MOST SECRET
RUDOLF HESS’S OWN ARCHIVE
FROM HIS LANDING IN SCOTLAND (MAY 1941), ON A SECRET MISSION, TO HIS TRIAL IN NUREMBERG (OCTOBER 1945)

From the wealth of the Museum’s Archives, these documents once belonged to Hess and include artifacts from his mysterious mission to England in 1941. (Many of the British government’s copies are still sealed as one of World War II’s last enduring secrets.) There are more than 300 documents and letters in the Museum’s Archives, many of them in Hess’s clear handwriting.

In the Spring of 1941, the famous British resilience was being put severely to the test. Eight months of bombings, and a shortage of food and supplies due to the German U-Boat attacks on merchant shipping, were taking a toll. On April 16, the most devastating night of bombing thus far killed 1,100 Londoners; three nights later, a larger raid killed another 1,200. Industrial cities and ports were targeted in raid after raid. A quarter of Londoners were homeless; only 1 in 10 homes was not damaged.

On May 10, Roosevelt told Churchill, again, that the United States was staying out of the war. That night, the worst attack ever took place on London with destruction spread all over the city. Also that night, a lone Luftwaffe Messerschmitt 110 flew undetected to Scotland. It was piloted by Rudolph Hess, the Deputy Führer of Germany and the head of the Nazi Party. His destination was the Duke of Hamilton’s estate. (Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, 14th Duke of Hamilton, Lord Steward of the King’s household, a man of impeccable reputation and fighting pedigree, then in command of air defence in Scotland, was wrongly thought by Hess to be inclined toward peace terms.) Running out of gas, Hess parachuted into a farmer’s field, was arrested, and demanded to see the surprised Scottish aristocrat. Thus did the mystery begin.

What was Hess’ mission? Whatever it was, was he sent by Hitler? The first news accounts only deepened the mystery with speculation. Then, suddenly, the only news was that Hess was insane. Then nothing. Hess disappeared from news and view; only the mystery remained.

Another mystery was why England sealed the archives about Rudolph Hess for 75 years, until 2017.

HESS’S ARCHIVE SURFACES

A year ago, an archive of over 300 pages surfaced in Hamburg, Germany. These were clearly Rudolph Hess’s personal files that he had with him when he was transferred to Nuremberg at the end of the war. The German magazine, Der Spiegel, calling the discovery of the papers “a sensational find,” stated: “Ever since that day, there has been much puzzlement over what exactly prompted the Third Reich’s third-most powerful man to travel to Scotland, what he hoped to achieve with his mission and whether he was acting on his own authority or had the backing of Adolf Hitler, or had even been ordered by Hitler to fly to Britain.

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"Hess was carrying such a file, stamped in red with 'Most Secret,' when he was transferred in October 1945 from British custody to the Trial of the Major War Criminals in Nuremberg. Excerpts from one of the documents found their way into the evidence published by the International Military Tribunal as well as a list of the remaining documents in the file. But since the trial, the whole volume has been missing."

FIRST MEETING WITH THE DUKE OF HAMILTON, MAY 12, 1941

Hess wanted to meet the Duke of Hamilton, who he believed would organize anti-Churchill members of the Conservative Party and welcome the peace terms he was bringing with him. Hess's first meeting was with the Duke of Hamilton two days after he landed. The Deputy Führer wrote a memo about their meeting:

"Like the Führer, I regarded the war between our countries as a misfortune for all involved. Most severe sacrifices would have to be brought on both sides, without achieving anything at all that would even remotely be worth these sacrifices. The British Empire will emerge from this war weakened, if not in a state of total collapse.

"I know that at this stage of the war it would be difficult or downright impossible for the British Government, for reasons of prestige, to take up the Führer's offer of an accord without good reason. By coming here I have thus given a reason, which is visible to all the world.

"The British Government is now in a position to declare the following: After discussions with Reich Minister Hess the British Government has come to the conclusion that the Führer's offer of an accord was serious. Under these circumstances it would not be able to justify con-

continuing the bloodshed without having attempted on its part to reach an accord with Germany. The British Government hereby declares its willingness to engage in negotiations on the basis of the proposals made by Reich Minister Hess..."

