

The Devil's Graveyard

Cimeterium diaboli

A Walk with Dante and Virgil through
Hitler's Landsberg Prison



By

French L. MacLean

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Foreword

The Divine Comedy (*Divina Commedia*) is the title of the epic poem written by Dante Alighieri between 1308 and his death in 1321. Dante's original title for the work was "Comedia." Another literary figure, Giovanni Boccaccio later applied the epithet "Divina" to the poem, which was not formally published until 1555 by Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari. Dante's achievement is considered by many literary critics to be the pinnacle not only of Italian literature, but also one of the greatest pieces of world literature ever created. The poem's allegorical vision of the afterlife is a succinct summary of the medieval world-view of Heaven, Hell and faith, as it had developed in the western Christian Church. As a secondary effect, the work helped to establish Tuscan as the standardized Italian language, although at this time Italy was not politically unified but a collection of city states.

The Divine Comedy is composed of 14,233 lines that are divided into three parts – *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory) and *Paradiso* (Paradise.) Each section consists of thirty-three cantos. The work is written in the first person and describes Dante's journey through the three realms of the dead. The journey is set in the spring of 1300. The Roman poet Virgil, another literary giant, guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory. A woman, Beatrice, takes over these duties and subsequently guides Dante through Paradise/Heaven. At first reading, the work describes Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. More detailed reading, however, leads one to understand that the poem is actually an allegory from a spiritual perspective of a person's journey towards God.

Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in the middle of the complex politics of Florence, Italy. At age 37, leaders of the Black Guelphs, the political faction in power at the time – who were allied with Pope Boniface VIII – exiled him for life, as Dante's family had been part of the White Guelphs, mortal enemies of the faction then in power. During his enforced absence, Dante withdrew from political activities and began to conceive what would become *The Divine Comedy*.

In 1304, Dante first went to the northern city of Bologna, but two years later moved to Padua. During this period, he also spent significant time in Pisa. Prince Guido Novello da Polenta invited Dante to move to Ravenna in 1318, and Dante accepted the offer to move to that city. During the next three years, Dante finished *Paradiso*, and probably died of malaria in 1321, as he returned from one of the prince's diplomatic missions to the Adriatic city of Venice. Authorities in his adopted city of Ravenna buried him there at the Church of San Pier Maggiore, although a finished tomb was not completed until 1483.

Virgil, the co-equal primary character of *Inferno*, was not known by that name in his real life, but rather as Publius Vergilius Maro. He lived shortly before Christ, born on October 15, about 70

BC in Andes, and dying on September 21, 19 BC. Virgil produced three major works: the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the epic *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* proved to be Virgil's greatest success.

According to some sources, Virgil traveled to Greece to revise the work, but the trip proved his undoing. After finishing his revisions, Virgil decided to return to his home, but was struck down with a fever near the village of Megara. He was able to cross the Adriatic Sea by ship, but died in the port of Brundisium on the eastern coast of Italy.

Virgil left instructions that the *Aeneid* was to be burned, but Caesar Augustus ordered that the manuscript be saved, and it was published with few changes. Although Dante finished *The Divine Comedy* just before he died, it did not really gain fame until it was formally published in 1555. From then on, the poem inspired thousands – if not more – of paintings over the next five centuries. Below is Eugène Delacroix's 1822 painting "The Barque of Dante" showing Dante on the left and Virgil on the right.



Prologue

Massive, thick, squatty, gray, with a red-tiled roof the color of dried blood, the Landsberg Prison is of the Art Nouveau design, but its countenance is something medieval, something horrid. With an entrance building three stories high, the two round corner towers are topped with weathered copper onion domes, so common in Bavaria. The copper patina has turned to light green, streaked with black oxidation. The building itself is a depressing gray. The overall effect of the scene is of something from the harsh East, something out of the depths of Asia, where cruelty is a way of life.

One-hundred yards away is a small cemetery, known as the *Spöttinger Friedhof*. On its grounds are row upon row of crosses. Each cross is stark, made of wood and topped by an inverted “V” that looks like a tiny roof. To a German, nothing is out of place; to a foreigner, the crosses appear to be the boney skeletons of scarecrows. A closer examination reveals that most of the crosses have had their nameplates removed. Someone is buried under each marker, but we are not supposed to know whom that might be.

The combination of prison and cemetery is linked by history as well as proximity. For six years following World War II, hundreds of Nazi war criminals were confined to the prison. They had been tried and sentenced at other locations – primarily Dachau and Nürnberg – but were transferred to Landsberg to serve anywhere from one year to life imprisonment. Almost 300 had a different fate in store – they would be executed by firing squad or by hanging. Those criminals, whose families did not request their remains, were then buried at this cemetery.

These offenders were the worst of the worst. They lynched downed American airmen; conducted painful, horrible medical experiments on helpless concentration camp inmates; and shot tens of thousands of “sub-humans” in the in the snows of Russia. They threw the dead and the near dead into the crematoria ovens and furnaces at Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau.

The problem in understanding the Nazis and their evil deeds is that the subject is too overwhelming. The normal human mind simply cannot fathom the nature and magnitude of the crimes. Prose, and even photographs, fails to impart the horror of it all. There simply is no adequate technique to lift the mind out of the gore and lead to an understanding of how it occurred.

But, wait; perhaps there is such a device. Dante “resurrected” Virgil for his own work – creating his own *Deus ex Machina*. This “god from the machine” is a literary plot device to solve a seemingly intractable problem by an inspired and unexpected intervention of some new character, event, ability, or object. Depending on how it is done, the device can move the story forward in an unexpected direction or can bring the tale to a satisfying or successful conclusion.

Long ago, during my time in Germany I visited the cemetery outside of the prison mentioned above and in a corner of the grounds I found a half-buried hand-written manuscript written in Latin. Almost like a rough draft of a report, it was dialogue between two men not of my own time, but written sometime before. I remembered enough of my reading of *The Divine Comedy* to know that this document referred to that earlier work. It appeared in this finding that Dante Alighieri may have also revisited the earth in the twentieth century, rather than living here just once seven centuries ago, and he had re-populated his nine circles of Hell with modern men in an updated *Dante's Inferno*.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Virgil's official role is a guide for Dante, but he quickly progresses from tour guide to that of personal tutor, liaison, and father figure to the somewhat naïve Dante. Perhaps Dante and Virgil had somehow united a second time from outside the grave and this effort is related to this spot in Germany. There is something quite strange about this area of Bavaria – some thirty miles west of Munich. There is a constant, nagging feeling in the cool air that this location is a portal from one time-period to another. Time travel – at least in an active imagination able to connect the dots – may actually be possible here.

This may be disturbing, as the most evil man of the last century – and possibly in all of history – resided here for a while. Adolf Hitler served several years' incarceration in Landsberg Prison after his failed 1923 *putsch*. He dictated from his cell room his horrendous *Mein Kampf*, which stated within its pages his ultimate plan to kill Jews and others he deemed sub-humans. The nearby graves and the prison walls seem to try to pull us back into a very terrible time. There is something evil here. Could this be a portal to the past? Or a portal to something much worse?

So with the help of some trusted friends and experts in Latin – who have asked not to be named – I took the old manuscript, translated it (well, mostly my friends did that work) and “filled in the blanks” of the dialogue between Dante and Virgil to put it all into context. I have put Dante's words in a different font from those of Virgil to help with a clarity of who said what, although in the original everything was written by just one hand. Titled *Cimeterium diaboli*, I believe that Virgil had written the manuscript. It was obvious that some of the pages were so damaged that the text could not be read even in the original Latin. And in some few instances, the team determined that an entire page might be missing because of the context.

I would never presume to be as superb a writer as Dante Alighieri or Virgil, and so I have inserted some explanations of the topics to connect the conversational threads of Virgil and Dante, but never to put words into their mouths. Thus, my own humble additions, I hope, may provide some clarity, or perhaps fill in a blank or two and are in a normal font, as are the words of a few other persons mentioned in the work.

But enough of me. Let us get to their story.



Welcome

“Salve! Dante, welcome to the twentieth century. My name is Virgil; we have met before. Welcome to what I call the devil’s graveyard.”

“It is good to see you again, Virgil. What year is it and why have you come for me?”

“It is almost seven hundred years after you died, Dante. Much has happened since then. Your city-states have all joined as one country, now known as Italy. From Sicily to the Alps is currently one nation, speaking one language, using one currency.”

“And they get along alright, Virgil? I mean, are they not at each other’s throats?”

“Yes, Dante, they are fine, although they still argue about politics and who is more corrupt than another. They argue about food, sports and women. You would feel right at home in Italy.”

“But we are not in Italy. I feel a cool wind here, a rawness not known to the south.”

“Yes, this is Germany, Dante; we are north of the Alps in the land of Frederick Barbarossa, *Germania*. I have brought you here because for many years after your death, mankind remained as you knew it. Lust, gluttony, greed, anger, heresy, violence, fraud, and treachery remained pretty much the same, generation after generation. The nature of *Inferno*, as you called it – others refer to it as Hell –

remained the same, as mankind never seemed to learn from the mistakes of the past and kept repeating them.”

“However, in the last century, something dreadful changed everything. For twelve years, mankind went insane and committed sins that dwarfed anything you could have comprehended from your day. Tens of millions of people were murdered over these dozen years. Over one hundred million more suffered some form of deprivation. Many humans killed and plundered during this time, but one group of men from Germany became the worst of the worst. Because of them, mankind became more aware of evil in a different scope than ever before. It was only natural that with a different level of evil men, Hell changed as well. You might say that Hell had to modernize its character and way of doing business.”

“So we are going to Hell, Virgil?

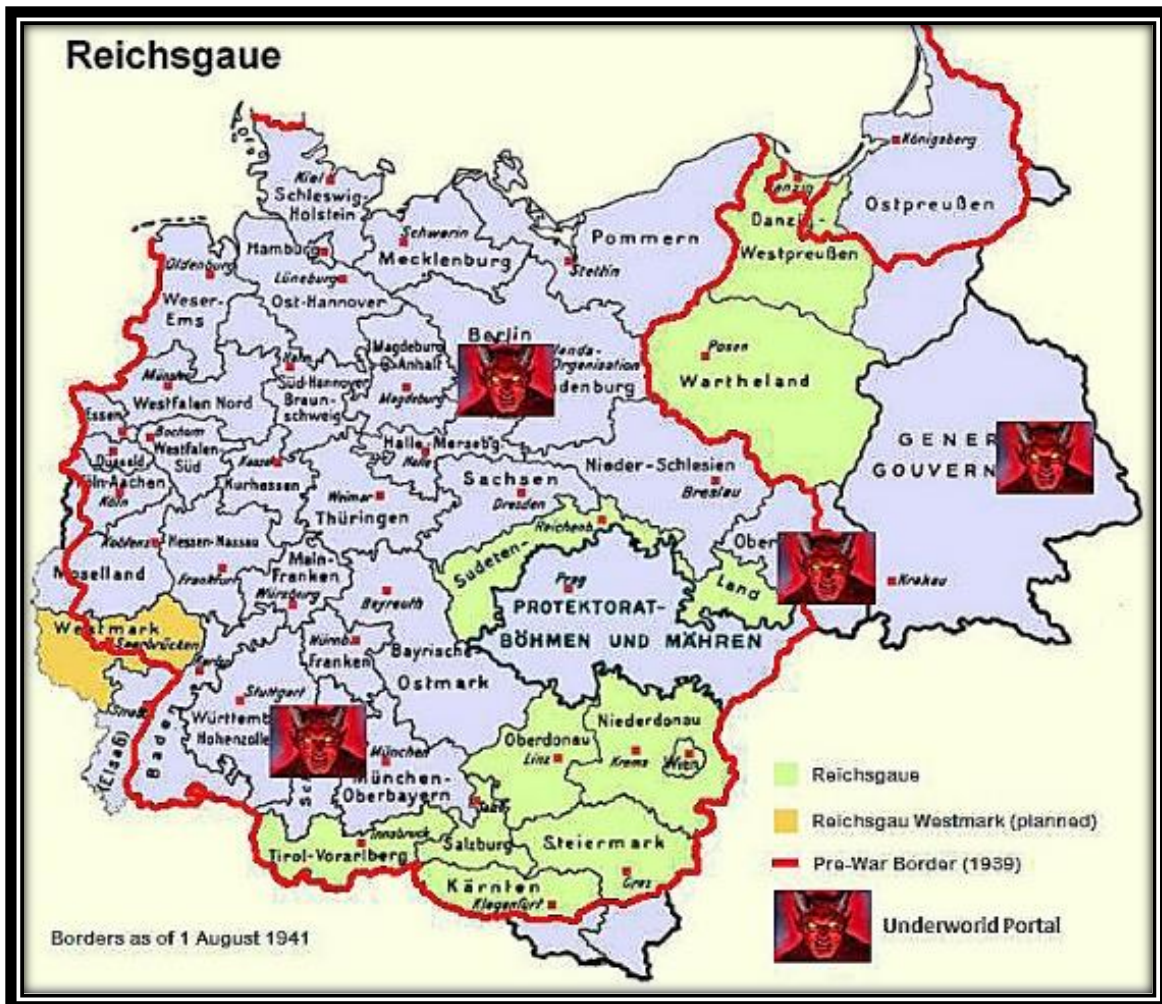
“Yes, in a manner of speaking, Dante. We will visit the various circles of Hell, much as we did in your epic work of literature so many years ago. However, it is also instructive to meet the worst offenders here on Earth, so you can see and hear them in their human corpus form, before they actually make their way to their appropriate destiny in the underworld. Therefore, we will be traveling through time to various places here in Germany and to Poland – although most of our time will be spent here at Landsberg.”

“*Facilis descensus Averno* – Virgil – Easy is the descent into Hell. But why will we be in this Landsberg so often?”

“The evil men started a war that lasted about six years. At the end of this war, the malevolent men lost, and the victors tried several thousand people for crimes against humanity, which they defined as particularly odious offenses against human dignity, to include murder, incarcerations, slave labor, and medical experimentation. The victors found hundreds of men, and a few women, guilty of some or all of these particulars and executed almost three hundred of the condemned right here.”

“Will we go anywhere else, Virgil? Will we visit the circles of Hell once again?”

“Yes, Dante, we will go back to the underworld. That is why I was sent here. The angel Gabriel is concerned. You see, there have always been portals to the underworld, usually at places on Earth, where evil was at its worst. These portals are two-way avenues and allow the demons to come out of Hell to terrorize the living. The portals never go away, and it appears that there are now more than when you were alive. See this old German map, that Gabriel provided me. Gabriel believes that four new portals



could be great peril on the Earth. In fact, these four new portals were created because these evil men in Germany were so wicked. One is here at Landsberg Prison at the lower left of the map. The others are at Berlin, Auschwitz, and Lublin – these last two in Poland, furthest right on the map. Our journey will take us to all of them. Do not worry about all the German words such as *Reichsgaue*; I will explain everything in due time. We will go in other, newer ways of transport and you will save your strength and enjoy them all, I promise you. Are you ready to begin, Dante?”

“Yes, of course, Virgil. Although first, may we eat a small breakfast to fortify me for the journey? And while we eat, could you tell me why Gabriel and you have chosen me to go on this search?”

“Certainly, Dante; it is because of your background, experiences, ability to reason and use logic, and your previous journey to the underworld, which people still read about today. And you can sense a man’s inner core, why he does what he does and the nature of his evil. This next journey would not be possible without the evil committed

by a man named Heinrich Himmler and his organization known as the SS. I will tell you more about them later in detail, but for the moment just start gathering information.”

“For now, what you need to know is this: Heinrich Himmler possessed a fourteenth century psyche trapped in a twentieth century body. To the *SS-Reichsführer*, which is the title Himmler held, the German invasion of Poland and Russia and the acquisition of *Lebensraum*, living space, in the East were long-overdue sequels to the conquests of the *Deutsche Ritterorden* – the Teutonic Knights – some five hundred years before. Himmler, ever the mystic, liked to tell his SS officers: ‘Never forget, we are a knightly Order, from which one cannot withdraw, to which one is recruited by blood and within which one remains with body and soul so long as one lives on this Earth.’”

“To complete this image of a medieval paladin, the *SS-Reichsführer* bestowed on his officers silver Death’s Head rings, ornately engraved SS officer daggers and exquisitely designed ceremonial swords. For the highest of the high, he created a castle at Wewelsberg – a mountain fortress – fit for the new Knights of the Round Table. These select leaders of the SS were entitled to gather in a huge dining room some 100 by 145 feet in size. Seated in twelve high-backed, pigskin-covered chairs adorned with etched silver nametags denoting seniority, the men would listen for hours as Himmler – whom they referred to behind his back as ‘King Heinrich’ – dispensed his macabre wisdom.”

“Leading down from the end of the dining room was a long flight of stairs, ending in a dark crypt, known as ‘the realm of the dead.’ Surrounded by five-foot thick walls, the chamber contained a stone stoop and twelve stone pedestals – each with a large, empty funeral urn.”

“Should one of the dozen barons of this black order perish in the service of the Third *Reich*, his weapons were to be placed on the stoop and set alight. The smoke from this symbolic funeral pyre would spiral upward toward four ornate vents in the high ceiling, so that the assembled SS warlords could watch the fallen warrior’s ‘spirit’ ascend in a single column of smoke to a mythical Valhalla – the afterlife of fallen warriors. The SS satrap’s real ashes would then be placed in one of the large urns to remain in heroic perpetuity.”

“To the officers of the SS, the *SS-Reichsführer* gave much. In return, he took their souls.”

“Perhaps, this journey is not for me, Virgil. Just listening to you describe this Heinrich Himmler makes my skin grow cold, my mind start to worry, and my heart

begin to waiver. Are you sure that you need me on your trip? I was having a perfectly good time in Heaven, when you came and got me.”

“Do not worry, Dante. We will be perfectly fine, trust me!”

“Nusquam tuta fides – Virgil – No trust is ever sure.”





The Prison, the Cemetery, and the Executioners

“Dante, we are in a place called the Landsberg Prison Cemetery right now; the Germans call it the *Spöttinger Friedhof*, *Friedhof* being the German word for cemetery. Just to the northeast, about six hundred yards away, you can see the prison towers and walls. Once you have finished your breakfast, we will walk over there and go back a few years in time.”

“Alright. This drink you have provided – coffee – is most unusual and delicious. We did not have this in Florence in my day. I wonder if they drink it there now? But won’t anyone see us, when we walk over to the prison, Virgil?”

“No, Dante, remember, when we travel through time, we are invisible. As we walk over, I will begin by telling you about the prison’s history.”



“With a frontage in the Art Nouveau style designed by Hugo Höfl, the Landsberg Prison was completed in 1908 after four years of construction. Initially conceived as a facility for holding 600 convicted criminals and those awaiting sentencing, the Landsberg prison soon became designated a *Festungshaft* – a fortress confinement – in which prominent prisoners received protective custody. Within its massive walls, the four brick-built cellblocks were constructed in a cross-shape orientation. This allowed guards to watch all wings simultaneously from a central rotunda location.”

“This prison would not be infamous without mentioning one man, Dante, who is central to our story, Adolf Hitler. In 1924, a German court sentenced Adolf Hitler to prison for treason, after he was convicted of organizing the failed Beer Hall *Putsch* in Munich in 1923. During his 264 days in the prison, Hitler – with the assistance of his deputy Rudolf Hess – wrote his seminal work, *Mein Kampf*.”

“The rotunda, over three stories high, was open in the center; each circular walkway was protected by iron railings that not only facilitated viewing down prisoner hallways on the same floor, but did not obstruct observation to other floors. Each wing stood three stories tall; the brick walls were covered with masonry and each wing was topped by a steep clay tile roof. Acoustics inside the four wings was excellent. The guards could hear even slight coughing from down the hallway. The prisoners, after the facility was taken over by the American Army, could even hear the distinct clicking caused by the shoes of the military police officers, who wore combat boots with horseshoe-shaped metal heel plates.”

“Almost every cell was designed for a single prisoner; male prisoners were kept solitary, while the few women prisoners were in communal cells. Each cell had four plastered walls, a ceiling and one outside window with eight vertical one-inch bars set in concrete. The single entrance to each cell was a heavy oak door, framed with heavy steel. Five feet up from the bottom on this door was a small opening, fifteen inches square, hinged from the outside, with its own special lock. In the center of this small door was a glass peephole, two inches in diameter. Each morning, guards opened the small doors, so that prisoners could receive books, mail and food. During religious services conducted in the hallways, prisoners could stick their heads outward and participate in the events.”

“Inside each cell was a metal bunk bed secured by heavy steel bolts to the wall so it could not be moved or tipped over. On each bed was a hard straw filled mattress. A short three-legged wooden stool completed the furniture list for each cell. In one of the two corners, farthest from the door, was a cylindrical radiator. The prison’s boilers pumped hot water to the cells – when the boilers were operating. The old contraptions worked best when fired by a large supply of Peissenburg nut coal #4, which seemed to always be in short supply. The cells and hallways were cold in winter; American guards wore overcoats and field jackets, while some prisoners suffered from frostbite. Each cell had a metal night pail for bathroom use. Groups of prisoners collected the pails every morning and dumped their contents at the prison farm outside the walls.”

“Outside the cellblocks were twenty prison workshops, including one for tailors, cobblers, sheet metal, carpentry, blacksmiths, photography, laundry and locksmiths. Most prisoners had the opportunity to work in these areas during the day. German work supervisors, after being cleared by American authorities, oversaw the efforts.

Several exercise areas, enclosed by walls, were adjacent to, but outside, the four cellblocks. Around the entire prison compound was a twenty-foot high concrete wall. Anton Graf von Arco auf Valley, an Austrian and ardent German nationalist, was the first of these special prisoners. On February 21, 1919 in Munich, he shot and killed Kurt Eisner, the Premier of Bavaria. Von Arco then spent time at Landsberg.”

“Hitler began to receive visitors shortly after he arrived at Landsberg. These included General Erich Ludendorff, a key leader in World War I and who participated in the Putsch to overthrow the Bavarian government, but was acquitted. Captain Ernst Röhm, later head of the SA and Alfred Rosenberg, future Nazi ideologue also visited Hitler. Ernst Hanfstaengl – an intimate friend of Adolf Hitler – later reported that in Hitler’s quarters were fruit, flowers, wine and other alcohol beverages, ham, sausage, cake, and boxes of chocolates. Hitler’s cell #7 was on the first floor. Otto Leybold, the Landsberg warden, wrote this about prisoner Hitler on September 18, 1924, ‘He was always reasonable, frugal, modest and polite to everyone, especially the officials at the facility.’ In its early years, the Landsberg Prison was nice, as prisons go. From its opening to 1932, only 32 prisoners died in the prison, most from illness.”

“Tell me about this *Mein Kampf*, Virgil. What did Hitler say in his book?”

“In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s main thesis was ‘the Jewish peril,’ a Jewish conspiracy to gain world leadership and domination. He also described the process by which he became increasingly Anti-Semitic. Hitler announced his hatred of what he believed to be the world’s twin evils: Communism and Judaism. He elaborated on the new territory that Germany needed to obtain to nurture the ‘historic destiny’ of the German people. He called this *Lebensraum* – living space – and wrote that the future of Germany had to lie in the acquisition of land in the East, of course at the expense of Russia. Those Slavs in this new living space would be killed or enslaved by German farmers and settlers moving into the area.”

“Hitler blamed Germany’s chief woes on the parliament of the Weimar Republic, the Jews, and the Social Democrats, as well as the Marxists. He announced that he wanted to destroy the parliamentary system, because in principle it was corrupt, as those, who attained power, were inherent opportunists. Hitler also wrote that the destruction of the weak and sick was far more humane than their protection, as destroying the weak would provide the proper living space and purity for the strong.”

“Did anyone actually read the book, Virgil?”

“Probably not at first, Dante; once the Nazis came to power a few years later, people were encouraged to read the book and give it as a gift at marriages and birthdays.

However, the book was hard to understand, repetitious and boring. One old Nazi opined that the book should have been titled *Mein Krampf* instead of *Mein Kampf*. *Mein Krampf* translated into ‘My Cramp.’ However, leaders in other governments should have read it after Adolf Hitler came to power, as it proved to be quite an accurate roadmap for what Nazi Germany would do during the war.”

“Did Hitler have that old Nazi arrested for those comments, Virgil?”

“No, Dante. The man was Christian Weber, an early Nazi Party member, former horse-trader, likely pimp and one-time beer-hall bouncer, who participated in the failed Nazi 1923 Beer Hall *Putsch* and was on the personal security detail for Adolf Hitler. Hitler was usually loyal to these old Nazis, *Alte Kämpfer* – Old Fighters – as he called them. But we are dawdling and must continue on our story.”

“After the Nazi assumption of power, Landsberg Prison was used to house political prisoners as well as common criminals; by April 1933, some 385 of the former were incarcerated. During the Nazi period, the number of prisoners increased, although only an average of two prisoners died per year. In November 1944, there were 949 registered prisoners. Most prisoners, scheduled for execution, were first transferred from Landsberg to a concentration camp, although records show that at least six of the condemned were executed at the prison itself in the last year of the war.”

At the conclusion of World War II, American forces occupied Landsberg Prison and designated it War Criminal Prison Nr. 1. The first guard force consisted of American and French soldiers. A U.S. Labor Service Company, in actuality a guard company of displaced Polish individuals, soon joined the security force. The first detainees arrived at Landsberg in the fall of 1945. The first three executions – hangings conducted by the veteran German *Scharfrichter* – executioner – Johann Reichhart – occurred on Monday, November 19, 1945. The final execution of a Nazi war criminal occurred on Friday, June 8, 1951. Prisoner strength varied; in June 1946, there were seventy-four inmates, while this increased to 220 that fall. In January 1948, 926 prisoners resided in the facility.

Witnesses recalled that executions were often held on Fridays. During the proceedings, witnesses could hear a number of American tanks driving through the grounds. The death row was located in the last cells on the corridor of “BO.” From there, the condemned were marched up from the “moldy” basement, where they had spent their last night. In the last part of the walkway, that led through the hospital on the first floor was the prison chapel. Catholic priest Karl Morgenschweis served as the Catholic vicar at the prison during this time. He was born in the Oberpfalz in 1891 and came to the prison in 1932. If the prisoner wished, Father Morgenschweis read the Holy Mass to them and provided spiritual assistance. From there the

prisoners were escorted to the final door through the hospital corridor. The work took its toll on Father Karl; he suffered a heart attack in 1951 and died on October 8, 1968.

During the post-war period, the gallows were in three configurations. The first gallows was a single structure, constructed in the prison church courtyard, used for seven executions, between November 19, 1945 and April 1, 1946. The second configuration consisted of adding a second scaffold, constructed about ten yards to the left of the first. Both gallows were located at the corner between the hospital building and two wings of the prison. The door from the prison was located midway between the two. The last configuration was inside a building.

“After the war, which we will discuss later Dante, the victorious powers conducted executions here. As one witness said, ‘From here the condemned saw the ‘Hitler oak’ before the noose was placed around their necks,’ although the view from the scaffold may have been to the window of Hitler’s old cell at the prison. The courtyard was large enough to have several linden and chestnut shade trees and a greenhouse. It was enclosed by a wall and had two entrances; one was the aforementioned door, while the second entrance was at the rear of the wall, which led to the cemetery. The gallows were draped with heavy black curtains covering the area, where the body would drop. The executions in 1951 took place at the attic of the locksmith building inside the prison. It is likely, given the infrequency of executions in later years that the two outside scaffolds were dismantled in 1950.”

Born in Middle Franconia in 1912, Pastor August Eckardt began his service as prison chaplain on June 1, 1948. He was well versed in the military, having served as a soldier in World War II. Captured by the Russians, he was repatriated to Germany in 1946. He also recalled that Friday was the day for executions and up to fifteen “red jackets” – termed this because of the colored shirts those condemned to death wore – were led to the gallows on this day of the week. On the day before in the afternoon or evening, the prisoner was notified of his impending death. Present at this notification was the Evangelical or the Catholic priest. The prison chaplains stayed longer with each condemned, providing comfort, prayer, and a blessing, which usually lasted all night.

An Evangelical Lord’s Supper or Holy Mass with confession and absolution was held in the early morning of the day of the execution for all who wanted it. Pastor Eckardt or his Catholic colleague went with the condemned on the last walk to the gallows. The offender climbed the thirteen stairs to the scaffold and was given the opportunity to speak his last words; the pastor spoke the Lord’s Prayer. Then, a black hood was pulled over the prisoner’s head and the noose tightened around his neck. The trapdoor opened, the man disappeared into the depths. Shortly thereafter, a doctor noted the death. On the same day, the attending pastor or priest went to the nearby Spöttinger cemetery and conducted the funeral, all of which was done silently without audible speech. “After that I was completely finished, dog tired, since over 24 hours on your feet,” recalled Pastor Eckardt.

There were Sunday worship services every Sunday; “red jackets” were escorted by guards. According to Pastor Eckardt, the work of two prison chaplains was viewed suspiciously by the Polish prison guards and the American military administration. Captain Lloyd A. Wilson, the Prison Commander, exhorted Eckardt to limit himself to purely religious matters. However, the pastor saw his task as concern for all needs, fears, and worries of the prisoners, to include taking complaints of ill-treatment to higher authorities. He also remained in contact with family members and announced in the services the names of the executed. On April 1, 1949, the U.S. administration banished Eckardt from the prison for inappropriate conduct without previous notice, an action Eckardt disagreed with for the rest of his life.

“At a typical hanging at Landsberg, such as on May 28, 1946, Military Police ringed the execution area. Civilian press were not allowed; a *Stars & Stripes* reporter was present. A Signal Corps photographer would photograph the event with still photos; on this day, a motion picture crew also recorded events. There was an officer responsible for the conduct of the execution – on this day it was Colonel Thurston. A captain from the Judge Advocate General served as the official witness. Two U.S. Army doctors would certify the death of each prisoner. The German mayor of Munich served as the chief German witness.”

“Four Military Police sergeants would escort each prisoner from his cell to the scaffold. Private First Class Brain, who was fluent in German, would translate to order of execution to the condemned and translate into English the man’s final statement on the scaffold. Two U.S. Chaplains and one German priest provided religious support. Two prison inmates stood by with carts at the gate to the cemetery to receive the bodies. Later photographs of the event showed several dozen additional spectators in the immediate vicinity.”

“What are photographs, Virgil? I have never heard of these.”

