

## *Chapter 8*

October 1945

**M**y master sergeant comes into my office on the second day of my assignment at the Dachau concentration camp. He is tall, with a fine appearance, and is competent in seeing to the performance of my staff. He introduces himself, then says, “Did you know we have new additions to our staff of translators? They were recorders for Hitler.”

“No, I didn’t. How did they get here?”

“They came from Berchtesgaden, where Hitler sent them. They speak good English,” the sergeant says, standing at my desk.

“Why are they here?”

“They came here a couple of days ago with a letter from the U.S. Counterintelligence Corps at Berchtesgaden. Here it is.” He takes a letter from his shirt pocket and gives it to me.

“Thanks.”

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The letter states briefly that the recorders voluntarily surrendered to the American army on May 5, 1945. They were cleared as non-Nazis but chose to stay at Berchtesgaden and translate documents. Finishing with that work, they were told not to try to go to their families in Berlin (because of the Russian occupation) but to go to Dachau, where their talents could be put to good use.

“This is very interesting,” I say. “They could be useful on the staff. They are here in this building?”

“Yes.”

“I would like to talk with them. Could you bring in a few chairs and ask them to come here?”

“Certainly.” He brings the extra chairs, then leaves.

In a few minutes, the recorders arrive.

“How do you do, gentlemen? I am the chief prosecutor here. Please have a seat. How is everything?”

“We are fine,” they say, almost in unison. They sit down, not knowing what to expect.

“I understand you were recorders at Hitler’s military-situation conferences.”

“Yes, we were.”

The recorders introduce themselves as Ludwig Krieger, age 58; Ewald Reynitz, 44; Karl Thoet, 39; Hans Jonuschat, 44; and Heinz Buchholz, 39.

“You may be of special help, as the interviewing lieutenants on the staff will see top German officers. Do you have any trouble with that?” I ask.

“No. We would be glad to help. We have just discovered the horrible treatment of prisoners here. This is a situation we knew nothing



*Hitler in conference with Field Marshal (Fritz) Erich von Manstein at his right and Gen. Kurt Zeitzler at his left. Seated is recorder Hans Jonuschat. The back of the photo reads in German and appears to be in Jonuschat's tidy hand.*

about before we came here,” says Krieger. He chose the staff for Hitler from the Stenographic Office of the Reichstag (German parliament).

I am interested in Hitler's reactions to the first things the Allies encountered in Normandy, France, and so we begin our interviews:

“How did Hitler react to the Allied invasion by the Americans, British, and Canadians on June 6, 1944?” I ask.

“[Erwin] Rommel had complained to Der Fuehrer that building steel and concrete fortifications along the French coast would be inadequate. Besides there would be a shortage of men and firepower. The Allies had command of the air and 75 percent of the German forces, including tanks and planes, on the Russian front.” Jonuschat leans forward in his chair.

“Der Fuehrer made only one comment when the Allied invasion was successful,” he recalls. “Rommel is always complaining of shortages, just as he did in Africa.’ He said no more.”

“Why do you always refer to him as *Der Fuehrer*?”

“We were all required to use that term, and I guess it is just a matter of habit.”

“What were Hitler’s reactions to the July 20 bombing attempt on his life and the breakthrough at Saint Lô?”

Heinz Buchholz says he made a memo for the U.S. Counterintelligence Corps at Berchtesgaden, on July 14, 1945 (almost a year later) regarding the attempt on Hitler’s life. Of average height and rather thin, Buchholz has a long face and a short haircut. But his appearance belies his accomplishments. He has been a lawyer since 1929. Finding that the law paid poorly, he became a verbatim recorder for the Prussian Diet, for Field Marshal Erhard Milch’s headquarters, for the German Reichstag, and finally for Hitler’s headquarters in 1942. He has lived an arduous life and is a competent recorder. He smiles frequently, showing all his teeth as he tells me of the bombing. I notice his upper left incisor is missing.

“When the bombing took place on July 20, 1944, Hitler immediately called for a news blackout. The bomb had been planted at the conference by Lt. Col. Count [Claus Schenk Graf] von Stauffenberg, who was introduced by Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, one of Hitler’s inner circle, as the man working on new activations for the replacement army in Berlin. If you don’t mind, I’ll go through the whole story.”

