



# HITLER'S LAST DAYS

THE DEATH OF THE NAZI REGIME AND THE WORLD'S MOST NOTORIOUS DICTATOR

**BILL O'REILLY**

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## BILL O'REILLY



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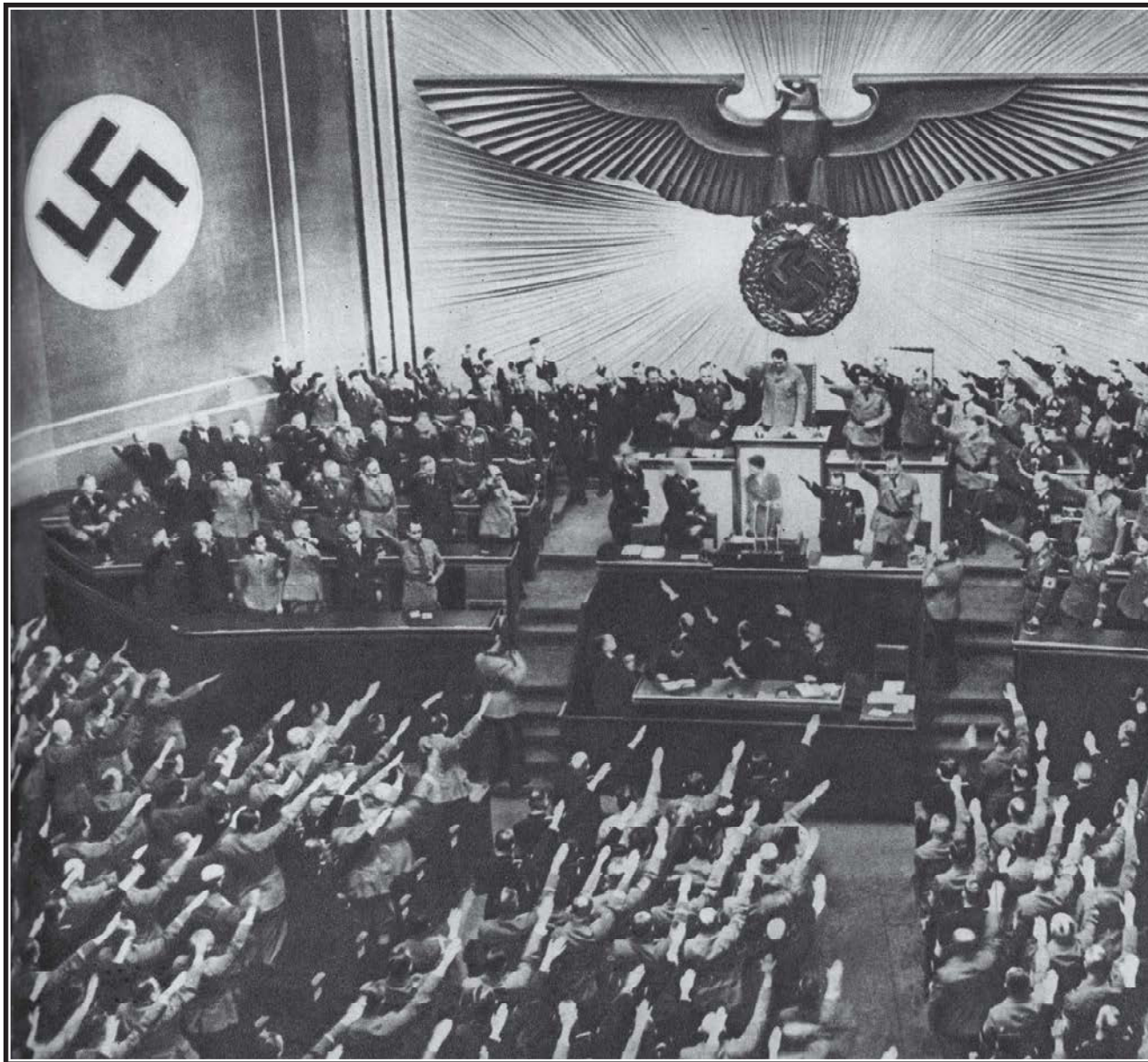
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**I do not see why man should not be  
just as cruel as nature.**