“Dante, they are images caused by allowing light to be focused on a type of thin film. It is used to keep a record of an event, and as such they can be good or bad, but we are getting diverted again, and there is much to do.”

During the years that executions occurred at Landsberg, the following officers served as prison directors: Major Carlson (1945), Major George T. Scheiner, Captain Lloyd A. Wilson (November 1946 to December 1949) and Colonel W.R. Graham (January 1950 to March 1951.) In 1946, U.S. Army Chaplains Peter Rush and Karl Almer assisted in providing religious support to the two German priests.

In May 1958, the United States Army relinquished control of Landsberg Prison to the Bavarian Ministry of Justice, when the last four war criminal prisoners were released from custody.

“So let’s continue by visiting the nearby cemetery, Dante.”



“So, Virgil, I understand that many men were executed here; is this the cemetery in which they were buried? It looks strange.”

“It looks strange, Dante, because it is strange. Part of that reason is because some people want it to remain in existence, while others want it hidden.”

“*Spöttinger Friedhof* is the oldest surviving cemetery in Landsberg am Lech. It began in 1765 as the Spöttinger St. Ulrich’s Church. In 1923, St. Ulrich’s Church became the property of the State of Bavaria and commenced to be administered and supported by the Landsberg Prison. On February 8, 1984, the cemetery was closed to further burials.”

“Over the years, there were several demonstrations at the Spöttinger Friedhof. Some centered on the burial of war criminals in the cemetery; others were anti-military, in general, such as during the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam Conflict. Articles sometimes appeared in German and Bavarian newspapers began discussing the appropriateness of the cemetery and exactly how the maintenance of the facility was funded.”

“Perhaps tired of the controversy, on January 22, 2003, the Bavarian Minister of Justice, Dr. Manfred Weiss declassified the area of the cemetery from its formal cemetery status. The following February 13, workers removed the inscription plaques from the wooden crosses marking the burial sites of executed Nazis. Justice Ministry spokesman, Michael Grauel, stated, ‘There will be no individual grave markers.’”

“In my humble opinion, Dante, the Bavarians found themselves in something of a dilemma, wouldn’t you say? On the one hand, they appear not to want to remember the terrible deeds that went on here. Conversely, most intelligent men realize that if they forget their own history, they are bound to repeat it.”

“Cuiusvis hominis est errare, nullius nisi insipientis in errore perseverare, Virgil – Anyone can err, but only the fool persists in his fault. The Germans are an obstinate bunch; look how difficult they made it for your people, the Romans, at the Teutoburg Forest thirty years after your death. The defeat was so total and dispiriting that Rome never used the three legion numbers again in their army. Sixty years after the end

of this Second World War, the Germans now appear to be tired of shouldering the guilt that happened before most of them were born.”

“Only time will tell if they are correct, Dante. That is why I wanted to bring you here to this cemetery now, so you could see it before they plow it under. After that, the evil will remain, but it will be that much more difficult to identify it. That is the tragic part. Now, let us go back to the prison. Before we meet the creatures in this underworld, Dante we must talk about the executioners.”

“Im 'certus sum autem discite quid, Virgil – I’m sure I will learn something.”

“Dante, there were two types of executions at this prison, hanging and by firing squad. Hanging, you are familiar with, no doubt. Firing squads were an invention after your time. A group of men each had a weapon that projected a small lead ball at great speed down a tube, caused by an explosion of gunpowder. The lead balls struck with great force at the condemned man standing some 20 feet away, causing his death.”

“Modern sagittari, I would presume – archers. Yes, Virgil, I have heard of this gunpowder from my friend Marco Polo of Venice. Before he died, he told me of this powder that he had seen in the court of the Great Khan. It sounded quite fearful.”

Twenty-nine prisoners were executed by firing squad at Landsberg. Several weeks before the first firing squad, on February 14, 1947, First Lieutenant Joseph H. Williams supervised the construction of a firing range near the west wall courtyard. Engineers placed three heavy oak timbers, twelve feet long by eight inches square into round holes in the ground, some three feet deep. The workers then cemented the poles in place, which formed a line four feet apart. Williams then screwed a large round metal eyebolt into the bottom rear side of each timber. He then added another eyebolt on the rear side, two feet from the top.

During the proceedings, each condemned man had his feet tied to the bottom part of the timber, while a rope was placed under each arm and lashed to the top metal hook. Finally, his hands would be tied behind the back of the timber by a rawhide strap or small rope. Learning from a wartime firing squad in England – where ricochets almost hit official witnesses – Lieutenant Williams ordered that two hundred sandbags be filled and stacked three feet behind the timbers, forming a wall two rows deep and ten feet high.

“Fear was the key in many executions of this modern time, Dante. Many people believed that the fear of a terrible death might deter some murderers of committing their crimes. I think these executioners thought that, certainly. Let us go back in time and meet some of them, beginning with a real character, John C. Woods.”

“During his supposed 15-year career as a hangman, John Woods reportedly executed 347 men, but this is undoubtedly a large exaggeration, as Woods was a heavy drinker and self-aggrandizer. An eleven-year search of military records indicates that it is far more likely that John Woods had a two-year career and hanged 60-80 men.”

John C. Woods, Master Sergeant and U.S. Army hangman was born on June 5, 1911 in Wichita, Kansas. Prior to his induction in the Army on August 30, 1943, he lived in Eureka, Kansas; he was married with no children. At his induction, he was listed as having blue eyes, brown hair with a ruddy complexion, standing 5’4½” tall and weighing 130 pounds. He reported to basic training on September 19, 1943; he was later assigned to Company B of the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion in the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. Woods was attached to the 2913th Disciplinary Training Center in 1944; orders in December 1944 show him assigned to the Provost Marshal Section in the Headquarters of the Brittany Base Section. Woods was formally assigned to the 2913th Disciplinary Training Center on February 12, 1945; on May 7, 1945, he was assigned to the Headquarters of the Normandy Base Section, but was attached back to the 2913th for duty.

However, unknown to the Army, there was a dark secret about John C. Woods’ past. On December 3, 1929, John Woods joined the United States Navy. He reported to the west coast. After initial training, he received an assignment for the *U.S.S. Saratoga*. Within months, Woods deserted. Authorities apprehended him in Colorado and returned him to California, where he received a General Court-Martial. After the conviction, a Navy medical officer recommended that a medical board examine Woods. This happened on April 23, 1930. The report following the examination read:

This patient, though not intellectually inferior, gives a history of repeatedly running counter to authority both before and since enlistment. Stigmata of degeneration are present and the patient frequently bites his fingernails. He has a benign tumor of the soft palate for which he refuses operation. His commanding officer and division officers state that he shows inaptitude and does not respond to instruction. He is obviously poor service material. This man has had less than five months service. His disability is considered to be an inherent defect for which the service is in no way responsible. [He] is not considered a menace to himself or others.

The report also provided a diagnosis for John Woods – Constitutional Psychopathic Inferiority without Psychosis. The U.S. Navy then discharged him.

“During 1944 and 1945, Master Sergeant John Woods hanged about thirty U.S. soldiers, who had been sentenced to death. After the war, he hanged Nazi war criminals at the Landsberg Military Prison, often in conjunction with Johann Reichhart – who had executed thousands of condemned persons during the Third *Reich*.”

“Woods gained international fame in October 1946, as the official hangman for the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg. In July 1946, he began constructing – with five Military Police sergeants and three German carpenters – three scaffolds for the upcoming event. Working here at Landsberg Prison, the group planned to construct the gallows in three modules, disassemble the gallows, transport the modules to Nürnberg and assemble the modules prior to the execution there.”

“On October 16, 1946, Woods executed ten senior German military and civilian officials previously convicted of egregious crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and war crimes. The condemned included Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Colonel General Alfred Jodl, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Julius Streicher, Fritz Sauckel and Arthur Seyss-Inquart. Post-execution photos indicate that the trap door mechanism was flawed and that several of the condemned hit the door with their face as they plummeted downward.”

After Nürnberg in October 1946, John Woods never hanged another man and returned to his Army specialty as an engineer, serving in the United States and in the Pacific. He did not lose his nerve, but rather shot his mouth off to reporters on the secret details of the event. Master Sergeant Woods was accidentally electrocuted on July 21, 1950 on Eniwetok Atoll in the Pacific, while attempting to repair an engineer lighting set (not while constructing an electric chair, which is part of his myth.) Another anecdote from Europe after his death was that German scientists on Eniwetok as part of *Operation Paperclip* murdered Woods and made it look like an accident.

Woods is buried in the modest city cemetery in Toronto, Kansas, a small town 60 miles east of Wichita. John C. Woods received no individual military awards during his career for his service as a hangman. Records indicate that Master Sergeant Woods hanged fifteen condemned men at Landsberg Prison, beginning on May 28, 1946 and ending on September 12, 1946.

“Dante, you can see Sergeant Woods standing over there at his gallows; he is the short man with all the stripes on his arm that looks like he slept in his uniform. Now let us turn to the right and see German hangman Johann Reichhart hard at his craft at his duplicate gallows; he is the man dressed in a dapper manner with a bow tie. They will alternate hangings to finish the immense task they have today. For your interest, it is May 28, 1946.”

German executioner Johann Reichhart was born on April 29, 1893 in Wichenbach near Würth an der Donau into a family of executioners going back eight generations. During World War I, he served in the trenches at Verdun. On March 23, 1924, Reichhart applied to the Bavarian State Ministry of Justice in Munich for the position of executioner. The administration accepted his

offer, allocated 150 *Goldmark* for each execution he performed and announced, “From April 1, 1924, Reichhart takes over the execution of all death sentences coming in the Free State of Bavaria to the execution by beheading with the guillotine.” His career began on July 4, 1924 – when he beheaded two men on the guillotine at Landshut – and spanned the time of the Weimar Republic and the Third *Reich*.

In 1929, however, his ghoulish reputation was such that he fled Germany to Holland, opening a vegetable market in The Hague. During these years, he returned to Bavaria only when he received an encrypted telegram informing him of an assigned execution. With Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, Reichhart returned to Germany and joined the Nazi Party four years later. The Nazis proved prolific superiors and paid Reichhart so much money as an executioner that in 1942 he bought a private home in the Gleisse Valley, near Deisenhofen, south of Munich.

“Johann Reichhart executed 3,165 people, most of them during the period 1939 – 1945 when, according to his own records, he put 2,876 men and women to death. In this Third *Reich* era, the executions derived largely from heavy sentences handed down by the *Volksgerichtshof* (People’s Court) for political crimes such as treason, and included Sophie and Hans Scholl of the German resistance movement White Rose. Reichhart executed them at Munich’s Stadelheim Prison. Most of these sentences were carried out by the *Fallbeil* – “drop hatchet” – a shorter, largely metal, re-designed German version of the French guillotine. Reichhart served as one of four principal executioners in the Third *Reich*.”

“Reichhart was very strict in his execution protocol, wearing the traditional German executioners’ attire of black coat, white shirt and gloves, black bow tie and top hat. He initially served as the Bavarian State Executioner. His work took him to many parts of occupied Europe, including Poland and Austria. He claimed during questioning that, toward the end of the war, as the allied armies closed in, he disposed of his mobile guillotine in a river, a claim that seems related to almost every guillotine in Germany at the end of the conflict.”

Following *Victory in Europe* (VE) Day in 1945, Reichhart, a member of the Nazi Party, was arrested for the purposes of denazification, but was not immediately tried for carrying out his duty as one of the primary judicial executioners in the Third *Reich*. He was subsequently employed by the Occupation Authorities beginning in November 1945, to help execute Nazi war criminals at Landsberg am Lech by hanging. He appears to have worked for the Americans only through May 1946.

“According to a reliable source, Reichhart spoke to the prison commandant, sometime after hanging seven men on May 29, stating that he was worried that he was executing some innocent men. He asserted that, although he was afraid of repercussions, he

would rather face judicial proceedings than continue as the hangman. His work at Landsberg terminated, military police arrested Reichhart at his home in May 1947 and took him to an internment camp at Moosburg an der Isar. His court proceedings began on December 13, 1948 at Munich. On November 29, 1949, in a German tribunal, Reichhart was sentenced to strict punishment measures.”

The court sentenced him to two years confinement in a labor camp and confiscation of 50% of his assets. He was forbidden from ever holding public office, voting or the right to engage in politics. Finally, Reichhart was forbidden to own a motor vehicle or possess a driver's license. He also was ordered to pay 26,000 *marks* for the cost of the trial.

Reichhart was financially ruined; his marriage failed, and one son, Hans, committed suicide in 1950 at age 23. In 1963, there were public demands, during a series of taxi driver murders, for the re-introduction of the death penalty in West Germany and Reichhart was vocal in his support for this legislation. He maintained that the preferred method of killing should be the guillotine, as it was the fastest and cleanest method of execution.

Johann Reichhart died in a nursing home at Dorfen near Erding, Bavaria, on April 26, 1972. On May 2, 1972, his body was cremated at the crematorium at the *Ostfriedhof* in Munich. He is buried in the *Ostfriedhof* in a family grave (Section 47, Row 2, #21) that also contains his two sons and his uncle Franz Xaver, an experienced executioner himself. One source credits Johann Reichhart with hanging 42 German war criminals after the war, but it is far more likely that he only hanged twenty-one condemned men at Landsberg Prison and was not involved in any way with the Nürnberg executions.

“A morte verus discipulus.” A true student of death, Virgil.”

“Now we go to a very odd man, Joseph Malta, who is also an American like John Woods. Part of the reason he is odd, Dante, is that he is an American. America is on the other side of the ocean from Europe and many of the people there had been run out of Europe or had moved there for opportunity. They are fiercely independent, which sometimes causes problems for other nations, but without a doubt the evil Nazis would have won the war had the Americans not fought them.”

“They sound unique, Virgil. Tell me more about this Joseph.”

“Joseph Malta was born on November 27, 1918 in Revere, Massachusetts. He had been a floor sander in civilian life. A U.S. Army military policeman, he volunteered for the job of hanging the men condemned by the International Military Tribunal, serving as the assistant to John C. Woods at Nürnberg on October 16, 1946, when these executions occurred. Nicknamed ‘Hangman Joe,’ ‘Dirty Dom,’ and ‘Hangman Ten’ – for

the ten executions at Nürnberg – Malta claimed he hanged sixty Nazi government and military leaders, before leaving the Army in 1947. Returning to his former job as a sander, he later stated, “It was a pleasure doing it,” echoing the sentiments of his hangman partner, John C. Woods.”

“For Malta, it may have been more than a pleasure. After reporting to Landsberg for a scheduled execution – from his base unit at the Third Army in Heidelberg – ‘Hangman Joe’ would walk down the hallways of the cellblocks, examining the nameplates over the cells. When he found the name of one of the prisoners he was scheduled to hang, Malta would open the small fifteen-inch door, remove his headgear and get the attention of the condemned man. After making eye contact, Malta then displayed a miniature scaffold, replete with a dummy figure, and trip the lever on the tiny model, causing the doll to drop through the trap – all under the terrified gaze of the prisoner.”

“It seems that ‘Dirty Dom’ ran afoul of the officers at Landsberg in February 1947. Receiving instructions to report to Landsberg Prison, he refused to ride in a winterized jeep, saying that if an Army sedan were not dispatched as his transport, he would not report to the prison. The officer replied that if a winterized jeep was good enough for the prison commandant, it should be good enough for a private first class. He then told Malta that his services were no longer needed. Joseph Malta died on January 6, 1999 in Revere, Massachusetts. Malta probably served as the assistant to Woods on fifteen executions at Landsberg Prison and may have conducted two additional hangings as the primary executioner on December 4, 1946.”

“Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt – Virgil – The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling.”

“There were several other men involved in the executions, Dante, but we must move on now to one in particular.”

“Tech Sergeant Vincent J. Martino, served as a military police guard at six of John Woods’ executions of American soldiers in France during the war, and continued this work after VE Day, helping Woods hang Nazi war criminals. Born in New York City on April 17, 1924, he had served as a stock clerk before the war. Martino stood 5'6" tall and weighed 195 pounds. He arrived overseas on February 18, 1944; the Army assigned him to the 2913rd Disciplinary Training Center. He was awarded the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.”

His file listed him with a military occupational specialty of 564 – "Special Assignment" which included hangmen. Martino very likely served as the assistant executioner for Master Sergeant Woods at the hangings of Alfons Klein, Karl Ruoff and Wilhelm Willig at Bruchsal, Germany

on March 14, 1946, after they had been convicted and sentenced to death for murders at the Hadamar euthanasia center that occurred before the war. Sergeant Richard Norwood served as the hangman from 1946-48. Later, Josef Kilian and a Sergeant Britt carried out these duties.

“Well, Dante, what do you think of these hangmen?” Here is an image of Woods with his hangman’s rope from that time, so you will recognize him later.

“Mors vincit omnia – Virgil – death always wins. It sounds as though Woods and Malta may have been a little bit crazy, while Reichhart, the German hangman, believed that his craft was a professional calling. Regardless, I would not have wanted to meet them anywhere near a hangman’s rope.”

“They were babes in the woods, so to speak, compared to whom you will now meet, Dante, babes in the woods.”





The First Circle of Hell – The Post-War, One-Time Killers

“Dante, your First Circle of Hell then was populated by those who were not sinful, but rather those who had not accepted Christ. You wrote that those in this level lacked hope for anything greater than a rational mind could conceive. Many of the residents of this level lived before Christ and we found Homer, Horace, Ovid, Julius Caesar, Plato and Aristotle.”

“Yes. Virgil, it was quite thrilling to meet those famous people!”

“Dante, surely no one executed at Landsberg after the war would fit your description of anyone in our visit to the first circle of Hell; they are much, much worse than that. With the “least evil” of the many executed here at the prison, the first circle of Hell is populated by those who were post-war killers of just one person. There were many of this ilk, who were executed in the prison; twenty-five are still buried back at the cemetery. I will not bore you, Dante, with the details of every one of them, but a few accounts may be illustrative of the type of evil being you will meet in this epoch and at this portal to the underworld. We will go back now to 1947.”

“Dr. Werner Wolfgang Raabe was a dentist from Berlin. A supplier in the black market, Raabe was holding 312 cans of chocolate sauce for American Corporal Stanley P. Claycomb of New Enterprise, Pennsylvania. Claycomb went to the dentist’s apartment, where an argument ensued. Dr. Raabe murdered the American soldier with a hatchet. Raabe was hanged on Friday, January 7, 1949 at the prison. His remains were transferred to Berlin.”

“Ferdinand Lechner was born in the district of Weilheim, Bavaria in 1923. A tiler by trade, Lechner robbed and killed a man near Feldafing, on Lake Starnberg in Bavaria in

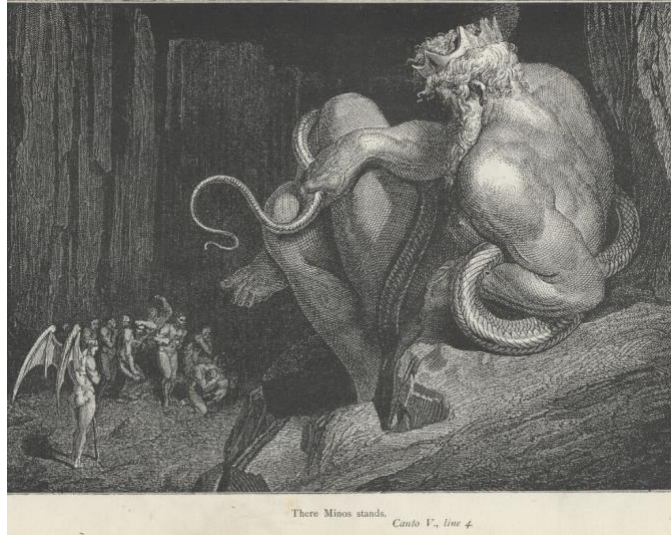
February 1947. Arrested by U.S. authorities, he was convicted of murder by an American military tribunal and sentenced to death by a firing squad. At 10:45 a.m. on Tuesday, August 10, 1948, an American firing squad executed Ferdinand Lechner at Landsberg Prison. His remains were buried at the Spöttinger *Friedhof* in Grave #314.”

“These men do not seem that awful, Virgil. Certainly, we had murderers in my time, and I suspect that you did as well.”

“Yes, we certainly did, Dante. These men were common criminals and in a peaceful world, the German court system would have handled their crimes. However, so many lawyers and judges in Germany had been part of the Nazi régime, that the victorious Allies – primarily Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union – took years to sort out which officials were really corrupt and which ones could be brought back into the new German government. In some cases, very bad men – who had been Nazis – were able to conceal their misdeeds and return to German society, with no one the wiser. For the first five years after the war, American tribunals held cases for serious crimes committed in the American sector. British military tribunals did the same for crimes committed in the British sector, as did French military tribunals.”

“In the East, military tribunals of the Soviet Union – the Russians from your day – did the same, although the Russians really were only one-step up from the Nazis in their barbarity during the war. In fact, it was often rumored that the Russians did not bother with holding a trial for many of the Germans they convicted after the war. No one truly knows how many Germans died by a single Nagant pistol shot to the back of the neck or head, done in the dark of night in a Brandenburg forest or in the basement of the infamous Lubyanka Prison in Moscow.”





The Second Circle of Hell – The Post-War, Multiple Killers

“In your Second Circle of Hell, Dante, one found the active, willful sinners, the first group to be judged by the serpentine Minos. Part man, part serpent, Minos would wrap his tail around the person to be judged – the number of loops around the body corresponding to the level of Hell to which the person would be condemned. Those cursed to the second circle had been overcome by lust in their lives – a sin that you found evil, as it permitted their carnal appetites to sway normal reason. In the second circle, you found that a violent storm whipped the bodies of the lustful without respite. Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Achilles, Paris and Tristan were just some of the people you met in this circle.”

“Although many of the Landsberg condemned may have been overcome by lust during their lives, Dante, it was not for that that they were hanged or shot. These men killed, and they killed more than once. Let us look at a few to show you how far mankind has slipped toward the abyss from your day in Florence.”

“Dimitrios Kosturos and Petridi Dimosthenes were Greek soldiers captured in Albania by Italian forces in 1940. Transferred to a German concentration camp, they survived for five years until the end of the war, when they became displaced persons. The two men then joined an outlaw band in Bavaria, committing several robberies and murders. In Munich, the two men cut a girl’s throat and dumped her body out a window, after they determined she knew too much about the group.”

“Police apprehended the men and an American military tribunal sentenced them to death by firing squad. The day before the execution, guards transferred both men to separate cells in the dungeon – the basement cells. There the Americans took their

belts and shoelaces so neither man could hang himself. The men received a last meal that evening of beef, potatoes, bread and coffee.”

“The next morning, February 14, 1947, a Greek Orthodox priest gave the men their final service. At 10:45 a.m., First Lieutenant Williams entered the cells to begin the march to the firing squad. Kosturos had previously seen Lieutenant Williams with a candy bar and asked the officer if he might have one. His request was accepted and the prisoner finished the chocolate bar, put on his shoes and began the march to the post. He chose not to have a hood placed over his head. In his final statement, which was translated into English and read aloud, Kosturos said he had been a front-line soldier who fought against Italian Fascism and Nazi Germany. He ended that he was not afraid of dying.”

“Lieutenant Colonel James P. Smith ordered the eight-man firing squad, from the 508th Military Police Battalion, squad to raise their M1 rifles, aim and fire. They stood only fifteen paces from the target and their aim was true. Kosturos stiffened, raised his body upward and quickly collapsed. A physician pronounced him dead at 11:06 a.m. The firing squad executed Petridi Dimosthenes a few minutes later. Authorities took both bodies to Munich, where they were used for medical autopsy training.”

“It sounds, Virgil, as though Kosturos was quite brave at the end, unlike when he murdered the girl.”

“Yes, Dante, and perhaps that is why the entire firing squad was quite horrible that day. When the guards led each procession of the condemned that morning from the prison building to the posts, an Army band played a doleful march, which was called for by the Army field manual on executions. This music affected the squad, and as the second group came out of the prison, one of the MPs in the firing line staggered and vomited. An MP Officer took the man’s rifle and asked a vehicle driver if he could take the man’s place, which he did. On the third round of executions, one of the condemned men was hit by only one shot in the center of his chest and after a period that seemed outrageously long, the prisoner sagged at the knees and was declared dead.”

“Non videmus manticae quod in tergo est – Virgil – We do not see the burden on our own back.”

“Listen, Dante! Do you hear the music? After the removal of these final bodies, the band struck up a spirited rendition of “The Chattanooga Choo Choo,” a popular song of the day, and marched off the field. One of the MPs later said that he had a difficult time shooting one of the condemned men, who had refused to wear a black hood, as

the man appeared to be staring directly at him during the event. It had been a terrible morning that probably haunted each man for the rest of his life.”

“Peter Chemy, a Polish national born on June 18, 1918 in Tarnopol, was liberated from a concentration camp by the Americans in May 1945. With no home to return to, he spent the first few months of his freedom adrift in the sea of flotsam and jetsam of refugees in Germany. One snowy winter night of that year, he found refuge and a meal in the home of a German family. After the husband, wife and daughter retired for the evening and went to sleep, Chemy found a hatchet and murdered them in their beds. He was tried by an American tribunal at Ochsenfurt, Germany and convicted of murder on August 6, 1946. A firing squad executed Peter Chemy at Landsberg on Friday, March 21, 1947. His remains rest at the *Spötting Friedhof* in Grave #156.”

“These men represented the condemned men, who were not German, but who were executed for their crimes anyway. In a way, they were common criminals and certainly not part of the Nazi machine, as those men we will meet later. To prepare for those future encounters, we need to go to Vienna, Austria in the year 2002 to meet an interesting man. We will only be gone a few days and will then come back to this Landsberg Prison. So now let us head to the *Bahnhof*, a German train station, where we will catch a train to Munich and then Vienna.”



“Did you like that ride on the train, Dante?”

“Yes, it was marvelous, Virgil. We went so fast and the ride was most comfortable.”

“That is because we rode in first class, Dante. It is much more comfortable there, and since we have been invisible going forward in time, we did not even have to buy a ticket! Now, however, we must become visible again, so we can talk to this man. While we walk to his office, I will tell you more about him. He has led a very interesting life and knows perhaps more about the Nazis than any other person.”

“I believe that Simon Wiesenthal was born on December 31, 1908, in Buchach, in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was a wholesaler, who had left Russia in 1905 to escape the anti-Jewish pogroms. The elder Wiesenthal was called to active duty in 1914 in the Austro-Hungarian Army at the start of World War I; he was killed in action on the Eastern Front in 1915. Simon, his younger brother and his mother fled to Vienna,

when the Russian Army overran Galicia. In the ebb and flow of war, the family returned to Buchach in 1917, after the Russians retreated.”

“Yes, Simon attended the Czech Technical University in Prague, where he studied from 1928 until 1932. After graduating, he became a building engineer, working mostly in Odessa in 1934 and 1935. The next six years are unclear concerning Wiesenthal’s life; he married in 1936, when he returned to Galicia. After the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941, Wiesenthal’s mother came to live with him and his wife in Lvov. Wiesenthal, a Jew, was detained by German authorities on July 6, 1941, but was saved from an *Einsatzgruppe* firing squad by a Ukrainian man, for whom he had previously worked. German police deported Wiesenthal and his wife in late 1941 to the Janowska labor and transit camp and forced to work at the *Eastern Railway Repair Works*.”

“Every few weeks the Nazis would conduct a selection of Lvov Jewish Ghetto inhabitants unable to work. In one such deportation, Wiesenthal’s mother was transported by freight train to the Belzec extermination camp and killed in August 1942. On April 20, 1943, Wiesenthal avoided execution at a sand pit by a firing squad, when at the last moment a German construction engineer intervened, stating that Wiesenthal was too skilled to be killed.”

“On October 2, 1943, the same German warned Wiesenthal that Janowska and its prisoners were about to be liquidated. Wiesenthal was able to sneak out of this camp and remained free until June 13, 1944, when Polish detectives arrested him in Lvov. With Russian troops advancing, the SS moved Wiesenthal and other Jews by train to Przemyśl, 135 miles west of Lvov, where they built fortifications for the Germans. In September 1944, the SS transferred the surviving Jews to the Płaszów concentration camp in Krakow. One month later, Wiesenthal was transferred to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. While working at a rock quarry there, Wiesenthal’s right foot was crushed a large rock, which resulted in the amputation of the large toe.”

The advancing Russian Army forced the evacuation of Gross-Rosen, as Wiesenthal and other inmates marched by foot to Chemnitz. From Chemnitz, the prisoners were taken in open freight cars to Buchenwald. A few days later, trucks took the prisoners to the Mauthausen concentration camp, arriving in mid-February 1945. When the camp was liberated by American forces in May 1945, Simon Wiesenthal weighed 90 pounds.

“Wiesenthal dedicated the rest of his life to gathering information and tracking down fugitive Nazis – so that they could be brought to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In 1947, he co-founded the Jewish Historical Documentation Center in Linz, Austria, to gather information for future war crime trials. Later, he opened the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna, which became his headquarters.”

The center is in a nondescript building in downtown Vienna. At the front door, on the outer wall, are hints of the building's tenants. A tiny plate, one of perhaps sixteen address markers, reads, "*Dokumentationszentrum*." Pushing the buzzer results in the door being electronically unlocked. Climbing several flights of stairs leads to the office itself. Beginning on the last set of stairs to Wiesenthal's office are numerous crushed cigarette butts – evidence of security guards with tobacco habits. They are armed.

After ringing another buzzer at the office door, a woman named Rosemary answers; she is one of Wiesenthal's secretaries and is the strict guardian of the clock – Wiesenthal's daily schedule. The sparsely-furnished three-room office has a staff of four, including Rosemary. The three small rooms are crammed with reminders of the Holocaust and tributes to the Nazi hunter. Numerous doctorates are framed on the walls; a bronze bust and photographs of Nazi victims lie on tabletops. One old copy machine, with paper boxes haphazardly stacked nearby, shows that work somehow gets done in this claustrophobic space.

In Wiesenthal's personal office at the end of the hallway, a large desk is relatively clean, compared to the bookshelves in which there is no rhyme or reason as to the positioning of the books. The ceiling must be ten feet tall. Opposite the desk, is a huge map of Hitler's Third *Reich* occupying the entire wall. On the map yellow Jewish Stars of David show concentrations of Jews in Europe and Russia. The map also shows the location of the extermination camps and the numbers of Jews estimated to have been slaughtered at each location.

"We are here to see Mr. Wiesenthal, ma'am."