“Certainly.”

“The bombing was at Hitler’s headquarters, called *Wolfsschanze* [Wolf’s Lair], a compound of bunkers and barracks in a forest about three-and-a-half miles east of Rastenburg in East Prussia. The conference was not in the bunker but in a room above ground with win-

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dows. Near the middle was a large map table supported by two thick, massive table plates instead of legs.

“Stauffenberg’s left lower arm had been amputated from a wound in the African campaign. He wore a patch over his right eye. He was carrying a brief case, which was not unusual, as those who attended these conferences usually had maps and papers.

First, his background:

Note for Capt. HANSEN

HEINZ BUCHHOLZ

My home-address is: BERLIN-FRIEDENAU, Bismestr. 8 III

I am 39 years old (born on 14 March 1906 in Berlin).

I attended the Elementary school from 1912 till 1915, the Public school from 1915 till 1924. From 1924 to 1929, I studied for the laws at Berlin University. Besides that, I was employed as verbatim reporter at the Prussian Diet, starting 1 September 1925.

After Hitler took over, I was transferred to the stenographers office of the German REICHSTAG. There I was employed till 1945 as Reichstagsstenograph, i.e. an official of senior civil service, with the title "Regierungsrat".

Since October 1939, I was a member of the Wehrmacht (air force, air base troops), at last as Sgt. on the Eastern front. In August 1942, I was ordered to Field Marshal MILCH's headquarters in Berlin as verbatim reporter.

In December 1942, I was detached to the stenographic service in the FÜHRER's headquarters, although I was not a member of the Party or SS; but there were no other stenographers who could do this difficult work of noting down the military discussions verbatim and accurately.

( I was present at the briefing on 20 July 1944 when an attempt on HITLER's life was made. I refer to the special report I gave about this attempt. )

Dachau, 13 Dec 1945

*Heinz Buchholz*

“He set the briefcase on the floor, leaning it against the solid wooden plate where Hitler stood, near the middle of the map table. Stauffenberg was called by telephone, and he left the room with the remark that he had to go to the office to take the call. We learned later that the call was prearranged.

“One of the generals near the briefcase stumbled into it and moved it to the other side of the plate. Soon the briefcase exploded. At that moment, Hitler was looking at a map on the table, and he leaned over it, supported by his right arm. I remember the blast as a thundering roar, with a bright yellow flame and thick smoke. Glass and wood splinters flew through the air. The large table collapsed. I heard a voice calling, ‘Wo [where] ist Der Fuehrer?’

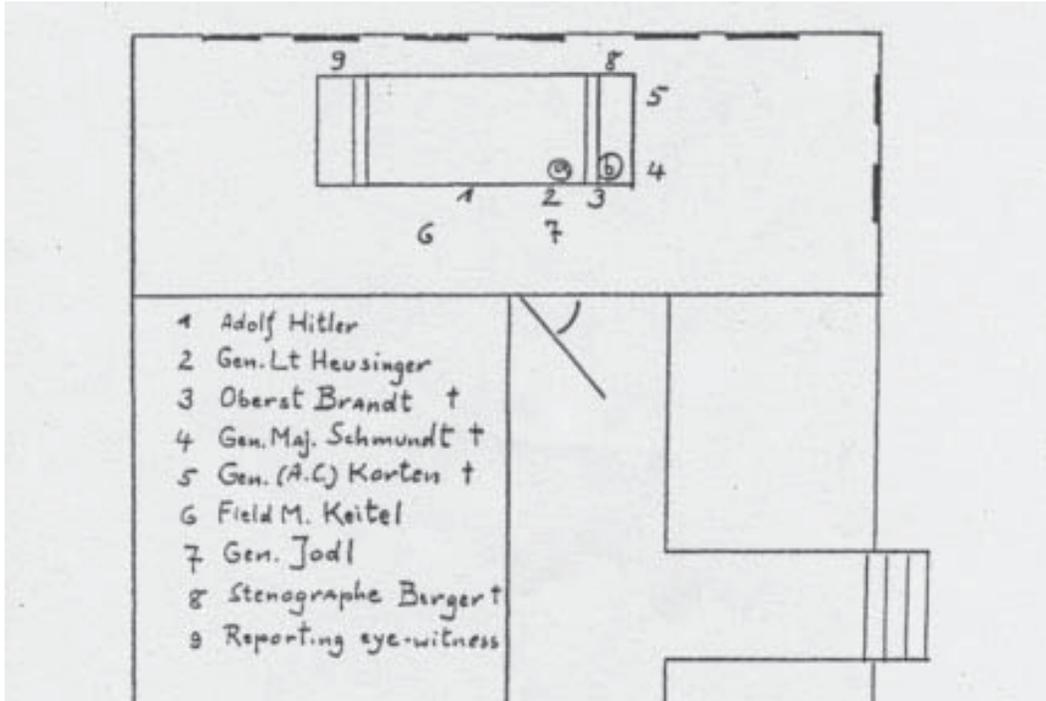
“I saw Hitler, supported by a general and a valet, walking from the barrack to his bunker quarters, approximately 70 meters away.

