that everyone again looked to their poison.

63. ORDERS TO LEAVE THE SHELTER: At one thirty on the morning of the 30th of April Hitler, with chalk-white face, came to Greim's room and slumped down on the edge of the bed. "Our only hope is Wenck", he said, "and to make his entry possible we must call up every available aircraft to cover his approach." Hitler then claimed that he had just been informed that Wenck's guns were already shelling the Russians in Potsdamer Platz.

64. "Every available plane", Hitler said, "must be called up by daylight, therefore it is my order to you to return to Rechlin and muster your planes from there. It is the task of your aircraft to destroy the positions from which the Russians will launch their attack on the Chancellery. With Luftwaffe help Wenck may get through. That is the first reason why you must leave the shelter. The second is that Hitler must be stopped", and immediately he mentioned the SS Fuehrer his voice became more unsteady and both his lips and hands trembled. The order to Greim was that if Hitler had actually made the reported contact, and could be found, he should immediately be arrested.

65. "A traitor must never succeed me as Fuehrer! You must get out to insure that he will not."

66. Greim and Reitsch protested vehemently that the attempt would be futile, that it would be impossible to reach Rechlin, that they preferred to die in the shelter, that the mission could not succeed, that it was insane.

67. "As soldiers of the Reich", Hitler answered, "it is our holy duty to exhaust every possibility. This is the only chance of success that remains. It is your duty and mine to take it."

68. Hanna was not convinced, "No, no", she screamed, "what can be accomplished now, even if we should get through. Everything is lost, to try to change it now is insane." But Greim thought differently. "Hanna", he said, "we are the only hope for those who remain here. If the chance is just the smallest, we owe it to them to take it. Not to go would rob them of the only light that remains. Maybe Wenck is there. Maybe we can help, but whether we can or cannot, we will go."

69. Hanna, still convinced as to the absurdity of attempting an escape went alone to the Fuehrer while Greim was making his preparations. Through her sobbing she begged, "Mein Fuehrer why, why don't you let us stay?" He looked at her for a moment and said only: "God protect you."

70. THE LEAVE TAKING: Preparations were quickly made and Reitsch is graphic in her description of the leave taking. Below, late Goering's Liaison officer with the Fuehrer and now a staunch Greim-man said, "You must get out. It depends upon you to tell the



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truth to our people, to save the 'honor' of the Luftwaffe, to save the meaning of Germany for the world." Everyone gave the departing day some token, something to take back into the world. Everyone wrote quick, last minute letters for them to take along. Reitsch says that she and Grein destroyed all but two letters which were from Goebbels and his wife to their oldest son, by Frau Goebbels first marriage, who was then in an allied prisoner of war camp. These Reitsch still had. Frau Goebbels also gave her a diamond ring from her finger to wear in her memory.

71. Thirty minutes after Hitler had given the order they left the shelter.

72. THE FLIGHT OUT OF BERLIN: Outside the whole city was aflame and heavy bombardment fire was already plainly audible a short distance away. SS troops, committed to guarding Hitler to the end, were moving about. The men brought up a small armored vehicle which was to take Reitsch and Grein to where an Arado 96 was hidden near Brandenburger Tor. The sky was filled with the thunder of shells, some of which landed so close that their vehicle was knocked out several hundred yards short of the revetment where the Arado was stationed. (Reitsch claims that she is certain that this was the last craft available. The possibility of another plane having gotten in and possibly out again with Hitler as passenger, she dismisses as highly unlikely as Grein would certainly have been informed. She knows that such a message was never delivered. She knows too, that Grein had ordered other planes in but that each craft was shot down in the attempt and as Russian troops already solidly ringed the city, she is certain that Hitler never left Berlin.)

73. The broad street leading from Brandenburger Tor was to be used for take-off. About 400 meters of uncratered pavement was available as run-way. The take-off was made under hailing Russian fire and as the plane rose to roof-top level it was picked up by countless searchlights and at once bracketed in a barrage of shelling. Explosions tossed the craft like a feather, but only a few splinters hit the plane. Reitsch circled to about 20,000 feet from where Berlin was a sea of flames beneath her. From that altitude the magnitude of the destruction of Berlin she describes as stark and fantastic. Heading north, 50 minutes saw them in Wechlin, where the landing was again made through a screen of Russian fighter craft.