Rosemary, who has worked for Simon since 1925 asks, "Does he know you are coming?"

"No, but he will want to see us. We have information of a critical nature for him."

"Thank you, Rosemary. My name is Simon Wiesenthal; how may I help you gentlemen? Today has been quite a remarkable day; just this morning an American infantry colonel came by to visit!"

"Please give us a moment of your time, Mr. Wiesenthal. My name is Dante and this is my friend Virgil. It would take too long to prove our bona fides by words alone and you would still be inclined not to believe us. So let me start with a demonstration. Virgil, begin talking, and after a few seconds, begin traveling forward a few years, but all the while remain standing in your current location. In fact, just start with the first few verses of the poem you wrote in Rome – the *Aeneid*."

“Arma virumque cano – Arms, and the man I sing, who, forc’d by fate, and haughty Juno’s unrelenting hate, expell’d and exil’d, left the Trojan shore. Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore, and in the doubtful war, before he won the Latian realm, and built the destin’d town; his banish’d gods restor’d to rites divine, and settled sure succession in his line, from whence the race of Alban fathers come, And the long glories of majestic Rome.”

“Is that enough, Dante?”

“Yes, Virgil. Now travel back through time so we can see you and while you are at it, tell us the next part of the poem.”

“O Muse! The causes and the crimes relate; what goddess was provok’d, and whence her hate; for what offense the Queen of Heav’n began to persecute so brave, so just a man; involv’d his anxious life in endless cares, éxpos’d to wants, and hurried into wars! Can heav’nly minds such high resentment show, or exercise their spite in human woe?”

“Gentlemen, I need to sit down, please. I am an old man and I have heard and seen something I had never thought possible. That is happening to me more and more as the years go by.”

“We will not take up much of your time, Mr. Wiesenthal. Virgil – as you know doubt now know – is the Virgil of Rome. Publius Vergilius Maro was born on October 15, 70 BC and died on September 21, 19 BC, although the Roman calendar did not show the dates that way. As you know, he is famous for his three major works, the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the epic *Aeneid* – a piece of which he has just recited for you over the last few minutes. You should feel honored, Mr. Wiesenthal. You are the first human being in two thousand years to actually hear this poem from the lips of the author!”

“Then you must be Dante Alighieri, the greatest Italian poet of the Middle Ages. I read your *Divine Comedy*, widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language. I read it in Yiddish, you understand, so I may have missed a little in the translation.”

“Yes, I understand that I have been cursed through the centuries by many a university student in many, many languages! Do not worry! Virgil and I are not here to quiz you, Mr. Wiesenthal, but to seek your help. We have been brought back to life and sent to Earth. We have been sent here by the angel Gabriel. To make a long story short, my own poem *Inferno* was the first part of *The Divine Comedy*. While it is a work of fiction, it was inspired by my own study of the afterlife

in which I concluded that there were, indeed, portals between the current world of the living and the underworld of the dead.”

“After I died, my conclusions were confirmed to me by the angel Gabriel. As he stated, there have always been portals to the underworld, usually at places on Earth, where evil was at its worst. These portals are two-way avenues and allow the demons to come out of Hell to terrorize the living. The portals never go away. It is Gabriel’s belief, told to Virgil, that four new portals were created during the era of the Third *Reich* because of all the evil done during the reign of the Nazis. Reports to Gabriel indicate that two of these portals are at the Landsberg Prison and in Berlin – both here in Germany. The other two are in Auschwitz and Lublin in Poland.”

“It was a terrible place...it was a terrible place.”

“Quick, get Simon a glass of water. He appears to be slipping into a kind of trance.”

“It was a terrible place...it was a terrible place.”

“Here, Mr. Wiesenthal, drink this. It will help you.”

“What is happening Virgil? Is Simon beginning to travel through time as we have been doing?”

“Not with his body, Dante; but definitely his mind has temporarily gone to somewhere long ago – probably to one of those concentration camps.”

“Thank you, gentlemen. Sometimes my old mind slips a little and I drift off to somewhere I have been before. Please continue, before I slip away again.”

“We know the general location of each portal, at least the name of each city. However, we do not know where to look specifically inside these cities. That is why we came to you. Gabriel thought you could point us in the right direction; he did not want to wait for you to die, but did not want to call you home early – so to speak. So here we are!”

“Be sure and thank him for that! Let me think...I would think the locations would be where the Nazis did the most evil in each particular city. It would seem to me that this evil must also be unique. After all, only four portals seem to have been caused by Nazis actions. The Nazis committed crimes all over Europe, so to be one of the four worst places would certainly be unique. At Landsberg, it should be easy to find. Your portal there must be at or near the

Landsberg Prison. Authorities incarcerated Hitler at the Landsberg Prison for several months in 1924. After 1945, almost three hundred war criminals were executed there – so start with the prison. For the other three places, it is hard to say. When all else fails, try and think what is uniquely evil about that location. That is where you will find your portal, gentlemen.”

“You mean the *Sine qua non*, Simon – without which it could not be.”

“Yes, Dante, but it is not as easy to discern as you might think. When looking at evil, you must take the emotion out of it to find its essential characteristic – what makes it unique within its own surroundings. Now may I ask you a question?”

“Yes, certainly, Simon; ask me or Virgil anything you wish.”

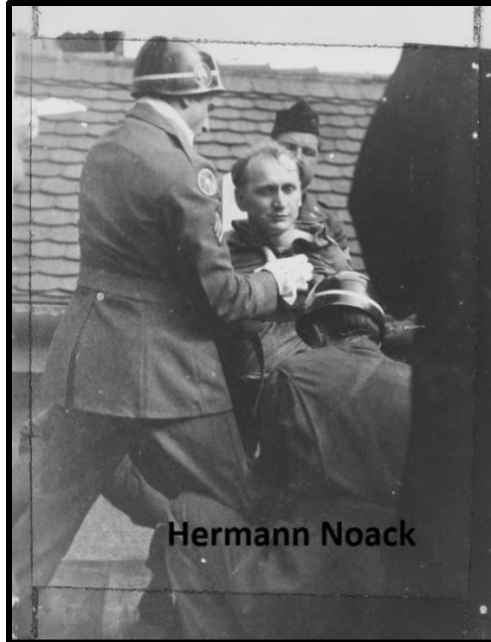
“As you were in Hell once before in your *Divine Comedy*, Dante, I assume that on this trip you and Virgil will visit Hell once again. I also assume that you will see many Nazis in those nine circles of Hell you described. If you see any SS officers that knew me, would you tell them that I am now ninety-five years old, with children and grandchildren?”

“I think we can manage that, Mr. Wiesenthal. Don’t get up, please; we will let ourselves out of your office and by the time we get to the door, your security guard will not even see us.”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha! Have a good search, gentlemen; I wish I were young enough to go with you!”

“Do not worry, Simon. *Aquila non capit muscas* – an eagle doesn't catch flies.”





The Third Circle of Hell – The Allied Airmen Killers



“Dante, while we are taking the train back to Landsberg we will continue our discussion. Certainly being forced to lie forever in the vile slush produced by an icy rain is a terrible fate and we saw that in the original Third Circle of Hell. It is from the sky that this third circle of Hell at Landsberg spawns. Years after your life, man achieved one of his greatest ambitions and learned how to fly. He did not do this with wings, as did the ancient myths describe, but rather with machines that mimicked soaring birds. However, man could not leave well-enough alone and used these machines to bring conflict to the homeland of the enemy during times of war.”

“You see, Dante, every city-state adhered to certain rules regarding these flying machines, one of which was that men who crashed in these apparatuses in enemy territory had certain rights to be treated as honorable prisoners and not be executed. The men in today’s fourth circle of Hell violated those laws and killed many birdmen in cold blood, after they landed. *Pugil est multo fortiori solus quam cum adversario* – The boxer is much braver alone than with an opponent.”

“Yes, Virgil, I understand. War is by nature cruel and bloody even with rational rules applied. As strange as it may seem, without some rules limiting what can and cannot be done, all mankind might sink into the abyss.”

“Dante, you will see the abyss a bit later, my friend. For now, let me provide some examples of vengeance taken against the birdmen. There were 72 criminals in this category, but again we will only look at a few until you get the idea of the nature of their crimes.”

“Seventy-two defendants, convicted of murdering downed Allied fliers, were executed at this Landsberg Prison. The last execution at Landsberg for the crime of murdering a downed airman occurred on February 2, 1949.”

“Police Officer Ernst Müller was born in Zörbig, Saxony on April 6, 1895. In 1912, he entered military service and fought in World War I, beginning in 1914. He began his police career in 1920, rising to the rank of sergeant in the rural police of Altenburg/Saale, near Naumburg, Saxony. During his career, he married and had one child and one grandchild; he also joined the Nazi Party in May 1933.”

“On July 29, 1944, an American aircraft was shot down over Altenburg. The pilot was found by a German civilian. Shortly thereafter, officer Müller arrived on his motorcycle, beat the downed airman and then shot him twice with his service pistol, seriously wounding the American. The two Germans left the scene. According to testimony, a German soldier arrived later, shot the American, Second Lieutenant Robert Dykeman, in the head and robbed him of his personal effects.”

“Advancing American troops arrested Müller on April 12, 1945 at Altenburg, after someone told them what he had done the previous year. The American military tribunal at Ludwigsburg later investigating the case could not exhume the body of the deceased, as it was located in the Soviet zone of occupation, but concluded that Müller had murdered the airman. Ernst Müller was executed by hanging at Landsberg Prison on Tuesday, June 10, 1947. His remains were buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #192.”

“Were the Americans certain that Müller killed the birdman, Virgil?”

“I believe so, Dante. On the scaffold, just before he was hanged, Müller said that he was only doing his duty. He knew what he had done. This next case also involves two more birdman killers.”

“Paul Rübsamen was born in Daaden bei Siegen, Rhineland-Palatinate, on May 17, 1905. He attended grade school and became a miner, working in a copper shale mine near Nentershausen, east of Bad Hersfeld. He went into the military in February 1943, serving in a transport unit, the 9th Driver Replacement and Training Detachment in Fulda. Rübsamen was married with five children. On September 27, 1944, Rübsamen

was home on leave, when he saw several Americans parachuting to safety from their damaged aircraft. He rushed over and placed them under arrest. Minutes later, several other Germans arrived. Rübsamen then began shooting, striking the American in the back of the head, which killed him. Mine inspector Paul Winkler began to shoot as well. Other Germans later buried the two dead Americans in the Nentershausen cemetery.”

“American military police arrested Rübsamen on August 4, 1945. He and Paul Winkler were tried by an American military tribunal, which had the forensic evidence from the exhumed victims, and sentenced to death. Paul Rübsamen was hanged at Landsberg Prison on Tuesday, July 15, 1947. His remains rest in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #265. Paul Winkler was hanged at the prison on Tuesday, August 5, 1947. At the request of his family, authorities sent Winkler’s remains to Munich.”

“Friedrich Hildebrandt served as the *Gauleiter* of Mecklenburg. He was born in Kiekindemark bei Parchim, in Mecklenburg, on September 19, 1898. He attended grade school and then became a laborer for the railroad. In 1916, he entered the Army and served on the Western Front. The next year, he was seriously injured in a French poison gas attack at Flanders. During his time in combat, Hildebrandt won the Iron Cross 2nd Class and the Mecklenburg Service Cross 1st Class.”

Returning to Germany after the war, Friedrich Hildebrandt served in *Freikorps von Brandis*, fighting Communists and revolutionaries in the Baltic and Silesia. Serving as a non-commissioned officer, Hildebrandt spent a short time in a Russian prison camp. He returned to Halle, Germany and joined the security police. After leaving the police, he dabbled in right-wing politics, before joining the Nazi Party on February 1, 1925. As an early party member, he held membership number 3653.

“He became an early ally of Gregor Strasser, a party leader and on March 22, 1925, was named *Gauleiter*. He was relieved of his duties by Hitler for one year, but regained his position in 1931. An American military tribunal at Dachau convicted him of promulgating an order for Mecklenburg to shoot down Allied airmen. Friedrich Hildebrandt was hanged at Landsberg Prison on Friday, November 5, 1948. His last words were, ‘Captain, for twenty-six years I have been fighting against the Bolsheviks out of deep conviction, as a Mecklenburg farmer. They have sentenced me to death, but American marine soldiers delivered me from them. I am a victim, not of your courts, but of Communist elements who made statements against me. Since my home is in the Russian zone, I was not able to get all the material for my defense. God, protect my family and my poor five children.’ His remains were buried the same day in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #407.”

“Ah, I see that we have arrived at Landsberg. Let us walk to the prison and I will continue with our story.”



“Virgil, what were these *Gauleiter*? Did they have anything to do with the map you showed me?”

“Dante, Germany, like every other country, had cities. The next larger geographic area was a district. Most districts had several cities, towns and villages. Larger still were what the Germans called a *land*. Bavaria was a *land*, so was Baden-Württemberg, Saxony and so forth. Other countries called a *land*, a state, region or province. Italy, for example has twenty regions, such as Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto. Each of these levels in Germany had political officials that helped run things.”

“When the Nazis started their march to power, they created party districts that they called *Gau*. Each *Gau* had a leader, thus *Gauleiter*. Look back at the map I first showed you. There were usually several *Gau* in each state of Germany. Bavaria had parts of six *Gau* in it, for example. The *Gauleiter* were in charge of all Nazi Party functions in their area; they were very powerful men and usually had been in the Nazi Party a long time. They had to swear unconditional personal loyalty to the *Führer* and were directly answerable to him.”

“How many different *Gau* were there, Virgil?”

“I believe there were sixty-seven, Dante, but some of these were created as Germany expanded and took in Austria and parts of other countries. Many of the people, secretly of course, referred to the *Gauleiter* as “golden pheasants.” It was a very derogatory term that derived from the brown and red uniforms with golden insignia worn at official functions and rallies by *Gauleiter* and senior Nazi officials that resembled the brilliant colors of male pheasants. If a *Gauleiter* knew a person called him that, he would have that person thrown into a concentration camp.”

“It looks as though this next man was not a *Gauleiter*.”

Hermann Noack was born on June 4, 1912 in Duisberg. He graduated from grade school and became an apprentice shoemaker in Bad Freienwalde. In 1931, he joined the military and later transferred to the *Luftwaffe* – the German Air Force. He was involved in a serious accident, a concussion, and subsequent fits of epilepsy, and invalided out of the service for two years, but then he returned to active duty. He became a paratrooper and fought in the Battle of Crete and

later in Russia. He made two combat parachute jumps – at Corinth, Greece, and Crete with the 2nd Regiment of the 1st *Fallschirmjäger* Division. One source states that he was also recruited by Otto Skorzeny in 1943 to liberate deposed Italian dictator Benito Mussolini from a mountain prison in an airborne commando operation.

“On September 27, 1944, a B-24H heavy bomber (Nr. 41-28922) “Texas Rose” in the 701st Bomb Squadron in the 445th Bomb Group was returning from a bombing mission over Kassel. Near Bad Hersfeld, German *Luftwaffe* fighter planes attacked the aircraft, shooting it down. One by one, the crew bailed out; the pilotless plane later crashed near Schiffenberg bei Giessen. At the time, Captain Hermann Noack was serving as the commander of a *Luftwaffe* airbase at Ettingshausen, twenty miles east of Giessen. Grabbing another man, Noack drove to the village of Hattenrod, where he observed the downed aircraft and one of the American crewmen. Driving the American to a nearby wood to look for his parachute, in the forest, Captain Noack shot and killed the flier with his pistol. The two Germans found another airman and killed him as well.”

“The two Americans were Staff Sergeant Ferdinand E. Flach, the nose turret gunner, and Staff Sergeant Lee R.J. Huffman, a waist gunner. An American military tribunal at Dachau, in a five-day trial, convicted Noack of murder and sentenced him to death on August 14, 1946.”

During his prison stay, Noack was often loud and disruptive. Displaying schizophrenic symptoms (he had already left a suicide note,) he was kept at the prison hospital instead of a holding cell. The crafty Noack fasted for several weeks, losing enough weight that he was able to slip through a window grate, climb over a wall and escape into the Bavarian countryside in November 1946. He made his way to Hof, Bavaria, close to the border between the American and Russian occupation zones. Attempting to cross into the Russian zone, Hermann Noack was wounded in the leg by German police. Doctors at the hospital in Hof found the wound so serious that they had to amputate his leg. He returned to the prison hospital shortly before his death.

“First Lieutenant Joseph Williams, the assistant commandant at Landsberg, went to the hospital and told Noack they were taking him back to his cell. As they approached a split in the corridor, where one way led to the cells and the other to what was known as the dungeon, Noack realized his execution was near and began to scream and rebel, which continued all night.”

“On Friday, March 27, 1947, Hermann Noack was hanged at Landsberg Prison. Company E, 26th Infantry Regiment in the 1st Infantry Division marched to the execution area and faced the twin gallows; the scaffold on the left would soon see use. First Lieutenant Williams came to the dungeon cell at 9:00 a.m. to escort Noack to the gallows. Perched high on his bed, Noack hurled himself headfirst onto the commode,

which caused a large gash on his head and knocked him senseless. Guards placed him on a stretcher and a physician periodically administered smelling salts to the prisoner to keep him conscious, while two guards carried the stretcher in the death march toward the gallows.”

“At the scaffold, guards strapped Hermann Noack to a brace board and held him upright on the center of the trap doors. The executioner, Staff Sergeant Richard Norwood, placed the black hood over his head and the noose, with thirteen knots, around his neck. Norwood tightened the noose, placed his left hand on the release lever and pulled it towards him, releasing the trap doors. Noack hurtled downward. At 9:36 a.m., he was pronounced dead; an autopsy was conducted later. Noack was buried at 1:00 p.m. on March 30. The burial was attended by the prison commandant, First Lieutenant Williams, a U.S. Army chaplain, a German minister and the widow of the deceased. Hermann Noack’s remains are at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #157. Sergeant Flach and Sergeant Huffman, the dead airmen, were reburied at the American War Cemetery at Margraten, Netherlands.”

“This Noack was a tough man, Virgil. Crete was famous in my day as a nest of sea pirates; they were a hard people and gave the civilized nations fits.”

“Yes, Dante, the paratroopers were soldiers who jumped out of airplanes with their weapons and attacked the enemy, once they landed on the ground. However, descending in a parachute was so dangerous, that many paratroopers died in the attempt.”

“Therefore, Virgil, it sounds that if a birdman was coming down in a parachute with a weapon after jumping out of an airplane, and he wanted to fight you when he landed, then it was all right to kill him. However, if a birdman was coming down in a parachute with a weapon after jumping out of an airplane, and he did not want to fight you when he landed, then it was not all right to kill him. *Confusa sum* – I am confused.”

“All war is confusing, Dante. However, it is less confusing if you win and more confusing if you lose. And if you lose and your side has done horrible things during the war, it may get very ugly for you – particularly if you did ugly things yourself.”

“Virgil, here is another one of the birdmen killers. Justus Gerstenberg was a house painter, born on September 6, 1897. He served in World War I; in 1931 he joined the country police force, rising to be a police sergeant. Gerstenberg was married and had three sons. During an American air raid at Kassel in August 1944, an American, Sergeant Willard M. Holden, a tail gunner in a B-17 of the 91st Bomb Group, jumped

out of his damaged aircraft and floated to earth under his parachute, near Gut Freudenthal. With injuries to his left hand and foot, the airman lay on his back, as Police Sergeant Gerstenberg approached on his motorcycle.”

“According to trial records, Virgil, Gerstenberg drew his service pistol and shot the American between the eyes, killing him. The following day, Gerstenberg ordered a German civilian to bury the body, saying the American had succumbed to his wounds. An American military tribunal weighed the evidence at Ludwigsburg, Germany on January 21, 1946, and sentenced Justus Gerstenberg to death for murder. At the trial, Gerstenberg stated that he was aware of orders in his district to kill all downed enemy fliers and that he was afraid in this situation not to do so.”

“At 8:00 a.m. on a warm, sunny Thursday, September 12, 1946, Master Sergeant John Woods – assisted by Private First Class Joseph Malta – hanged Justus Gerstenberg here at the Landsberg Prison. No spectators, reporters or photographers were present. His remains were buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #127. His family later requested that his remains be transferred. Prison authorities stated that a zinc coffin was required for such a transfer; after many difficulties, the family obtained one and in 1947, they buried Gerstenberg in a new grave.”

“But the story does not end there, Dante. During the funeral, a strange man came to the graveside. He informed Gerstenberg’s son that the body of his father was not in the coffin and had not been transferred. Sergeant Willard Holden was reinterred after the war at the American War Cemetery Ardennes at Neupré, Belgium.”

“My God, Virgil! What happened to Gerstenberg’s body?”

“It is a mystery that may never be solved, Dante. Gerstenberg was a small fish; certainly the Americans were not worried that his remains would become a rallying point for any new form of Nazism. It was probably just a clerical error and the workers at the prison cemetery could not find the actual remains and just threw some dirt in the coffin to approximate the weight, so they would not have to search further for the correct gravesite.”

“This is nothing new, Dante. A Prussian military officer back in the 1800s, Carl Clausewitz, wrote a famous book about war and discussed the confusion that permeates all aspects of conflict and makes the simple often very hard to accomplish. That is probably what happened here, not some complex conspiracy to hide bodies.”

“Errare est humanum – to make a mistake is human.”

“But, enough trivia, Dante; we must first find the portal from the underworld here at Landsberg. Let us walk over to the prison first and look there.”



“Virgil, here we are. I would say that there could be two places, where the portal might be – Hitler’s old jail cell and the areas where the Nazi war criminals met their deaths by hanging and firing squad. This is Hitler’s cell; it used to be a shrine for German children during the Third *Reich*. After the war, it faded back into obscurity. We can see that there is no portal here, even though some would argue that *Mein Kampf* was an evil book, maybe the most evil of all time.”

“Yes, Dante; there is no portal here. Let us walk over to the three execution sites, although I am starting to have my doubts whether the portals are there either.”



“Here we are in the old locksmith building, where the last of the Nazi criminals met their end in 1951. There is no portal here, nor did we see any portal as we walked by the site of the dual gallows in 1946 and 1947. What should we do now, Virgil?”

“Let’s go back to the cemetery. Now I am sure that my first hunch was right, and the portal is there.”



“Here we are, Dante. Look around; pull on the crosses to see if any is a release catch of some kind that causes a hidden door or fissure to open in the ground.”

“Nothing is here, Virgil. Wait – look at that compost heap in the corner, where old flowers and wreathes placed on the graves over the years have accumulated. Here it is! I can see bat-like shapes fluttering in the semi-darkness below. I feel the up-rushing air and smell the evil stench. The portal is here because of the critical mass of so many Nazi war criminals buried at this one site. That mass overcame the purity of the consecrated ground, even though long ago a Bishop sprinkled holy water on the site, sanctifying it as a resting place for the bodies of the faithful. ‘God’s Acre’

was not strong enough to repel the combined wickedness of these hundreds of evil men. Look deep down here, Virgil! See the red glare and the pair of evil eyes!"

"Let us get away from here immediately, and go back to the prison where it is much safer. We know where this portal is located, and I can tell Gabriel about it."





The Fourth Circle of Hell – The Unrepentant Killers

“Remember, Dante, those whose attitude toward material goods far exceeded any rationality. They hoarded their possessions or squandered them and thus reside in the Fourth Circle of Hell. They were forced to push great weights, such as boulders, to pay for their sins. Were hoarding and squandering the only sins here at Landsberg; alas, they would not receive even an honorable mention amongst this group of current miscreants. Though the condemned men here committed unspeakable crimes, many went to their deaths unrepentant – claiming that their accusers were the ones to blame for Germany’s recent misfortunes, not themselves. The avaricious of your day in the fourth circle of Hell have been moved out and replaced by these, the unrepentant.”

“Being unrepentant was not a crime during the war; the men in this category were drawn from the condemned in the other circles of Hell. While we cannot go inside the souls of these men to determine their true feelings, each man received a moment before his death to utter his final words. The Americans diligently recorded these last statements and it is from those reports that we draw some examples here. However, you have a unique opportunity to listen to a few of them first hand, Dante, as they stand upon the gallows.”

“*SS-Gruppenführer* Dr. Karl Brandt was born on January 8, 1904 in Mühlhausen. He studied at numerous universities, before receiving his degrees from the University of Dresden and the University of Berlin. After rising through the ranks of the SS, in which he joined in 1934, he became a personal physician to Adolf Hitler in 1934 and held the position of *Reich* Commissioner for Health and Sanitation. In 1939, Brandt assumed a

leading role in the 74 Nazi Euthanasia Program that killed tens of thousands of Germans that suffered from serious mental illnesses, birth defects and other costly long-term medical conditions.”

“He also performed abortions on large numbers of women who were determined to be genetic risks. At the end of the war, a Nazi Court of Honor convicted Brandt of defeatism and high treason, sentencing him to death, but he avoided this punishment as the war ended soon thereafter.”

“Oh, he is so terrible Virgil! I see where the ‘Doctors’ Trial’ at Nürnberg in 1947 convicted Dr. Karl Brandt of crimes against humanity, the most serious charges included participation in medical experiments on concentration camp inmates that included freezing experiments, malaria, sea-water tests, sterilization, typhus, and jaundice experiments, as well as bone, nerve, and muscle regeneration of wounded patients. He also personally gave lethal injections to six patients in the earlier euthanasia program.”

On Wednesday, June 2, 1948, he was hanged at the Landsberg Prison. Brandt’s unrepentant last words on the gallows were, “It is no shame to stand upon this scaffold. This is nothing but political revenge. I have served my Fatherland as others before me.” Authorities transferred Brandt’s remains to Marienheide in Northrhine-Westfalia at the request of his family.

“Tell me more about this Nazi euthanasia program, Virgil.”

“The Nazis came to power in 1933, Dante. Within days, they started discussing measures for the forced sterilization for people who had hereditary diseases, so that these diseases would not be passed on to future generations – forced meant that the patient had no say; the government would determine who would be sterilized. That law was made public a few months later and almost immediately, the Catholic Church in Germany voiced opposition to it. However, this did not stop the Nazis and two years later, they passed another law.”

“This legalized abortion in the cases of pregnancy, where either the mother or father suffered from a hereditary disease. Again, the Catholic Church opposed the law and again the Nazi Party refused to retreat. At first, the Nazis determined that schizophrenia, epilepsy, Huntington’s chorea, and imbecility were hereditary, but later they expanded this, and sterilization also became mandated for chronic alcoholism and behaviors they described as social deviance.”

“Silent enim leges inter arma – Virgil – Laws are silent in times of war. This law could have included just about anyone if you make the definition large enough!”

“Exactly, Dante, but even with this draconian decree, the Nazis wanted more. In 1938, Viktor Brack – you will meet him later – said that many Germans with relatives who had incurable mental diseases were petitioning Hitler for permission to introduce mercy killings. Hitler slow-rolled this subject for a while, as Germany had just annexed Austria in the *Anschluss* and the Catholic Church was more powerful in Austria than in Germany. Meanwhile, the Nazis sterilized 360,000 people between 1933 and 1939. I will tell you more about this program later. Here comes an especially vile man that we need to hear as he says his last words. Pay careful attention to this one, Dante.”

SS-Obergruppenführer August Eigruber hailed from Steyr, Austria, where he was born April 16, 1907. Although he held a significant rank in the SS, in which he joined in 1938, his primary accomplishments were in conjunction with the Nazi Party, in which he served as *Gauleiter* of Upper Austria and *Gauleiter* of the Upper Danube. Eigruber was trained as a survey technician and was employed as a mechanic at the Steyr-Werke factory.

Joining the Nazi Party on April 18, 1928, Eigruber received the Nazi Golden Party Badge and the Knights Cross of the War Service Cross during the war. American troops captured Eigruber at Salzkammergut, Austria on May 8, 1945. Eigruber was tried by an American military tribunal at Dachau and convicted of war crimes associated with the Mauthausen concentration camp – specifically, that he helped establish the Gusen facility in May 1940 and that he witnessed several mass executions there. He founded the Ebensee sub-camp of Mauthausen in November 1943 and was a frequent visitor to the euthanasia center at Hartheim, Austria.

“August Eigruber was associated with the terrible concentration camp in which Simon Wiesenthal was a prisoner. The court sentenced him to death on May 13, 1946. August Eigruber was executed by hanging on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg.”

Standing on the gallows, his final words were, “Lord, take care of Germany. Lord, take care of my family. Lord, take care of my children. I regard it as an honor to be hanged by the most brutal of victors. Long live Germany.” August Eigruber’s remains were transferred to Efferdingen bei Linz, Austria at the request of his family.

“You will see that the hanging of August Eigruber did not go well after this point. Maybe it was his unrepentant last words. The executioner slipped the black hood over Eigruber’s head and noose around his neck, tightened it and pulled the trap door lever. Eigruber plunged through the opening and into the lower portion of the scaffold that was concealed from the outside by canvas walls. The condemned man swung at the bottom of the taut rope, but did not have a broken neck, so continued moving.”

“According to eyewitness reports, the hangman then ordered several American guards to go under the scaffold and clog Eigruber’s mouth and nose with cotton wool so that

he would suffocate. Apparently, the guards refused, and Polish auxiliary guards finally followed the order, undoubtedly taking their own sweet time to do so.”

“It was a grisly death, Virgil...a real circus there, when Eigruber did not die right away. I was waiting for an officer, perhaps a captain or a major, to have given the appropriate orders to the executioner, to go under the scaffold and either suffocate the condemned man or pull down hard on his legs until his neck broke.”

“Dante, you are becoming positively blood-thirsty! You must be associating with too many unsavory characters lately, yours truly, excluded.”

“*Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*, Virgil – Kill them. For the Lord knows those who are his.”

“Well, we can do nothing about that, Dante, as we meet the next of our unrepentant war criminals.”

A dentist, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Dr. Wilhelm Henkel was born on June 14, 1909 in Odenhausen. During the war, he served as an SS dentist at the Mauthausen concentration camp from 1941 to 1943. Dr. Henkel then transferred to the 3rd SS Division *Totenkopf* and subsequently served in the 11th SS Division *Nordland*. He was convicted of crimes against humanity (specifically extracting dental gold from corpses in the gas chamber and crematoria complex) and executed by hanging on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg. Wilhelm Henkel is buried in Offenbach.

