



HITLER

The Memoir of a Nazi Insider Who Turned Against the Führer

Introduction by John Willard Toland,
winner of the Pulitzer Prize

ERNST HANFSTAENGL



HITLER

*The Memoir of a Nazi Insider
Who Turned Against the Fuhrer*

HITLER

*The Memoir of a Nazi Insider
Who Turned Against the Fuhrer*



By Ernst Hanfstaengl

Translation and Introduction by John Toland

Afterword by Egon Hanfstaengl



Arcade Publishing • New York

Copyright © 1957, 2011 by Ernst Hanfstaengl
Introduction copyright © 1994, 2011 by John Toland
Afterword copyright © 1994, 2011 by Egon Hanfstaengl

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without the express written consent of the publisher, except in the case of brief excerpts in critical reviews or articles. All inquiries should be addressed to Arcade Publishing, 307 West 36th Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Arcade Publishing books may be purchased in bulk at special discounts for sales promotion, corporate gifts, fund-raising, or educational purposes. Special editions can also be created to specifications.

For details, contact the Special Sales Department, Arcade Publishing,
307 West 36th Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10018 or info@skyhorsepublishing.com.
Arcade Publishing® is a registered trademark of Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.®, a Delaware corporation.

Visit our website at www.arcadepub.com.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available on file.

ISBN: 978-1-61145-055-2

Printed in the United States of America

To the Memory
of OSWALD SPENGLER
(1880-1936)

Historian, Philosopher, Patriot and Friend whose
unheeded warnings and prophecies
about Hitler became such grim reality

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN TO LAND

FOREWORD TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

LETTER TO THE AUTHOR FROM HERMANN GOERING

I Harvard's Gift to Hitler

The dozen years that made Hitler – My schooldays with Himmler's father – Sedgwick, Heine and Hanfstaengl forbears – Harvard and Theodore Roosevelt – Conflict on Fifth Avenue – The predictions of a German Jew – The American military attaché speaks of Hitler – Introduction to an agitator.

II Tristan in the Thierschstrasse

Sugar in the wine – Rosenberg – The infantryman's guide – Fitting Hitler for society – The *Stammitsch* at the Café Neumaier – Cranks and intimates – The basic reading of a dictator – Wagner on an upright piano – From *Falarah* to *Sieg Heil* – A woman's reaction – A pamphlet becomes a newspaper.

III One Side to a Statue

Begging expeditions – Hitler escapes a Communist patrol – From bombs to women boxers – Hitler's fixation with Leda and the Swan – His *faux pas* as an art expert – Diamonds and a fedora hat – The plans for Czechoslovakia – Hitler's gifts as a mimic – Poison on his birthday – Orator in excelsis – Goering, Hess and Haushofer.

IV Particular Generals

Ferment in Bavaria – Hitler and Roehm – Pyromania in the Rhineland – Jewish anti-Semites – Dietrich Eckart loses faith – Rhinoceros whips in the courtyard – Rosenberg insults the Catholics – An offer from Mathilde Ludendorff – Hitler tempts General von Seeckt – Compromising reluctant allies.

V Fiasco at the Feldherrnhalle

Plan for a Putsch – Cracks in the *Kampfbund* – Double-cross at the Bürgerbräu – Kahrfreitag – Red wine for Ludendorff – Fusillade in the Residenzstrasse – My escape to Austria – Hitler's attempted suicide.

VI Twilight at Landsberg

Goering in exile – A first sight of Geli Raubal – Hitler's hunger strike – The acrobat of the

cells – Duel for the leadership – Welcome with *Liebestod* – The narrowing of a mind –
Operatic eroticism – The man on the tight-rope.

VII Hitler and Henry VIII

A revision of *Mein Kampf* – No waltzes for the Führer – Ludendorff for President – The return of Rosenberg – A world tour rejected – The scaffold block at the Tower — Hitler on his knees – Forced repayment of a debt.

VIII The Bohemian at the Brown House

Art versus politics – The return of Goering – A red ground for the Swastika – The radicalism of Goebbels – Appearance of a Hohenzollern – An electoral triumph – Picking the first team – Interlude with the press – A letter from the Kaiser – Committed to the Nazis.

IX Geli Raubal

Hitler takes a luxury flat – The amours of his niece – Pornographic drawings and blackmail – Soprano without talent – The unwilling sub-tenant – Suicide – Corpse without inquest – Hara-kiri and a pregnancy – The impotent Herostratus.

X Lohengrin Prevails

Poacher and gamekeeper – Prejudices strengthened – The Prussians of Asia – Peripatetic boredom – The court minstrel – Assertion at arm's length – Encounter with Churchill – A message from Roosevelt – Split with Strasser – Buskers in the Kaiserhof – Two organized disappointments – No mate for the glow-worm.

XI Disillusionment at Nuremberg

Neurath versus Rosenberg – First brush with Goering – Reichstag fire fever – Goebbels at Potsdam – The one-man revolution – Interventions with Himmler – Hostages for a policy – No make-up for the Mitfords – The shape of things to come.

XII Circus at the Chancellery

Metternichs in shirt-sleeves – Three lunches a day – Rings around a dictator – King Kong and Ludwig II – America from a chair – The schizopedic radical – The wine merchant who deserted – The loyalties of a Fouché – A flag without a pole – Intercession with Mussolini.

XIII A Murderer's Welcome

Palm court interlude – Disguised departure – Shock on the high seas – Harvard, class of '09 – The liquidation of Roehm – Assassin at bay – The mad hatter's lunch party – The Flying Dutchman.