HEADLINE IN THE LONDON TIMES TWO DAYS AFTER HESS'S ARRIVAL

Rudolph Hess's oxygen mask from his flight to Scotland

HESS'S COPY OF THE TRANSCRIPT OF HIS MEETING WITH CHURCHILL'S LORD CHANCELLOR, JUNE 9, 1941

After a month as a prisoner, it was clear to Hess that his mission had failed. He had expected to immediately meet with opposition leaders, and that he would be welcomed as a peace emissary, but he languished as a prisoner. On June 9 he met with Lord Simon, Churchill's Lord Chancellor, the head of Britain's legal system. The three hour meeting was transcribed in German and English in more than a hundred typewritten pages. Hess's copy, now in the Museum, has dozens of pages of Hess's notes and additions to the transcript. A few of the highlights:

"I arrived at the decision to come here after seeing the Führer during the French campaign in June 1940. I was definitely of the opinion - I and us all, of the opinion that we would conquer England, sooner or later, but in the end definitely... The Führer was of the opinion that the war could possibly lead to a closer rapprochement between the countries, which he had always attempted to bring about... The Führer's aim ever since 1921 had always been to further this rapprochement between Germany and England. Then came the Führer's offer to England at the conclusion of the French campaign... This offer was, as is known, refused... And this confirmed my resolution that I must go through with my plan.

"Following that came the air war between Germany and England... Which on the whole definitely accrued heavier loss to England than to Germany...

With a welcome like this, the question of whether or not Hitler knew in advance about Hess's flight was bound to be influenced by circumstances on the ground. Hess's duty would have been to spare him the embarrassment of a failed mission.

The only time in his interrogation by Lord Simon that he was asked the direct question -- "Tell me... do you come here with the Führer's knowledge or without his knowledge?"
Hess's answer is recorded: "Without his knowledge. Absolutely. (Laughs)."

A week later, the despondent Hess attempted suicide by diving head first down a stairwell. His foot hit a railing, causing him to land feet first and break his leg.

Hess’s heavily annotated copy of the transcript of his interrogation

Hess’s Analysis of England and Germany at War with Each Other, and the Role of the Soviet Union

In August, Hess worked on a very reasoned analysis of England and Germany at war with each other, and the role of the Soviet Union in destroying both countries. [Germany had invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.] This was possibly intended for the Duke of Hamilton, but was given to Lord Beaverbrook, Churchill’s confidant and Minister of Supply, when he came to see Hess on September 9th:

“What is the war aim of England? A "rational" peace? Germany on her part wants a "rational" peace. She is ready to conclude this peace without a victory over England.

"The difference between that which the Axis on the one hand and England on the other understand by a rational peace so great that it justifies a continuation of the war until a possible victory of England?...So great that all the sacrifices which will have to be made by continuing the war...sacrifices in men, in buildings, in irreplaceable works of culture...destroyed factories,...in national wealth extending to far-reaching indebtedness of England to foreign countries....

“I am convinced...of the victory of the Axis...Reasons: The sole opponent of Germany to-day on land, the opponent in the East, is certainly not materially superior...; Germany’s present day power to manufacture war material is incomparably greater... Tanks...in this war they are being manufactured in the greatest quantities; Ger-

many acquired in France all the raw materials which the latter country had accumulated for armaments over a period of years; Fuel... synthetic production is very large. A shortage can scarcely arise, even after the cessation of Soviet Russian deliveries... The...Eastern Front...of are, thanks to the influence of national socialism, not only immune against Bolshevist propaganda; they are also fanatically anti-Bolshevist.

“...In the campaign of Germany... against the Bolsheviks it is not a matter of holding conquered country at all costs, but of protecting Europe against the Bolshevik danger...[E] verything has been prepared on a grand scale for the winter...it is not at all certain that an Eastern front will continue for any length of time.

“...Germany...is able to continue the war till England collapses through lack of tonnage. This will happen sooner or later, even if one accepts the figures of sinking issued by the British Admiralty. Today the whole coast from the North Cape to the Franco-Spanish frontier is available for U-boat bases.

“German air attacks on England will be considerably stronger in the future than in the past...I frankly admit that the picture I conceived of the frightful things to come recently further strengthened my resolve to attempt the flight to England.