“Dante, listen to Henkel’s last words standing on the gallows.” “Please Lord, watch over Erna and Gieschen. I request a re-brief of my sentence for the sake of my relatives in the States. America entered the war on a mission of justice. My sentence is unjust. I am innocent. I did not kill anybody. Once more, I ask for a postponement of my sentence.”

“But, Virgil, that man did not die right away either; I could see him moving just a little behind the black curtain.”

“According to the Americans, Dante, hanging does not immediately kill a man; however, in a correct hanging, the condemned loses all consciousness and feeling the instant the large coils of the noose snap his neck. At this moment, his brain is no longer connected by nerves from his body and his respiration stops. Complete cessation of his heartbeat occurs within eight to twelve minutes after he drops; physicians officially determine he is dead at that point. During those eight to twelve minutes, he does not choke or gasp, although he may have bitten off his tongue or lost control of his bowels when his neck snapped, but the Americans believed he would not be aware of either

malady. I guess, however, that when you see Dr. Henkel later in Hell you may ask him what he felt.”

“Virgil, I am starting to faint, myself. Might I be able to have a bit of that Riesling wine you showed me earlier? Aah, that is better.”

SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr. Willi Jobst, born October 27, 1912 in Eger (now known as Cheb in the Czech Republic), served as an SS doctor at the Gross-Rosen and Mauthausen concentration camps. Prior to his assignment at the camps, Jobst served in the 1st SS Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, where he was wounded.

“In the ‘Mauthausen Process,’ Dr. Willi Jobst was convicted of crimes against humanity – specifically as the camp doctor at the Ebensee sub-camp of Mauthausen from May 1944 to March 1945, where he killed inmates through lethal injection and by starvation – and was executed by hanging at 10:57 a.m. on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg. Dante, listen to Henkel’s last words standing on the gallows. ‘Pastor, give my regards to my family. What happens here is murder – murder by order.’”

Post-death photos show that the rope cut through the front of his throat at the moment of death. Dr. Willi Jobst was buried the same day in Grave #309 at the *Spöttinger Friedhof*.

SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Joachim Mrugowsky was born in Rathenow in Brandenburg province on August 15, 1905; his father died early in World War I. He received his doctorate degree at the University of Halle. Early in the war, he served briefly in the 2nd SS Division *Das Reich*, before becoming the chief of the *Waffen-SS* Institute of Hygiene. Evidence later showed that Dr. Mrugowsky conducted medical experiments at the Belsen concentration camp. He also coordinated medical experiments on inmates at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp; these procedures included biological warfare tests and effects of poisoned bullets.

“*SS-Brigadeführer* Dr. Joachim Mrugowsky was convicted of crimes against humanity at the Nürnberg Doctor’s Trial and executed by hanging at Landsberg Prison on Wednesday, June 2, 1948. Dante, listen to Mrugowsky’s last words before his execution, ‘I take my death as a German officer, sentenced by a brutal foe, knowing that the crimes committed by him will be accounted for one day. I feel no hatred against the man who led me to this scaffold. My last thoughts go to my family and to my German Fatherland, which one-day should raise from the ruins and become a nation among the nations of the Europeans. I pray to God to grant my desire. Into his hands I lay my fate.’” His remains were transferred to Munich at his family’s request.

“Virgil, it seems that most of these men were shaped in some way by World War I. What was it about this fighting that so influenced them?”

“It was not the war itself, Dante, although many men lost their lives on both sides. It was the way it ended that many Germans could not stomach. The German Army began the war in 1914 quite victorious and by 1917 Germany had knocked Russia, one of their three major enemies, out of the war. The Germans then transferred many more men to the Western Front, to crush France and Britain, once and for all. However, America jumped in the war on the side of the French and the British, known in my day as Gaul and Britannia, sending millions of men to the Western Front as well.”

“Finally, in the spring of 1918 Germany launched one more great attack to crush France, but the Allies hung on. Meanwhile, riots broke out in Germany, inspired by food shortages and exacerbated by German left wing elements that wanted an end to the war and the overthrow of *Kaiser* Wilhelm II. The German Army began to collapse in August. The *Kaiser* agreed to accept parliamentary government in September. The German Navy revolted in October. Wilhelm II abdicated on November 9; and Germany signed an armistice, formally ending the war.”

“But countries lose wars all the time. What was so different about this one, Virgil?”

“It was what happened after the conflict that made it so different, Dante. No other event in German history had been as destructive, other than perhaps the Thirty Years’ War. Germany lost a large amount of land in both west and east. The vindictive terms of the armistice forced Germany to shrink its armed forces and pay huge reparations to the victors. Germans felt betrayed by their former enemies and most of all by the enemies within Germany. Thus began the ‘stab in the back legend.’ The Germans came to believe that due to the revolution back home, the German Army was forced to relinquish territory, while it still occupied land owned by its opponents.”

“Additionally, the upheaval throughout Germany prevented the German military from establishing a firm defensive line on the frontiers of the *Reich*, which could have resulted in a negotiated peace, which would have been much more favorable for them. The ‘stab in the back’ theory went on to opine that the German government became so concerned with internal strife that it could not concentrate on the peace settlement.”

“A second version of the theory was even more radical – its believers were convinced that but for the traitors at home, the Jews, the left-wing, the war profiteers and the members of the Weimar Republic that was established in 1919 to replace the imperial form of government, Germany actually would have won the war. Almost everyone in Germany believed it and greeted the German Army returning to the fatherland after the conflict with the phrase, ‘Unconquered in the field!’”

“I see now what happened, Virgil. All the Nazis later had to do was to say that this group or that was part of the traitors at home and almost anything could be done to them, because the hatred was so great.”

“Here are three more real scum that you need to see die, if only to reaffirm that sometimes justice is done. Former commandant of the Dachau concentration camp, *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Alex Piorkowski was another unrepentant killer. Born on October 11, 1904 in Bremen, he served consecutively at the Sachsenburg, Lichtenburg and Dachau concentration camps. He was convicted of crimes against humanity and executed by hanging on Friday, October 22, 1948 at Landsberg Prison. Piorkowski’s last words on the scaffold were, ‘Long live Germany, long live my family. My son, take revenge for me. I am ready. Farewell; father.’ Authorities transferred the remains of Alex Piorkowski to Munich at the request of his family.”

“*SS-Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl was one of the most significant figures in the entire SS. Born on June 30, 1892 in Duisburg – the son of a blacksmith – he rose to be the chief of the Economic and Administrative Central Office of the SS that oversaw the economic aspects of the concentration camps. During World War I, Pohl served as a sailor in the German Navy, winning the Iron Cross 2nd Class. After that conflict, Pohl served in various *Freikorps* paramilitary forces fighting Communists in Germany and neighboring eastern neighbors. Well decorated, he received the Nazi Golden Party Badge, German Cross in Silver, and the Knights Cross of the War Service Cross.”

“An American military tribunal convicted Pohl of crimes against humanity, specifically directing the processing of the remains or murdered Jews and for crimes committed in concentration camps. He was executed by hanging at Landsberg Prison at 1:25 a.m. on Thursday, June 7, 1951. Standing on the scaffold, Pohl uttered, ‘As one of the senior SS leaders I had never expected to be left unmolested. No more, however, did I expect a death sentence. It is a sentence of retribution.’ Oswald Pohl is buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #420.”

SS-Oberführer Dr. Hans Trummler, convicted of killing downed American airmen, was born on October 24, 1900 in Friedrichsroda, Thuringia. In World War I, he served in the 104th Infantry Regiment. He later became a lawyer, graduating from the University of Leipzig and worked in the banking industry. During the war, Trummler served in *Einsatzkommando von Woyrsch* in Poland in 1939 and as the Commander of the Security Police in Metz. He also served as the commander of the Security Police School in Fürstenberg. He also worked at the RSHA Headquarters in Office I B 3 (Personnel.) Beginning in 1944, he became the Commander of the Security Police in Wiesbaden and the Commander of the Security Police in the Rhein-Westmark district. During the war, Trummler was the winner of Nazi Golden Party Badge and the Iron Cross 2nd Class.

“*SS-Oberführer* Dr. Hans Trummler was convicted of war crimes before an American military tribunal on April 21, 1947 and sentenced to death. Dr. Trummler was executed by hanging on Friday, October 22, 1948 at Landsberg. His last words were, ‘My last greetings are for my dear old mother, my dear wife, Gertrud, and my dear children. I do not die as a criminal but because I am a German. I am ready.’ The remains of Dr. Hans Trummler were buried the same day at *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #228.”

“Virgil, wait a moment, please. All these men, who’s last words I have just heard as we are watching their final moments on the gallows, had been members of the same particular group. Just what was this SS organization?”

“The SS, Dante, was an abbreviation for *Schutzstaffel*, translated as Protective Squadron. It began in 1925 as a small permanent guard unit made up of Nazi Party volunteers to provide security for Nazi Party meetings in Munich. The SS, under the command of Heinrich Himmler, grew in size and power due to its exclusive loyalty to Adolf Hitler, who would become the leader of Nazi Germany. During the 1930s, the organization took over more and more internal state security functions, becoming the most-feared organization in all of Germany. The SS, clad in their jet-black uniforms – also stressed total loyalty and obedience to orders unto death.”

“As the war began, Hitler used the SS in attempt to kill every Jew in Europe, as well as other ethnic groups the Nazis deemed enemies of the state, to include gypsies and many Slavic people. As the war progressed, dozens of SS divisions operated alongside the regular German Army on almost every military front. However, by the final stages of the war, the SS came to dominate the Army in order to eliminate perceived threats to Adolf Hitler's power, while implementing his strategies of conquering living space for Germans in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Nazis regarded the SS as an elite unit, the party’s ‘Praetorian Guard,’ and initially all SS personnel were selected on the principles of racial purity and loyalty to the Nazi Party.”

“In fact, in the early days of the SS, officer candidates had to prove German ancestry to 1750 and that they had no Jewish ancestors. When an SS officer wanted to marry, he had to submit papers showing that his fiancé was also Aryan, with no Jewish ancestors. This was so important that Heinrich Himmler had the final say on all officer marriages! Their official motto of the organization was *Meine Ehre heißt Treue* – My Honor is Loyalty.”

“Virgil, you keep talking about divisions; I assume this is a military term?”

“Yes, Dante; recall that in my day, the Roman Army had *centuriae* of 100 men, *manipuli* of 200 men, *cohortis* of 600 men and *legionis* of 6,000 men. A division in this modern war was between two and three *legionis*.”

“That is indeed quite huge, Virgil. So the SS was like a Knight’s Templar organization, such as we had in the Crusades, only evil?”

“Yes, Dante, in fact, Himmler modeled the self-sacrifice of the SS on that shown long ago by the Templars, but other than that, the two organizations were as different as – well, Heaven and Hell! But it is Hell we are discussing here, so let us get back to another unrepentant doctor. Listen to his final words.”

“Serving as an SS pharmacist at the Mauthausen concentration camp from 1941 to 1944, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Erich Wasicky was born at Vienna, Austria on May 27, 1911. After camp service, Wasicky joined the 20th SS Division. An American military tribunal convicted him on May 13, 1946 of convicted of crimes against humanity, specifically implementing *Zyklon B* poison to kill inmates at Mauthausen and at the Hartheim euthanasia center. He also invented the gas van used there, which killed prisoners confined in the rear cargo hold by exhaust gas.”

On July 26, 1946, he commented on his time at Mauthausen saying, “I personally had absolutely no command function, but my sole duty consisted of taking proper care of the medical supplies.” He also made the statement: “The grateful smiles of all those poor people, however, was my most gratifying responsibility and at the same time the reward.”

“Wasicky was executed by hanging on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. His last words were, ‘Farewell comrades, we’ll meet again. What happens here is murder of justice; for myself I can forgive you, but I cannot forgive you for the suffering of my wife and family.’ Authorities transferred the remains of Erich Wasicky to Munich.”

“I was a pharmacist as well, Virgil. I did not intend to practice as one, you understand, but a law required that all nobles who wanted public office had to be enrolled in one of the *Corporazioni delle Arti e dei Mestieri*, so I obtained admission to the apothecaries’ guild. What one will do to seek political office!”

SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Waldemar Wolter hailed from Würzburg; he was born on May 19, 1908. Wolter served as an SS physician at six different concentration camps – Dachau, Buchenwald, Hinzert, Herzogenbusch, Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen. For his service at these locations, he received the War Service Cross 1st Class. Wolter was convicted of crimes against

humanity in the first Mauthausen Camp Trial, held at Dachau between March 29 and May 13, 1946.

“Dr. Waldemar Wolter specifically was implicated in prisoner deaths at the Mauthausen camp hospital and in selecting prisoners for the gas chamber. Of course, in reality he also did terrible things at Dachau, Buchenwald, Hinzert, Herzogenbusch, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps as well. Dr. Wolter was executed by hanging on May 28, 1947 at Landsberg; his final words were, ‘Here goes power before justice. May the Lord save my Fatherland from future rape.’ Prison authorities transferred the remains to Munich.”

“You know Virgil, unrepentant murders were buried alive in my time.”

“Civilized men in these modern days would consider that barbaric, Dante.”

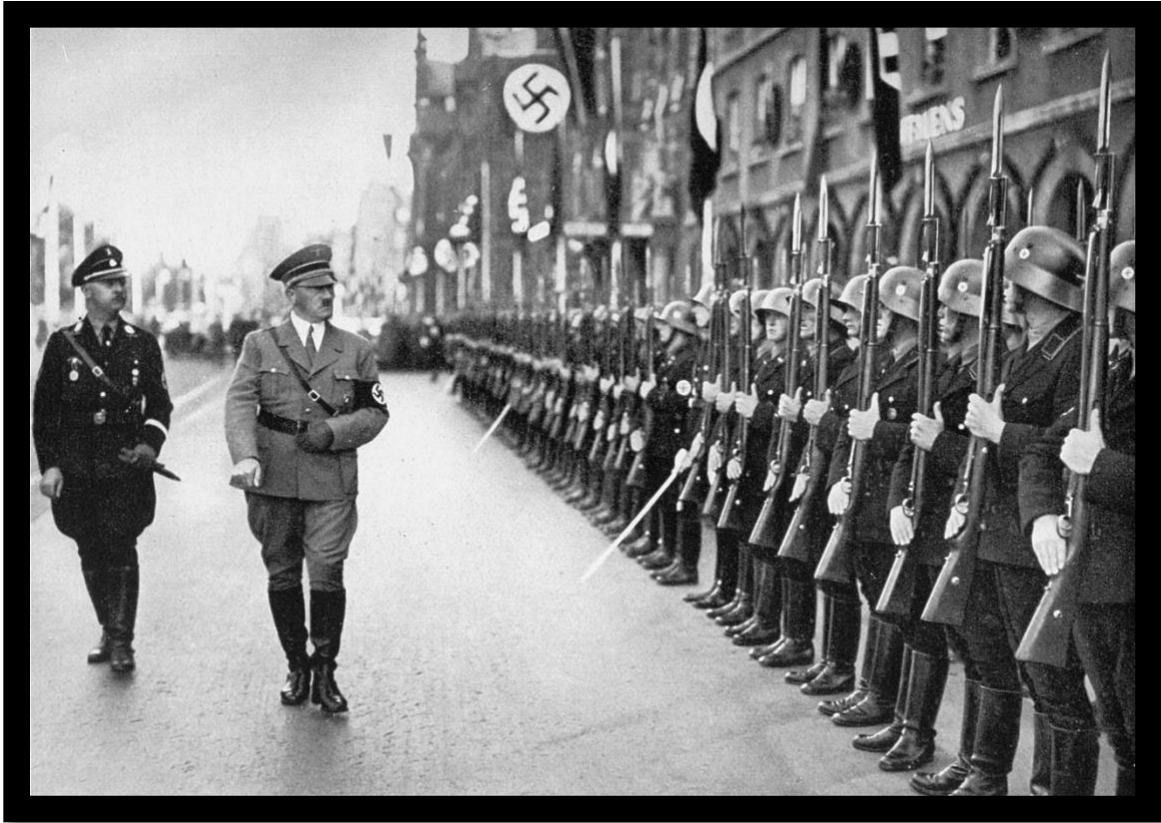
“Perhaps so, Virgil, but it seems that these SS perpetrators were barbarians in their own right and deserved nothing better.”

“What one deserves and what one receives are not always the same, Dante. During the Third *Reich*, the Germans had a fashionable saying: *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* – One People, One Nation, One Leader. It was a unifying phrase at the time that meant, “we’re all in this together,” the modern-day Germanic tribe unifying as one power, under one overall supreme leader. *Germaniae est imperare orbi universo* – It is Germany’s destiny to rule the whole world. Can an entire nation be held guilty for the crimes of the leaders and their fanatics? If you believe that a nation, indeed, goes to war together and has joint designs on a future in which they rule over others, perhaps the whole country and its people subsequently can be held guilty.”

“Virgil, there you go contemplating the fate of nations, while I am having a difficult enough time watching man after man drop to their deaths through the trap door. Sometimes I think I can even hear their necks snap, while at other times, I know I am hearing them choke behind that black curtain. I am still a little shaken from this latest visit to the prison. May we go back to the cemetery and rest a bit, while we contemplate what we have heard and seen here on the scaffold. I know that my nightmares of what I have seen here will haunt me for weeks.”

“Whatever you wish, Dante. As for me, I believe I will first visit a local *Metzgerei* and *Bäckerei*, where I shall buy some liverwurst, yellow sausage, and several types of cheeses at the first place and some wonderful bread rolls, at the second, to make a

delightful lunch, to go with this fine bottle of Gewürztraminer wine. *Dulcia somnia* – sweet dreams!”





The Fifth Circle of Hell – The Concentration Camp Killers

“Recall, Dante, that Fifth Circle of Hell so long ago. In the muddy, foul and swamp-like water of the River Styx, with Phlegyas as our boatman, we saw the wrathful and the angry fight each other on the current’s surface, while the sullen lay gurgling beneath – never to find joy.”

“Yes, Virgil, it was one of the most terrifying venues in all of Hell, one that I should never want to visit again.”

“But visit it we must, Dante, and your words lead us now to the fifth circle of Hell today – the circle populated by the ‘Camp Men,’ the Nazis who operated the concentration camps, where thousands were confined like animals and millions died.”

“What did they do in these camps, Virgil?”

“They did many things, Dante, all of them evil. Let me try to recap. These camps were used to incarcerate the opponents of the régime; in that respect, they were used to frighten other Germans, as no one wanted to be sent there – in fact, the early concentration camps were quite public – almost everyone knew what went on inside the barbed wire fences.”

“There were camps used as slave labor facilities, where inmates were worked to death as they built the weapons and implements for the Nazis.”

“There were other camps, in which horrible medical experiments – often ending in death or disfigurement – were conducted on the prisoners, all in the name of advancing Nazi science and medicine.”

“And there were camps whose sole purpose was to kill by poison gas all the inmates who were shipped there; these last camps were very secret – in fact, many of the officers who ran these extermination camps were later sent to fight enemy partisans, where most of them were killed. Some 164 men here at Landsberg worked in these camps of Hell, but you will become sick to your stomach long before we have met all of them. But meet some we must, so let us finish our excellent lunch, walk back over to the prison and go back in time to the 1940s.”



“*Tempus fugit!* Quick, Dante, see the man on the trapdoor about to be hanged! He is Max Schobert, a very evil man.” *SS-Sturmbannführer* Max Schobert was born in Würzburg on December 25, 1904. Trained as a machinist, he joined the SS and the Nazi Party in 1932. He served at the Dachau concentration camp from 1934 to 1938, SS officer at Dachau. In 1939, he transferred to Flossenbürg, where he led a work unit. Then, it was on to Buchenwald in January 1940, where he rose to become the acting camp commander; he remained at Buchenwald until April 11, 1945. He returned to Dachau and spent two weeks there, before the camp was liberated by American forces. Schobert was the winner of the War Service Cross 1st Class. After fleeing Dachau for Austria, he was apprehended by American forces in May 1945. A tribunal convicted him on August 14, 1947 of crimes against humanity; he was executed by hanging at Landsberg Prison on Friday, November 19, 1948. He is buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #397.

“Thank you, Virgil, I almost missed that. Say, a while back, you mentioned the word Aryan. I have never heard this term before. What does it mean?”

“According to some proponents, the Aryan were a “master race” that built a civilization that dominated the world from Atlantis about 10,000 years ago. This alleged civilization declined after the destruction of Atlantis because the inferior races mixed with the Aryans, but traces of their civilization remained in Tibet, and even in Central America, South America and Ancient Egypt.”

“A theory of Aryan and Jewish conflict was proposed in Nazi theoretician Alfred Rosenberg’s work, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. His and other ideas evolved into

the Nazi use of the term "Aryan race" to refer to what they saw as being a master race, which they narrowly defined as being the Nordic race. To maintain the purity of Aryan race, the Nazis used eugenics programs and encouraged Aryan couples to have as many children as possible. While the Nazi ideology stressed the ideal of the Nordic Man, most of the Nazis leaders looked nothing like this ideal."

"So Virgil, the idea of the Aryan race and the Nordic Man seem to have been just a myth."

"That is a good description, Dante, a myth. The Nazis tried to ascribe mythic properties and achievements to this super race, but in the end, the superiority of the SS and Nordic Man were just a myth. Nevertheless, the mere thought that they were superior to others enabled the SS to do terrible things against those they believed were inferior to them."

"This is an interesting one, Dante. Do you see the man hopping about on one leg?"

Leonhard Eichberger was born on January 22, 1915 in the Fürstenfeldbruck district west of Munich. A soldier in the *Wehrmacht* at the beginning of the war, he was wounded seriously, which resulted in the amputation of his left leg below the knee. Declared unfit for frontline duty, Eichberger transferred to the SS and assumed a position in the Dachau concentration camp administration office. Part of his duties was to coordinate the execution of prisoners sent to Dachau for this purpose by the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* – *Reich* Main Security Office – in Berlin. The condemned were all Russians or Germans convicted of sabotage. Eichberger participated in the firing squads.

Arrested after the war, he faced an American military tribunal that convicted him of murder and sentenced him to death. As Eichberger had only one leg, prison authorities planned to carry him to the gallows on a stretcher to preclude the possibility that he might use his crutch as a weapon. However, Eichberger requested that he move under his own power – which was finally approved by Colonel Thurston – and Eichberger hopped up the gallows steps, subsequently balancing himself on his single leg on the trap door. At 2:36 p.m., on Wednesday, May 29, 1946, Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Leonhard Eichberger at Landsberg Prison. His remains are buried at *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #137.

"*Qui pedibus ambulare usque ad occidendum est ultima eius mille solus.*" A one-legged murderer must still walk his final mile alone, Virgil."

"You are right, Dante. But if that last man deserved a small drop of sympathy, this next one deserves nothing but contempt." One of the most infamous of the 'Camp Men' was *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Martin Gottfried Weiss, who was born in Weiden in der Oberpfalz on June 3, 1905, the son of a Bavarian railway man. He joined the Nazi

Party in 1926 and the SS in 1932. The following year he reported to Dachau, serving as an electrician and subsequently as the adjutant to *kommandants* Hans Loritz and Piorkowski. Weiss later served as *kommandant* of Dachau (September 1, 1942 to November 1, 1943,) Neuengamme and Majdanek (Lublin) concentration camps; he was a winner of the War Service Cross 1st Class. From April 1944 to May 2, 1945, Weiss served at the headquarters for all concentration camps at Oranienburg.”

“Martin Weiss was tried in the Dachau Trials. On questioning, he stated, ‘I had nothing to do with the distribution of food,’ and ‘I had nothing to do with the camp.’ However, the tribunal did not concur and found Weiss guilty of crimes against humanity on December 13, 1945. These included facilitating terrible medical experiments.”

“Watch Johann Reichhart as he executes Weiss by hanging at 11:46 a.m. on Wednesday, May 29, 1946 at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Martin Weiss will be buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #150 the following day. Reichert is the German executioner we talked about earlier. He is wearing his tuxedo, but as the day is hot, he is not wearing his top hat.”

“But not nearly as hot as Martin Weiss will find after his death! Virgil, I am thinking about what you said of the Nazi officers who ran those secret extermination camps. Were they killed by the SS to maintain this terrible secret?”

“I do not know, Dante. We will later meet a very evil man named Odilo Globocnik. He was in charge of three extermination camps, Treblinka, Sobibór and Belzec. All of them were located deep in the wooded areas of eastern Poland – away from curious eyes. Prisoners that arrived to these areas – usually on death trains – were dead within hours. Prisoners who were made helpers in this grisly process were killed within a few weeks so no one would know the terrible secret.”

“After these camps closed in 1943, most of the SS officers and many of the SS non-commissioned officers who ran these centers went with Globocnik to Trieste to kill people there and also to fight partisans in the Adriatic region. And, these SS men started to be killed one by one in partisan ambushes and other mishaps. Was it just bad fortune? Was it that the partisans were too deadly? No one knows for sure, but by the end of the war, many of these SS men were no longer among the living.”

“You may be on to something, Virgil. As we used to say during the intrigues in old Florence – ‘three men can keep a secret, if two of them are dead.’”

“Little did the burghers of Frankenthal, in the Rhineland-Palatinate, know that on February 2, 1905, the day that Frederick Wilhelm Ruppert was born, that they had

sired a monster. Ruppert reported for duty at Dachau concentration camp on April 11, 1933 and worked as a guard and camp electrician through 1942, rising to an *SS-Obersturmführer*. The SS then sent Ruppert to the Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, Poland, where he served for two years. Returning to Dachau on August 6, 1944, Ruppert assumed the position *Schutzhaftlagerführer* – the officer in charge of the prisoner confinement area of the camp, the most important position next to the camp *kommandant*.”

“The American military tribunal in the ‘Dachau Case’ found Ruppert guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. The tribunal specifically found that in August 1944, Ruppert supervised the shooting of 92 Russian prisoners of war in the Dachau crematorium yard. Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Ruppert at 9:54 a.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946 at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Frederick Wilhelm Ruppert were buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #139 on the following day.”

“There you go again, Virgil. *Schutzhaftlagerführer* – whoever formalized the German language deserves his own place in Hell, I believe.”

“He’ll have to stand in line, Dante. This next man killed helpless women. Dr. Fritz Hintermayer, an *SS-Obersturmführer*, hailed from Grafing bei Munich, where he was born on October 28, 1911. He was assigned at the headquarters of the concentration camps at Oranienburg in 1938. From 1942 to 1943, Hintermayer served in the 3rd SS Division *Totenkopf* on the Eastern Front. In 1944, he was transferred to Dachau, where he served as the chief SS physician. At the end of January 1945, the *Gestapo* (Secret Police) sent two Russian women to Dachau to be executed, which took place in the crematorium building. Hintermayer injected poison into the arms of the two women as they sat on chairs; the women collapsed within one minute and died.”

Dr. Hintermayer received the Iron Cross 1st Class during the war. The American military tribunal in the ‘Dachau Case’ found Hintermayer guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Dr. Fritz Hintermayer on Wednesday, May 29, 1946 at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Fritz Hintermayer are buried in Grafing bei Munich.

“Ille qui propter homicidium profugus est mulieris virum. He who kills a woman is not a man.”

SS-Obersturmführer Josef Jarolin was born on March 6, 1904 in Rehpoint, Bavaria. He joined the Munich Police and served for twelve years, before he was discharged because of illness. After four years of unemployment, Jarolin joined the SS in 1935. After an assignment in a guard

company at Oranienburg, he was assigned to Dachau from September 1938 to March 1943. In the spring of 1942, he supervised the shooting of six to eight thousand Russian prisoners of war outside of Dachau. He received the War Service Cross 2nd Class for his efforts.

In 1942, Jarolin applied for permission to marry, but his request was personally denied by Heinrich Himmler. The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Ruppert guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. He was hanged at Landsberg Prison at 11:11 a.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946. The remains of Josef Jarolin are located in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #145, where he was buried one day after his death.

SS-Sturmbannführer Otto Förschner hailed from Dürrenzimmern in Baden-Württemberg, where he was born on November 4, 1902. As a child, he lived on the family farm, but enlisted in the *Reichswehr* (German Army after World War I) in 1924 and remained a soldier for a dozen years. From 1940 to 1942, he served in the 5th SS Division *Wiking*, fighting on the Eastern Front after June 1941; he was wounded in action. Married with two children, in 1942, he transferred to the Buchenwald concentration camp and remained there until 1943, when he went to the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, which provided slave laborers for underground factories producing V-rockets and missiles. At Dora, he served as the *kommandant* until February 1945, when he was dismissed for taking a 10,000 *Mark* payment from the Mittelwerk Company. His final assignment was at Dachau, where he was the *kommandant* of the Kaufering sub-camp.

On April 27, 1945, during an attempt to flee from advancing American forces, Förschner's command car drove over a German landmine at Landsberg and he was seriously wounded. The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Förschner guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death, specifically for responsibility for the brutal conditions at Kaufering and for participation in prisoner executions. He was hanged at Landsberg Prison at 10:22 a.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946. The remains of Otto Förschner are located in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #133.

SS-Untersturmführer Johann Kick hailed from Waldau, where he was born on November 24, 1901. He became a police official in 1921 and was in the Munich department from 1925. Kick served as the leader of the Political Department at Dachau. He served at the camp from 1937 to 1944. The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Ruppert guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. The sentence noted that Kick had tortured prisoners to get confessions of their previous activities. Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Kick at Landsberg Prison at 1:19 p.m. on Wednesday, May 29, 1946. Johann Kick's remains are located in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #136, where he was buried the day after his execution.

SS-Obersturmführer Arno Lippmann was born at Lippelsdorf, on July 25, 1890 and was a master shoemaker by trade. He served in World War I, winning the Iron Cross 2nd Class. Lippmann was an early member of the Nazi Party, receiving party number #8891 (which qualified him to receive the Golden Nazi Party Badge) and an early volunteer in the SS, with SS number #439. He served at Dachau from 1935 to 1939. He was detailed to serve at Mauthausen for three months in 1940. Lippmann, who was married with three children, served at Flossenbürg concentration camp from 1941 to 1943. He returned to Dachau in 1943, commanding the Kaufering sub-camp in Landsberg from August 1944.

The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Lippmann guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death on December 13, 1945. Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Arno Lippmann at Landsberg Prison at 10:31 a.m. on Wednesday, May 29, 1946. Lippmann's remains were buried the following day in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #152.