XIV The Last Chord

Aftermath of a purge – What happened at Wiessee – Austrian misadventure – Short shrift at Neudeck – A wheel comes full circle – Funeral March farewell – Analysis of a medium – The prophet and the caliph – The militant revivalist – Pinchbeck Pericles – The tragedy of an orator.

XV Wilderness and Flight

Unacknowledged banishment – The warning of Rosalind von Schirach – No bed of my own – The Chancellery on the telephone – A mission to Spain – The intrusive cameraman – Goering's plot frustrated – A race with the Gestapo – Fiftieth birthday of a fugitive – Unity Mitford repeats a remark – No joke on a parachute.

XVI The Catoctin Conversation

Bodenschatz as emissary – Egon abstracted – Bribes, blandishments and threats – The warning of Reichenau – The non-enemy alien – Eels in a bathing hut – Cramped quarters in Canada – Haushofer *triumfans* – An offer to Roosevelt – State prisoner at Bush Hill – Reports for a President – No inducement to revolt – A black-list ignored – Return to the ruins – No world for Hitlers.

AFTERWORD BY EGON HANFSTAENGL

INTRODUCTION

ERNST HANFSTAENGL was a man with two countries. His mother came from a well-known New England family, the Sedgwicks, and two of his ancestors were Civil War generals, one of whom helped carry Lincoln's coffin. In Germany two generations of Hanfstaengls had served as privy counsellors to the dukes of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and were connoisseurs and patrons of the arts. The family owned an art publishing house in Munich well known for its excellent reproductions.

Hanfstaengl had been brought up in an atmosphere of art and music and was himself an accomplished pianist. I have spent many hours in his Munich home listening to him play the piano with verve, his six-foot-four frame hunched over the piano, making him look like an impish bear. His nickname was Putzi (little fellow).

Adolf Hitler too had been enthralled by Putzi's music, and made him one of his closest associates in 1922. After hearing Hitler speak at a beer hall, Hanfstaengl had been fascinated by his control of the audience. "People," he wrote, "were sitting breathlessly, who had long since forgotten to reach for their beer mugs and instead were drinking in the speaker's every word." Nearby a young woman was staring at Hitler: "As though in some devotional ecstasy, she had ceased to be herself and was completely under the spell of Hitler's despotic faith in Germany's future greatness."

On the spur of the moment Putzi introduced himself. "About ninety-five percent of what you said can set my name to, and five percent – we will have to talk about that." What he particularly objected to was Hitler's blatant anti-Semitism.

Like so many others in Germany, Hanfstaengl imagined he could control Hitler. He loaned the Führer a thousand dollars, interest free, which enabled Hitler to purchase two American rotary presses and turn his weekly Nazi newspaper into a daily. Putzi also became his foreign Press secretary.

Hitler soon became a fixture in the Hanfstaengl apartment. He fell in love with Helene Hanfstaengl and played games with her two-year-old son, Egon. He also became fascinated with Hanfstaengl's music. "Hitler dragged me around from house to house as his resident musician, and had me sit down at the piano to perform." On one occasion Putzi began playing Harvard's football marches and explained how cheerleaders and marching bands would stir up the crowd to almost hysterical marching shouting. When Hitler's interest quickened, he demonstrated on the piano how the buoyant American beat could be injected into German marches, and Hitler started parading up and down like a drum major. "This is what I need for the movement!" he exclaimed. Hanfstaengl wrote several marches in this style for the S.A. band, but his most significant contribution was the transference of Harvard's "Fight! Fight! Fight!" to "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

Hitler became even closer to the Hanfstaengls after he fled from the disastrous Beer Hall Putsch and sought refuge in their country home. Here he was captured and sent to prison; and one of the first places he visited after his release was the Hanfstaengls' new home across the Isar River. It was here that the Führer came on Christmas Eve to regain his composure. First he asked Putzi to play the *Liebestück* and then he romped with Egon, marching up and down like a soldier, showing the child how to carry his little sabre and imitating the sound of an artillery barrage. Later, when alone with Helene, he put his head in her lap and said, "If only I had someone to take care of me!" But he could never marry, he told her, because his life was dedicated to his country. "I thought he was acting like a little boy – not a lover – and perhaps he was," recalled Helene. "It would have been awful if someone had come in. He was taking a chance, he really was. That was the end of it and I passed it off as if it had simply not happened."

Hanfstaengl remained as Hitler's Press secretary for years. Like many of those who had helped put Hitler in power, he thought he could stem Hitler's excesses. But by 1936 Martin Bormann's influence

over the Führer had gained dominance, and Putzi was reduced to a minor role. For some time the Führer had been annoyed because Hanfstaengl called him “Herr Hitler” instead of “Mein Führer” and talked to him like an equal.

Hanfstaengl knew he was in danger and told Egon, now fifteen, “Things are not well. We all believed in the movement, didn’t we? I am still trying to believe in it.” But he had found corruption everywhere, and war was coming with England and America. “The country is in a foul state internally. I ascribe that mainly to the blackguards who are sitting firmly entrenched behind official desks in Berlin and elsewhere. But Hitler refuses to hear me.” And it looked as though the Führer himself had become corrupt.

Hanfstaengl warned his son that his enemies were almost sure to get around to liquidating him sooner or later. Several months later, on February 11, 1937 – Putzi’s birthday – Hitler ordered him to fly to Spain and protect the interests of German correspondents in Franco’s country. Soon after takeoff the pilot revealed that once over the area between Barcelona and Madrid, Hanfstaengl would be forced to parachute into the Red lines. That would mean death. The sympathetic pilot said nothing more, but soon one of the motors began spluttering. With a meaningful look he told Hanfstaengl that they would have to land at a small airfield.

