LAST LETTERS FROM HITLER'S AIR RAID SHELTER

Introduction,

Account of the Hevel, Bormann and Eva Braun letters

English and German Texts of Goebbels's Letter

English and German Texts of Frau Goebbels's Letter

Section I

INTRODUCTION

1. When Hanna Reitsch together with Ritter von Grein, Goering's successor as head of the Luftwaffe, left Hitler's Berlin air raid shelter in the early morning of the 30th of April 1945, (see Interrogation Summary No.1) Reitsch was given letters to take out by various of the occupants who were to remain in the shelter to die with Hitler.

2. These were letters by Goebbels and his wife to their son; one from Eva Braun to her sister, wife of SS Obergruppenfuehrer Pegolch, liaison officer between Himler and Hitler; one from Hevel, Ribbentrop's representative on Hitler's staff, to the Foreign Office Headquarters in Fuschl, near Salzburg; and one from Martin Bormann to the Reich Chancellory Offices which had just evacuated to Berchtesgaden. The fact that she was given these letters to deliver was developed during interrogation, but the fact that two letters (from Goebbels and his wife) were still in her possession was discovered quite accidentally, whereupon she admitted that she and von Grein had destroyed the others.

3. Her reasons for destroying them she gives willingly. Hevel's and Bormann's letters were simply official communications. As the collapse occurred before they could be delivered, she and von Grein considered them to be of no further value (see description of contents, paragraphs 4 and 5 below). The Eva Braun letter was destroyed because she and von Grein both felt that the text was so gloriously theatrical and in such poor adolescent taste that only odious reactions would result should the letter ever fall into German hands. Reitsch remarks that she and von Grein were of the opinion that possible German readers might eulogize Braun as a Nazi Martyr and not be able to read between the lines that this is exactly what Braun intended. Von Grein's remark after he had read the letter was, "It sounds just as childish and obvious as she looks. Tear it up." These letters were taken out of the shelter in the early morning of the 30th of April 1945. As the deaths of the shelter occupants were not announced until the next day, it is possible that later letters and documents might have been brought out.

Section II

ACCOUNT OF THE HEVEL, BORMANN AND EVA BRAUN LETTERS

4. HEVEL'S LETTER: This letter to the Auswartiges Amt (Foreign Office) in Fuschl, near Salzburg, was a brief and insistent request as to why none of the radio messages from the shelter were not being answered. The text as Reitsch remembers it: "Why do you not answer our
radio messages? Are you receiving them? Information requested is badly needed here. Answer immediately." It was not addressed to any particular person and was to be delivered to anyone of Ribbentrop's staff who might be at the Fuschl office. Reitstech has no idea as to what the "information requested" refers.

5. **BORMANN'S LETTER**: When Bormann handed Reitstech his letter he indicated that it contained nothing of great importance and would not involve any danger should it be lost. It was addressed to the Reichscancellory offices which had just moved to Berchtesgaden and asked why communications were not being maintained. It closed with instructions to contact the shelter immediately and gave a description as to how this should be done.

6. **EVA BRAUN'S LETTER**: Braun wrote to her sister, wife of Obergruppenfuehrer Faegelein, whom Hitler had shot on the 28th of April because he deserted from the Fuehrer's shelter. Following is given the best version that Reitstech, months after reading the letter, is able to reconstruct but it must not in any way be considered as the verbatim text of the Braun letter:

"I must write you these words so that you will not feel sad over our end here in the shelter. It is rather we who are filled with sorrow because it is your fate to live on into the chaos that will follow. For myself I am glad to die here; glad to die at the side of the Fuehrer; but most of all glad that the horror now to come is spared me. What could life still give me? It has already been perfect. It has already given me its best and its fullest. Why should I go on living? This is the time to die; the right time. With the Fuehrer I have had everything. To die now, beside him, completes my happiness. Live on as well and as happily as you can. Shed no tears nor be regretful over our deaths. It is the perfect and proper ending. None of us would change it now. It is the right end for a German woman."