74. THE LAST GERMAN EFFORTS: Grein at once issued the orders calling all available craft to the aid of Berlin. Having performed the first of Hitler's commands he immediately decided to fly to Ploen, near Kiel, to determine what information Doenitz might have regarding Himmler. A Ducker 181 was used and by the time they got into the air German aircraft were already arriving in compliance with Grein's order. The entire heavens were soon a seething mass of German and Russian planes. Reitsch kept her own plane at 1 and 2 meters altitude and even with such protection against visibility she was twice unsuccessfully attacked. Landing at Lubeck still necessitated an automobile trip to Ploen, during which time they were again under constant Russian attack. On arrival they found that Doenitz knew nothing of Himmler's actions. The next move was to see Keitel in the event that a change in air tactics should be employed in helping Wenck in his entry into Berlin.

75. THE NEWS OF WENCK'S NONEXISTENCE: Keitel was found in the early morning of the first of May and told that the news that Wenck's army had long been destroyed or captured, and that he (Keitel) had sent word to Hitler to that effect the day before. (30th of April)

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76. Grein and Reitsch now knew that Hitler must surely have given up all hope and both fully expected that the well rehearsed suicide plans had already been put into operation.

77. THE "NEW" GOVERNMENT: The advance of the English necessitated a retreat into Schleswig late on the first of May. Here, the same evening, Reitsch and Grein learned that the announcement of Hitler's death had been made and that he had been succeeded by Doenitz. On the 2nd of May the new government was called to Ploen. Grein and Reitsch, to receive orders from Doenitz as to immediate Luftwaffe activities, had the additional purpose of meeting Himmler and confronting him with the betrayal story.

78. HIMMLER'S CAPITULATION EXPLANATION: Himmler arrived late so that all the others were in the conference room, leaving Reitsch alone when he walked in.

"One moment Herr Reichsfuehrer, a matter of the highest importance, if you can spare the time?" Reitsch asked.

Himmler seemed almost jovial as he said, "Of course."

"Is it true, Herr Reichsfuehrer, that you contacted the Allies with proposals of peace without orders to do so from Hitler?"

"But, of course."

"You betrayed your Fuehrer and your people in the very darkest hour? Such a thing is high treason, Herr Reichsfuehrer. You did that when your place was actually in the bunker with Hitler?"

"High treason? No! You'll see, history will weigh it differently. Hitler wanted to continue the fight. He was mad with his pride and his 'honor'. He wanted to shed more German blood when there was none left to flow. Hitler was insane. It should have been stopped long ago."

"Insane? I came from him less than 36 hours ago. He died for the cause he believed in. He died bravely and filled with the 'honor' you speak of, while you and Goering and the rest must now live as branded traitors and cowards."

"I did as I did to save German blood, to rescue what was left of our country."

"You speak of German blood, Herr Reichsfuehrer? You speak of it now? You should have thought of it years ago, before you became identified with the useless shedding of so much of it."

A sudden strafing attack terminated the conversation.

79. THE LAST ORDERS TO HOLD THE RUSSIANS: Grein indicated that little had been decided at the first Doenitz war council. However everyone was in accord that at best, resistance would only be possible for a few days longer. In the meantime commanders against the Russians were to hold to the last to enable as many civilians as possible to flee from the advance. Reitsch claims that Grein, whose leg was becoming increasingly worse, insisted upon flying immediately to Feldmarschall Joerner, in command of troops in Silesia and Czechoslovakia, to instruct him that he should resist even after the capitulation order was released to give the civilians time to flee to the American zone.

80. On the flight to Joerner, Grein's foot became so bad that he had momentary lapses of unconsciousness. Upon arrival Joerner indicated that he had already decided to hold as long as possible and had issued orders to that effect even before Grein's arrival.

81. It was then decided to fly on the Kesselring with the same instructions, but Grein's leg was by now so critical that further movement was impossible. From the 3rd of May to the 7th it was necessary to remain at Joerner's headquarters in Koenigpratz where Reitsch nursed Grein until he could move about again.

82. On the night of the 7th of May they took off in a Dornier 217 to fly to Graz where Kesselring was reported to be. Directly over the field German 16k severely damaged their craft which crash landed at the edge of the field. Reitsch and Grein were of the understanding that the capitulation would come on the night of the 9th of May and when it was learned that Kesselring had left Graz for Zell am See they flew on in an effort to instruct him to combine some of his troops with those holding the Russians.