Once on the ground, Putzi said he was going to call Berlin for instructions. Instead he phoned his secretary in Berlin, telling her that his orders had been suddenly changed and he was going to spend his fiftieth birthday with his family in Bavaria. Then he informed the pilot that the Führer had ordered him to return to Uffing. Instead he took a night train to Munich and a morning train that took him to freedom in Zurich.

The revelations in this reprint of Hanfstaengl’s classic memoir will enrich the reader’s understanding of Hitler, the twentieth-century Napoleon. Some historians have dismissed Hanfstaengl as a mountebank, but, with all his quirks, he was one of the few who ever stood up to the Führer and then lived to write about it in fascinating detail.

JOHN TOLAN

FOREWORD TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

THE FINAL impulse that led to the compilation and publication of these memoirs I owe to Mr. Brian Connell. We met some years ago and he, while writing his own books, never lost sight of the story he thought I could tell. He came to Germany again in 1956 and discussed in detail a scheme of collaboration, to which I agreed. Our method was this: Mr. Connell spent two months in Bavaria and every day, for hours on end, took tape recordings of my discourse. His imagination and enthusiasm as an interrogator succeeded in overcoming my reluctance to dive into the sour memory of those desperate years. From these recordings and from previously compiled material of my own, he then prepared a draft manuscript, which resulted, after joint revision, in the present text. The burden of transcribing my roving reminiscences fell upon poor Mrs. Connell, to whom I therefore owe a large measure of gratitude.

I am no less indebted to my own wife, Renata, for her active help with the secretarial chores and for patiently putting up with the unending domestic upheavals that always go together with literary labours.

The story, of course, and the responsibility for it are mine, but full credit must go to Mr. Connell for having devised a relatively painless method of reducing speech to print and for having filtered out unnecessary detail.

Finally I want to pay tribute to those without whom there would have been no story: to my friends and comrades of those years – many of them no longer alive – who stuck by me, who hoped, worked, and took risks, only to be cruelly disillusioned just as I was.

ERNST HANFSTAENGL

Munich

March 1958

IN THE YEARS following World War Two, as key figures of the Nazi era dropped out of the picture, firsthand accounts of that period were lost to history. It quickly became impossible to reconstruct from eyewitnesses the astonishing story of the twenty years between the two wars that brought Hitler to power and the Western world very nearly to its knees.

Those seeking to analyse the motive force of these two decades would be surprised to discover how many members of Hitler's immediate entourage survived the war years. Most of them were seen as relics, uncomfortable ghosts in dirty raincoats, haunting this or that Munich suburb: Emil Maurice, an early intimate and his first chauffeur; Hermann Esser, one of the few Party orators who could hold his own with his master; Heinrich Hoffmann, crony-photographer; Sepp Dietrich, bodyguard and later U.S. general – even one-armed Max Amann, who published *Mein Kampf* and the *Völkisch Beobachter*. In retrospect, they were all minor figures, with neither the insight nor the perception to give a coherent account of the political genius and monster in whose wake they had their being. But one survivor of the years that brought Hitler from obscurity to power was of a very different calibre: Dr. Ernst F. Sedgwick (“Putzi”) Hanfstaengl.

Hanfstaengl was a representative of that dwindling human species – a character. His appearance alone singled him out in any crowd. He was a towering six-foot-four, the thick hair on his enormous head barely specked with grey even into his seventies. The twinkling eyes above the bold nose and prognathous jaw reflected the endless stream of humorous comment and brazen *boutades* that composed his conversational fireworks. His huge hands could rend a piano in the direct tradition of the Lisztian romantics, and there were few men who dared question his judgement in matters of pictorial art. Of mixed German-American parentage and upbringing, what somehow came through was pure Celt. As he looked back on the bitterness of a life that had included nearly ten years of exile, the mobile face could assume the air of an avenging Druid.

In the little group of provincial plotters who gravitated to Hitler during the inchoate years after World War One, Hanfstaengl must have stood out like a sore thumb. He had left Germany at the height of her imperial glory to work in the United States and came back to find his country crushed and desolate. His romantic nature was fired by the incandescent promise of this almost unknown agitator, his disillusionment only completed by the triumph he had intuitively foreseen. He became the only literate member of Hitler's inner circle, and brought to this relationship far more than he ever received. When he progressed from being Hitler's window on the outside world and artistic mentor to the role of unwelcome conscience, he found himself frozen out. The process took a dozen years, but then he had to run for his life.

With his American wife, Hanfstaengl represented a new factor in Hitler's existence. The family name was one to conjure with in Munich. His father and grandfather had been welcome counsellors at the Wittelsbach and Coburg courts. They were respected pioneers in the field of art reproduction and prominent members of the Romantic movement represented by Richard Wagner and Ludwig II, the last, mad, royal Maecenas of Bavaria. Hanfstaengl himself provided the aura of Harvard, a genuine acquaintance with past, actual, and future presidents of the United States, *entrée* not only to the best of Munich and German society, but attachment to the intangible net of international social intercourse and an artistic accomplishment which went straight to the heart of Hitler's tortured soul – the ability to play Wagner's music superbly on the piano.

To hear Hanfstaengl thunder through the crescendos of the *Meistersinger* prelude or of the *Liebestod* was an experience. The powerful fingers had, after the war, lost some of their cunning, and the associations of mood served anecdotal reminiscence rather than musical memory, but it was still

possible to perceive the hold this talent had on the immature mind that Hanfstaengl had once tried to influence. For this was the impossible task that Hanfstaengl set himself in those embryonic years — to mould into some statesmanlike form the spell-binding oratorical gifts and immanent potential of Adolf Hitler.