**—ADOLF HITLER**





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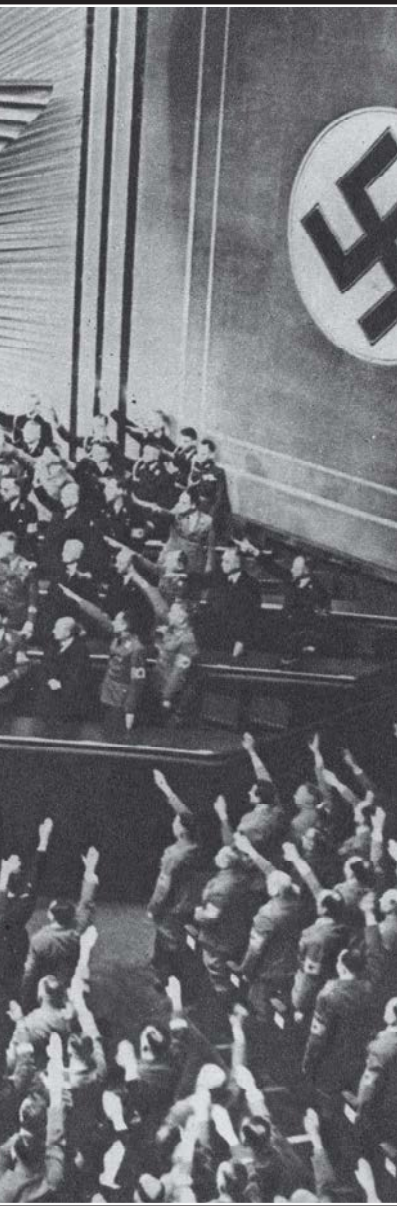
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## Map Legend

### Allied



Advance



Highlighted movement



Retreat



Infantry



U.S./U.K.

Armor/  
mechanized\*



U.S.S.R.

### Axis



### Military features



Front line



Defensive position



West Wall



Clash/event

Battery

Machine-gun  
emplacement



Barbwire

\*On some maps, only tank symbols are used. In these cases, tanks represent armies or army groups that also include infantry.

White symbols are used periodically to highlight Allied units and their movements.

### Physical features



Major roads



Minor roads



Railroads



Rivers



Terrain



Forest



City/town with  
urban area

### Combatant nationalities



United States



United Kingdom



Canada



France



U.S.S.R.



Germany



## A NOTE TO READERS

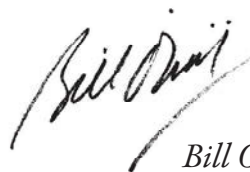
■ THINK IT FAIR TO SAY that people who make history are some of the boldest people to have ever walked the earth. Researching and writing about them can be sobering, time consuming, and full of discovery.

Working on this book was a journey. It began in the German town of Heidelberg, with a visit to the hospital room at Nachrichten Kaserne where General George S. Patton died. It also included many conversations with the personal staff and others close to Adolf Hitler. Some of this was a straightforward dig into various archives, museums, and official U.S. Army battlefield histories. But it didn't just involve reading published works. It involved speaking and corresponding with descendants of those who were actually there like Hitler's secretary. Hitler's former clerks verified his last days with vivid portrayals in German. I talked with the grandchildren and learned about his crazy hour-by-hour situation and the extreme measures he took to stay alert, like