Letter to Lord Beaverbrook, Press Baron, Churchill Confidant and Minister of Supply

On October 23, 1941 Hess again wrote to Beaverbrook: “What I have for some time sensed would happen, has come to pass: As I have learned from German news services, the Führer -- surely in accordance with the Axis partners -- has stated publicly that the war will now be waged to a clear victory. ... That means: fight for life or death. ...”

Letter to King George

The letters Hess wrote to King George VI are sealed in the archives of Windsor Castle. Hess' copies are now in the Museum. The last letter was written on November 13, 1941 and summa-

Continued on next page
rizes Hess’s situation which he realized was hopeless.

"After my arrival in Scotland... I appealed to Your Majesty via the Duke of Hamilton. I placed myself under your protection by appealing to your chivalrousness, as well as the chivalrousness of the English people as a whole. ..."

"What is important to me is that Your Majesty learn how a man has been treated who came to England of his own free will to do both our peoples a service and whom you placed under your protection. In my eyes there are only two ways to explain the treatment I have been subjected to:

A) One wishes to exert pressure on me with reference to the purported treatment of prisoners in German concentration camps. This is evidenced by the remark of 2nd Lt. Atkinson-Clerk, that I was getting the same treatment here that the "Gestapo" gives prisoners in Germany.

B) One hopes to get me to the point that I would one day be willing... to submit, either personally or in writing, the English peace proposals to the Führer, which are such that I would normally not send them off.

"I would never have thought it possible that I would be subjected to hardships in England as evidenced by the psychic and corporeal torments which I have documented in my protest note. I came to England with faith in the fairness of the English. I know as an experienced flyer that they have often displayed this to their adversaries. How much more could I expect to be treated fairly, since I had not come as an adversary? For I came, risking my life and unarmed, to England to try and end the enmity between our two peoples."

CONCLUSIONS

Hess’s rational reasoning in his manuscripts and letters argue against the British statements that he was insane and to be ignored. His letters about his food are in keeping with his chronic complaints about his food in Germany, including the food Hitler’s vegetarian chef served.

By 1941 the Nazi movement had advanced beyond Hess’s role as head of the Nazi Party. The more extreme elements were more powerful, and a successful peace mission to England would reestablish Hess’s position as head of the party. Whether this was solely Hess’s idea, or whether Hitler had an easily deniable role in case of failure, is not definitively answered anywhere. What is very clear is that Hess had the very strong belief that upper class England supported Germany, and did not support Churchill, and that it would welcome him with his peace terms from Hitler. Albert Speer in his memoirs didn’t think that Hitler knew of Hess’s flight beforehand; he described Hitler as being angry and upset, but in other situations he describes Hitler’s ability to turn his outbursts on and off as needed.

WHY WERE THESE PAPERS DECLARED "MOST SECRET" FOR 75 YEARS?

Churchill, who intimately had the pulse of British morale, understood that he could not afford to have Hitler’s terms for ending the war known outside his inner circle. A severely shaken country might have been ready to embrace the status quo. Germany had already overrun all of Europe, and it might not have made sense to them to continue a war they were losing. (The fact that Hitler never kept any treaty he had agreed to might have been lost in the relief and belief that the nightmare could be over.)

Why then keep the facts of Hess’s mission secret for decades? To reveal what are in these papers -- the simplicity of the offer from Hitler and the evidence that Hess was not insane -- is also to reveal that Churchill’s Government may have been concerned about the durability of the vaunted British fortitude. This British courage and fortitude was the key to the defeat of Germany in the West; the United States’ role would later be crucial, but if England had agreed to the terms Hess presented here, Germany could have focused its armies and air force and defeated the Soviets and then turned back to the West and invaded England.

PEACE TERMS

To prevent future wars between the Axis and England establishment of spheres of interest. The sphere of interest of the Axis is Europe – England’s sphere of interest is its Empire.

Restitution of the German colonies.

Compensation of German citizens who had resided before or during the war within the British Empire and had suffered damage to their person or property as a result of measures taken by a government of the Empire or by any other occurrence, such as riots, looting, etc. Compensation in similar fashion on the part of Germany to British citizens.

Armistice and peace are to be agreed upon with Italy at the same time.