In contrast to such provincial academicians as Dietrich Eckart and Gottfried Feder, and to pseudointellectual fanatics like Rudolf Hess and Alfred Rosenberg, Hanfstaengl was the only educated man of good family and cultural background at Hitler's elbow. Hanfstaengl had lived fifteen years in the United States, remaining at liberty on parole even when America entered the war. He was deeply imbued with the latent strength of the maritime powers, and tried to wean Hitler away from the Balkans, who wanted revenge against Russia and the military fanatics who wanted revenge against France. His thesis was that Germany would never find equilibrium and greatness again without a rapprochement with Britain and particularly the United States, of whose incredible industrial and military potential he had been a witness. The basic premise he tried to lodge firmly in Hitler's mind was that all thoughts of settling old scores on the Continent would prove illusory if the two saltwater nations were ranged on the wrong side.

A Protestant himself, Hanfstaengl tried to restrain Hitler and his chief theorist, Rosenberg, from their campaign against the Church in predominantly Catholic Bavaria. He fought political radicalism in all its forms and, while supporting the basic objective of a national renaissance, tried to attract Hitler to the traditional values he himself represented. With countless other people of his class and type, Hanfstaengl thought Hitler could be normalized, both personally and ideologically. They were all to be disillusioned and betrayed in their turn, for failing to recognize that the basic drive of Hitler's character was not reformist but nihilist.

The Hanfstaengl household was the first to try to make Hitler socially acceptable. They introduced him to the world of art and culture, and in those early years theirs was almost the only private circle in which he found himself at ease. After the Ludendorff Putsch it was to their villa in the Bavarian Alps that he fled for succor. During his prison term the Hanfstaengls provided one of the few centres of loyalty and after his release made a final attempt to inculcate in him their standards. Then there was a hiatus until, with ultimate power looming ever more certain, Hanfstaengl attempted (unsuccessfully) to apply the social and musical gifts that still attracted Hitler to divert the revolution into respectable channels before it was too late.

Hanfstaengl was a merry and amusing companion, full of charm and vitality. He had a mocking and teasing way about him, an inextinguishable capacity for anecdotal embroidery and a total lack of inhibition in his remarks and comments. He enjoyed the licence of a Shakespearean jester, punctuating his rodomontade with tart and telling observations. Moreover, he possessed one channel to Hitler with which no one else could compete. In the exhausted pauses of the final political campaigns, often late at night, Hitler would turn to the form of relaxation that only Hanfstaengl could provide, the hour-long session on the piano that would ease Hitler's overwrought nerves and often make him receptive to Hanfstaengl's counsels of moderation.

With power in his hands, Hitler would start to dispense with the respectable front that Hanfstaengl had provided with his international connections, provided for the Party's heterogeneous hierarchy. Even after his personal break with Hitler at the end of 1934, and until his flight from Germany in February 1938, Hanfstaengl retained the nominal post of foreign Press chief of the N.S.D.A.P. His open opposition to the methods of the revolution and his unbridled criticisms of those responsible for them soon made him intolerable to those in power. Should he appear to protest unduly in his memoirs about his personal resistance and attitudes to the Nazi regime, there were plenty of witnesses, German and foreign, who could testify to every word and more. One story he does not tell is how at a crowded

reception he called Goebbels a swine to his face. Ten further years of exile, internment, and frustration were the price he had to pay for his early idealism.

He ended his days modestly in the same house in Munich that once echoed with the voices of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, Eva Braun and others long dead. By association and temperament he could place himself for hours in a state of total recall. Not only was he one of the best raconteurs of his time but a superb mimic who could remember the atmosphere and tone of voice of conversations he had twenty-five and thirty-five years earlier. To close one's eyes and hear Hitler thundering, Goering expostulating, and early leaders like Dietrich Eckart and Christian Weber declaiming was to undergo an experiment in time. Like his erstwhile intimate, Hanfstaengl was a master of the spoken word. Somewhere in the memoirs I have reconstituted with him, he talks of the marches and musical compositions for which he had provided the melody, relying on others to complete the orchestration. He had the exhilarating task of orchestrating his flood of reminiscence.

As a man of true artistic temperament, he had a psychological insight into Hitler's personal character and repressions not remotely matched by anyone in constant contact with him during the formative years they were together. To the incomplete if extensive patchwork of Hitlerian biography and Nazi history he brings a conclusive picture of Hitler, the man in the making. He was able to evaluate as an intelligent intimate the neuroses that determined Hitler's megalomania. There is no record like it because no other man is or has ever been equipped to tell the story. If the question is asked what political influence Hanfstaengl had on this unbalanced demon, then the answer, ultimately, must be none. It was to Hanfstaengl's credit that he remained untainted by the regime's excesses. In the end Hitler only listened to those who pandered to his prejudices and wholly destructive passions. But as a chronicler of the process that made him what he became, Ernst Hanfstaengl was unique.

BRIAN CONNEL

Hermann Goering's letter to the author following the latter's flight to avoid assassination at the hands of the Nazi regime. See overleaf for translation.

Der Preussische Ministerpräsident.

Berlin W 8, den 19. März 1937
Leipziger Str. 8.
Fernspr.: A 3 Flora 6841, 7071.

St. M.

Lieber Hanfstaengl!

Wie mir heute mitgeteilt worden ist, befindest Du Dich seit einiger Zeit in Zürich und hast die Absicht, vorläufig nicht nach Deutschland zurückzukehren.


Ich nehme an, dass die Gründe hierfür auf Deinen letzten Flug von Staaken nach Wurzen i.Sa. zurückzuführen sind. Ich versichere Dir, dass die ganze Angelegenheit nur einen harmlosen Scherz darstellen sollte. Man wollte Dir wegen einiger allzu kühner Behauptungen, die Du aufgestellt hast, Gelegenheit zum Nachdenken geben. Etwas Anderes war wirklich nicht beabsichtigt.