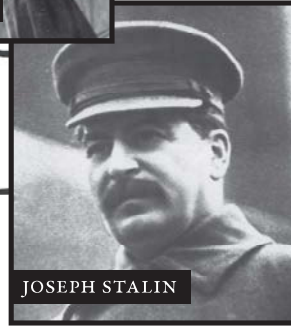
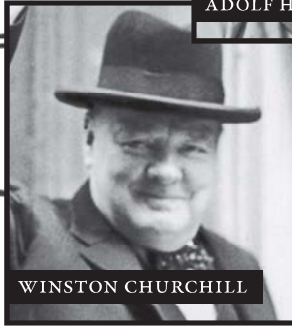
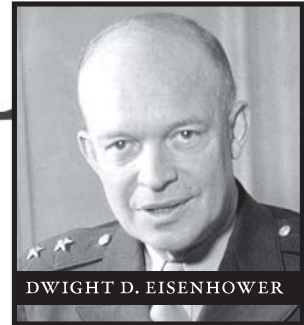
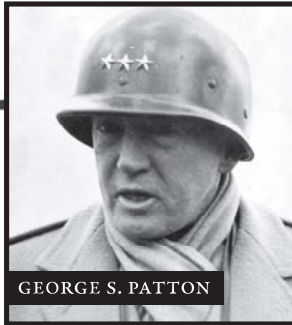
cocaine eyedrops. The search for information led to local historians, to Luxembourg, and to Germany—nothing was left unexplored.

Adolf Hitler is modern history's best-known evil ruler and murderer, so to step inside his world is frightening, to say the least. From his early days as chancellor of Germany to his last days as Führer before his suicide, Hitler's life—and death—were filled with senseless violence. But this is not just a story about the world's most notorious dictator. It's a story about the last six months of World War II, and the chaos and brutality that characterized this period of history. It is a story about the people who fought—the flesh-and-blood men and women who laid down their lives in this great tragedy. And it's about the military leaders who strategized and maneuvered to bring the war to a close. In this book, they aren't just famous people to study; they are human beings.

*Hitler's Last Days* is ultimately a story about a struggle for power. And with that, I put you right in the bunker.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bill O'Reilly". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

*Bill O'Reilly*  
*New York*



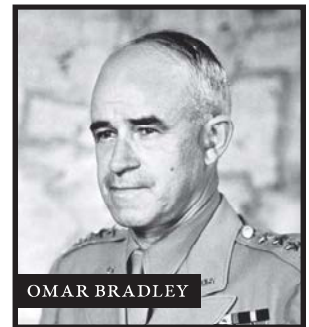
## KEY PLAYERS

### UNITED STATES

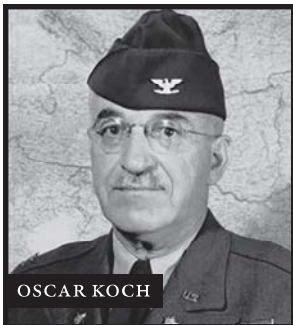
**Creighton Abrams:** Lieutenant colonel, commander of U.S. Thirty-Seventh Tank Battalion, Fourth Armored Division

**Charles Boggess:** First lieutenant, U.S. Thirty-Seventh Tank Battalion

**Omar Bradley:** Lieutenant general, commander of U.S. Twelfth Army Group, which includes Third Army







**Charles Codman:** Colonel, General Patton's aide-de-camp

**Jacob Devers:** Lieutenant general, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army Group

**Benjamin Dickson:** Colonel, U.S. First Army intelligence chief (G-2)

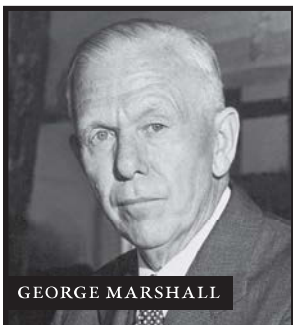
**Dwight D. Eisenhower:** General, supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe

**Hugh Gaffey:** Major general, commander of U.S. Fourth Armored Division, Third Army

**Paul Harkins:** Colonel, General Patton's deputy chief of staff

**Joseph Harper:** Colonel, commander of U.S. 327th Glider Infantry Regiment

**Courtney Hodges:** Lieutenant general, commander of U.S. First Army



**Harry Kinnard:** Lieutenant colonel, U.S. 101st Airborne Division operations officer

**Oscar Koch:** Colonel, U.S. Third Army intelligence chief (G-2)

**George Marshall:** General, chief of staff of the U.S. Army

**Anthony McAuliffe:** Brigadier general, acting commander of U.S. 101st Airborne Division

**Troy Middleton:** Lieutenant general, commander of U.S. Eighth Corps, Third Army



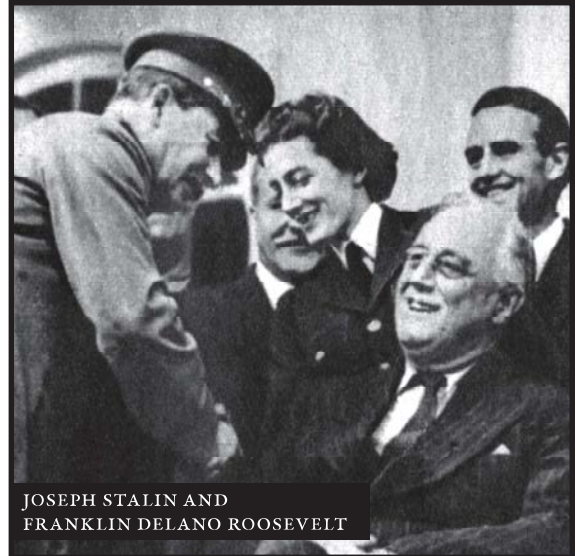
**John Mims:** Sergeant, General Patton's driver

**Ned Moore:** Lieutenant colonel, General McAuliffe's chief of staff

**Beatrice Patton:** George Patton's wife

**George S. Patton:** General, commander of U.S. Third Army

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt:** President of the United States of America



## BRITAIN

**Winston Churchill:** Prime minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

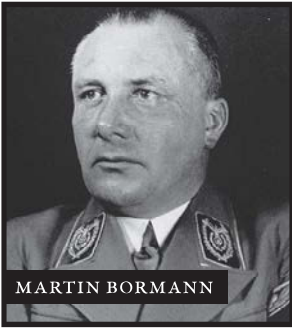
**Bernard Montgomery:** British field marshal, commander of Twenty-First Army Group, which included British and Canadian forces

**Kenneth Strong:** British major general, General Eisenhower's intelligence chief (G-2)



## RUSSIA

**Joseph Stalin:** Premier of the Soviet Union



## GERMANY

**Martin Bormann:** Head of Nazi Party  
Chancellery

**Eva Braun:** Hitler's mistress, then wife

**Joseph Goebbels:** Reich minister of propa-  
ganda

**Heinrich Himmler:** Reichsführer of the SS

**Adolf Hitler:** Führer of Germany and leader of the Nazi Party

**Traudl Junge:** one of Hitler's secretaries

**Wilhelm Keitel:** Field marshal, Hitler's commander of the  
armed forces

**Heinrich Lüttwitz:** General, commander of German panzer  
troops surrounding Bastogne

**Theodor Morell:** Hitler's personal doctor

**Joachim Peiper:** German SS commander, First SS Panzer Divi-  
sion

**Erwin Rommel:** German field marshal

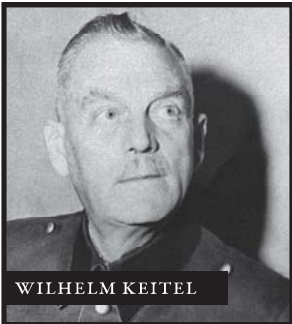
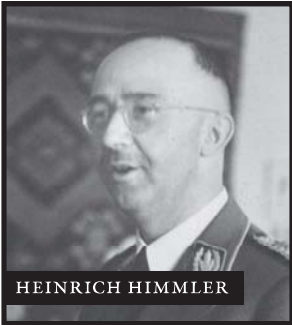
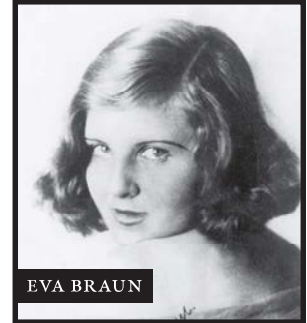
**Christa Schroeder:** one of Hitler's secretaries