Section III

**ENGLISH AND GERMAN TEXTS OF GOEBBELS' LETTER**

7. **ENGLISH TEXT**: The following is a translation of the letter written by Dr. Goebbels in Hitler's Berln shelter on the 28th of April 1945 to his step-son, Harald Quandt, then a PW in the Allied camp, P.O.W.L. #360 Algiers, PW #191901:

"My dear Harald,

We sit locked in the Fuehrer's shelter in the Reichscancellory, fighting for our lives and our honor. How this battle will end God alone knows. But I know that, alive or dead, we will not leave the shelter unless we leave it with honor and glory. I hardly believe that we shall ever see each other again, therefore, it is likely that these will be the last lines you will ever receive from me. I expect from you, should you outlive this war, that you do only that which will honor your mother and your father. It is not necessary that we be alive to influence the future of our people. It is likely that you will be the only one left to carry on the traditions of our family. Do this always in such a manner that we would never need be ashamed of your actions.

"Germany will outlive this terrible war, but only if it has examples upon which to guide its reconstruction. Such an example we want to give here! You can be proud to possess a mother such as yours. Yesterday evening the Fuehrer gave her the gold party insignia which he wore on his coat for so many years, and she justly deserved it. In the future you must know only one duty: To prove yourself worthy of the great sacrifice which we are prepared and determined to make here. I
know that you will do that. Don't let yourself be confused by the noise that will now reign throughout the world. The lies will one day break down under their own weight and the truth will again triumph. The hour will come when we will stand pure and unfilled above the world, as pure and unfilled as our beliefs and aims have always been.

"Farewell, my dear Harald. Whether we shall ever see each other again lies in the hands of God. If it is not to be, then always be proud to have belonged to a family that even in the face of disaster remained true to the Führer to the very last and true to his pure and holy cause.

All the best and my heartfelt greetings.

Your Father."

8. HITLER'S EVALUATION OF GOEPPBEL'S LETTER: Goebbels claims that the Goebbels letter made such a poor impression on both herself and Grein that they decided to make no immediate efforts to deliver it. First of all she claims that the letter is filled with various figures of speech that have no resemblance to the truth as she and Grein saw it in the shelter. Contrary to what Goebbels writes, they were not "locked" in the shelter nor were they "fighting" for their lives. But more than that she and Grein objected to the overall tone of the letter. Both felt that Goebbels was not writing to his son but rather to the German people in an effort to solidify such remnants of the Nazi ideology that might outlive the German collapse. Both Grein and Reitsch held Goebbels in rather low regard and felt justified in deciding that this, "Goebbels last propagandistic effort" should not fall into the hands of possible German readers. This obvious bid for martyrdom that the letter reflected, Reitsch and Grein both felt might work an unhealthy influence should the letter ever be publicised in German channels. They would both have preferred to find some link of regret or some faint suspicion that a system which had caused such suffering and useless destruction, both of the German people and the rest of the world, might not be as "pure" and as "holy" as Goebbels letter claimed.

9. GERMAN TEXT: The following is the German text of Goebbels' letter:

"Mein lieber Harald!


"Leb' wohl, mein lieber Harald! Oh wir uns jenals wiedersehen werden, das steht bei Gott! Wenn nein, dann sei immer zart darauf, zu einer Familie zu gehören, die dem Führer und seiner reinen, heiligen Sache, auch in Unglück bis zu letzten Augenblick treu gebli- ben ist.

"Alles Gute und meine herzlichsten Grüße,

Dein Papa."
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"To begin a new page is difficult. Who knows whether I shall still have time to fill it, but I want to give you so much of my love, so much strength, and to take from you all the sorrow of our being. Be proud of us and try to keep us ever in a proud and joyous remembrance! Everyone must one day die. Is it not better, more honorable and brave, to have lived a short and happy life rather than a long one under dishonorable conditions?"

"This letter is to go out. Hanna Reitsch will take it along. She is to fly back out again."