Ich habe Oberst Bodenschatz zu Dir geschickt, der Dir persönlich noch einige Aufklärungen geben wird. Ich halte es aus verschiedenen Gründen für dringend notwendig, dass Du mit Bodenschatz sofort nach Deutschland zurückkehrst. Ich erkläre Dir ehrenwörtlich, dass Du Dich hier bei uns wie immer in aller Freiheit bewegen kannst. Lass also allen Argwohn fallen und handele vernünftig.

Mit kameradschaftlichen Grüßen

Heil Hitler!

*Habe erwartet, dass
An meinem Wort
glauben steht!*



Dear Hanfstaengl,

According to what I have been told today, you* are now in Zürich and do not intend for the time being to return to Germany.

I presume that the reason for this is your recent flight from Staaken to Wurzen in Saxony. I assure you that the whole affair was only intended as a harmless joke. We wanted to give you an opportunity of thinking over some rather over-audacious utterances you have made. Nothing more than that was intended.

I have sent Colonel Bodenschatz to you, who will give you further explanations in person. I consider it vitally necessary for various reasons that you come back to Germany straight away with Bodenschatz. I assure you on my word of honour that you can remain here amongst us as you always have done in complete freedom. Forget your suspicions and act reasonably.

With friendly greetings,

Heil Hitler

PS. I expect you to accept my word.

* The German uses the familiar, second person singular, form.

HITLER

*The Memoir of a Nazi Insider
Who Turned Against the Fuhrer*

HARVARD'S GIFT TO HITLER

The dozen years that made Hitler – My schooldays with Himmler's father – Sedgwick, Heine and Hanfstaengl forbears – Harvard and Theodore Roosevelt – Conflict on Fifth Avenue – The predictions of a German Jew – The American military attaché speaks of Hitler – Introduction to an agitator.

THE LOG-CHEST in the comer of the fireplace in my library is still covered with the traveling-rug I lent to Hitler when he was a prisoner in Landsberg. It is not a particularly hallowed memento, but a constant reminder of the dozen years of his rise to power. During that formative period I was an intimate member of his inner circle, of which I am probably the only articulate survivor. It was to my house in Munich, now laboriously regained after painful years of exile, that he came for his first meal after release from jail and where, nearly a decade later, he celebrated with Eva Braun the year of his triumph. Mine was the first Munich family of standing into which he was introduced when he was still unknown. Throughout our long association I tried to imbue him with some of the norms and ideas of civilized existence, only to be thwarted by the ignorant fanatics who were his closest cronies. I fought a running and losing battle against Rosenberg and his hazy race mystique, against Hess and Haushofer with their narrow foot-slogging misconceptions of global politics and strategy, and against the sinister and finally determining radicalism of Goebbels.

People have said I was Hitler's court jester. Certainly I used to tell him my jokes, but only to get him into the sort of mood when I hoped he would see reason. I was the only man who could hammer out *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger* to his satisfaction on the piano, and when this put him in the right frame of mind I could often enter a caveat against some more outrageous piece of behaviour on the part of one of his associates. For years he used me to give an air of respectability to his Nazi Party and when he could no longer stand my public criticism of the excesses of his new Germany he hounded me out of the country with the Gestapo on my heels.

There have been scores of books about Hitler and his era. The public records of his régime were produced at the Nuremberg trial or have appeared since in official American and British publications. I cannot hope and would not even try to compete with this massive documentation of his public career. What seems to me to be still missing is an account of the man, particularly of the development of his character during precisely those years that I knew him so well. When I met him in the early 'twenties he was a minor provincial political agitator, a frustrated ex-serviceman, awkward in a blue serge suit. He looked like a suburban hairdresser on his day off. His chief claim to notice was his golden voice and transcendent powers as an orator on the platform of one of his Party meetings. Even then, he was so little regarded that the sparse reports in the press did not even spell his name aright.

By the time of the Roehm Putsch in 1934, not long before I broke with him, he had become a murderer, the power-hungry demonic monster the world knew and feared. Doubtless the facets of his character which permitted this development were always present. A man's temperament does not change. But the final product was the result of a combination of circumstances, environment, too many bad and ignorant advisers and, above all, personal, intimate frustrations of the most abysmal sort. The story I have to tell, from close association and observation, is of a man who was impotent, in the medical sense of the term. The abounding nervous energy which found no normal release sought compensation first in the subjection of his entourage, then of his country, then of Europe and would have imposed itself on the world if he had not been stopped. In the sexual no-man's-land in which he

lived, he only once nearly found the woman, and never even the man, who might have brought him relief.

It took me many years to plumb the depths of his personal problem. The normal human being reacts only slowly to the abnormal, and even then tries to convince himself that a return to normality is possible. Hitler was all of a piece. His political conceptions were warped and foolhardy. Again the normal person assumes that argument, example and evidence will produce an approximation of orthodox thinking. These were my twin misconceptions. I remained in Hitler's vicinity because I was convinced that his natural genius must bring him to the top. In that, at least, I was right. But when I got there his faults were magnified, not diminished. It was the experience of power which finally corrupted him. What happened thereafter was only the natural consequence of what had gone before and that is the story I propose to tell.

* * *

One vicarious connexion with the Nazi hierarchy goes back to my schooldays. My form master at the Royal Bavarian *Wilhelms-gymnasium* before the turn of the century was none other than Heinrich Himmler's father. The grandfather had been a gendarme in some village on Lake Constance, but the father had risen in the world and had been at one time tutor to Prince Heinrich of Bavaria. As a result he became a terrible snob, favouring the young titled members of his class and bearing down contemptuously on the commoners, although many of us came from well-to-do and prominent families. The son was much younger than I was and I remember him only as a pallid, moon-faced boy whom I used to see occasionally when delivering extra work at his father's house in the Sternstrasse. He went to the same school in the end and I remember hearing from other old boys that he had a particularly unpleasant reputation as a sneak, always running to his father and other teachers with tales about his fellows. But by that time I was far away studying at Harvard.