**Otto Skorzeny:** German SS officer

**Albert Speer:** Hitler's minister of armaments

**Gerd von Rundstedt:** German field marshal, west-  
ern front

**Walther Wenck:** General, German Twelfth Army



**PART ONE**



# **THE WOLF'S LAIR**







## CHAPTER 1

# THE WOLF'S LAIR

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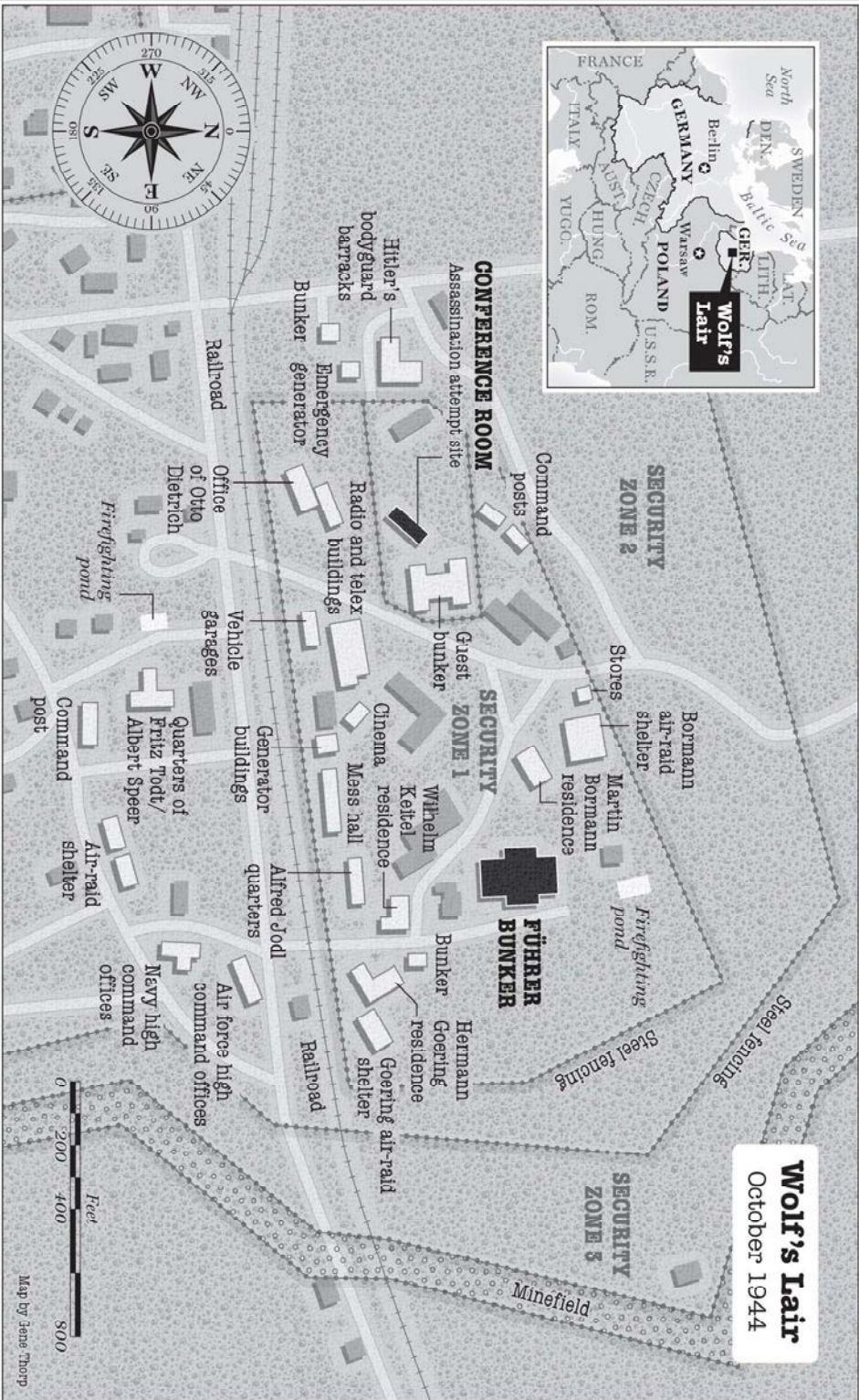
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EAST PRUSSIA ✠ OCTOBER 21, 1944 ✠ 9:30 A.M.