The points above were repeatedly named to me by the Führer in discussions as the basis for an accord with England. Other than these, no points were mentioned.
OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

VETERAN FUNDRAISER SHEILA DENNIS JOINS THE MUSEUM

We are pleased to announce that last November, Sheila F. Dennis joined the Museum as Director of Development. She is actively involved in developing plans to raise funds for our projected new building, exhibitions and education initiatives.

Sheila Dennis brings over 30 years of diverse development experience to the Museum of World War II. She began her career at Yale University and has held senior positions at the American Museum of Natural History, The Nature Conservancy, Union of Concerned Scientists, Deerfield Academy and The Wilderness Society. Her experiences include working for both large and small organizations, often requiring an entrepreneurial approach to fundraising. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, she is a board member of Eyes Wide Open Mentoring in Washington, DC, an organization devoted to helping homeless youth.

Dennis stated: “I’m honored to be the first Director of Development at the Museum of World War II as I’m working with outstanding colleagues and volunteers to the vision of bringing the realities and lessons of WW2 to new audiences locally and around the world. My top priority is to organize the fundraising effort for the new museum building and exhibitions so that this first class collection can be experienced by many more people.

“My life was shaped by World War II as my father, the pilot of a B-24 Liberator bomber in the war, was shot down on his 28th mission and spent six months in a German prison camp before being liberated by the Russians. Most of his crew died, and he was reluctant to discuss his war experiences until near the end of his life.

“There are thousands of stories contained within the walls of the Museum of World War II; each artifact and document provides a powerful connection to the past. I believe it is crucial to preserve and understand the lessons of this global war so we can be educated and engaged citizens today.”

Director of Development, Sheila F. Dennis

ANTI-SEMITISM EXHIBITION AT THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FROM THE COLLECTION AT THE MUSEUM OF WORLD WAR II, BOSTON

The exhibition explores the question: How did Hitler and the Nazi Party persuade the majority of Germans that Jewish people must be excluded from society, eventually to the point of mass murder?

The original documents and objects on display date from 1919 to 1939. It is an uncomfortable truth that Hitler came to power by building substantial popular support amongst German voters. The exhibition shows some of the unique and commonplace objects that illustrate the nature, breadth and depth of Nazi ideology. They show the extent to which increasingly virulent propaganda saturated German life during these years.

There is the earliest known example of Hitler’s anti-Semitic writings in 1919, a copy of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, and Hitler’s handwritten speech outlining his determination to “annihilate” the Jews, delivered on the eve of World War II in 1939. Together they show the incremental stages by which anti-Semitism moved from ideology to state policy and finally, to war. In sharp contrast, the personal documents on display show the profound impact of these policies on the everyday lives of individual people.

In the wake of recent propaganda and terrorist attacks targeting Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere, Anti-Semitism 1919-1939 is relevant today. The materials on display, drawn from the Museum’s collection, will convey to visitors, particularly the 200,000 New York City public school students who learn history with New York Historical each year, the dangers of ignoring or discounting anti-Semitic discourse, as well as of underestimating the role of propaganda in denying racial and religious groups their right to live without fear or threat of violence.

This moving, illuminating and in many ways disturbing exhibition at the New York Historical Society is based entirely on pieces from the collection of the Museum of World War II, Boston, a total of 65 pieces in all. Anti-Semitism 1919-1939 opens to the public on April 12th and runs until July 31st.
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Last fall, thanks to contributions from foundations, corporate sponsors, and more than 165 private individuals, we were able to purchase the property adjacent to the Museum to begin planning for a substantial expansion. Arnold Haynes of Wellesley secured the property while we raised the funds and then made a substantial contribution himself in honor of W. H. MacCrellish, Jr. Soon we hope to announce our vision of the new museum.

Since the last edition of this newsletter in September 2015, when we thanked donors for contributing to the purchase of the property, we have continued to receive donations for the property (which arrived after the deadline of our newsletter) and for our building campaign which is still in its quiet phase. We would like to thank everyone for their support.