I am in fact half American. My mother was born a Sedgwick-Heine. My maternal grandmother came from the well-known New England family and was a cousin of the General John Sedgwick who fell at Spotsylvania Court House in the Civil War and whose statue stands at West Point. My grandfather was another Civil War general, William Heine, who was on General Dix's staff in the Army of the Potomac. Trained as an architect, he had fled his native Dresden after the Liberal revolution of 1848, helped to decorate the Opéra in Paris and then emigrated to the States. There he became a well-known illustrator and accompanied Admiral Perry as official artist on the expedition to Japan. In the funeral cortège of Abraham Lincoln, he was one of the generals who carried the coffin.

My mother, who died in 1945 at the age of eighty-six, could still remember the scene clearly, and had equally vivid recollections of seeing Wagner and Liszt at her father's family home back in Dresden, where she first met Edgar Hanfstaengl, my father. He was one of the most spectacularly handsome men of his age and had been, I fear, the direct cause of the broken engagement between King Ludwig II of Bavaria and his beautiful cousin Sophie Charlotte, Duchess of Bavaria, who later became Duchess of Alençon by her marriage to a grandson of Louis-Philippe.

I do not want to insist unduly on these personal details, but my family background played a determining part in my relations with Hitler. The Hanfstaengls were substantial folk. For three generations they were privy councilors to the Dukes of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and well known connoisseurs and patrons of the arts. The family enterprise my grandfather founded was, and remains to this day, one of the pioneers in the art reproduction field. My Hanfstaengl grandfather's photographs of three German Kaisers, Moltke and Roon, Ibsen, Liszt, Wagner and Clara Schumann set the standards of their time. My father kept open house at the villa he built in the Liebigstrasse, at the

time on the outskirts of Munich. Few names in the artistic world failed to grace the guest book over the years, Lilli Lehmann and Arthur Nikisch, Wilhelm Busch, Sarasate, Richard Strauss, Felix Weingartner and Wilhelm Backhaus. My parents were friends of Fritjof Nansen and Mark Twain. The atmosphere was almost ostentatiously international. My mother had decorated part of the house in shades of green because it was the favourite colour of Queen Victoria, whose signed portrait dedicated to my father on some occasion, looked at us from its heavy silver frame. Conversation was heavily interlarded with French expressions. Guests sat on the *chaise-longue* behind the *paravent*, with closed *rouleaux* and the ladies suffered from *migraine*. The *teint* was treated with *parfum* and friends had a *rendez-vous* for a *tête-à-tête* in the *foyer* of the opera. My family was Bismarckian monarchist, needless to say with a personal aversion to Wilhelm II.

At the same time, there was great enthusiasm for social and technical progress. The Liberal tradition of 1848 was strong. We even had our own bathroom, at a time when the Prince Regent went to the newly renovated Four Seasons Hotel once a week for his scrub. The great argument of capitalism versus socialism already waxed hot and the great prophet of a new relationship between employer and worker was Friedrich Naumann with his national-social ideas. I can remember when I was no older than thirteen becoming a regular reader of his weekly magazine *Die Hilfe* and his advocacy of a social monarchy on a Christian Socialist basis remained my strongest political trait. As I was to learn from bitter experience, it was not the sort of National-Socialism Hitler had in mind.

That was the atmosphere into which I was born in 1887, which these days is at least three worlds away. It also saw the inception of my infant nickname of 'Putzi' which I have had to suffer to my impotent annoyance ever since. At the age of two I caught diphtheria, at a time when serums and child surgery were little trusted. My life was only saved by an old retainer, a peasant woman who fed me untiringly from a spoon, crooning: 'Putzi, eat this now Putzi.' In Bavarian country speech 'Putzi' means little fellow, and although I am now seventy and still six-foot-four the name has stuck.

I had three governesses, of whom my favourite was Bella Farmer, a roses and cream English beauty who came from Hartlepoons and had been found for my father during one of his visits to England by the wife of the great Victorian painter Alma-Tadema. She had gone through a list of applicants for my mother and picked out the prettiest one. Even so the most lasting influence of my boyhood was Sergeant-Major Streit. He was a splendid man, the son of a forester in Kissingen. He had grown his impressive moustachios in the Bavarian Royal Guard and my father employed him on the recommendation of a friend, General von Euler, to put a bit of stuffing into a quartet of sons in danger of getting spoilt by too many artistically-minded adults. He came in every Sunday afternoon to teach us military drill and had us marching up and down the lawn like Frederick the Great's *Lange Kerls*. I believe my unfortunate sister, Erna, was even included in these manœuvres.

Streit used to put on an act of bawling us out like a lot of clumsy recruits and we adored him. He was an imposing figure, and held us spellbound with his stories of military prowess, although when he picked them up I do not know, as I do not think the Bavarian army ever won a battle in the memory of man. It all had a special effect on me, as I was marooned in America from 1911 to 1921, missing the whole of the First World War and was never able to suppress a yearning and an inferiority complex at the thought of the service I had missed, which decimated my generation and killed two of my brothers.