SS-Hauptsturmführer Michael Redwitz was born in Bayreuth, Bavaria on August 14, 1900. Redwitz served at Mauthausen from 1938 to 1941, Ravensbrück women's concentration camp from 1941 to 1942 as the camp adjutant, Buchenwald and Dachau in 1944. He filled the position of *Schutzhaftlagerführer* at Dachau and at the infamous Mauthausen sub-camp of Gusen. Sometime during the war, Redwitz was assigned to the staff of the 1st SS *Panzer* Corps.

He was the recipient of the Golden Nazi Party Badge and the War Service Cross 2nd Class. The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Redwitz guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. He was executed by hanging at Landsberg Prison on Wednesday, May 29, 1946. At the request of his family, the remains of Michael Redwitz were transferred to Munich.

SS-Obersturmführer Rudolph Heinrich Suttrop was born on July 17, 1911 at Horstmar-Lünen, North Rhine-Westphalia. As a civilian, he tried his hand as a commercial clerk. Joining the Waffen-SS in 1939, he served in the Netherlands, France and later Russia. He entered the concentration camp system in 1940 with an assignment to Wewelsburg; he served twice at Gross-Rosen as the camp adjutant, 1941 to 1942 and 1944 to 1945. In between, he served as the camp adjutant at Dachau (1942 to 1944.)

Suttrop served for six weeks in 1945 at the 17th Panzer Grenadier Training and Replacement Battalion, affiliated with the 17th SS Division *Götz von Berlichingen*, before returning to Dachau. The American military tribunal in the 'Dachau Case' found Rudolph Heinrich Suttrop guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. He was hanged at 10:54 a.m. at Landsberg Prison on Tuesday, May 28, 1946. The next day, his remains were buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #134.

“Those last six men went by in a flash and will be a blur in my memory, except for one thing. You know, Virgil, I have been watching these two hangman, John Woods and Johann Reichhart for a while now and they seem to hang the condemned men differently. Is there an explanation for that?”

“Yes, Dante, Reichhart was an advocate of the British style of hanging when he worked for the Americans. The object in a British style hanging was the fracture dislocation of the cervical vertebrae, which severed the spinal cord. There are no knots in a British hanging rope, simply a metal eye at the end, unlike an American rope that traditionally has 13. The hangman made a loop by running the free end of the rope through the metal eye and fastened the free end of the rope securely to the top of the scaffold. The noose was covered with soft wash-leather, with the eyelet adjusted for a snug fit just in front of the left ear – unlike an American hanging where the knots securing the loop are placed behind the right ear or directly behind the head. That is what you are noticing.”

“Yes, exactly, Virgil; Reichhart always holds the noose way to the left of the person to be hanged. But why was there a difference?”

“Dante, according to a noted British hangman, when the condemned falls, his body pulls on the noose and it gyrates a quarter-circle clockwise, the rope ending under the chin. This violently throws the neck back and breaks the spinal column. Many American hangmen's ropes gyrated from behind the right ear to behind the left, which only propelled the head forward – not killing by spinal severance, but by slow strangulation, which could take upward of 15 minutes. Also the American system at the time, often used a standard five-foot drop – the distance a body fell until the rope became taut – while the British used a variable drop distance, based on the weight of the condemned and his physical condition.”

“So why didn't Woods use the better method, Virgil?”

“No one knows for sure, Dante. He was a stubborn man and remember – when he was in the Navy, they thought he was crazy and that he would not take to instructions. Therefore, either Woods thought his way of hanging was the only way to do it and he was not going to change that, or he enjoyed seeing the condemned men suffer. It could have been one crazy man hanging other crazy men. This next man we will meet was not hanged, but he belongs in this group anyway.”

SS Oberführer Hermann Pister was born in Lübeck on February 21, 1885, the son of a finance official. The family moved to Switzerland, early in Hermann's life. After graduating from the

Realschule in Basel, Pister joined the Imperial German Navy in 1901, but then transferred to the Army. After serving nine years, Pister left the service; he was married and had a daughter. After serving in the Navy during World War I, Pister became a car salesman and rose to head a dealership in Karlsruhe. He was divorced in 1921, married again in 1924 and divorced in 1926. His second ex-wife had a son soon after.

“Hermann Pister joined the Nazi Party and the SS in 1932. He was promoted to *SS-Hauptsturmführer* in 1935. In 1939, he was assigned to Hinert, a work camp that later became a small concentration camp, and served there until December 1941. Pister transferred to Buchenwald on January 21, 1942. During the time he was *kommandant*, at least 29,000 prisoners died at this camp. In April 1945, as American troops approached Buchenwald, Pister ordered that prisoners be put in open boxcars and evacuated to Dachau. In what became known as the “Death Train,” many prisoners died of starvation and exposure.”

“American troops arrested Pister in the area of Munich, on June 1, 1945. Hermann Pister received the War Service Cross 1st Class for his working during the war. An American military tribunal in the Buchenwald Trial convicted Pister of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. Prior to his execution, Hermann Pister died of a massive heart attack on September 28, 1948. Pister’s remains are located at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #325, where he was buried on October 1, 1948.”

“Obviously, Virgil, from a figurative sense, an avenging angel ripped his heart out of his chest, before he could be hanged.”

“Fate works in mysterious ways, Dante.”

SS-Obersturmführer Johann Altfuldich was born on November 11, in Brückenau, Bavaria. In 1936, Altfuldich was assigned to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He was stationed at the Mauthausen concentration camp from 1941 to 1944, specifically the Gusen camp, where he participated in many executions, as part of a common design. During the war, he won the War Service Cross 2nd Class. An American military tribunal convicted Altfuldich of crimes against humanity. Johann Altfuldich was executed by hanging on May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were transferred to his birthplace for burial.

“How did the tribunals obtain evidence that these men in the concentration camps committed these crimes? Were not many of the witnesses killed in the camps, Virgil?”

“What the prosecution did, Dante, was to develop a concept known as “Common Design.” They knew that it would be quite difficult to prove beyond a reasonable doubt

that a particular officer killed a specific person on a certain date. However, they knew that tens of thousands of prisoners died, many were tortured and others starved to death. Somebody had to be involved. So the test to be applied, they argued, was not did an individual defendant personally kill or beat or torture, but did he by his conduct, aid or abet in the implementation of this common design and participate in it? That was consistent with American law, but the Germans screamed bloody murder about it.”

“What was the alternative, Virgil, for the tribunal to have done?”

“There really was nothing else they could have done, Dante, unless they were prepared to accept that most of the defendants would have gone free, when common sense screamed that they had something to do with all that death and destruction.”

“So common design, Virgil, sprang from common sense?”

“That is a most excellent way of putting it Dante; *absit iniuria verbis* – let injury be absent from these words, but you should have been a lawyer.”

SS-Obersturmführer August Blei was born on August 26, 1893 in Hüsten, in Northrhine-Westfalia. Blei was assigned at the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1942. The American military tribunal at Dachau in the first Mauthausen camp trial convicted August Blei of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death on May 13, 1946. August Blei was executed by hanging on May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. At the request of his family, Blei’s remains were transferred to Neheim-Hüsten for burial.

SS-Obersturmführer Heinrich Eichenhöfer was born February 19, 1893 in Pirmasens. After finishing high school, he joined the Army and won the Iron Cross 1st Class as a sergeant in World War I. From 1931 to 1939, he was the manager of a steel factory; Eichenhöfer was married and was a Protestant. Joining the Nazi Party in 1934, he subsequently joined the SS and served in a music platoon. During World War II, he was assigned to Mauthausen, starting as a platoon leader in a guard company. He later served in the camp administration. American troops captured Eichenhöfer at Mauthausen on May 4, 1945. The “Mauthausen Process” tribunal convicted him of crimes against humanity on May 13, 1946 and sentenced him to death. Heinrich Eichenhöfer was hanged at 10:43 a.m. on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* on the same day in Grave #306.

“Virgil, it seems as though many of these men came from unremarkable backgrounds. Is that so?”

“Yes, Dante; almost one thousand SS officers had served at one time or another during the war at a concentration camp. Some 177 had been born in large cities, but most hailed from villages and small towns. Eighty percent were married and were typical family men. Concerning religion, 264 officers listed Protestant as their religion, 166 men listed Catholic and 425 officers stated that they were believers in God but were not members of any specific religion.”

“Very disturbingly, some 285 SS officers who served in the camps were members of the medical community – physicians, dentists, pharmacists, etc. Overall, over 38,000 physicians – more than half of all medical doctors in Germany – joined the Nazi Party. German physicians were attracted to the Nazis on the thought that they would be entrusted with a special role in restoring German’s honor and dignity.”

“Damnatio ad bestias – Virgil – Damnation of the beasts!”

Georg Gössl was born in Munich on June 14, 1909. He attended grade school from 1922 to 1925 and then became interested in politics, affiliating himself with the Social Democrats – opponents of the National Socialists. After the Nazis rise to power, they arrested Gössl and put him in Dachau in 1933. In 1938, Gössl found himself at the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he remained a prisoner for two years. Nazis authorities transferred Georg Gössl to the Mauthausen camp in 1940.

He remained there for three years, before being sent to *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger*, a *Waffen-SS* unit composed primarily of convicts with some concentration camp inmates and disgraced SS personnel, then fighting Russian partisans in White Russia. This assignment ended in failure and Gössl returned to Mauthausen as a prisoner at the Mödling sub-camp. In the final two months of the war, Gössl became a prisoner *kapo*.

Apprehended by the Americans in an SS uniform on June 5, 1945, he was transferred to the Moosburg Internment Camp several days later. An American military tribunal charged him with shooting several other prisoners on an evacuation march out of the Mauthausen camps. The tribunal convicted Gössl of murder and sentenced him to death on May 13, 1946. Gössl was hanged at Landsberg Prison at 10:47 a.m. on Tuesday, May 27, 1947. His remains are buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #333.

“What was a kapo, Virgil?”

“A *kapo* was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, who was assigned by the SS guards to supervise forced labor or carry out administrative tasks in the camp, Dante. If they were derelict in these duties, they would be returned to the status of ordinary

prisoners and be subject to other *kapos*. Many *kapos* were known for their brutality toward other prisoners to curry favor with their SS masters. This brutality was tolerated by the SS and was an important facet of the camp system.”

“But weren’t the *kapos* forced into this behavior, Virgil?”

“No, Dante, in the end, they volunteered for it and could have proved so incompetent that they would have been returned to the general prisoner population. There is no doubt that Gössl was in a difficult situation, but he showed enough cooperation to his SS guards that he was sent to the Dirlewanger unit in White Russia in 1943. These Dirlewanger guys were real butchers and killed thousands of people, so Gössl had a hand in that as well, even if he was less than enthusiastic. Additionally, while in the backwoods of Russia, he could have escaped in the confusion and attempted to join the partisans – although that certainly would have been dangerous. To show you how bad Dirlewanger was, in 1944 his unit was brought in to help crush the Warsaw Uprising in Poland. They behaved in such a despicable manner that SS generals at Warsaw begged for the unit to be sent somewhere else!”

Karl Schöpferle rose to the rank of *SS-Obersturmführer* during his service at Mauthausen concentration camp from 1940 to 1945. Born at Triberg, in the Black Forest, on June 23, 1892, he was married, a Catholic and fought in World War I, winning the Iron Cross 2nd Class. He later served as a research director at a commercial school. During World War II, he served at the Linz sub-camp of Mauthausen. An American military tribunal convicted Schöpferle of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death.

“Karl Schöpferle was hanged at Landsberg Prison on Friday, November 12, 1948. His remains were initially buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof*. A German tribunal hearing in 1951 found that Schöpferle was not responsible for the actions for which he was executed. In 1953, his family requested the remains be transferred to Ladenburg, Baden-Württemberg for burial. On November 21, 1953, the German magazine *Der Stern*, reported that a coffin arrived, with instructions that it should not be opened. However, a Ladenburg cemetery employee opened the box, which contained only some ankle bones and the crushed original wooden coffin. *Der Stern*, which ran a photo of the Martin Weiss execution, portraying it as the hanging of Schöpferle, stated that an intoxicated American sergeant oversaw the botched exhumation.”

“Virgil, why did the Americans let this German proceeding try Schöpferle again after he was dead?”

“The Americans did what they had to do in their own trials after the war; they needed to punish at least some of those responsible for the atrocities of the war and Schöpferle

fell into their net. However, the Americans found that they soon needed the Germans to start standing on their own and help defend Europe. This was as part of a defense organization aimed at preventing the Russians, who were occupying eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, from invading westward. Therefore, the Americans ignored these little German proceedings and the half-truths or outright falsehoods published in some of the German press. Between 70,000 and 120,000 people were murdered at Mauthausen and its sub-camps during the war. Schöpferle was a commissioned officer, not a lowly private. He was part of the common design of murder, despite what the apologists said. As to the absence of bones in the coffin, when it arrived at Ladenburg – that is just another of Landsberg’s little mysteries!”

Karl Otto, unlike most SS personnel at the concentration camps, was a true war hero. Born on May 1, 1907 in Sommerfeld, he became an engineer by trade, after his father had died in World War I. Otto joined the *Waffen-SS* in 1939 and fought in Russia beginning in 1941. *SS-Unterscharführer* Otto was seriously wounded at the front, receiving wounds in his right arm, left hand and left knee. Because of his wounds, Otto was transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1942. He served as a work detail leader and block leader at the Völklabruck and Steyr sub-camps, until May 5, 1945, when advancing American forces apprehended him. An American military tribunal convicted Kurt Otto on March 13, 1947 of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. He was hanged on Friday, November 14, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #274.

“Dante, we will now rest a bit as we travel east to Poland. Remember how I told you that in addition to Landsberg, there was now a portal to the underworld at a place called Auschwitz. We will take a train there; our journey will last about ten hours with all the switches, but our travel will be much more comfortable then the several million people who went there by train during the war. Until then, let us sleep.”



“Wake up, Dante; we are here at Oświęcim, Poland. We are about thirty miles west of Cracow, near the confluence of the Sola and Vistula Rivers. About 40,000 people live here, but many times that visit the town every year for it is the home of Auschwitz, the most notorious Nazi concentration camp of them all. We will walk down the street to the main camp, which still exists as a museum. It is always cold here it seems, so button up your coat collar. You will know we are at the camp when we see a sign over the gate that reads “*Arbeit macht frei*,” work will set you free. That was a cruel joke on those arriving. The SS officers knew that a prisoner’s only escape from this Hell was as smoke through the crematoria chimneys. We are here to see one man, although many evil men worked here. His name is Rudolf Höss and it is April 16, 1947.”

Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss served as the first commandant of the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp from May 4, 1940 to November 1943, where it is estimated that more than a million people were murdered. Höss was born in Baden-Baden into a Catholic family on November 25, 1901. His father, a former army officer who served in German East Africa, ran a tea and coffee business; Rudolf was the eldest of three children and the only son.

When World War I erupted, Rudolf Höss served briefly in a military hospital. Then, at the age of just fourteen, he was admitted to his father's old regiment, the 21st Regiment of Dragoons. He fought with the Turkish Sixth Army at Baghdad, Kut-el-Amara, and in Palestine, rising to the rank of sergeant – at age seventeen the youngest non-commissioned officer in the army. Höss was wounded three times and was a victim of malaria. A brave soldier, he received the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Classes and the Baden Military Bravery Medal.

After the war, Höss completed his high school education, and then joined nationalist paramilitary groups in the East Prussian Volunteer Corps and then the *Freikorps Rossbach* that were forming in the post-war chaos in the Baltic area, Silesia, and the Ruhr. During the Silesian Uprisings, he participated in guerrilla attacks against Polish people, and later conducted sabotage against French occupation forces in the Ruhr. Joining the Nazi Party in 1922, on May 31, 1923, Höss and members of the *Freikorps* beat suspected Communist Walther Kadow to death as revenge for the French execution of German paramilitary soldier Albert Leo Schlageter five days earlier. One of the killers unwisely told a local newspaper of the murder; authorities arrested Rudolf Höss, who accepted blame as the leader of the crime, found him guilty and sentenced Höss to ten years imprisonment. As part of a general amnesty, Höss was released early in July 1928.

Rudolf Höss was married and had five children, two sons and three daughters. He was accepted into the SS on April 1, 1934 and was assigned to the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* – the feared Death's Head Units. In December 1934, he reported for duty at the Dachau concentration camp. By 1938, he was a *SS-Hauptsturmführer* and was made adjutant to Hermann Baranowski at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp outside Berlin. The following year, he joined the *Waffen-SS*.

On May 1, 1940, Rudolf Höss was appointed commandant of a prison camp in western Poland, built around an old Austro-Hungarian (and later Polish) army barracks near the town of Oświęcim. However, the town would become known throughout history by its German name – Auschwitz. *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Höss commanded the camp for three and a half years, during which he expanded the original facility into a sprawling complex known as Auschwitz-Birkenau. During this time, Höss lived at Auschwitz in a villa together with his wife and children.

At its peak, Auschwitz consisted of three separate facilities – Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II/Birkenau, and Auschwitz III/Monowitz, and included many satellite sub-camps. Auschwitz I

served the administrative center for the complex and the site where many medical experiments were conducted; Auschwitz II/Birkenau was the extermination camp, where most of the killing took place; and Auschwitz III/Monowitz was the slave labor camp for *I.G. Farben* and other German industries.

In June 1941, Höss attended a meeting in Berlin with Heinrich Himmler to receive instructions. Himmler told Höss that Adolf Hitler had given the order for the physical extermination of Europe's Jews. Himmler had decided on Auschwitz for this purpose due to its easy access by rail and because the extensive site offered space for measures ensuring isolation. Himmler continued by telling Höss that he would be receiving all operational orders from Adolf Eichmann, warning Höss that the project was to be treated with the utmost secrecy and that no one was allowed to speak about these matters with any person. Höss said later that he kept that secret until the end of 1942, when he told his wife.

A stickler for efficiency, Höss began to perfect techniques of mass killing, visiting other killing centers whenever he could. According to Höss, during standard camp operations, two to three trains, each carrying 2,000 prisoners, would arrive daily for periods of four to six weeks. The prisoners were unloaded in the Birkenau camp; those fit for labor were marched to barracks in either Birkenau or one of the Auschwitz camps, while those unsuitable for work were sent immediately into the gas chambers. Initially, the SS operated small gassing bunkers deep in the nearby woods, to avoid detection.

Later, they constructed four large gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau to make the killing more efficient and to handle the increasing rate of exterminations. Studying what was being done at the Treblinka extermination camp, Höss improved on the methods at Treblinka by building his gas chambers ten times larger – so that Auschwitz could kill 2,000 people at once, rather than 200.

Arthur Liebehenschel replaced Höss on November 10, 1943. The two men switched duties, with Höss assuming Liebehenschel's former position as the chief of Department D I in the SS Economic and Administration Office, under Oswald Pohl. Höss was also appointed the deputy of the inspectorate of the concentration camps under Richard Glücks, which was located at Oranienburg, just north of Berlin.

“Rudolf Höss returned to Auschwitz on May 8, 1944 to supervise a special action – the murder of 430,000 Hungarian Jews, who were transported to the camp and killed between May and July of 1944. However, even Höss' expanded facility could not handle the huge number of corpses and special details of prisoners were pressed into service to dispose of thousands of bodies by burning them in open pits, placing the bodies on wooden railroad ties and using the human fat in the bodies to keep the fires going

twenty-four hours per day. The stench was so great that people could smell the reek from miles away.”

As the war drew to an end in 1945, Heinrich Himmler advised Höss to disguise himself among German Navy personnel. Höss evaded arrest for nearly a year, but on March 11, 1946, British troops captured him – disguised as a farmer and calling himself Franz Lang. After being questioned and allegedly beaten severely, Höss confessed his real identity. He appeared as a witness at the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg in April 1946, where he gave detailed testimony of his crimes. On May 25, 1946, Polish authorities took control of Höss and handed him over to the Supreme National Tribunal in Poland, which tried him for murder. The tribunal sentenced Höss to death on April 2, 1947. The sentence was carried out on April 16, 1947, immediately adjacent to the crematorium of the former Auschwitz I concentration camp, where Höss was hanged on a gallows constructed specifically for his execution.

“Look, Dante! The hangman, wearing his black hood, is trying to put the noose over Höss’s head, but he is trying to avoid it! He can struggle for a few more seconds, but his fate is sealed and he will be going to Hell before we do!”

“What a terrible man, Virgil. He may be unique in the history of mankind.”

“If only that were true, Dante; we must now go down through the portal from Auschwitz to Hell – the sixth circle to be exact, where you will see many more evil men. However, first we have to find it.”

“Will that be difficult, Virgil?”

“At first, one would not think so, Dante. However, put together, Auschwitz occupies 20,000 acres of land and it would take too much time to search all of that. Help me think our way through this to narrow it down.”

“Alright, Virgil. Here are my thoughts. The portal will be at that place that is most evil in the entire Auschwitz complex. That could be at the slave labor factories at Monowitz and some of the sub-camps. Certainly, the conditions were bad there; I believe I heard one of the Nazis say that they killed the workers through starvation and hard work. That would be an evil place, but not unique enough for the portal to open there. Then there were those horrible medical experiments at Auschwitz I. Let us try that first.”



“Here we are at Block 10, the medical experimentation block, Virgil. This red brick building looks the same as many others on the outside, but inside horrible medical experiments went on. Let us quickly go through this building. No, it is not here; perhaps this is because many other camps had terrible medical experiments conducted at them as well. Let us go next door to Block 11.”



“This is where the interrogations were done. Here the SS employed standup cells, as well as suffocation and internment cells. In a standup cell, as many as three prisoners were forced to crawl in through a tiny door by the floor and then stand in a very small space making it impossible to sit; often the prisoners in these cells were simply ignored and they starved to death. The portal is not here either, although I would not have been surprised had it been. So if the portal was not at Auschwitz III and it is not here at Auschwitz I that leaves just Auschwitz II – Birkenau, as the place in which we must look.”



“Here we are at the front gate of Birkenau, Dante. Let us go inside. Where do you think we should go first?”

“It is obvious to me that the portal must be back at one of the gas chambers, Virgil. At Auschwitz, the SS used seven different buildings as gas chambers. In addition, they used two other sites as gas chambers but only for a few gassing actions. These two were the cellar of Block 11 at Auschwitz I – where we just were – where the first gassing tests were carried out in August 1941 and a delousing barracks at the Main Economic Area near Auschwitz I – termed ‘Kanada,’ where 200 members of the prisoner body-burning *Sonderkommando* were killed with *Zyklon B* gas on September 23, 1944. Those were the prisoners that had handled the bodies of the Hungarian Jews and Gypsies, and they were dangerous loose ends.”

“The first of the seven regular gas chambers was installed in the mortuary of the crematory at Auschwitz I. Called ‘Crematory 1,’ it could contain between 700 and 800 persons at a time in its 55 feet by 15 feet space. To kill the victims, SS men poured *Zyklon B* into the gas chamber through openings in the roof, because this gas chamber had no dummy shower fittings in the ceiling. The use of the mortuary had an additional benefit in that it possessed a strong ventilation system. It was put into

operation in autumn 1941, with the last killings occurring in December 1942, after which the *Sonderkommando*, which had removed the corpses of the first mass graves in Birkenau, was murdered. The exact number of victims who perished in this gas chamber is unknown, but has been estimated at 10,000.”

“Because the capacity of this first gas chamber was insufficient, and because it could not be kept hidden, Höss searched for an alternative solution at Birkenau. He found two empty houses that had belonged to expelled Poles just outside the camp and converted them into gas chambers. ‘Bunker 1,’ known as the ‘Red House’ because of its bare red walls, was located at the north border of the Birkenau camp. It measured about 49 feet by 19 feet, originally with four rooms, which were now converted into two gas chambers. Each room had a door; the windows were sealed with bricks. The doors were made airtight with felt and could be additionally tightened with screws. Inside the chambers, the walls were painted white and the floor was covered with sawdust after each gassing.”

“To introduce the gas, the SS dumped the poison through two openings per room in the outer walls and then closed the openings with gas-tight flaps. Because there was no ventilation system, the aeration after a gassing took a long time. At first, the SS carried out the gassings at night, but later this increased to the daytime as well because of many unpunctual transports. Each gas chamber could contain up to 400 victims. The corpses were buried in mass graves nearby. This gas chamber probably commenced operations in March 1942; it appears that the SS demolished the building one year later.”

“Also called the ‘White House,’ ‘Bunker 2,’ was located at the west end of the Birkenau camp. The SS put it into action as a gas chamber in June 1942. The house measured 56 feet by 26 feet. The SS converted its rooms into four gas chambers of different sizes; each gas chamber had two doors, which provided more rapid ventilation after the gassings. ‘Bunker 2’ was no longer used when the large crematories were put into action. The wooden barracks, which were used as undressing rooms, were demolished. The brick building remained unused until the summer 1944, when it was used as a gassing facility for Hungarian Jews. During this ‘Hungarian Action,’ the building was called ‘Bunker 5.’ It was demolished in November 1944.”

“Crematory II and Crematory III were almost identical. Construction of Crematory II began in August 1942; on March 31, 1943, Crematory II was officially handed-over to the SS. Crematory III became operational on June 24, 1943. The gas chamber in

each was huge – 98 feet long by 23 feet wide. Each had a roof of eight inches of reinforced concrete, covered with sixteen inches of earth. In late 1943, a wall was constructed in the gas chamber to create two separate gas chambers, for use with smaller transports of victims to save gas and to accelerate the killing. False shower heads deceived the victims into believing it was a washing area.”

“As it took a while until all victims had undressed and entered the gas chamber, the first ones inside had time to inspect the room. Although the SS had installed lamps in the gas chambers to avoid panic as they packed the people inside, some people became suspicious. When panic broke out, it was brutally suppressed by armed SS men. The gas chamber could be aerated and ventilated by a sophisticated ventilation system. The gas-tight entrance door contained a spy hole, secured from inside with an iron grill. SS men usually closed the door through a latch, but could also fasten it with screws, as victims pressed against the door, when they realized their doom.”

“Seven concrete pillars supported the heavy ceiling. Beside four columns were tall net wire square columns, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. The nucleus of each column served as the container for the carrier material for the *Zyklon B* gas. When a gassing took place, SS men wearing gasmasks opened the gas-tight caps at the upper ends of the wire net pillars on top of the ceiling above the ground and poured the gas into the container, dropping the box quickly down by a cord to the floor of the gas chamber. The SS men then quickly put the cap on the opening. After everyone inside was dead, SS men pulled up the containers and emptied the residue. Such a procedure ensured that the gas spread as quickly as possible, which decreased the time of the killing process.”

“Each one of these huge gas chambers could contain 2,500 people at a time. When the gas chamber was filled with victims and the gas-tight door was closed and bolted, an SS physician on duty gave the order to insert the poison. Death by suffocation usually occurred after five to ten minutes. Then, an SS man switched on the ventilation. After waiting thirty minutes, the Jewish *Sonderkommando* members, wearing gas masks, opened the gas chamber door, pulled out the corpses, prepared them for the cremation ovens one story up and placed the bodies in an elevator device to take them upward for burning. The first mass murder in Crematory II killed 1,500 Jews from the Jewish Ghetto in Krakow.”

“The construction of Crematory IV and Crematory V started in November 1942. Planned as pure extermination facilities from the start, they were much simpler in

construction. Crematory IV was located near '*Kanada II*,' the sorting area for the possessions of the victims on the left of the camp road. Crematory V was located in the adjacent birch forest. Crematory IV became operational on March 22, 1943. On the left of the main entrance at both crematoria, was a large undressing room. The first of four gas chambers was located on the right. All total, the four chambers encompassed 2,540 square feet. The two gas chambers had separate doors to the outside, so that the aeration and *Sonderkommando* work were easier."

"None of the gas chambers had windows; eleven inch by fifteen inch openings were located high on the walls, through which the gas was poured. The openings were closed with gas-tight flaps. To introduce the gas, SS men had to climb on a chair or ladder to pour the gas into the rooms, as the openings were high on the walls. This slowed down the killing procedure and undoubtedly increased the agony of the victims. Technicians installed heating ovens in the large gas chambers to ensure that a temperature of 80.6° F would be attained – the optimum dissipation conditions for *Zyklon B* gas."

"The Jewish *Sonderkommando* at Crematory IV set it on fire during an uprising on October 7, 1944 and it was never used again. The SS blew up Crematories II and III with explosives on January 20, 1945, when it became obvious that Russian troops would arrive within days. Crematory V was the last gassing facility to be blown up on January 26, 1945, just before the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army."

"So, which gas chamber contains the portal to Hell, Dante? It could be any of them!"

"No. Virgil; I now think it is none of them!"

"But I do not understand, Dante."

"You see, Virgil; each one of the seven gas chambers is truly horrible. They are different, perhaps in size, but their purpose is the same – it allowed the Nazis to play at being Satan. The Nazis, at these gas chambers and the gas chambers at their other extermination and concentration camps, decided how the victims would die. They would decide how long it took the victims to die and how many would perish at one time and what would happen to their corpses. As Satan, you see, the SS could be creative in determining the parameters of death. However, that alone – playing Satan – would not warrant a portal between Auschwitz and the underworld. But I will now show you a place that does deserve an evil gateway; follow me."



“Where are we now, Dante?”

“We are at the railroad tracks that have led from outside the camp to this point, Virgil. This is the last and largest of the so-called selection ramps. Selections of prisoners from mass Jewish transports took place on three railroad unloading platforms, or ramps. SS physicians, present at each ramp, when each train arrived, made the decisions about who was qualified for labor and who would be killed immediately. The first unloading ramp, located adjacent to Auschwitz I, began its function in June 1940 and primarily served the main camp. This is where the first transport of 728 prisoners from Tarnów was unloaded on June 14, 1940. The ramp’s use continued throughout the war. The second ramp (known as the Old Jewish Ramp) went into operation in 1942. It was located on the grounds of the Oświęcim freight station, between the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps.”

“The majority of the mass transports of Jews arrived between 1942 and May 1944 at this ramp, as did the mass transports of Gypsies, beginning in February 1943, to Birkenau. Only after July 4, 1942 – when *Operation Reinhard* was gathering steam – did selection take place regularly, with all the mass transports of Jews to Auschwitz after that date subject to selection. This third ramp, where we are now, was built in 1943, inside the Birkenau camp. It began operating in May 1944, in connection with the anticipated arrival of transports of Hungarian Jews. The railroad spur along this ramp ran as far as gas chambers, and Crematoria II and III. Aside from the 440,000 Hungarian Jews, about 67,000 Jews from the Łódź ghetto, as well as 50,000 Jews from Slovakia were unloaded at this ramp. Transports from Warsaw Uprising were also unloaded here.”