“There were 23 persons in the room with Hitler. Four died: a colonel, two generals, and my colleague, Heinrich Berger. Twelve were seriously injured and seven slightly injured, including me.

“Hitler suffered a strong shock of the right lower arm, some lighter burns and injuries on the right leg, and slight scratches of the skin from the splinters. Besides that, both eardrums were injured. One became perforated, so his hearing ability was reduced for a long period after the attempt. This became especially obvious during telephone conversations.

“I have a sketch of the room that I’ll give you later. It shows locations of the windows, door, and the wooden plates of the table. Position (b) shows that all who died from the explosion were on the open end of the wooden plate, while Hitler stood in the middle, between plates, almost two yards away. I can’t remember where everyone

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*Buchholz's sketch of room where Stauffenberg made an attempt on Hitler's life.*

stood, only the nine shown on my sketch. Crosses mark the positions of the four who died.” Buchholz ends his narration.

Reynitz continues: “Hitler assigned his favorite general, Kurt Zeitzler, now suspect, away from headquarters to an obscure post. He was sure of Field Marshal Rommel’s part in the bombing and ordered two generals to see that Rommel died. Rommel was at the time at a nursing home, recovering from wounds he received in a strafing of his vehicle. The generals were told to give him a cyanide capsule or shoot him on the spot if he didn’t take it. He took the capsule.”

“That is a good bit of history. You certainly have a wonderful memory. Did Hitler make changes in chief commanders?” I ask.

“Hitler named Goering the director of mobilization and Himmler the director of the home front. They were to increase the number of replacements for units at the front lines. The inner-circle people were

to stay at headquarters. They were Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the high command; Gen. Alfred Jodl, chief of operations staff; and Adm. Karl Doenitz, commander of the navy. Herman Goering remained as chief of the air force.”

“What happened next?” I address Reynitz again. He seems to have a good command of the facts.

“On the afternoon of the bombing Hitler had an appointment with Benito Mussolini, dictator of Italy, at Hitler’s headquarters, which he kept. Mussolini expressed surprise at the lack of security. Hitler said, ‘I think the bombing is a good omen. I am still living, and my right hand has quit shaking.’” Reynitz’s answer surprises me.

“What did Hitler say about the breakthrough at Saint Lô?” I ask Buchholz.

“He said, ‘It’s all Rommel’s fault.’ That’s all he said in spite of the fact that he himself had sole command of the war.”

“Thank you, gentlemen,” I say. “You have been quite helpful, and I now understand a little more of Hitler . . . I will see you soon.”

“It was a pleasure. We will be happy to see you anytime,” says Krieger.

“Auf Wiedersehen.”

They leave with smiles on their faces.

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The recorders have little but the clothes they wear. They are housed in the barracks with other translators, and they eat in the staff’s restaurant. I am able to improve their living conditions by putting them in private rooms, raising their translator’s pay, and arranging for them to eat in the witness restaurant. Then I get them decent clothing—underwear, socks, and shirts—in Munich. New suits are made for them

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by Jacobs, formerly the private tailor for Reichminister Heinrich Himmler, a member of Hitler's inner circle. They can't seem to do enough for me in return, and I continue to invite the recorders to my living quarters or office on evenings and weekends. I want to learn all I can about Hitler.



*Entrance to the main courtroom at Dachau concentration camp.*



*The court, showing reporters (left) and the defense table (right).*