"I put my arms about you with the deepest, most heartfelt mother's love.

"My beloved son, Live For Germany!
For Mother."

11. REITSCHE'S EVALUATION OF FRAU GOEBBELS' LETTER: Reitsch's criticisms of Frau Goebbels' letter are almost identical to those she makes of the little Doctor's letter. Additionally she points out that Frau Goebbels found it just as difficult to adhere to the truth as her husband found it. Frau Goebbels remarked that the children had to sleep on the floor, were unable to wash, and had little to eat, all the result of the "primitive surroundings." Reitsch found the living conditions in the shelter the most luxurious she had experienced throughout the war. Reitsch and Greim decided that this letter should not be delivered either because it too might help crystallize the martyr-minded left-overs of the Nazi idea. Reitsch is not surprised at the tone of the letter as she describes Frau Goebbels as the epitome of her husband's teachings.

12. GERMAN TEXT: The following is the German text of Frau Goebbels' letter:

"In Führerbunker den 28 April 1945.

"Mein geliebter Sohn!

"Nun sind wir schon 6 Tage hier im Führerbunker, Pappe. Deine 8 kleinen Geschwister und ich, un unseren nationalsozialistischen Leben den einzigmöglichen, ehrenvollen Abschluss zu geben.


"Die Welt, die nach den Führer und dem Nationalsozialismus kommt ist nicht mehr wert darin zu leben und deshalb habe ich auch die Kinder hierher mitgenommen. Sie sind zu scheue für das nach uns komende Leben und ein Gedächtnis Gott wird mir verstehen, wenn ich selbst ihnen die Erzählung geben werde. Du wirst weiter leben und ich habe die einzige Bitte an Dich: Vergiss nie, dass Du ein Deutscher bist, tue nie etwas, was einen die Ehre, so wahr, dass durch Dein Leben unser Tod nicht umsonst gewesen ist!

"Die Kinder sind wunderbar! Ohne Hilfe helfen sie sich selbst in diesen mehr als primitiven Verhältnissen, ob sie auf denoden schlafen, ob sie sich waschen können, ob sie zu essen haben um was, niemals ein Wort der Klage oder ein Weinen. Die Einschläfer hier sind selbst für sich eine Nervenprobe. Die Kleinen berühren die noch kleinere und ihre Anwesenheit hier ist schon dadurch ein Sagen, dass sie dem Führer hin und wieder ein Lächeln abgewinnen."
Gestern Abend hat der Führer sein goldenes Abzeichen abgenommen und mir angeheftet. Ich bin stolz und dankbar! Gott gebe, dass mir die Kraft bleibe, um das letzte Schweres zu tragen!

Wir haben nur noch ein Ziel: Treue bis zum Tod zum Führer und dass wir mit ihm und zusammen mit ihm das Leben beenden können ist eine Gnade des Schicksals mit der wir niemals zu rechnen wagten.

Harald, Lieber Junge, ich gebe Dir das Beste noch auf den Weg, was das Leben noch gelehrt hat: Sei treu! Treu dir selbst, treu den Menschen und treu Deinem Land gegenüber. In jeder und jeder Beziehung!

Einen neuen Bogen anzufangen ist schwer. Was weiß ich, wenn ich ihm ausfüllen kann, aber ich möchte noch soviel Liebe Dir geben, soviel Kraft und Dir jede Träume über unsere Verlust nehmen. Sei stolz auf uns und versuche uns in stolzer, freudiger Erinnerung zu behalten. Einmal muss jeder Mensch sterben und ist es nicht schöner ehrenvoll und tapfer kurz zu leben, als unter schmackhafter Bedingung ein langes zu führen?

Der Brief soll rea—Hanna Reitsch nimmt ihn mit. Sie fliegt nochmals rea:

Ich umarme Dich in innigster, herzlichster, mütterlichster Liebe.

"Mein geliebter Sohn! Lebe für Deutschland!

Deine Mutter."

[Unterschrift]

ROBERT E. WOOLF
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Chief Interrogator.

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