“This is how it worked. After leaving the train cars, families were divided and all people were lined up in two columns. The men and older boys were in one column; the women and all the younger children, of both genders, were in the other. SS guards led each column to the SS camp physicians and other camp functionaries, who were conducting the day’s selection. These SS officers judged the people standing before them on sight, sometimes eliciting a brief declaration as to their age and occupation, or otherwise just gesturing which way to go. Age was one of the principal criteria for selection. As a rule, the elderly and all children below sixteen years of age were sent to die.”

“Perhaps twenty percent of the arrivals were ordered into the camp proper. For the others, trucks carried those too infirm to walk, while the rest unknowingly marched west about two-thousand feet to where the gas chambers were. Dr. Josef Mengele participated in many selections looking for twins. He would shout ‘Twins, Twins’ in German, hoping to find some that he could experiment on later. Mengele was also interested in eye color, hoping to find victims with unusual eyes. In his laboratory, he maintained a display on which were pinned eyes of almost every shade of color.”

“That is truly terrible. But why is the portal in this area, Dante?”

“It is quite simple, Virgil. At the gas chambers, the SS could play at being Satan. However, here at the selection ramps – which were quite unique to Auschwitz in many ways – the SS could play at being God. At the gas chambers, they could only determine the details of death. Here, they could determine who lived and who died.”

“This is why the portal is here at this third ramp at Birkenau. All the ramps could have been the location for this threshold to Hell, but it is only at this third and last ramp that so many people went through the selection process in so short a time. In over half a million instances, an SS doctor got to play God. That is the height of evil; that is man at his worst – thinking he knows better than the Almighty. Look at the concrete moving by your feet, Virgil. Feel the hot, fetid, foul air blowing up from the underworld. There is an evil rent in the fabric of time here. Say your prayers, Virgil. We are about to enter the sixth circle of Hell.”

“Abyssus abyssum invocat – Dante – Deep calleth unto deep.”





The Sixth Circle of Hell – The Typewriter Perpetrators

“Virgil, as I remember, the Sixth Circle of Hell was a rocky crag, full of terrible things, a place for the heretics. This place looks much different, almost like a governmental office of some kind.”

“You are most perceptive, as always, Dante. It is an office of sorts, but it is not for heretics, but for the administrators of death. These were the men, who worked behind the scenes to make sure that all aspects of mass murder were coordinated. The Germans called them *Schreibtischtäter*, Typewriter Perpetrators.”

“But why make a distinction between the men who planned the excesses and those who carried them out, Virgil?”

“It stems from the distinction between American law and way of thinking and the German concept of guilt, Dante. Under the American system, if five men rob an old man, then after they are caught all will be charged with robbery. If, however, during this robbery, one of the thieves pulls out a knife and kills the unfortunate victim, then all five men will be charged with murder, as well as robbery, not just the man that actually killed the victim. The Germans are less comfortable with this concept. To

them, there was a difference between those who killed and those who were in support of the killing. So later, in their own trials, they slapped the *Schreibtischtäter* on the wrist with sentences of only a few years in prison, even though these men sent many victims to their deaths.”

“That is crazy, Virgil. Without these men organizing the whole effort, the actual killers would never have been able to kill all those thousands of people.”

“Yes, and it was actually millions of victims, Dante. However, this sixth circle of Hell makes up for that. Notice what is here. Do you see all these little machines? They are called typewriters – *Schreibtisch* in German – and on them, the operators can produce documents and even entire books. About 120 years after you died, a German blacksmith invented something called a printing press, using movable type. It would produce books at a faster rate, compared to the calligraphy and lengthy copying that the monks in your time did just to produce one paper or book. It was good for people, as they had more to read, and it was good for the monks, as without having to copy books, they could devote all their time to making excellent wine and beer.”

“A wonderful and fulfilling change for the monks, I would say, Virgil.”

“Yes, yes, of course, Dante, but let us try to stay on the subject at hand. In this sixth circle of Hell, the typewriter perpetrators are forced to sit behind their machines the entire day and type away.”

“What do they type, Virgil? Why is that a punishment for them?”

“They can type anything they wish, Dante. You will notice that the typing keys the men hit with their fingers appear almost orange. That is actually because of their intense heat. You see the keys are so hot that they burn each finger every time they touch a key, and they must touch the keys several times every second.”

“Why do they not just stop typing, Virgil?”

“Dante, that is because you see the Geryon flying around. He will sting them with his wicked tail if they are not typing fast enough. Let us see him at his noble work on some of the worst of the *Schreibtischtäter*. Here is the first one, Adolf Eichmann.”

SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann was born in Solingen, Germany on March 19, 1906. His mother died when he was eight and the family moved to Linz, Austria. His father fought in World War I in the Austro-Hungarian Army and survived to start a mining company in that

Austrian city. Adolf attended high school but dropped out to become a mechanic, later finding that he was unsuitable at this occupation. He worked for his father and then two other clerical jobs, before returning to Germany in 1933.

Prior to departing Linz, he joined the Austrian Nazi Party and the SS. Once in Germany, he was assigned in the SS to the administrative staff at the Dachau concentration camp for a year. He then transferred to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) and assigned to the 'Freemasons' Desk' to keep track of that organization. In 1938, Adolf Eichmann traveled to the British Mandate of Palestine to assess potential massive deportations of Jews to Palestine. After the German unification with Austria in 1938, Eichmann transferred to Austria to assist SS forces organize in Vienna.

In November 1934, Adolf Eichmann transferred to the Jewish Section at the *Reich* Main Security Office in Berlin. He was promoted to *SS-Hauptscharführer* and later to *SS-Untersturmführer*, a commissioned rank. Eichmann married in 1938; he would father three sons with his wife and a fourth with a woman in Argentina, later in life. The same year he was selected to form the Central Office of Jewish Emigration in Vienna, Austria. In December 1939, he moved to the *Reich* Main Security Office to become the head of Office IV B4, Jewish Affairs. After submitting a report in 1940 on the potential to ship Germany's Jews to the island of Madagascar, he became transportation administrator of the 'Final Solution,' coordinating the transportation of Europe's Jews to eastern ghettos and extermination camps.

"On October 15, 1941 – through Eichmann's non-stop efforts – the German *Reichsbahn* State Railway transported the first trainload of German Jews eastward. Eichmann, nicknamed 'The Bloodhound,' hit his zenith of evil in 1944, when he went to Hungary and organized the transportation of that country's 430,000 Jews to Auschwitz and their deaths. In 1944, he remarked, 'A hundred dead people are a catastrophe. Six million dead is a statistic.' He received the War Service Cross 1st Class for his efforts. In 1945, Eichmann said, 'I will leap laughing to my grave, because the feeling that I have five million people on my conscience is for me a source of extraordinary satisfaction!' He would later get this opportunity!"

After the war, Eichmann was briefly detained by American forces, but escaped. In 1950, he left Germany for Italy and subsequently fled to Argentina, where he remained in hiding for several years. Living under the alias, Ricardo Klement, he was captured by Israeli security agents in Buenos Aires on May 11, 1960. He said at the time, "But I had nothing to do with killing the Jews. I never killed a Jew, but I never killed a non-Jew either – I've never killed anybody."

He was returned to Israel, where he was put on trial, where he was found guilty and sentenced to death. During that proceeding, Eichmann stated, "If they had told me that my own father was a traitor and I had to kill him, I'd have done it. At that time I obeyed my orders without thinking, I

just did as I was told.” Israeli hangman Shalom Nagar hanged Adolf Eichmann shortly before midnight on May 31, 1962 at a prison in Ramla, Israel. The Israelis cremated his remains and scattered the ashes in the Mediterranean Sea.

“Yes, Virgil, I see how Eichmann worked behind the scenes to make all these terrible things happened. But how did he get all the different organizations in Germany to go along with them?”

“Through a meeting known as the Wannsee Conference, Dante, a meeting of senior officials in the Nazi-run German government. The purpose of the conference was to inform administrative leaders of key governmental departments, responsible for pieces of various policies relating to Jews, that *SS-Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich was acting as the chief executor of the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question.’ Heydrich presented a plan, for the deportation of the entire Jewish population of Europe and French North Africa to German-occupied areas in Eastern Europe. Those Jews fit for labor – such as road projects and other heavy labor – would eventually die, with the surviving remnant annihilated after completion of the projects. Jews in smaller work projects would be sterilized.”

“Those unfit to work would be sent East to be killed in extermination centers and by the *Einsatzkommandos*. Heydrich introduced Adolf Eichmann to the conference attendees and informed them that Eichmann spoke for him in the coordinating details of future Final Solution actions. Heydrich was so powerful and so feared that no bureaucrat dared challenge either Heydrich or Eichmann. They knew that Heydrich’s instructions came straight from the *Führer*, Adolf Hitler. Unfortunately, no exact minutes of the meeting were taken.”

“And then Heydrich was killed in Prague and Eichmann carried on in his name, Virgil?”

“Yes, Dante, the Nazis continued their war on the Jews after Heydrich died, until they were finally defeated in May 1945.”

“Well Virgil, let us pause here a moment and watch the Geryon sting Mr. Eichmann as he types on the keys of fire and then look at some of his minions. I believe you said we should see Dieter Wisliceny, Alois Brunner, Theo Dannecker, Helmut Knochen, and Hermann Krumei.”

The son of a landowner, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Dieter Wisliceny served as an assistant to Adolf Eichmann in the *Gestapo* bureau of Jewish Affairs. Wisliceny was born on January 13, 1911

near Angerburg in East Prussia. As a young man, he studied theology, but did not obtain a degree, and became a clerk in a construction firm. The cherubic-face Wisliceny joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and enlisted in the SS a year later, transferring to the Security Service shortly thereafter. His duties in the *Gestapo* included arranging for the deportation of Jews from Greece, Slovakia, and Hungary to the Auschwitz extermination camp.

Wisliceny was also involved in the creation of the ‘Madagascar Plan’ – which was never implemented. He later said, “In August 1940 the main idea was to solve the Jewish problem by emigration of the Jews from the countries occupied by Germany. The intention was, at that time, to force France to open Madagascar for Jewish emigration. The idea was to have emigration to Madagascar from all the countries occupied or controlled by Germany.”

In September 1940, he was attached to the German delegation in Bratislava, as an advisor to the Slovak government on Jewish questions. He was less fanatical than Eichmann, who was initially junior to Wisliceny, but then overtook him and became his superior. Wisliceny also re-introduced the wearing of the yellow star by Jews in occupied countries. He was arrested near Altaussee, Austria on May 12, 1945. After he served as a prosecution witness at the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg, a Czech tribunal convicted Wisliceny of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. Dieter Wisliceny was executed by hanging on May 4, 1948 in Bratislava.

Adolf Eichmann referred to *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Alois Brunner as his right hand man. Born on April 8, 1912 in Rohrbunn, Austria, Brunner joined the Nazi Party in 1931 and the SS in 1938. He first worked as Eichmann’s secretary in Vienna and was in charge of the registration and deportation of Austrian Jews to the East. Brunner commanded a deportation train of Jews from Vienna to Riga in February 1942. He supervised a transport of Jews leaving from Vienna to the death camp at Sobibór in Poland on June 14, 1942.

Brunner worked in Berlin from late 1942 to January 1943, deporting Jews to the East. In February 1943, Brunner was in Salonika, Greece, organizing deportations of Jews to Auschwitz and Treblinka in Poland. From July 1943 to August 1944, Brunner served in France, commanding Drancy Internment Camp near Paris – assignments that led to the deportation of 140,000 Jews to the gas chambers. Eichmann transferred Brunner to Bratislava for the deportation of Slovakian Jews to Auschwitz.

After the war, Brunner changed his name to Alois Schmaldienst and lived in Essen, in North Rhine-Westphalia. Sensing that the authorities were closing in, Alois Brunner fled under a fake Red Cross passport to Rome, Egypt and finally to Damascus, Syria, where he was granted asylum and lived under the assumed name of Dr. Gregor Fischer. He lived in an apartment building at #7 Haddad Street, guarded by members of the Syrian security service. Mossad, the

Israeli Secret Service, tracked his location and sent him a letter bomb, which resulted in the loss of an eye and several fingers on the left hand of the former SS officer.

In a 1987 telephone interview, Alois Brunner told the *Chicago Sun Times*, “The Jews deserved to die. I have no regrets. If I had the chance, I would do it again.” In 2001, a French court sentenced Brunner to death in absentia for crimes against humanity, but the trial was largely symbolic in an effort to honor the victims. In 2003, England’s *The Guardian* described him as “the world’s highest-ranking Nazi fugitive believed still alive.” He was reportedly last sighted in 2001; his infamous reputation lives on through a question of whether or not he ever worked for West Germany’s intelligence service after World War II.

SS-Hauptsturmführer Theo Dannecker was Eichmann’s man in France in 1942, Bulgaria in 1943 and Italy during 1944. He was responsible for planning deportations of Jews in those areas. Dannecker was born in Tübingen, Baden-Württemberg on March 27, 1913. He worked as a textile dealer until entering the Nazi Party and SS in 1932. Dannecker was married in 1941 and had two sons. Sent to Paris in September 1940, he was the first bureaucrat to propose continuous Jewish deportations from France to the East. He constantly prodded Vichy authorities to take more-active Anti-Semitic measures. Because of his abrasiveness – and for stealing property confiscated from the Jews – Dannecker was recalled to Berlin in October 1942 for abusing his independence.

In January 1943, Eichmann transferred Dannecker to Sofia, Bulgaria, where he continued to supervise deportations of Jews. He was assigned to Verona, Italy in October 1943 and to Hungary in the summer of 1944, to assist in the massive deportations of Jews there. In October 1944, he left Hungary and assumed the post of Jewish Commissary for Italy. Dannecker committed suicide in an American prison camp in Bad Tölz, Bavaria on December 10, 1945. After his death, Dannecker’s wife remarried and moved to Australia.

“Virgil, explain to me why the Nazis decided to deport all these people from their homes.”

“It was quite simple, Dante. The Nazis studied how to kill large numbers of people, so they could create the *Lebensraum*, the living space that they needed in the East. They were faced with a choice; they could either bring the killers to where the victims lived, or they could bring the victims to where the killers were located. Taking the killers to the victims was tried in 1941, when the mobile killing units followed the German Army as it advanced into Russia. These killers did murder a lot of people, but it was very inefficient, as they had to find all the victims and that took time and Russia had many places where they could hide. Because of the invention of the railroad train, over one-hundred years before, it was now possible to move thousands of victims in one train to a killing center, where the killers worked. The Nazis tried that and found that it worked

quite efficiently. Now they could kill millions of people and these men helped coordinate all that.”

The son of a teacher, *SS-Standartenführer* Helmut Knochen studied philosophy and journalism. He was born in Magdeburg on March 14, 1910. He earned a PhD in 1934 from the University of Leipzig and Göttingen and joined the SS two years later – he assumed a position in the Security Service. Knochen first analyzed newspapers of German émigrés in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The following year, Knochen headed sub-section II-11 in charge of Churches, Jews and Freemasons. In 1939, Knochen joined the *SD-Ausland*, Foreign Intelligence Services, where he directed infiltration operations of a British Intelligence Service network in Holland. He received the Iron Cross, 1st Class.

Though Knochen’s talent as an organizer and a negotiator were behind the successful launch of the Final Solution in France, he perceived the situation in occupied France in essentially political terms and focused on law enforcement and keeping order, ensuring that the German administration ran smoothly, especially with regard to the economic exploitation of France. As the war progressed, upon a request from Berlin, he carried out harsher directives when the Allied landing became imminent in 1944, such as rounding up French Jews for deportation. Knochen was recalled to Berlin on August 18, 1944, when the SS left Paris. He subsequently briefly served with the 1st SS Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.

In March 1947, a British military court sentenced Knochen to death for the murder of a number of British pilots, who had been taken prisoner, on August 9, 1944. On September 16, 1948, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and further commuted in February 1950 to twenty-one years’ imprisonment. However, the French wanted their pound of flesh and Knochen was extradited to France in 1954, convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. French President Charles de Gaulle pardoned and released Knochen from prison on November 28, 1962. Helmut Knochen retired to Baden-Baden, Germany, where he died on April 4, 2003.

SS-Sturmbannführer Hermann Krumei was born on April 18, 1905 in Mährisch Schönberg, then in Moravia, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He trained as a druggist and joined the Sudeten-Germany Party. He joined the SS after the *Anschluss*. In November 1939, he was assigned to the Higher SS and Police Leader in the Warthe Land, where he was in charge of the program to remove Poles by force from the Warthe District. In April 1940, Krumei transferred to be the head of a branch office in Lodz of the Central Office for Migration, which controlled the deportation of Poles to the General Government. In summer 1941, Krumei took a break from Poland to go to Croatia to plan the concentration Croatian Jews in transit camps.

Back in Poland, Krumei was enlisted by the SS and Police Leader of Lublin, Odilo Globocnik, to organize the resettlement of Poles and Germans in the Zamość region, which began on

November 24, 1942. Krumey had contact with Eichmann's department during the resettlement of the Warthe District, and in the spring of 1944, he accompanied Eichmann to Budapest, where Krumey served as a member of the group organizing the mass deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz, where a minimum of 290,000 were gassed. Allied authorities arrested Krumey in Italy in 1945, but he obtained his release and went to Korbach in Hesse, where he operated a pharmacy until 1957.

Active in the local government at Korbach, Krumey was arrested three different times, in 1957, 1958 and 1960, finally remaining in custody until 1965. A Frankfurt regional court convicted him of murdering Hungarian Jews and sentenced him to five years imprisonment. However, Krumey was deemed to have already served his sentence, and he was immediately released. Following an appeal by the prosecution, he received a new trial that sentenced him to life imprisonment on August 29, 1969. Due to health reasons, Hermann Krumey was released from prison and died on November 27, 1981 in Erftstadt in North Rhine-Westphalia.

“There is one more interesting facet of this punishment, Dante. I have told you that the typewriter perpetrators are forced to sit behind their machines the entire day and type away. By the end of the day they will have burned all their fingers off down to the nubs. Then they are handcuffed and chained in the back of the room. Their fingers grow back as they await the coming of the dawn, when they will return to their terrible typewriters.”

“But why, Virgil, are they not forced just to remain at their machines both day and night?”

“It is based on an observation by the famous English playwright, William Shakespeare, a few hundred years after you, Dante. He said that a coward dies a thousand times before his death, but the valiant taste of death but once. These men, Dante, were cowards, and by stopping their punishment every day, their imaginations begin to take hold. With each tick of the clock – growing louder and louder all through the night – they know that they are one minute closer to the excruciating pain beginning once again in the morning.”

“Their wailings are continuous throughout the night, even though they have no pain then. In fact, they scream louder at night than they do during the day. It is the thought, the certainty of the anguish that they will again experience, that causes them to die a thousand, nay a thousand-thousand times...they will scream for infinity.”

“There is one more man I would like you to meet. Let us go outside this typewriter building for a moment.”



“Look down in the valley with these binoculars, Dante. Do you see the man on the railroad track?”

“Yes, Virgil. *Quis est* – Who is he?”

“*SS-Hauptsturmführer* Franz Novak was born on January 10, 1913 in Wolfsberg in the Carinthia district of Austria. The son of a locomotive driver, who died in 1920, he joined the Hitler Youth and subsequently the Nazi Party. Leaving school at age fifteen, he became an apprentice printer, producing an anti-Semitic local newspaper. Engelbert Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, banned the Nazi Party in that country in July 1933. On July 25, 1934, ten Austrian Nazis entered the Chancellery building and shot Dollfuss to death; Novak was involved in the plot. Following the assassination, Novak fled to Yugoslavia and then to Germany. In 1938, following the *Anschluss*, Novak returned to Austria, joined the SS and Security Service working in the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, first in Vienna, then Berlin, and finally in Prague.”

“Novak was Adolf Eichmann’s railroad and transportation timetable expert and thus occupied a liaison role with the Ministry of Transport. Once Eichmann had coordinated the deportations of Jews from a specific region with that area’s local government, he would assign his deputy, Rolf Günther, the task of arranging transportation. Günther, in turn, notified his subordinate, Franz Novak, of the number of people to be deported, the origin of the proposed movement and the final destination. Novak then contacted Office 21 of the *Reichsbahn* Traffic Section and the railroad men would handle the rest. Novak worked in 1944 on the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. It is estimated that he coordinated at least 707 trains to Auschwitz.”

“After the war, Franz Novak went into hiding in Austria under an assumed name, but reverted to his actual name in 1957. Novak managed a print shop in Vienna until January 20, 1961, when he was arrested. He said at his trial: ‘For me, Auschwitz was just a train station.’ In 1964, an Austrian court sentenced Novak to eight year’s imprisonment. The jury did not convict him for aiding and abetting murder, but only of intentionally compromising the integrity of the passengers during transport by not providing adequate water, food, and toilet facilities. After an appeal, a retrial was ordered in 1966 and Novak was acquitted. This Austrian jury found that Novak had only been following orders.”

This reversal did not sit well in Austria. Two years later, the Austrian Supreme Court revoked the result of the second trial and ordered a third trial. This court, meeting in 1969, issued a unanimous verdict of guilty, resulting in a sentence of nine year’s imprisonment. Novak’s

attorney pleaded for a nullification of the verdict and Novak was not re-arrested. After the third appeal to the Austrian Supreme Court, a verdict of guilty was handed down by a court in 1972. It was all very confusing and Austrian President Rudolf Kirchschläger granted Novak a pardon. Franz Novak died on October 21, 1983 in Langenzersdorf, just north of Vienna, Austria.

“Why is this man not roasting his fingers with the other typewriter killers, Virgil?”

“Look carefully again at the railroad track, Dante. You will see that Novak is tied to the iron rails. About a half-mile away from him, you will see a huge German steam locomotive, belching thick gray smoke; it has the number 707 on it. Look at the engineer standing in the cab so you can get an idea as to the true size of this beast. It is a heavy goods freight locomotive, known, for short, as a BR96. It had the name of *Mallet*, German for Hammer, and a hammer it was indeed.”

“First produced in 1913 – ironically, the year of Franz Novak’s birth – the BR96s were perhaps the most impressive locomotives in Europe, if not the world. With their sixteen coupled wheels, they provided a true spectacle of raw power in motion. When introduced, the BR96 was the heaviest locomotive on the continent, weighing in at 123 tons. The beast was built to work on three steep stretches of the Bavarian State Railways and was able to pull a 540-ton freight train at twelve miles per hour up a 2.5% slope, mile after mile – the equivalent of 1,300 horses.”



“What a monster, Virgil. However, I do not see it pulling any freight cars; it is alone. What is this locomotive doing?”

“It is being punctual, Dante, *pünktlich* in German. German trains are so precise in their schedule of arrival, that you can set your watch by them. The locomotive is

traveling at three miles per hour, so Mr. (*Herr*) Novak knows the exact time that the behemoth will run over and crush him to death; I believe it will be precisely...ten minutes from now. This is not *Herr* Novak's only problem. After the train does its grisly work, it will proceed down the track a few miles, make a large circular loop on the tracks and begin its return trip. By that time, *Herr* Novak will have been brought back to life again."

"He will see the locomotive getting closer and closer. He will see the number 707, the number of trains he sent to Auschwitz. He will feel the vibrations of the huge machine on the steel track under him as it steadily approaches. He will once more be able to calculate when his arms, legs, chest and head will be crushed by 123 tons of metal. The train will roll over him, make another loop and the process will happen again and again and again, with no rest for Franz Novak, despite what the farce of an Austrian court ruled. *Herr* Novak was Adolf Eichmann's railroad expert, so it is only fitting that a locomotive be the avenging angel in his own unique Hell."

"*Alea iacta est* – Virgil – the die is cast. Now we will go back through the portal and to the earth at Auschwitz and then take our own train back to Landsberg Prison."



The Seventh Circle of Hell – The Hippocratic Killers



“You now see, Dante that many men of this prison and cemetery would have resided in the old Seventh Circle of Hell at the very least. All were extremely violent in thought, word and deed.”

“Yes, Virgil, I see that now. Not even the sharpest sword could slice so fine the evils these men committed.”

“What is worse, Dante, is that most of these men were physicians. They had taken the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm. They were respected in their communities and yet they sank to unspeakable depths as you will see.”

The son of a physician, *SS-Standartenführer* Viktor Brack was born on November 9, 1904 in Haaren/Aachen. He served as the head of the *Reich* Chancellery’s “Euthanasia” Department, also known as *T4*. In 1939, he started providing instructions to physicians for killing mentally deficient patients, children with long-term medical problems or “birth defects” and anyone falling into a nebulous medical category of “life unworthy of life.” Brack helped establish six killing centers for the program. In each, the gas chamber was disguised as a shower room, but

was actually a hermetically sealed room connected by pipes to cylinders of deadly carbon monoxide.

Each euthanasia center included a crematorium where the bodies were taken for disposal. Nazi officials then falsely informed the families of the deceased that the cause of death was an infectious disease, heart failure, appendicitis or pneumonia. In 1941, he turned his attention to sterilization in the hopes that the Nazis could conduct this procedure – using X-rays – in a way that the victim was unaware of the process. The process was then tested on prisoners at Auschwitz. Brack also played a significant role in “Action 14f13” that led to the gassing of concentration camp inmates, who became unable to work.

Brack was the winner of Nazi Golden Party Badge and War Service Cross 1st Class. He was convicted of crimes against humanity in the “Doctors’ Trial” at Nürnberg. Viktor Brack was executed by hanging on Wednesday, June 2, 1948 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were transferred to Reichenbach bei Tuttlingen, in Baden-Württemberg.

“Dante, let us pick up again on the Nazis euthanasia. In late 1938, Adolf Hitler instructed his personal physician Karl Brandt – you remember him – to evaluate a family's petition for the mercy killing of their blind, physically and mentally disabled infant boy, little Gerhard Kretschmar of Leipzig. The five-month-old boy was eventually euthanized in July 1939. With the barrier broken, Hitler instructed Brandt to proceed in the same manner in similar cases. In May 1939, the Nazis formed the *Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses* in order to prepare and proceed with the massive secret killing of infants.”

“First, beginning in August, the Interior Ministry required all doctors and midwives to report all cases of newborns with severe disabilities. Those youngsters to be killed were all children under three years of age in whom any of the following serious hereditary diseases were suspected: idiocy, Down’s syndrome, microcephaly, hydrocephaly, malformations of all kinds, especially of limbs, head, and spinal column, and paralysis, including spastic conditions. As reports on children started to flow in, and the Nazis created lists of the affected children.”

“Parents were told that their children were being sent to special hospitals for children, where they would receive improved treatment, as the Nazis knew that various methods of deception were required to gain consent – particularly in Catholic areas, where parents were generally uncooperative. Still, many parents refused consent when they suspected what was really happening. These parents were warned that they could lose custody of all their children if they did not comply.”

“How horrible, Virgil. The parents of these poor children were really trapped by the Nazis.”

“It would get worse, Dante. The children sent to these special centers were kept for an assessment for a few weeks and then killed by injection of toxic chemicals, typically phenol, and sometimes directly into the heart. The staff would fabricate a cause of death, often pneumonia, and send a letter to the parents. By the time that arrived at the family, an autopsy had been performed, brain samples removed for further medical research – sometimes the entire brain – and the tiny bodies cremated so no one would ever know the truth.”

“Once the program produced successful results for the Nazis, it was expanded to include older children and adolescents. Doctors were also told to expand covered conditions to include various borderline or limited impairments in children of different ages. It culminated in the killing of those designated as juvenile delinquents. As for Jews, Jewish children could be placed in the program primarily because they were Jewish.”

“Please, stop Virgil; I cannot take this anymore.”

“I know, Dante. It was truly horrible and some 70,000 Germans fell victim to the Nazi euthanasia program, of which 5,000 were children. You see, once you kill the unborn, it becomes easier to kill infants. Once you kill infants, it is easier to kill toddlers. Once you kill toddlers, it is easy to kill anyone.”

Possibly a childhood friend of SS chief Heinrich Himmler, *SS-Gruppenführer* Dr. Karl Franz Gebhardt was born in Haag/Upper Bavaria on November 23, 1897. He was wounded in action and the winner of the Iron Cross 1st Class, while assigned to the 4th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, in World War I; he was also a British prisoner of war for a short time. He later graduated the University of Munich as a physician. In 1923, he was a member of the *Freikorps/Bund Oberland* and participated in the Beer Hall *Putsch*. He joined the Nazi Party and SS in 1933. In 1937, he became chair holder for orthopedic surgery at the University of Berlin. Gebhardt subsequently became a personal physician to Heinrich Himmler.

His other titles included Chief Surgeon to the *Reich* Physician to the SS and Police, President of the German Red Cross. In 1940, Dr. Gebhardt served a tour of duty in the 2nd SS Division *Das Reich*. On May 27, 1942, Himmler sent Dr. Gebhardt to Prague to assist Reinhard Heydrich, who had been gravely wounded in an assassination attempt. Gebhardt disdained the use of sulfonamide, expecting Heydrich to make a full recovery without antibiotic use, which Gebhardt thought worthless. But Heydrich died of sepsis.

During the war, Dr. Gebhardt conducted horrific medical experiments on several dozen female inmates at the women's concentration camp of Ravensbrück. For his achievements, Gebhardt received the Knights Cross of the War Service Cross; he also received the German Cross in Silver. The "Doctors' Trial" convicted him of crimes against humanity and issued a death sentence on August 20, 1947. Karl Gebhardt was executed by hanging on Wednesday, June 2, 1948 at the Landsberg Prison. His remains were transferred to Munich, where he is buried in the *Ostfriedhof*.

"Yes, Virgil, I seem to remember several other doctors that we saw as unrepentant in the fourth circle of Hell. They are fortunate that they did not commit their excesses in my day. I think we would have burned them at the stake."

"Let us continue, Dante; but we may find that not even the stake would be appropriate for some of these next men."

"*SS-Sturmbannführer* Dr. Eduard Krebsbach was born on August 8, 1894 in Bonn. He fought in World War I and won the Iron Cross 2nd Class. Krebsbach received his doctorate from the University of Bonn and worked for several years as a pediatrician. Joining the SS in 1938, he soon found himself at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and soon transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp, as an SS doctor in 1941. Prior to this, in 1940, he served in the Waffen-SS in the campaign in France, probably with the forerunner of the 3rd SS Division *Totenkopf*. In this period, he earned the nickname 'Dr. Spritzbach' for executing sick prisoners by heart injections (*Spritzen*) of poison."