It was decided that my share of the family enterprise would be to take over in due course the branch which my father had set up in the 1880's on Fifth Avenue in New York. The first step was for me to get to know my mother's country, so in 1905 I was sent to Harvard. It was quite a vintage period, and I made friends with such outstanding future figures as T. S. Eliot, Walter Lippman, Hendrik von Loon, Hans von Kaltenborn, Robert Benchley, and John Reed. A near accident also led to

my becoming a welcome young guest at the White House. I was a husky young fellow in those days and was trying to make the crew. We were out training on the Charles River one cold spring morning in 1906 when some fool of a canoeist got into difficulties in the swift current and tipped himself overboard. Everyone else seemed to consider it a joke, but I did not like the look of it, jumped into a boat and rowed to where he was floundering. He was pretty well all in and I had to dive in fully clothed and push him up into the boat, changing out of my soaking things to go out with the crew.

The next day the *Boston Herald and Globe* came out with a great story about 'Hanfstaengl Harvard's Hero' and how the fellow, who apparently was a theological student, would have drowned without me, and so on, the cheapest rubbish. It had my name spelt in some unbelievable fashion, but at least it became known all over the college and that is how I got to know young Theodore Roosevelt, eldest son of the President.

I had acquired something of a reputation at Harvard as a piano player. There was some reason for this, after all. My teachers in Munich had been August Schmid-Lindner and Bernhard Stavenhagen, the last pupil of Liszt, and my big hands gave me a very fair mastery of the Romantic school. However, they were chiefly in demand for spirited renderings of the stirring American football marches. I even composed one myself, called *Falarah*, based on an old German tune. The Harvard football team used to take me along to pep them up on the piano before their games. President Theodore Roosevelt, a fellow extrovert, had heard of my prowess through his son and invited me to Washington in the winter of 1908. I was to see him again frequently in later years, but my chief memory of this occasion, a stag party in the small hours in the White House basement, is of breaking seven bass strings on his magnificent Steinway Grand.

I returned to Germany from Harvard in 1909 for a year's military service in the Royal Bavarian Foot Guards. We might as well have been back in the eighteenth century for all the military instruction we got. We shouldered arms, trooped the colour, stood guard outside the royal palace, and my only experience of anything resembling hostilities was when some Harvard friends, led by Hamilton Fish, later the isolationist U.S. Congressman, saw me standing sentry and threatened to knock off my *Pickelhaube* and use it for a football game in front of the Feldherrnhalle. However, when I threatened to call out the guard they left me in peace. Then, after another year of study in Grenoble, Vienna, and Rome, I returned to the States and took over the Hanfstaengl branch on Fifth Avenue.

I took most of my meals at the Harvard Club, where I made friends with the young Franklin D. Roosevelt, at that time a rising New York State Senator, and received several invitations to visit his cousin Teddy, the former President, who had retired to his estate at Sagamore Hill. He gave me a boisterous welcome and two pieces of advice which were by no means without influence on my way of thinking. "Well, Hanfstaengl," he said, "how did your military service go? I bet it did you no harm. I saw something of your army at Doeberitz as the Kaiser's guest, and discipline like that never hurt anybody. No nation can degenerate which maintains those standards." I must say I found these surprising words, as Wilhelm II was not exactly making Germany popular at the time, but it was an additional prop to the idealized picture of the army inculcated by Sergeant-Major Streit. Later we got to talking about art, literature, and politics, and the ex-President came out with the phrase which has stuck with me ever since: "Hanfstaengl, your business is to pick out the best pictures, but remember that in politics the choice is that of the lesser evil."

The Hanfstaengl representation was a delightful combination of business and pleasure. The famous names who visited me were legion: Pierpont Morgan, Toscanini, Henry Ford, Caruso, Santos Dumont, Charlie Chaplin, Paderewski, and the daughter of President Wilson. When war broke out, I cannot say that I was surprised. Years before, an old Harvard friend of mine from New Orleans named Freddie Moore, who had lived much of his life in Constantinople, had told me: "Mind you, Hanfy, the next war

will not start on the Franco-German frontier but in the Balkans”, and now, with the shots at Sarajevo his prophecy had come true.

There was little doubt where American sympathies would fall in the long run, but I tried to keep the German flag flying as best I could. I used to get the bands from the German ships blockaded in New York harbour to come and play for our colony in the Hanfstaengl establishment. When a hostile crowd gathered as they were playing the *Wacht am Rhein*, I switched them quickly to the *Blau Danube*. But in a population which came to regard dachshund dogs as fifth columnists this was only a short-term evasive action. I had my shop-windows stove in once and thereafter found discretion the better part of valour. When America finally joined the Allied side I was fortunate in having Senator Elihu Root, who had been Theodore Roosevelt’s Secretary of State, as my lawyer. In exchange for my promise to indulge in no anti-American activities, I was not interned. “I would blow you all up if I could, but one measly little bridge is not enough to change the fortunes of war,” I told him. And so they let me be, although my freedom of movement was eventually restricted to Central Park. This did not prevent the Custodian of Enemy Property from taking over the assets of the Hanfstaengl firm in the final months of the war. They were worth half a million dollars and were sold at auction for about \$8,000. However, immediately after the Armistice, I was permitted to set up a little business of my own which I called The Academy Art Shop, just opposite Carnegie Hall, and this kept me going for the next three years.

News from Germany was sparse. I heard that the Bolsheviks had seized power in Munich, but at that time the word did not have the meaning it has today, and I rather had the impression that it was some form of popular resistance movement against the victors and was by no means displeased. I was detained in the States as a result of the dissolution of our diplomatic representation and in 1920 I was married. My wife’s name was Helene Niemeyer, and she was the only daughter of a German American business man who had emigrated from Bremen. The following year our son Egon was born. I really felt it was time to return home, and, after making arrangements to sell out to my partner, an apostle-like character named Friedrich Denks, the son of a Lutheran minister, we embarked in June 1921 on the *S.S. America* for Bremen. I had been away from Germany for ten years, and was travelling on an imposing document issued by the Swiss Consul in New York as the representative of German interests. It was not to be very long before it saved Adolf Hitler’s life.