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Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Arvidson
The Arzak Foundation (L. Dennis Shapiro)
In honor of Julian Bussgang
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To make a contribution please contact our Director of Development, Sheila Dennis, at sdennis@museumofworldwarii.org or 508-655-5995 or at the Administrative Office, 46 Eliot Street, South Natick, MA 01760. Thank you.
For years, we have been very actively seeking to acquire an American or British field surgery kit, the type that would fit into a back pack. We wanted to show the reality of war in terms of wounded soldiers, that the effort to save soldiers was as important as attacking the enemy, and that a tremendous number of American and British soldiers were seriously wounded. Not only could we not find a field surgery kit, we couldn’t even find any militaria dealers who had ever come across one.

Then, the military dealer Gary Hendershott, a long time colleague and friend of Ken Rendell, told him about the complete World War II Mobile Auxiliary Surgical Hospital museum collected by Dr. Peter Kirsch, an orthopedic surgeon. The photos were unbelievable – a complete field hospital (from the European theater), with two operating tables, fully equipped with anaesthesia units, mobile x-ray, thousands of instruments and complete supplies. Dr. Kirsch knows of no other comprehensive World War II field hospital.

In 1943 the concept of moving a full surgical unit to a forward area “collection station” was instituted. The wounded first went to a Battalion Aid Station and, if necessary, were transferred to a collecting station a few miles back from the front line. Triage was carried out and troops were treated and returned to the front line or sent to the rear to division hospitals or medical centers. Frequently there were those casualties that were too unstable to move. Hence a full surgical unit was attached to the collecting station to stabilize these troops too critical to continue on. In World War II the unit was called a “Mobile Auxiliary Surgical Hospital.” In Korea, the name was changed to “Mobile Army Surgical Hospital” or “M.A.S.H. Unit.”

Museum educators have been very impressed by the foreign medical kits we have on display. This field hospital gives an extraordinary sense of the human cost of war. It is not only about the cold numbers of the dead but also about the sufferings of millions. Thousands of men were seriously wounded enough to require surgery in this MASH unit, on these operating tables, with these instruments. It brings the horror of war into full perspective. Thanks to Dr. Kirsch some sense of the suffering of the wounded can be known by future generations.

In a year end wrap up, Eve Kahn, the Antiques Editor of The New York Times, featured the field hospital which she found to be one of the most interesting items to surface in 2015.
Since formally beginning our educational initiatives last fall, more than 125 educators from more than 25 different schools and districts have made professional visits to the Museum, and through January 2016, 500 students have come to the Museum, already exceeding the total number of student visits for all of last year. Many more trips are in the planning stages; by the close of this academic year, more than 1,500 students will experience the collection, first-hand.

Their reactions are extremely gratifying. A sophomore from the Boston Public Schools commented, "I just felt closer to everything surrounding World War II." Her classmate noted that the Museum "bettered my understanding because I could actually see and touch things."

The active and broad outreach of Director of Education Marshall Carter has resulted in visits by a dozen teachers from Boston Public Schools, led by their district-wide K-12 Director of History and Social Studies; the Natick Superintendent’s team, all K-12 building principals, and the middle and high school history faculties; and educators from numerous other districts and schools including Framingham, Wayland, Dudley-Charlton, Newton, Shrewsbury, Stoughton, Stoneham, Somerville, Brookline, the MetroWest Jewish Day School, the Rashi School and the Rivers School.

As curricula and learning goals vary widely by school, the Museum staff has worked to custom-tailor programs to the specific needs of each student group. As examples, one group focused on studying the Holocaust; another used a rigorous set of document analysis tools provided by the National Archives to investigate items in the Museum’s collection; another sought to understand how different types of propaganda were aggressively used to shape public opinion, on all sides.

Fueling the momentum are grants from Cummings Foundation ($100K for 100 grants), the Foundation for MetroWest and the Middlesex Bank Foundation to support critical start-up resources for staffing and curriculum development. A private donor generously underwrote transportation for districts with significant number low-income students. Our partnership with MathWorks is creating technology infrastructure (through our new website) to enable the Museum to expand its reach, and offer educational resources to students and teachers across the country and internationally.

Carter, who joined the Museum in September, notes that "Fundamentally, the Museum’s education programs are about the leaps of insight and emotion that occur when students have extraordinarily close contact with authentic, powerful artifacts and documents. We’re able to do that in a uniquely intimate way here. Our success so far testifies to the great things that lie ahead."