He supposedly left Mauthausen abruptly, after he shot and killed a German soldier while on vacation in May 1943. Dr. Krebsbach headed east to Riga and the Warwara concentration camp, where he led prisoner selections for death and presided over the liquidation of the camp in 1944. A U.S. military tribunal in Dachau convicted him of crimes against humanity on May 6, 1946. During the proceedings, Krebsbach maintained, "I certainly have not killed anybody." Dr. Eduard Krebsbach was executed by hanging at 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. He is buried at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #311. Post-death photos show that his face probably hit the edge of the scaffold as he fell through the trap.

"How many people did these doctors kill, Virgil?"

"Dante, we will never know. They killed the old people; they killed the middle-aged people and they killed thousands of children. They even killed the unborn."

“Another physician that conducted medical tests on concentration camp inmates was *SS-Obersturmführer* Dr. Hellmuth Vetter. Born on March 21, 1910 in Rastenburg, he served as an SS doctor at Dachau, Auschwitz and Mauthausen concentration camps. At Dachau, Vetter – who also worked for *I.G. Farben* – conducted experiments with drugs on the inmates infected with gonorrhea and pneumonia. At Auschwitz, he conducted tests on prisoners in Block 20 (the contagious diseases ward in the main camp) – specifically concerning typhus, typhoid fever, paratyphoid diseases, diarrhea, tuberculosis of the lungs and scarlet fever. A great many patients in these tests died. Many of the medications used by Vetter caused the victims to vomit or have bloody diarrhea.”

For his service, Dr. Vetter received the War Service Cross 2nd Class. He was convicted of crimes against humanity at Dachau in the Mauthausen Trial and was sentenced to death. Vetter was executed by hanging on Wednesday, February 2, 1949 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were transferred to Munich. Dr. Vetter never realized the harm he had done as a physician. Part of his last words were, “I am a physician and was a physician and have done nothing against my Hippocratic Oath.”

“Virgil, what is this *I.G. Farben*?”

“An excellent question, Dante. *I.G. Farben* was a giant German chemical company. It dominated the world market in synthetic dyes and other chemical products. The company worked closely with Nazi officials to employ slave laborers in their factories, which cut their labor costs down to almost nothing. They also collaborated with the SS in experiments of their products on concentration camp inmates; many experiments ended in death. *I.G. Farben* was closely involved in the development and use of *Zyklon B*, a pesticide that the SS used in the gas chambers of most of the concentration and extermination camps. As a pesticide, *Zyklon B* was thrown into barracks and buildings that had all their windows closed. After a while, the doors would be opened from the outside and the building aired to remove the fumes caused by the chemical pellets and all the vermin inside – mice and rats – would be dead.”

“Some crafty SS man wondered if the same pellets could be dumped in the ventilation shafts in the ceilings of the gas chambers from the outside, after the Jews were locked within. Experiments showed this could be done and *I.G. Farben* found another market for one of its products. After the war, an American military tribunal conducted legal proceedings, known as the “*I.G. Farben* Trial,” against 24 directors of the company. Thirteen men received relatively short prison terms. For example, Otto Ambros, a member of the managing board of *I.G. Farben*, was convicted of using concentration camp slave labor and mass murder, but was sentenced at Nürnberg to eight years imprisonment.”

“That sounds like a slap on the wrist, Virgil, considering how many people died in those gas chambers and undoubtedly as slave laborers.”

“It was worse than a slap on the wrist, Dante; it was a sickening joke. Otto Ambos served only three years in prison, and then he became an adviser to chemical companies *W.R. Grace*, and *Dow Chemical*, as well as the U.S. Army Chemical Corps. He later advised *Chemie Grünenthal* in the development of thalidomide, a cancer-fighting drug that unfortunately caused thousands of birth defects in unborn babies.”

SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr. Friedrich Entress was born on December 8, 1904 in Posen. He graduated from the University of Posen, passed his state examination and granted a physician's title by the Ministry of Culture in 1942. From October 1939 to December 1940, Entress served in the *Waffen-SS*; he was the assistant physician in an SS Signal Replacement Battalion. On January 3, 1941, Dr. Entress transferred to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where he served as the camp physician. He remained at Gross-Rosen until December 10, 1941.

The following day, he was assigned to the main camp at Auschwitz. While there, he administered lethal injections to tubercular and insane prisoners and those incapable of further work. Camp physicians also had to be present at gas chamber operations and based on statements it is obvious that Entress supervised these.

Dr. Entress remained at Auschwitz until October 20, 1943, when he transferred to Mauthausen, where he served as garrison physician until July 25, 1944. From August 3, 1944 to February 1945, Dr. Entress served as the camp physician once again in Gross-Rosen. On February 10, 1945, Dr. Entress transferred to the 9th SS Division *Hohenstaufen* and served as a surgeon in a medical company.

American forces captured him near Steyr, Austria on May 18, 1945. He was convicted of crimes against humanity at Dachau in the Mauthausen Trial and was sentenced to death. Friedrich Entress was executed by hanging at 9:05 a.m. on Wednesday, May 28, 1947 at Landsberg Prison. His remains are located at the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #339, where he was buried later on the day of his execution.

“This next one is quite interesting, Virgil. Hailing from Freiburg im Breisgau, Baden-Württemberg, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Dr. Waldemar Hoven was born on February 10, 1903. After an interruption in his studies, he attended the University of Freiburg and Munich and became a doctor. In 1939, he joined the *Waffen-SS* as a physician. In October, he became an assistant medical officer at Buchenwald. He became the chief physician for all inmates at the camp in July 1942; he held this position until September 1943.”

“SS investigators arrested Hoven at that time for administering a lethal injection to a potential witness in an embezzlement case against Ilse Koch, the wife of the camp *kommandant* and Hoven’s mistress. According to prisoner testimony, Ilse had selected prisoners with unusually tattooed skin and Hoven killed them with lethal injections. An SS court sentenced Hoven to death, but he was released from confinement in 1945. The “Doctors’ Trial” at Nürnberg convicted Dr. Waldemar Hoven of crimes against humanity on August 20, 1947 and sentenced him to death the following day. Dr. Hoven was executed by hanging on Wednesday, June 2, 1948 at Landsberg Prison. Authorities transferred the remains of Waldemar Hoven to Freiburg im Breisgau at the request of his family.”

“But why did Dr. Hoven kill prisoners with unusually tattooed skin, Virgil?”

“Well, Dante apparently, his mistress, Ilse Koch, had a bestial hobby. After the prisoners were killed, she ordered that the corpses be skinned. The area containing the tattoos would be tanned and later made into lampshades, book covers, cigarette cases, a handbag and even gloves. She also was fascinated with shrunken heads. It is believed that she would walk around the camp and when she noticed an interesting tattoo or body marking, she would notify her husband or Dr. Hoven and that prisoner would be carefully killed, so as not to damage the skin. Years later, General Lucius Clay, commander of all U.S. forces in Europe said that he thought the lampshades were made out of tanned goatskin. However, many of the trophies were human in origin.”

“What an evil woman, Virgil! What happened to her?”

“Ilse was convicted after the war in several different trials and given a sentence of life in prison. She later made several petitions for a pardon, all of which were rejected by the Bavarian Ministry of Justice. She became pregnant, while she was in custody, and had the child, which was obviously taken from her and placed in another family. About twenty years later, this son found out about his mother and began visiting her at the Aichach Prison, just outside of Augsburg. It was a German civilian prison. They apparently got along well. However, on September 1, 1967, the day before her son’s next visit, she hanged herself with a bed sheet in her prison cell. The body of the “Bitch of Buchenwald” was buried in an unmarked and untended grave at the cemetery at Aichach. After her death, her son disappeared.”

“These Germans and their unmarked graves will be the death of me, Dante. Should we go back in time to 1967 to Augsburg and Aichach and watch them bury her, so we will know for sure that Ilse Koch died?”

“Perhaps on another trip, Virgil, we can do that and examine every Nazi grave that may or may not have a body in it – and if that body is truly that of the perpetrator, not a *Doppelgänger* – or double. For years after the war, for example, many people were convinced that the Nazis finally found a double for Adolf Hitler – a man that looked exactly like him in every respect. According to historical lore, the SS shot and killed this double in the bunker in Berlin at the end of the war and it was this body that the Russians found.”

“Martin Bormann was alleged to have survived the war, as well. Other stories about fake corpses of Odilo Globocnik and Heinrich Himmler have also survived many years after the war ended. Some historians, supported by credible medical evidence, believe that the man incarcerated at the Spandau Prison in Berlin for forty years after the war – Deputy *Führer* Rudolf Hess, who flew to Scotland in 1941 on a fantastic peace mission – was not Hess at all, but a double. But we tarry too long; now we must visit the mass murderers.”





The Eighth Circle of Hell – The Mass Murderers

“Dante, now we are going to visit a unique set of killers – the mass murderers in the Eighth Circle of Hell. Every murder victim is a tragedy and it is hard to comprehend the magnitude of what these men did. Most were the leaders of what the Nazis called the *Einsatzgruppe* and *Einsatzkommando*. These groups were mobile killing units that followed the German Army as it advanced into Russia – when Germany invaded that country in 1941 – and killed tens of thousands of those they considered undesirable. No one knows exactly how many people were killed, because later in the middle of the war, the Nazis created a special unit to visit the murder scenes and burn the bodies until there was nothing left. We will start with the man who tried to cover up these crimes. Come quickly, Dante, we must get over to the prison immediately and go back to 1951. It is almost time for four of these men to depart the Earth.”

“*SS-Standartenführer* Paul Blobel was born on August 13, 1894 in Potsdam, near Berlin. An architect by trade, he fought in World War I, winning the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Classes. Blobel joined the Nazi Party and the SS on December 1, 1931. He gravitated to the *Sicherheitsdienst*, in particular the *Reich* Main Security Office, where in 1941, Reinhard Heydrich selected him to command *Sonderkommando 4a* for the

Russian campaign. Blobel commanded this formation from June 1941 to January 1942 in the Ukraine and southern Russia, although the rangy red-haired officer was suffering from typhoid fever and on the verge of a nervous breakdown.”

“Blobel spent all of July 1941 in Lublin, Poland in quarantine in a German military hospital. During its history, *Sonderkommando 4a* killed at least 59,000 people. Heinrich Himmler assigned Paul Blobel in July 1942 to command *Sonderkommando 1005*, whose mission was to destroy the corpses at *Einsatzkommando* and extermination camp killing sites. Blobel, who was frequently drunk, executed this task for two years, forming two subordinate units and concentrating his efforts at Babi Yar (where Blobel’s unit had killed 33,771 people,) Dnepropetrovsk, Chelmno and Minsk.”

In 1944, Paul Blobel took the personnel of the command – after killing the forced labor Jews in the project – to Salzburg, Austria, where he formed *Einsatzkommando Itis*, whose mission was to fight Yugoslav partisans in the Carinthia area of Austria. Blobel received the Bar to the Iron Cross 1st Class (denoting an award of the medal in World War II, after the recipient had won the award in World War I.) He was apprehended at the end of the war; Blobel was convicted in Nürnberg Case 9 “The *Einsatzgruppen* Case” of crimes against humanity. Paul Blobel was executed by hanging on Friday, June 8, 1951 at Landsberg Prison. At the request of his family, authorities transferred the remains of Paul Blobel to Solingen.

“All these German words are killing me, Virgil, *sonder* this and *kommando* that.”

“In some ways, that was all part of the plan, Dante. The Nazis were masters at the hidden euphemism and using terms that concealed guilt. They were smart in other ways, also. The chief of that Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, knew that if Germany lost the war, his subordinates would turn on him and testify in trials against him to save their own lives. Therefore, Heydrich picked his principal subordinates – those who knew all about his evil deeds – to put in charge of many of these killing units. He called it “shared guilt,” as the subordinates knew that they had so much blood on their own hands, they could never betray Heydrich.”

“Very crafty of Heydrich, Virgil. Was he the same person who died in Prague that you told me about earlier?”

“Yes’ see, Dante, you are starting to get the picture. Look! Here comes the next mass murderer to the scaffold, as we speak.”

“A high school graduate and merchant by trade, *SS-Brigadeführer* Erich Naumann was born on April 29, 1905 in Meissen. After high school, he became a salesman. He joined the Nazi Party in 1929 and the SS in 1935. He served in the Security Service in

Berlin from 1935 until November 1941, when he was selected to command *Einsatzgruppe B* in Russia, a unit he led until March 1943. The group murdered at least 134,000 victims, but it is difficult to determine Naumann's slice of this total. In any case, he received the Iron Cross 1st Class for his accomplishments."

Erich Naumann then became the chief of the Security Police for the Netherlands. In the Nürnberg Case 9 "The *Einsatzgruppen* Case," Naumann was convicted of crimes against humanity. During the trial, he pleaded not guilty and maintained that he was only following the orders of his superiors. Naumann was executed by hanging at 0:45 a.m. on Thursday, June 7, 1951 in the attic of the locksmith building at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Erich Naumann are located in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #421.

"A very early member of the SS – he joined in 1925, receiving membership #880 – *SS-Gruppenführer* Otto Ohlendorf was born on February 4, 1907 in Hoheneggelsen bei Hildesheim. A lawyer by trade, he graduated from the University of Göttingen. He was later the leader of Department III of the *Reich* Main Security Office, from which he was plucked by Reinhard Heydrich to be the leader of *Einsatzkommando D*. The group murdered at least 91,000 victims; tens of thousands occurred under Ohlendorf's watch. For his achievements, Otto Ohlendorf received the War Service Cross 1st Class."

In the Nürnberg Case 9 "The *Einsatzgruppen* Case," Ohlendorf was convicted of crimes against humanity. During the trial, he stated, "My mission was to see to it that this general order for execution would be carried out as humanely as conditions would permit." Ohlendorf added the following about the Jews, who made up the majority of his victims, "What else could we have done when confronted with demons at work, engaged in a struggle against us?" Otto Ohlendorf was executed by hanging on Thursday, June 7, 1951 at Landsberg Prison. His remains were transferred to his hometown of Hoheneggelsen bei Hildesheim.

"Virgil, this man Ohlendorf went to a university; he must have been quite intelligent."

"You have made an excellent observation, Dante. The American officer, who visited Simon Wiesenthal just before we did, conducted research fifty years after the war on 380 SS commissioned officers who served in these *Einsatzkommandos*. He found that forty-three percent of the officers in these murder squadrons attended German or Austrian universities. They were certainly highly educated. If the medical profession can be said to have provided more concentration camp officers than any other occupation, than certainly the *Einsatzkommandos* were the domain of the lawyer and the police officer. A full twenty-five percent of the SS officers assigned to these organizations were lawyers. Law enforcement officers – regular police and detectives – accounted for another twenty-seven percent of the *Einsatzkommando* officers."

“Virgil, now I see why it took the victorious Allies so many years to sort out which lawyers and police officers were really corrupt and which ones could be brought back into the new German society, especially as most of these men kept silent about their nefarious activities. It appears that this next killer was also a university-man.”

“SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Werner Braune was born on Mehrstedt on April 11, 1909. A lawyer, who attended the University of Jena, Bonn and Munich, he joined the Nazi Party in 1931 and the SS in 1934. Werner Braune’s brother, Fritz Braune, commanded *Sonderkommando 4b*. Werner assumed command of *Einsatzkommando 11b* in October 1941 and commanded this formation, which operated behind German Army Group South until September 1942. He later was the Security Service Commander for Oslo, Norway and in the same position for Halle, Germany.”

In the Nürnberg Case 9 “The *Einsatzgruppen* Case,” Werner Braune was convicted of crimes against humanity. He was executed by hanging on Thursday, June 7, 1951 at Landsberg Prison. Dr. Braune’s remains were transferred to Oeslau bei Coburg.

“So, Virgil, a pair of brothers commanding these terrible units. What happened to Fritz?”

“Dante, like so many of the killers during the war, Fritz Braune escaped the noose and wound up with a sentence of only nine years in prison, and died in 1992. Such is life. Now, we will take a train to Berlin and go back in time to the war years to visit a man, who also escaped the noose at Landsberg – Arthur Nebe. I believe you will find him to be of great interest to you.”



“Now we are in bustling Berlin during the war, Dante. Just ignore all the men you see in the SS uniforms; remember that we cannot be seen. We will be heading over to the suburb of Wannsee and see what occurred in January 1942 and then to Plötzensee Prison in 1945, after we try and get a coffee at the Hotel Adlon; you will enjoy that.”

“I know we are invisible, Virgil, but these SS men...their eyes seem to see right through me and freeze my soul. Let us keep moving lest they discover us!”



“Well, Dante, here we are; it is January 20, 1942. We are about twelve miles southwest of the center of Berlin, almost in Potsdam, in a suburb called Wannsee. This is a fashionable district of the city located on a long, narrow lake of the same name. This house is where the Wannsee meeting will take place. I know it is cold and you are tired of the snow, but let us see the guests arrive, before we go inside. Ah, do you see the black sedan? It appears that Dr. Lange is coming.”

“A key figure in the *Einsatzkommando* and the Wannsee Conference *SS-Standartenführer* was Dr. Rudolf Lange. The son of a railway construction supervisor, Rudolf was born on November 18, 1910 in Weisswasser, in eastern Saxony. Lange received a doctorate in law in 1933 at the University of Jena and soon joined the *Gestapo*. He served in the *Gestapo* office in Berlin in 1936, transferring to Vienna, Austria in 1938 to coordinate the annexation of the Austrian police system with the *Reich*. In 1939, Lange transferred to Stuttgart. He ran the *Gestapo* offices in Erfurt and Weimar in 1939, before returning to Berlin.”

“On June 5, 1941, Dr. Lange reported to Pretzsch in Saxony and the staff of *Einsatzgruppe A*. Lange rose to command *Einsatzkommando 2* on December 3, 1941; he also held the position of commander of the Security Service in Latvia. He planned and executed the murder of 24,000 Latvian Jews at the Rumbula Forest near Riga from November 30 to December 8, 1941. Lange was then invited to attend the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, to help discuss the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. It was held in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, along Lake Wannsee on January 20, 1942.”

The three-story villa, in which the meeting was held, was built as a villa residence for factory owner Ernst Marlier, a manufacturer of pharmaceutical preparations, in 1915. Marlier purchased two plots of land on Grosse Seestrasse (later renamed Am Grossen Wannsee) from the Head Forestry Office in Potsdam and the Royal Prussian Waterway Engineering Authority.

Marlier sold the property in 1921 to the North German Real Estate Company in Berlin for 2,300,000 *Reichsmarks*. Friedrich Minoux, a member of the board of this company, obtained the property in 1937. He was arrested in 1940 for helping to embezzle 8,800,000 *Reichsmarks*. While in prison, he sold the property for 1,950,000 *Reichsmarks* to the Nordhav Foundation, an organization that had been established in 1939 by Reinhard Heydrich to create and maintain holiday homes for members of the SS security services and their relatives. It was rumored that Heydrich planned to ultimately keep the property for his own home.

“Although Rudolf Lange was the lowest ranking of the present SS officers, Reinhard Heydrich viewed Lange’s direct experience in conducting the mass murder of deported Jews as valuable for the conference. Lange returned to Riga, where he remained until

1945, when he assumed command of the Security Service and Security Police for the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, at Posen, Poland. He was promoted to *SS-Standartenführer*, but soon after, the Red Army surrounded Posen (now Poznan.)”

“During the siege, Lange was wounded organizing the security police defenses in the city. He committed suicide at the *Kernwerk* core fortress in Posen on February 16, 1945, hours before Soviet troops overran these final defenses. He was posthumously awarded the German Cross in Gold.”

“Yes, Virgil, I see the important role that Lange played at the conference. He was really the only one who had murdered people with his own hands and knew the difficulties in doing so on a large scale. He was a lawyer by trade and so he knew exactly how many laws the Nazis were breaking during their notorious regime.”

“Indeed he did, Dante, although as we heard at the conference, in the spring of 1935, the Nazis began a new phase in the persecution of the Jews. The goal was now to bring about their biological segregation through a process of legal discrimination. Those 1935 Nürnberg Laws deprived Jews of many rights and laws after that went even further, until Jews were not even considered as human beings.”

“We ought to just kill all the lawyers, Virgil.”

“Why Dante, you are beginning to sound like Hitler! In 1942, the German *Führer* was discussing lawyers and said, ‘No one stands closer in mentality to the criminal than the lawyer.’ However, we can discuss lawyers later, when we are actually visiting Hell. Now it is time to visit another location in the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf district of Berlin, Plötzensee Prison.”



The Prussian government constructed Plötzensee Prison between 1868 and 1879 outside the Berlin city limits. Covering an area of more than sixty-two acres, the complex accommodated 1,200 inmates. In addition to the four prison wings of cells, the red brick complex included administration buildings, service facilities, work sheds, a prison infirmary, a chapel and housing accommodations for the prison staff. Until the Nazi rise to power, only murder and severe felonies involving explosives were punishable by death; by 1938, this grew to twenty-five offenses involving capital punishment.

From 1939, under the wartime special criminal laws, the death penalty could be administered for even minor offenses. The prison discipline also became harsher in Plötzensee as time went on,

which now became a facility for pretrial confinement for persons arraigned on political charges, as well as providing punishment and deterrence, rather than rehabilitation.

“From 1890 to 1932, thirty-six persons convicted of murder were put to death with an executioner’s ax outdoors in the courtyard at Plötzensee Prison. Between 1933 and 1936, execution by beheading with an ax claimed forty-five victims. On October 14, 1936, Justice Minister Franz Gürtner proposed that future executions be done with the German version (*Fallbeil*) of the guillotine; Hitler approved; through the end of the war over 2,000 persons had been executed at Plötzensee. A work shed was designated as the site of future executions and prison authorities transferred a guillotine to Plötzensee and erected it for the increase in executions they knew would come.”

“Condemned prisoners were kept in the large cellblock building directly adjacent to the execution shed, spending their final hours in shackles in special cells on the ground floor – known by the prisoners as the “house of the dead.” Their final steps took them through a small courtyard to the execution chamber housing the guillotine, minutes before their death.”

“In 1942, prison authorities fitted the execution chamber with a steel beam below the ceiling and fixed eight iron hooks to it. This gallows was then used for hangings. The condemned man was led to beneath the beam and appropriate iron hook. After turning around to face the room, he was lifted up by two executioners, while the hangman put the noose around his neck, consisting of a thin cord that passed through a snap link to form the loop. The other end of the cord, about eighteen inches above the loop, with its own snap link, was hooked to the iron hook on the beam.”

“The two executioners then released their hold of the condemned, who fell only a few inches before the noose completely tightened and began to choke him to death. For victims that did not expire quickly enough, the two executioners grabbed the legs of the condemned and began pulling them downward, tightening the loop even further. In any case, the victims took several minutes to die.”

“You are not going to make me watch that, are you, Virgil?”

“Yes, Dante, but we will watch only one. We are approaching the execution shed now. I believe it is precisely 8:00 a.m. on March 21, 1945 and you are about to meet the man who once was the chief criminal investigator in all of Germany, the enigmatic Arthur Nebe. Don’t be fooled by his kindly countenance and harmless moniker of “Uncle (*Onkel*) Arthur.” This man was a stone cold killer.”

“SS-Gruppenführer Arthur Nebe served as the commanding officer of *Einsatzgruppe B* in Russia, although that was not his most-important function in the Third *Reich*. Born in Berlin on November 13, 1894 to an elementary school teacher, he graduated from the Leibniz-Gymnasium in Berlin (high school) and served in the 17th Pioneer Battalion, a combat engineer organization in World War I. At the front, he was wounded twice by poison gas and was awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class. After the war, in 1920, Nebe joined Berlin’s detective force, the *Kriminalpolizei* (Criminal Police), called *Kripo* for short.”

By 1924, Nebe had advanced to the rank of Police Commissioner; that year he married Elise Schaeffer – the couple had one daughter two years later. In 1928, he assumed responsibility for the *Kripo* offices in Potsdam and Frankfurt an der Oder, where he investigated numerous narcotics and murder cases. Nebe joined the Nazi Party on July 1, 1931.

“In 1932, Nebe helped form the National Socialist Civil Service Society of the Berlin Police and became friends with Kurt Daluge, a police official and prominent Nazi. Daluge recommended that Nebe be appointed the Chief Executive of the State Police. In July 1936, the *Kripo* became the criminal police department for the entire Third *Reich*. It was merged, along with the *Gestapo* into the Security Police under Reinhard Heydrich. Arthur Nebe, who formally entered the SS on December 2, 1936, was promoted to *SS-Gruppenführer* and appointed head of the entire *Kripo*, making him a direct subordinate of Heydrich. Evidence shows that about this time, Nebe began to dislike the methods of Himmler and Heydrich, although he continued to have lunch with them frequently.”

“By 1938, his dislike of the two turned to hostility and he joined anti-Nazi conspirators Dr. Karl Sack and Hans Oster. Nebe provided information on SS forces to the conspirators involved in the September 1938 coup attempt, a plan to overthrow Hitler if Germany went to war with Czechoslovakia. However, Britain and France caved in to Hitler’s demands and there was no war over Czechoslovakia. In 1941, perhaps sensing some reluctance on the part of his subordinate to get his hands dirty, Reinhard Heydrich selected Nebe to command *Einsatzgruppe B*, which would follow the *Wehrmacht*’s Army Group Center in the invasion of the Soviet Union. Nebe asked for a transfer to the International Police Commission to avoid this duty, but Heydrich insisted; anti-Nazis Ludwig Beck and Hans Oster urged Nebe to accept, so they would have direct evidence of SS crimes and organization.”

“During Nebe’s tenure in the East, *Einsatzgruppe B* murdered about 46,000 victims. With the technical assistance of a Dr. Albert Widmann, Nebe experimented with the use of explosives and carbon monoxide gas vans (used to suffocate victims) to kill the mentally defective in lunatic asylums in Minsk and Mogilev, to spare his men the anxiety of shooting them.”

“Nebe served in Russia from June to November 1941, returning to Berlin to command the *Kripo* once again. In March 1944, after the mass escape of Allied prisoners of war from *Stalag Luft III*, Nebe helped select fifty re-captured prisoners for execution. He also reportedly suggested in June 1944 to SS physician Dr. Ernst Grawitz that the Gypsies held at Auschwitz would be good patients for medical experiments at Dachau.”

“Arthur Nebe appears to have been on the fringe of the July 20, 1944 bomb plot to kill Hitler at Rastenburg. Supposedly, his mission in the plot was to lead a team of twelve police officers to assassinate Heinrich Himmler, but his whereabouts on the day remain in question (He may have been in Berlin with conspirator General Paul von Hase) as does the method by which he was to have received the signal to act.”

“In any case, Nebe – using various disguises after a warrant was issued for his arrest on July 24 – fled into hiding. There are many versions of what happened next; one of the most logical is that Nebe contacted a female acquaintance in the police, one Adelheid Gobbin at the end of July, requesting help. She took him to her apartment and then arranged a hiding place with the Walter Frick family at Motzen on Lake Motzen, twenty miles south of Berlin. *Gestapo* investigator Willy Litzenberg, who was a real ‘bloodhound,’ appears to have tracked Gobbin down in January 1945 and in a later interrogation, she revealed Nebe’s hiding place.”

“Nebe, who according to one source attempted to fake his own suicide in January, was arrested in February 1945 and subsequently sentenced to death by the People’s Court. On March 21, 1945, executioners at Plötzensee Prison in Berlin hanged Arthur Nebe (and Walter Frick.) After the war, there were reports that he had been sighted in Turin, Italy, and Ireland, but nothing has ever confirmed that he survived the war.”

“So Virgil, what do you make of this Arthur Nebe? Had he survived the war, would he have been put on trial and sentenced for war crimes by the Allies?”

“I think so, Dante. It is clear that he assisted the anti-Nazi faction in Germany and provided them some information. That would tend to help exonerate him. However, there is something unsettling about Arthur Nebe. He accepted the position of commander of *Einsatzgruppe B* and he had to know that this unit would murder thousands of people. It may be true that he dragged his feet in this position and did not kill as many people as perhaps someone else would have, but his experimentation with gas vans and blowing up patients in mental institutions is quite repulsive. He did not have to recommend anything to Dr. Grawitz in 1944 and yet he suggested a terrible fate for many of the Gypsies at Auschwitz.”

“I agree with you, Virgil. I believe that Arthur Nebe was an opportunist, who wanted to feather both sides of his nest. That way, no matter who won and who lost, Nebe would find himself on the winning side. As things turned out, though, he found himself too clever by half and he is now hanging from a meat hook in this horrible little room at Plötzensee Prison. Let us hurry back to Landsberg, Virgil, I am very afraid here!”

“We cannot do that quite yet, Dante. First, we must go to the eighth circle of Hell to see one man and then we will go to the ninth – and worst circle – of Hell before we go back to Landsberg. To get to that portal to the underworld, we must go over to the *Reich* Chancellery and Hitler’s Bunker and then go downward to the portal. It is about two miles from here, and we will go later in time to May 1, 1945. I may have a few things to do there, separate from our task, so if you do not see me for a few minutes, do not worry as I will be coming right back. I guarantee that you will never forget this journey.”



“German engineers initially constructed the *Reich* Chancellery bunker as a temporary air-raid shelter for Hitler. Built in two phases, 1936 and 1943, the elaborate complex consisted of two separate levels, the upper bunker and the newer *Führerbunker*, located one level below. The two facilities were connected by a stairway set at right angles, which could be closed off from each other by a bulkhead and steel door.”

The *Führerbunker* was located almost twenty-eight feet beneath the garden of the old *Reich* Chancellery building at Wilhelmstrasse 77; it was some 400 feet north of the new *Reich* Chancellery building. The upper bunker was located beneath the large reception hall behind the old *Reich* Chancellery, which was connected to the new *Reich* Chancellery. Hitler’s bunker was located eight feet lower than the upper bunker and slightly to the west-southwest of it.

The two levels of bunkers featured thirty small rooms, distributed over both two levels, which were protected by approximately thirteen feet of concrete, with exits into the main buildings and an emergency exit into the gardens. The work in 1943 was done by the *Hochtief* firm, as part of an extensive program of subterranean construction in Berlin.

Adolf Hitler’s accommodations for Hitler were in the newer, lower section. By February 1945, it had been decorated with high-quality furniture taken from the Chancellery, along with several framed oil paintings.