83. THE END AT ZELL AM SEE: They arrived at Zell am See flying a Fiesler-Storch, and reported to General Koller, Chief of the GAF General Staff, who was to tell them of Kesselring's whereabouts. Here they learned that the capitulation was to be on the 8th instead of the 9th. They still wanted to locate Kesselring but Koller either chose not to tell them where Kesselring was, because it was already too late or else he did not know that Kesselring was in the village of Alldorf, a few miles north of Zell am See. At this news Reitsch and Grein decided that any further efforts on their part were quite useless. Just before the capitulation they left Zell am See for Kitzbuhl to place themselves under the care of a well known Doctor who had just opened his hospital there.

84. Reitsch claims that had it not been for the severe agony of Grein's foot she would not have been able to convince him to save his limb. To the last he wanted to encourage resistance against the Russians.

85. WHY THE "REDOUT" WAS NOT UTILIZED: In response to the question as to why the Austria-Southern Germany last stand of resistance was never put into operation, Reitsch has little to add to what is already known. She states that as late as the 15th of April it still seemed that there was every intention of moving the government and military headquarters to Berchtesgaden. All of the bureaus and headquarters in Berlin at that time were on a constant 2 hour alert. From what she heard from Oberst Below and others it appeared that the conference mentioned in paragraph 46 was to decide on the full particulars covering the move. She claims that the reports Hitler received at that time were so shocking that he was convinced that preparations to make "Redoubt" resistance a success would never be completed in time. It was believed that the realization that "Redoubt", of which so much was expected, would have to be crossed off as useless was the major cause of Hitler's breakdown. It was also said that

Goering and Hitler had had a strained conversation regarding this, with Goering insisting on an early evacuation to the "Redoubt" area and Hitler declining in the hope that the Oder would hold. Goering was to have claimed that "Redoubt" was ready for occupancy while Hitler preferred to wait until he could have it's readiness confirmed at the above mentioned conference. It was the talk later at the Doenitz war council and elsewhere that Goering's departure was governed solely by his realization that the Oder would be crossed and by his unfulfilled hope that the partially completed "Redoubt" area would hold.



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Had Goering's coup succeeded, it is believed that "Redoubt" might have been more actively defended. The reasons that it was not: First--Goering's failure. Second--Hitler's belief that continued resistance in Berlin might be more eventful than the sure collapse he saw in an uncompleted "Redoubt."

86. REPORTING TO THE AMERICANS: They arrived in Kitzbuhl on the morning of the 9th and reported to American Military authorities shortly thereafter. Grein was under treatment until the 23rd of May when he was taken to Salzburg, prior to being taken on to Germany as a prisoner of war. He committed suicide with Hitler's poison capsule in Salzburg on the night of the 24th of May. Although he was much less known than his corpulent predecessor, both in Germany or the world, in Hanna's opinion he should have had Goering's position years ago. The fact that he disagreed with Goering on almost every count is, to her, evidence enough of his capabilities.

88. EVALUATION OF SOURCE: It is the opinion of the interrogator that the above information is given with a sincere and conscientious effort to be truthful and exact. The suicide of her family, the death of her closest friend, von Grein, the physical ruin of Germany, and the trying nature of her experiences during the closing years of the war combined themselves to seriously tempt her to commit suicide as well. She claims that the only reason she remained alive is for the sake of the truth; to tell the truth about Goering, "the shallow showman", to tell the truth about Hitler, "the criminal incompetent", and to tell the German people the truth about the dangers of the form of government that the Third Reich gave them. She believes that she is fulfilling much of this mission when she speaks to the interrogator. It is therefore felt that her remarks may be considered as her deepest efforts at sincerity and honesty. At the moment she is undergoing a severe mental struggle in an effort to reconcile her conception of "honor" with her denunciations of Goering, of Himmler, and of Hitler himself. This difficulty appears less great when she is speaking to the interrogator than it is when she speaks to civilians, but from civilians who have led her conversation and then unknown to her, reported the results to the interrogator it appears that she is striving to exert a progressively more democratic influence over her countrymen. It is felt that her idealism and her exact knowledge regarding many of the faults of the Nazi system, if put to proper use, might eventually be of value in the re-education of the German people.

89. (EDITOR'S NOTE) Other reports, covering various phases of Reitsch's knowledge of the Luftwaffe, its research, and its activities, will be issued. Any specific needs of any or all agencies receiving this report should be forwarded to this headquarters with details of information required. No final interrogation report is intended as each separate subject will be handled in detail and summary form. At the completion of necessary interrogation, source will be released to her Salzburg residence unless other action is requested.

ROBERT E. WORK 546  
Captain, Air Corps  
Chief Interrogator

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