**I**N 190 DAYS THE WOLF will be dead.

Today he limps through the woods. The autumn air is chill and damp. As he does each morning at just about this time, Adolf Hitler, Führer of Germany and leader of the Nazi Party, emerges from the artificial light of his concrete bunker into the morning sun. He holds his German shepherd, Blondi, on a short leash for their daily walk through the thick birch forest. A fussy man of modest height and weight who is prone to emotional outbursts, Hitler wears his dark brown hair parted on the right and keeps his mustache carefully combed and trimmed. When Hitler was a young soldier, he preferred a long mustache and would curl the ends, but in World War I that style interfered with the seal on the

*Adolf Hitler, early 1944.* [Mary Evans Picture Library]



Map legend is on page viii.

gas mask he was required to wear. He cut off the ends, leaving only the center patch—called a toothbrush mustache.

Hitler spends more time at the Wolf's Lair, his extensive headquarters in the far eastern outpost of Germany called East Prussia, than in Berlin—some eight hundred days in the last three years. The Führer is fond of saying that his military planners chose the “most marshy, mosquito-ridden, and climatically unpleasant place possible” for this hidden headquarters when they scouted its location in 1940—a fact that is quite real on humid summer days. The air is so heavy and thick with clouds of mosquitoes that Hitler prefers to remain in the cool confines of his bunker all day long.

But autumn is different. The forests of East Prussia have a charm all their own this time of year, and Hitler needs no convincing to venture outside for his daily walk. These long morning strolls are a vital part of the Führer's day, offering him a



*Hitler plays with his German shepherd, Blondi, at one of his mountain homes.*

[Mary Evans Picture Library]

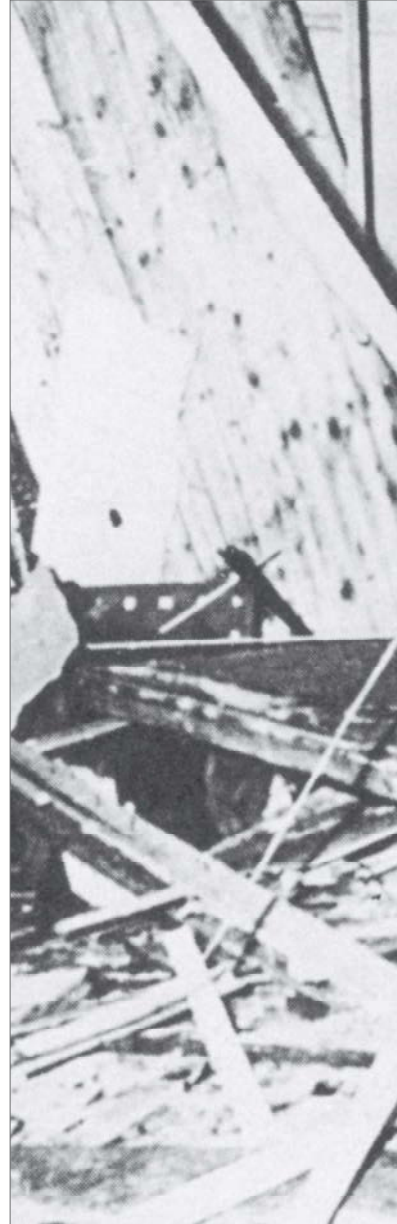


chance to compose his thoughts before long afternoons of war strategizing and policy meetings. Sometimes he amuses himself by teaching Blondi tricks, such as climbing a ladder or balancing on a narrow pole.

The journey through the dictator's six hundred-acre wooded hideaway takes Hitler and Blondi past concrete bunkers, personal residences, soldiers' barracks, a power plant, and even the demolished conference room where just three months ago Hitler was almost killed by an assassin's bomb. But despite all these visible reminders that the Wolf's Lair is a military headquarters, and despite the fact that his country is on the verge of losing the greatest war the world has ever known, the fifty-five-year-old Nazi dictator, who likes the nickname Wolf, strolls with an outward air of contentment, utterly lost in thought.