I found a Germany riven by faction and near destitution. The city workers, followers of the Centre Party and capitalists supported the new republic, the Junkers, upper middle class and peasants yearned for the old monarchy. Even the bracing, malt-laden air of Munich could not compensate for the unpainted look of the houses and the peeling façade of the great Court theatre. My family was at the station to meet us, reduced to my mother, Erna, and my eldest brother, Edgar, and the first difficulty which greeted us at the Four Seasons Hotel was to find milk for little Egon. It was rationed and there was none to be had, except by ordering wild quantities of coffee to qualify for the minute jugs of cream which accompanied each pot. Fortunately, my mother, true to her Connecticut past, had bought a small farm near Uffing on the Staffel Lake at the foot of the Alps, so that unlike most Germans we were not short of food. Even so, Mother was shamefully cheated by the farm servants, who took advantage of the rocketing prices of inflation to sell the produce on the black market and pocket the difference.

Almost the first political event which greeted my return was the murder of Matthias Erzberger who had signed the 1918 Armistice, by a couple of young Right Wing radicals. Counter-threats, reports of separatism, Putschism, and terrorism filled the columns of the newspapers. The tone of the press increased daily in violence and abuse. It became evident to me that Germany, politically speaking, was a madhouse, with a thousand opinions and no saving idea. I was by habit of thought

Conservative, or at least a monarchist, looking back to the happier days of Ludwig II and Richard Wagner. Like most expatriates, the clock had stopped for me at the point where I left Germany and felt that everything which was old and reminded me of the old days was good and the new things which did not fit into that conception were bad. I felt resentful at the contempt shown to the Army and distressed at the poverty of the honest artisan. I had been spared so much of the misery of the previous decade and wanted in a confused way to help, but could find no outlet.

To get my bearings I decided to study German history. We rented an apartment which belonged to the stepdaughter of the painter Franz von Stuck at No. 1 Gentzstrasse in Schwabing, the Montparnasse of Munich, and I got down to my books in the hope that previous events might provide some clue to the dilemma of the times. I discovered in the person of the American loyalist, Benjamin Thompson Count Rumford, the ideal figure round which to group my researches. In the last decade of the eighteenth century he had reorganized the administration and public life of Bavaria for the Elector Karl Theodor. I found so many apt parallels in his work of social reform that I decided to write a book about him.

One of the people to whom I talked of my plan was Rudolf Kommer, a brilliant Austrian writer I had known in New York. He immediately saw in the project a superb idea for a film, and during most of the summer of 1922 I worked with him on the script at a villa in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. We finally ended up with something that had the dimensions of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, so it is hardly surprising that the film was never made. However, there was much good intellectual company to compensate, including many of his Jewish friends like Max Pallenberg, the well-known actor, and his even more famous wife, Fritzi Massary. In their cynical disparagement of the old regime we stood poles apart politically, but we became firm friends.

One prophecy of Kommer's remained burned in my memory over the years. I met him walking on the Partnachklamm the day the papers carried the news of another political assassination, that of the Jewish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Walter Rathenau. It happened at a time when the anti-Semitic campaign in Germany was assuming serious proportions and there had recently been a rash of red swastikas daubed on walls and rocks round Garmisch with insulting anti-Jewish inscriptions.

"That is a dirty business your monarchist friends have organized," Kommer said. (He said monarchist, as the term National-Socialist was hardly known yet.) "This race romanticism of theirs will get them nowhere. There is only one danger. If any political party emerges with an anti-Semitic programme directed by Jewish or half-Jewish fanatics we shall have to watch out. They would be the only people who could put it over." How right he was time was to show.

* * *

It is a far cry from Harvard to Hitler, but in my case the connexion is direct. In 1908 I took part in a show called *Fate Fakirs* at the Hasty Pudding Club in which I was dressed up in arch-student fashion as a Dutch girl called Gretchen Spootsfeiffer. Another member of the cast was Warren Robbins. By 1922 he had become a senior official in the American Embassy in Berlin, at which time I had been living back in Munich for a year. I had been up to see him not long previously and during the second week of November received a telephone call from him:

"Listen, Hanfy," he said. "What are you Bavarians up to?" I had to tell him that in all conscience I did not know. The whole country was a hotbed of political agitation in those troubled post-war years and I had not really been trying to keep the thread of events in my head. "Well, we are sending our young military attaché, Captain Truman-Smith, down to have a look round," Robbins went on. "Look after him and introduce him to a few people, will you?"

- **[click Outcasts: A Love Story](#)**
- [read online The Art of the Renaissance](#)
- [click The Tiger's Wife pdf, azw \(kindle\)](#)
- [Low Carb High Quality Diet: Food for a Thinner, Healthier Life for free](#)
- [download Twopence To Cross The Mersey book](#)

- <http://twilightblogs.com/library/A-Soldier-of-the-Great-War.pdf>
- <http://deltaphenomics.nl/?library/Film--A-Very-Short-Introduction--Very-Short-Introductions-.pdf>
- <http://sidenoter.com/?ebooks/Blood-Brothers--A-Short-Story-Exclusive--The-Order-of-The-Sanguines--Book-1-5-.pdf>
- <http://crackingscience.org/?library/Low-Carb-High-Quality-Diet--Food-for-a-Thinner--Healthier-Life.pdf>
- <http://aircon.servicessingaporecompany.com/?lib/The-Astronomy-Revolution--400-Years-of-Exploring-the-Cosmos.pdf>