But Hitler is not tranquil. His right eardrum was ruptured by the blast of the assassin's bomb and has only recently stopped bleeding. That same blast hurled him to a concrete floor, bruising his buttocks "as blue as a baboon's behind"

*Hitler examines the damage done in the plot to assassinate him. The man on the left is Benito Mussolini, Italy's prime minister and Hitler's strongest ally.* [Mary Evans Picture Library]





and filling his legs with wooden splinters as it ripped his black uniform pants to shreds.

However, the failed assassination plot, engineered by members of the German military, did not cause all of Hitler's health issues. His hands and left leg have long trembled from anxiety. He is prone to dizziness, high blood pressure, and stomach cramps. The skin beneath his uniform is the whitest white because he does not spend time in the sun. And his energy is often so low that Theodor Morell, his longtime personal doctor, makes it a practice to inject Hitler each day with the stimulant methamphetamine. The

doctor also places drops containing cocaine in each of the Führer's dark blue eyes in order to give the dictator a daily rush of euphoria.

Adolf Hitler does not seem to have been a sickly child, although the reality and the myths of that childhood are vastly different. While he told people that he had struggled up from poverty, in fact he was born into a middle-class household and never expected that he would have to work for a living



*Hitler in 1899, about age ten.* [Mary Evans Picture Library]

but would live on his family's savings. While he had dreams of being a famous architectural artist, he had not done well enough in school to get into the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. This man, who would later command thousands with horrible charisma, was shy and usually silent as a child.

And so the reality and the myths of the current situation reflect this lifelong dichotomy. Despite recent German setbacks on the battlefield, the Wolf still has hope that his plans for global domination will be realized. His greatest goal is the eradication of the Jewish people, with whom he is obsessed. "This war can end two ways," he said in January 1942, addressing a mass rally at the Berlin Sportpalast. "Either the extermination of the Aryan [term used by the Nazis to mean non-Jewish Caucasians with Nordic features] people or the disappearance of Jewry from Europe."

Hitler fancies himself a military strategist, despite no formal training in field tactics. He takes full credit for the great U.S. General George S. Patton's recent defeat at Fort Driant in occupied France, in a long close-range battle that caused Patton to retreat south to the town of Nancy to regroup his vast Third Army. Hitler is cheered by the news that Nazi scientists are very close to developing a bomb with nuclear capacity, a weapon that would allow him to wipe his enemies off the face of the earth. In addition, he is quite sure that the audacious surprise attack he will unveil to his top commanders in a few short hours will push the Allied armies back across France and will allow Germany to regain control of Europe.

And most of all, Adolf Hitler is finally rid of those top



generals who have long despised him. SS death squads hunted down each of the men who took part in the July 20 assassination plot. Some were shot immediately, which infuriated Hitler because such a death was far too quick. So on his orders, the others were hanged. A cameraman filmed the events for Hitler's enjoyment.

Among those accused of treason was Hitler's favorite general, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. Just seven days ago, his house was surrounded by SS soldiers. Although he did not take an active part, Rommel knew of the plot to assassinate Hitler but did not warn him. This made him as guilty as the man who concealed the bomb in a briefcase and carried it into Hitler's conference room. Rommel kept silent because he had grave doubts about Hitler's ability to lead the war effort and favored suing for peace with the Allies rather than continuing a conflict that was destroying all of Germany. Because of his extraordinary service to the Third Reich, Rommel was given discretionary treatment. He was offered the option of swallowing a cyanide pill rather than going through a public trial.

The SS troopers drove Rommel away from his home, stopped in a quiet forest, surrounded the car, and handed him the pill. Fifteen minutes later, the general whom the Allied leaders—Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, U.S. General George Patton, and U.S.

*German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in 1942.* [Mary Evans Picture Library]



General Omar Bradley—respected for his intelligence and military trade craft and considered their true opponent is dead.

The Wolf could have waited until after his new offensive plan was completed to pass judgment on his favorite field marshal. From a tactical perspective, it would have been the smart thing to do. But Adolf Hitler needed his revenge. Nothing—not even winning the war—mattered more.

Hitler and Blondi finish their walk and reenter the massive concrete fortress that serves as his home away from Berlin. It is almost time for lunch—and the unveiling of his brilliant new campaign.

Or, as it will soon become known around the world: the Battle of the Bulge.