“Here we are, Dante, Adolf Hitler’s bunker. The portal to the underworld must be very close here. As we walk through the levels and rooms, check every air vent, closet, steel door and anyplace you feel hot, unhealthy air whirling in from some unseen source.”

“We have been looking for several hours, Virgil, and have found nothing. Did we miss it?”

“No, Dante, it is not here; I am sure of that now.”

“Let me look at your map of what happened in the final days, Virgil. Look at this! In the early hours of April 29, 1945, the Russian 3rd Shock Army crossed the Moltke Bridge from the north over the Spree River. However, their attack stalled. To the southwest, the Russian 8th Guards Army attacked north across the Landwehr Canal into the Tiergarten Park. The same day, from the southeast, the Russians captured the *Gestapo* Headquarters on *Prinz-Albrechtstrasse*. Determined SS counterattacks drove the Russians back, but the handwriting was on the wall. During the morning of April 30, 1945, *SS-Brigadeführer* Wilhelm Mohnke, commander of the central district of Berlin, informed Hitler he would be able to hold for less than two days against the advancing Soviet Army. At almost the same time, the Russians launched their attacks from the Moltke Bridge toward the massive *Reichstag* building.”

“Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide that afternoon, after which, several high-ranking Nazis decided to make a desperate breakout from the center of Berlin and attempt to head west, possibly to the Alps in Austria. The situation was precarious; Russian troops had entered the *Reichstag* that evening, but did not control the building until May 2, due to fanatical, room-by-room fighting by SS forces.”

“On May 1, 1945, the survivors in the bunker were in a panic. Some decided to attempt to escape; others made the decision to commit suicide. Mohnke announced that anyone who wished to attempt to escape could do so; he organized ten groups that would move in succession through the subway tunnels and try to leave Berlin to the north. The groups would rendezvous at a wooded area near Schwerin and then move north to Flensburg. Each successive group would begin twenty minutes after the cluster before it.”

“About 11:00 p.m. on May 1, the breakout started from the *Reich* Chancellery. Mohnke led the way and was the first to climb out through a basement window of the *Reich* Chancellery. Followed by his first group, Mohnke ran across the *Wilhelmsplatz* toward the subway entrance. Entering the subway, the group used

flashlights to make their way down the tracks. Outside the darkness was broken by the red glow of numerous fires throughout the city.”

“Martin Bormann’s group planned to follow tunnels eastward from the Chancellery to the subway line and follow the subway line north, under *Friedrichstrasse*, to the *Friedrichstrasse* S-bahn Station a few hundred yards south of the Spree River. At that point, the group would surface, link up with any other escaping groups and attempt to force their way across the Weidendammer Bridge over the Spree River. Then they would move north to the Stettiner *Bahnhof* subway station in the Wedding District and then make their way northward.”

“Mohnke’s escape group crossed the Spree River by an iron footbridge that ran parallel to the Weidendammer Bridge. The remaining groups emerged at the *Friedrichstrasse* Station and made their way north along the *Friedrichstrasse* to the Weidendammer Bridge. Here, they found their way blocked by an anti-tank barrier at the bridge’s north end. Russian fire was heavy. They next withdrew to the south end of the bridge, where they found several German tanks. Martin Bormann and several others followed the lead tanks as far as the Ziegelstrasse, about 300 feet north of the Spree River. There a German *panzerfaust* anti-tank rocket, fired by a Russian soldier, struck the lead tank. The violent explosion stunned Bormann and Ludwig Stumpfegger (one of Hitler’s physicians) and wounded Artur Axmann (the head of the Hitler Youth.) However, it did not kill them. All the Nazis retreated to the Weidendammer Bridge.”

“Bormann, Stumpfegger and Axmann then followed the surface railway tracks northwest about one mile to the Lehrter Station. Bormann and Stumpfegger subsequently decided to follow the *Invalidenstrasse*, two thousand feet south of the *Invalidenfriedhof*, to the east. Axmann decided to go west, but found his way blocked by a Russian patrol and returned on the path Bormann and Stumpfegger had taken. Behind the bridge, where the *Invalidienstrasse* crossed the railroad tracks (and 2,000 feet from the Lehrter Station,) Axmann found both men, lying on their backs – either the victims of enemy fire or suicides.”

“Of, course, Dante; you are a genius! The portal is at the *Invalidenfriedhof*. The Invalids’ Cemetery is close to where Bormann – the last significant Nazi out of the bunker – died, but more importantly, it is where many Nazis leaders were buried during the war. It is one of the oldest cemeteries in Berlin and was the traditional resting place of the Prussian Army. During the Nazi regime, a number of senior figures were buried in the Invalid’s Cemetery, including former Army commander Werner von

Fritsch, air ace Werner Mölders, *Luftwaffe* commander Ernst Udet, Armaments Minister Fritz Todt, Reinhard Heydrich, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau and General Rudolf Schmundt, who died of his wounds after the July 20 plot by the bomb intended for Adolf Hitler. We will go to the cemetery directly.”



“Dante, quickly, the battle is still raging around us. We are in the cemetery. We must go to Heydrich’s grave; that must be where the portal is. Look for a wooden cross, with his name on it.”

“But I thought, Virgil, that the Nazis wanted to build an elaborate tomb for Heydrich designed by the architect Wilhelm Kreis and the sculptor Arno Breker – to honor him in perpetuity.”

“They did, Dante, but the war precluded that effort. Ah, here we are; his grave is next to that of General of Infantry Count Tauentzien von Wittenberg of the old Prussian Army. Heydrich’s wooden cross has been knocked over. Start digging until we reach his coffin...Open the coffin now, Dante. Look! Here is the portal; I can feel the hot air rushing out of it. Look! The coffin draped with the Nazi flag and covered in dead flowers disguises the actual hole below the coffin; shift it and we can enter. I will go first; Dante, jump in and we will enter the portal to the eighth circle of Hell!”



“Virgil, I am trying to see what the punishments are for these mass murderers in this eighth circle of Hell, but it is quite dark here. Can you help me?”

“Certainly, Dante. First, let us look at the men of the *Einsatzgruppe* and the other mobile murder units. Through the dark, do you see that small Russian-style hut off in the distance? The hut is in the middle of a perpetual, brutal Russian winter, where the temperatures are many degrees below zero. It is always night outside the hut and the snow is quite deep, almost two feet. However, inside the hut, it is warm and toasty. You can see the fireplace glowing through the window. On the table is dish after dish of warm, hearty food. Now, take the binoculars and look outside the hut for many miles at the open fields.”

“Yes, Virgil, I see shapes that are not moving but are lying in the snow. There are thousands of them, maybe more. I also see, perhaps a mile or two from the hut, a

group of men moving toward the hut. They seem to be struggling in the snow, trying to reach the warmth inside and the awaiting food.”

“Quite right, Dante; the moving men are the Nazis of the *Einsatzgruppe*. They are struggling to get in out of the terrible cold. However, they have a problem. They must count each dead body they see in the snow. When they get to the hut, they must tell the old forester within, the number of bodies lying outside. If they have the correct number, they may enter the hut. If they are not correct, they must turn around, walk several miles to their start point and try again. They are doomed, Dante. You see that when that *Special SS Commando 1005* destroyed the killing sites during the war, the number of murdered victims if the *Einsatzgruppe* in Russia became unknowable. Therefore, no matter what number the SS men give to the old forester, it can never be correct. They will never be able to enter the hut; therefore, they will always be freezing cold and hungry.”

“*Cadavera vero innumera* – Virgil – it is truly countless bodies.”

“Right you are, Dante. Let us take a short walk toward another tiny building. This little structure has only one door and no windows. It has a small glass peephole in the door, which is otherwise quite thick and solid. Take a look through the peephole and tell me what you see.”

“Virgil! I see about twenty naked people inside. They are trying to open the door; they are convulsing and trampling over one another to get to the door. It looks like they are screaming, but I cannot hear them through the thick door and walls. Oh, Virgil; it is terrible.”

“Take another look through the peephole, Dante, and tell me what you see.”

“I also see one man in a police uniform, Virgil. He is at the door in front of the others; he is pounding the hardest, but he is suffocating to death just like the rest. What is going on?”

SS-Obersturmbannführer Christian Wirth was born on November 24, 1885 in Obersalzheim, in the Launberg district of Württemberg. Wirth fought in World War I, where he won the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Classes. He became a police officer in Stuttgart, joining the Nazi Party on January 1, 1931 and the SS in August 1939. Christian Wirth played a significant role in the euthanasia program in the late 1930s. In mid-1942, Odilo Globocnik encountered difficulties in executing *Operation Reinhard* and brought Wirth to Lublin to supervise the three major extermination camps – Belzec, Sobibór and Treblinka. Nicknamed “The savage Christian,”

“Christian the Terrible” and “Stuka,” he proved so successful that he received the War Service Cross 2nd and 1st Classes. Christian Wirth was killed in action near Fiume, Italy by partisans on May 26, 1944. He is buried at the German Military Cemetery at Costermano, Italy.

“That man in the uniform, Dante, is Christian Wirth. During the euthanasia program in Germany, Wirth helped deceive the people that were going to be killed. He led them to these small rooms, saying that they would wait there for doctors to see them. Once he got all of them inside the room, he jumped outside, shut the door, locked it and turned on the carbon monoxide gas, watching through the peephole at the deaths of the unfortunates inside. Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas – but as it is colorless, odorless, tasteless and initially non-irritating, it is very difficult for the people to detect. However, quite soon, it will cause lightheadedness, confusion, headaches and vertigo. These will be followed by convulsions and respiratory arrest – and finally death. Wirth is inside, because each time he leads victims in the underworld to this gas chamber, he is also fooled into going into the room as well.”

“Suddenly, the door slams behind him and he is trapped inside. However, because he knows the true nature of the room, he is the first to get to the door in a hopeless attempt to escape. If you look through the round glass view-port in the door, you can see his anguished face pressed against the glass in a vain attempt to get even a small whiff of fresh air. This happens repeatedly each day, but he never escapes from the room. After he dies inside, he will be brought back to life and take another group to the room. He will enter the room once more; he will be trapped, and he will die a horrible death every time. But do not feel sorry for the others; they also worked in the euthanasia program.”

“After you tire of watching Christian Wirth, Dante, we will go to the final level of Hell – the ninth circle. However, first we must leave the underworld, travel to Lublin, Poland and visit the last portal to Hell caused by the Nazis in the war. It is the least understood of the four portals, but in many ways, Lublin was as important to the Nazi evil as all the others.”



“Virgil, I understand that Lublin was an SS city. Beginning in 1940, Lublin and its surrounding area became a center of SS economic enterprises. Later, the city became a base for future SS colonization plans of Eastern Europe. A branch of the German Armament Works (*Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke*), supported by five thousand slave laborers, set up shop in Lublin in December 1940. In the summer of 1941, the SS clothing workshops (*SS-Bekleidungswerke*) moved into the old landing strip on

Chelmska Street in Lublin; the facility would soon have a sinister mission of sorting the clothes of those murdered in nearby extermination camps. On July 20, 1941, Heinrich Himmler visited the city and ordered that a large concentration camp be built on the south edge of the city – it would later be named the Majdanek concentration camp.”

“Yes, Dante, the German police used the Lublin Castle as the central prison for the city. During the Nazi occupation, of the detainees processed at the castle, about 4,500 prisoners were executed, while another 4,700 simply disappeared, never to be seen again. The German Police Headquarters (*Polizeidirektion*) was located on Sadowa Street. Several other SS offices began operations in Lublin. The headquarters for the 25th SS Police Regiment was on *Parkstrasse* (Stanislaw Leszczynski Street.) The Central Construction Office of the *Waffen-SS* and Police supervised all construction projects associated with these two organizations. The SS Central Hospital, with the SS Dental Office, provided medical service to SS personnel in Lublin. The SS Economic Operations Offices also established itself in Lublin.”

“The Research Center for Eastern Settlement here was engaged in planning for the forced deportations of Poles, Ukrainians, Balts and Belarusians from Eastern Europe to Western Siberia to make room for Germans moving eastward. Most important, the SS and Police Leader Lublin headquarters was located in the center of the city on Wieniawska Street. In addition, the *Gestapo* headquarters in Lublin under Hermann Werthoff reported to the SS chief. Hans Maubach, Odilo Globocnik’s adjutant, lived in a set of quarters opposite Globocnik’s villa mansion.”

“Between October and December 1941, special personnel reported to Lublin from Berlin. They included ninety-two SS officers and men who had been assigned to the *T4* Euthanasia Program, operating out of the Chancellery of the *Führer*. To these men, Odilo Globocnik attached 153 SS and police officers from the Higher SS and Police Leader Lublin staff and 205 SS and police members from local SS/Police staffs and units. This group of men would form *Operation Reinhard*, which began operations in March 1942.”

At this same time, the SS established a training camp at Trawniki, some fifteen miles southeast of Lublin; this facility would train Ukrainian guards assigned to the operation, and be under the command of *SS-Sturmbannführer* Karl Streibel. *Operation Reinhard* headquarters set up shop at the Julius Schreck Barracks, located in the former Stefan Batory College, in Lublin. A three-story building, the second floor also had a large room that served as the living quarters for the operation’s chief-of-staff, Hermann Höfle.

Directly responsible to Oswald Pohl, in Berlin, Georg Wippert oversaw the processing and forwarding of valuables and goods – previously owned by the victims killed in *Operation Reinhard* – to the German capital. To store the most valuable material, prior to its shipment to Berlin, Wippert had a specially built strongroom – even the location of this vault was considered secret. He also was in charge of smelting gold and silver from objects originating at the three extermination camps – this included gold teeth, yanked from the bodies of the dead – and sending the ingots to Berlin. In May 1943, the report of an *SS-Sturmbannführer* on a tour of Poland with his superior Max von Herff included the following description:

“...We wandered through the cellars of this “special enterprise” and we were reminded of the fairy tales of the “Arabian Nights.”

“...Whole boxes full of genuine pearls, cases full of diamonds, a basket full of pieces of gold and many silver coins, beside jewelry of every kind. In order to carry out a better realization of all these valuables, the gold and silver are melted into bars.”

“...We inspected the melting process in the garden of the house. There is a small foundry where gold and silver are melted and then formed into bars and then delivered to the German National Bank on certain days.”

“...The huge quantity of diamonds and pearls can hardly be evaluated. The best proof of the repercussions this enterprise has on the international market is the quotations on the Swiss Stock Exchange and the effects on the international market in diamonds and brilliants. The prices have all gone down and Switzerland could not absorb any more diamonds, because our enterprise has swamped the market.”

“...In this respect alone, the “special enterprise” *Reinhard* gives us the means for our political struggle and would have a decisive effect on the world market. Apart from other valuables, there are 60,000 watches, most of them double-cased watches of high value, very often decorated with diamonds, 800,000 wrist watches and a huge quantity of other small valuables from tobacco and cigarette cases and gold fountain pens and silver bracelets etc.”

“...In special workshops all these treasures are sorted out and examined by specially trained Jews, jewelers, bank clerks and goldsmiths. If necessary the diamonds are broken out in order to separate them and use the metal in a different way.”

“...You get the right distance from these false values and, even if our eye is delighted by the shine of thousands of brilliants, some of them the size of a pea, for which the old world has paid hundreds of thousands, one recognizes a people which saw its whole existence in the heaping up of such treasures.”

“We are here it seems, in Lublin, Virgil. Where should we start?”

“There are so many possibilities, Dante. I would think we could start with the *Gestapo* Headquarters.”



“Here it is and an impressive building it is. It was known as the “House under the Clock” on Uniwersytecka Street 1. As a headquarters for the *Sicherheitsdienst* in a mid-size city, this is as good as it gets. The SD officers conducted their investigations on the top floors, but it was in the basement that things got really ugly in the torture and holding cells. There is no telling how many people met a violent death in these hallways. But the portal is not here or there would be hundreds of portals at *Gestapo* headquarters throughout the Nazi empire. Let us go out to the old landing strip.”



“That was a walk, Virgil; I am tired, but I know we are getting close. The slave laborers here selected, cleaned and processed the belongings plundered from the Jews exterminated in those three camps. As part of that, they placed all the clothes in four small gas chambers here to kill any vermin hiding within the garments. According to some witnesses, the SS also used the little gas chambers to kill a few Jewish prisoners at this facility as well. Upwards of 5,000 Jews worked here in 1943, but when *Operation Reinhard* was done, the SS took all of these Jews over to the Majdanek concentration camp, where they were all executed by firing squad on November 3, 1943.”

“Yes, Dante, that was a black day for mankind, when the SS killed the Jews who remained as workers of *Operation Reinhard*. Sorting garments, though, was done at every camp. There is nothing unique at that. Let us go back to the city center of Lublin and look some more.”



“We are here at the labor camp on Lipowa Street. Here the prisoners worked in tailor shops, made shoes and furniture, and worked on small machines and locks for the SS. On November 3, 1943, the 2,000 inmates here were also marched to Majdanek, where

they were shot. A terrible place – to be sure – but not the worst, so let us keep looking elsewhere.”

“Let us try Chopina Street 27 and the *Operation Reinhard* warehouses. In 1942, this former Catholic Action building was converted by the SS to serve as the warehouse for clothes, personal belongings, books and quality furnishings from Jewish houses in Lublin, whose occupants had been deported to an extermination camp. Let us keep going, Dante. We must be getting close.”



“What about this grand old building, Virgil? I believe that before the war it was the location of a housekeeping school for girls. The plaque says we are on Chmielna Street 1.

”You are a genius, Dante. This is it. During the course of *Operation Reinhard*, the SS discovered so many jewels and so much money sewn into the clothes of the victims, that they knew they needed to have a very secure facility to store it. That is when Wipperfurth had his special vault built – let us go in and find it. The Nazis were smart. They used a special work squad of Jews from Bohemia, who had been jewelers and bank clerks before the war. These Jewish jewelers knew what to look for and how to assess its true value. Globocnik registered the group of Jewish specialists at the Majdanek camp, but he kept them at the *SS-Standortverwaltung* – the SS Garrison Headquarters – located right here, and under his direct control. When he found new Jewish jewelers, he had the old ones killed so they could never tell what they knew of the extent of the Nazi loot from *Operation Reinhard*.”

“Behind the main edifice of the school was a barracks with a special furnace that the SS used to melt the gold, platinum and silver jewelry. Then the SS figured out that there was a lot of gold in the dental work of the victims and ordered that henceforth, the *Sonderkommando* Jews in each camp would pull out all the gold and silver dental work with pliers and hooks, before they burned the bodies of the dead. Every so often, Globocnik would send the precious metals back to Berlin in bullion form.”

“Yes, Virgil, I can feel the draft from the portal. It appears to be coming from where the furnace had been that melted the gold from the teeth and the jewelry. How much loot and treasure did the Nazis take in the operation from all the dead?”

“Dante, it is estimated that the total haul in currency and precious metals approached 178,745,960 *Reichsmarks*, or \$71,200,000 at the existing rate of exchange back

then. That works out to about \$1,071,000,000 in today's dollars – over one billion dollars! But the real take by the Nazis may have been three times that, given the level of corruption at every camp and at Lublin, where numerous SS officers could have skimmed off a personal fortune. Willy Natke, Globocnik's batman, once mentioned that his boss had a secret account with an unnamed bank – but possibly the Bank *Emisyjny* (Issue) of Poland, located in Lublin – with the account name of "Ordinario."

"This secret account of Globocnik's has never been uncovered...disappeared from history. The theft of these valuable precious metals and gems, even gold teeth, is the largest robbery of all time. That, and the manner in which it was stolen from the 1,700,000 people who were killed, is why this place has become a portal to the underworld. Shall we go through a portal one last time to the underworld, Dante? Here at Lublin, Hell is only a hop, a step and a jump away!"





The Ninth Circle of Hell – The Fiends

“Dante, we are now at the Ninth Circle of Hell, the worst of the worst. Can you make it through this final part of our journey?”

“I do not know, Virgil. What you have shown me far exceeds what I had believed one human being could do to another. We certainly had murderers and cruel individuals in Florence in my day, but nothing on the scale that I have witnessed here. This murder enterprise involved hundreds of thousands of perpetrators, maybe more. What I cannot fathom is why all of these Nazis and SS men did not sink to this ninth circle? I am almost afraid to continue.”

“Well, I must tell you a secret, Dante, all of them do make it to this lowest level every so often. They stay for a while and then traverse back to their original circle. It gives them something to perpetually dread, in addition to their current suffering, knowing that for all eternity they will come to this ninth circle of Hell over and over, end without end. The only man, earlier associated with these other men, who permanently resides here is a short man with a strange-looking, small moustache, who screams a lot...in fact, he is quite unnerving, so be prepared.”

“We will start with a few men who were later executed at Landsberg, temporary denizens, if you will.”

“SS-Unterscharführer Engelbert Valentin Niedermeyer was born on December 26, 1911. He was a baker by trade, but after a long period of unemployment, he joined the SS. Niedermeyer served as the administrator of the crematory at Dachau. While at this post, he wore a black suit and a black hat. Niedermeyer admitted to cremating 500 corpses. He began his service at Dachau on May 24, 1934 and quickly rose to the position of Block Leader. Niedermeyer recalled administering at least 300 beatings of prisoners.”

Niedermeyer also conducted 100 floggings of prisoners with a whip, in which the victim received ten to twenty-five lashes – sometimes more. He served at the front in 1943 and never returned to the camps. The American military tribunal in the ‘Dachau Case’ found Niedermeyer guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. German executioner Johann Reichhart hanged Engelbert Niedermeyer at 11:21 a.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946 at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Engelbert Niedermeyer are buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #138.

SS-Hauptscharführer Josef Seuss was born on March 3, 1906 in Nürnberg, Bavaria. Trained as a carpenter, he joined the SS in 1932. On April 20, 1933, he joined the staff of Dachau as a guard. He remained at Dachau until 1939, when he transferred to Flossenbürg. In May 1941, he became the leader of the Radolfzell external work element of Dachau; he returned to the main camp in August 1942. In December 1942, he transferred to the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp. Seuss subsequently moved to the Schömburg sub-camp of Natzweiler. Josef Seuss was married and had five children.

“The American military tribunal in the ‘Dachau Case’ found Josef Seuss guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. In particular, they determined that he was guilty of transporting sick prisoners, as part of the “Action 14f13,” to the Hartheim euthanasia to be murdered in gas chambers. Josef Seuss was hanged at Landsberg Prison at 1:54 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946. His remains are in Grave #146 at the *Spöttinger Friedhof*.”

“SS-Hauptscharführer Otto Moll, the “Hangman of Auschwitz,” was born in Hohen Schönberg near the Baltic coast on December 4, 1914. He went to grade school and began a career as a gardener. He joined the SS in May 1935 and was assigned to the Sachsenburg concentration camp, also serving for a time at the Columbia Haus camp in Berlin. In 1937, he was involved in an accident that left him blind in his right eye. He served in the camp garden at Sachsenhausen from April 1938 to 1941. During this time, he married a female guard at the women’s concentration camp at Ravensbrück, but she died of illness several months later. In May 1941, he transferred to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he helped dig mass graves and operate the crematoria.”

One witness in the *Sonderkommando* burial detail later described Moll's activities there:

“*SS-Hauptscharführer* Moll was the most degenerate of the lot. Before by arrival at the camp, he was in charge of the work at the Bunkers, where they incinerated the gassed victims in pits. Then he was transferred for a while to another section. In view of the preparation necessary for the "reception" of convoys from Hungary in 1944, he was put in charge of all the *Krematorien*. It is he who organized the large-scale extermination of the people arriving in these convoys. Just before the arrival of the Hungarian transports, he ordered pits to be dug alongside *Krematorium V* and restarted the activity of Bunker 2, which had been lying idle, and its pits. In the yard of the *Krematorium*, there were notices on posts, with inscriptions telling the new arrivals from the transports that they were to go to the camp where work was waiting for them, but that first they had to take a bath and undergo disinfestation.”

“For that, it was necessary for them to undress and put all their valuables in baskets specially placed for this purpose in the yard. Moll repeated the same thing in his speeches to the new arrivals. There were so many convoys that sometimes it happened that the gas chambers were incapable of containing all the new arrivals. The excess people were generally shot, one at a time. On several occasions, Moll threw people into the flaming pits alive. He also practiced shooting people from a distance. He ill-treated and beat *Sonderkommando* prisoners, treating them like animals. Those who were in his personal service told us that he used a piece of wire to fish out gold objects from the box containing the jewels taken from new arrivals, and took them off in a briefcase. Among the objects left by the people who came to be gassed, he took furs and different types of food, in particular fat. When he took food, he said smilingly to the SS around him that one had to take advantage before the lean years came.”

“Moll left Auschwitz in January 1945 and transferred to Dachau. During his short stay, he led a group of prisoners on a death march to escape the advancing Americans, personally shooting 26 prisoners. The American military tribunal in the ‘Dachau Case’ found Otto Moll guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to death. Master Sergeant John C. Woods hanged Moll at 2:36 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 1946 at Landsberg Prison. The remains of Otto Moll are buried in the *Spöttinger Friedhof* in Grave #111, where he was buried the day after his execution.”

“The “Hangman of Auschwitz”; that may be the most fiendish description to ever have been given to a member of the human race, Virgil.”

“Yes indeed! Now, Dante, we will see some men who were not executed at Landsberg, but belong with the fiends anyway. Do you remember Dr. Albert Widmann, who assisted Arthur Nebe in his grisly work in Russia? Well now we will look at him in detail.”

“Yes, Virgil. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Dr. Albert Widmann, the son of a railroad engineer, was born in Stuttgart, Germany on June 8, 1912. Studying at the Stuttgart Technical Institute, he received his doctorate in chemical engineering in 1938. The year before he graduated, Widmann joined the Nazi Party. After his schooling, Albert Widmann found himself employed with the Technical Institute for the Detection of Crime, a forensic laboratory. By 1940, he had risen to be the institute’s chief of the section for chemical analysis. By that time, Widmann was also a member of the SS, holding the rank of *SS-Untersturmführer*.”

“Widmann’s section provided technical advice to the Nazi *T4* Euthanasia Program. He took part in the early discussions about killing methods, participated in the first carbon monoxide gassing experiment at the Brandenburg State Hospital and Nursing Home, and through the institute, obtained the necessary carbon monoxide gas and poisons for *T4*. He also obtained and provided the lethal chemicals used in fatal injections in the children’s euthanasia program, sharing his technological knowledge with others in the *T4* program that were in charge of supervising and administrating the program. Widmann visited other *T4* centers, when solutions to technical problems needed to be tested, such as when the crematorium in Sonnenstein Euthanasia Center malfunctioned.”

“Yes, Dante. In Russia, Dr. Widmann and Arthur Nebe conducted an experiment using explosives as the killing agent. They locked 25 mentally ill patients in two bunkers in a forest outside of Minsk. The first explosion did not kill every victim and it took so much time preparing the second explosive charge that the results were deemed unsatisfactory. Several days later, they conducted an experiment with poison gas in Mogilev. SS personnel hermetically sealed a room with twenty to thirty of the insane patients in the local lunatic asylum.”

“Two pipes were then driven into the wall and attached by Dr. Widmann to the exhaust pipe of a car parked outside. A driver turned the car engine on and Widmann ensured that the exhaust began seeping into the room. However, after eight minutes, the people in the room were still alive. A second car was connected to the second pipe and through simultaneous operation, and a few minutes later, all those in the room were dead.”

“Yes, Virgil. Dr. Widmann also reportedly conducted other experiments back in Germany at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, along with Dr. Joachim Mrugowsky, concerning testing poisoned ammunition on prisoners – most of the tests ended in the death of the prisoners. After the war, Albert Widmann fled Berlin to Austria and finally returned to Stuttgart. He took a job with a paint company and

ended up as the chief chemist. Widmann avoided prosecution until 1959. He served only six years and six months in jail for his crimes. Albert died in Stammheim on December 24, 1986.”

“Dr. Roland Freisler served as the Secretary of the *Reich* Ministry of Justice and President of the People’s Court (*Volksgerichtshof*.) Freisler was born on October 30, 1893 in Celle, in Lower Saxony. The son of an engineer, Roland attended school at the *Kaiser Wilhelm* grammar school; in 1912, he took his *Abitur* test for university admission, finishing first in his class. He went to the University of Kiel, but his schooling was interrupted by World War I.”

After the outbreak of the war, Freisler joined the 167th Infantry Regiment in Kassel. In November 1914, attached to the 26th Reserve Corps, his unit attacked Langemarck in Flanders. Freisler was wounded, and after convalescing for several months in Germany, he returned to his regiment, which was transferring to the northern sector of the Russian front. He was promoted to lieutenant and won the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Class. Russian troops later captured Freisler, while he was on a reconnaissance patrol.

He remained in a prisoner of war camp north of Moscow until July 17, 1920, when he returned to Germany. He then resumed his academic career, attending the University of Jena and the University of Berlin. He joined the extreme right wing *Völkisch-Sozialer Bund* and followed that by joining the Nazi Party, with membership number 9,679. He was married and had two sons.

“In February 1933, Hitler appointed Freisler a department head in the Prussian Ministry of Justice. He became Secretary of State in the Prussian Ministry of Justice in 1933–1934, and served in the *Reich* Ministry of Justice from 1934 to 1942. In October 1939, Freisler introduced the concept of the “precocious juvenile criminal” in the Juvenile Felons Decree. This law provided the legal basis for imposing the death penalty and penitentiary terms on juveniles for the first time in German legal history. Freisler represented the *Reich* Ministry of Justice at the Wannsee Conference, where he stood in for provisional Minister Dr. Franz Schlegelberger.”

“On August 20, 1942, Hitler named Freisler to be the President of the People’s Court. During his time there, 90% of all proceedings ended with death sentences or life imprisonment. His most infamous trials occurred in August 1944, when he sentenced numerous major participants in the failed July 20 attempt to assassinate Hitler at Rastenburg. On February 3, 1945, Freisler was conducting a Saturday session of the People’s Court, when American bombers attacked Berlin. The People’s Court was severely damaged.”

“In one report, Freisler was crushed beneath a fallen masonry column in the courtroom; another account stated that Freisler was struck by a bomb fragment, while trying to get to a bomb shelter and bled to death on the pavement outside the People’s Court. Luise Jodl, then the wife of General Alfred Jodl, recounted more than twenty-five years later that she had been working at the Lützow Hospital, when Freisler’s body was brought in, and that a worker commented, “It is God’s verdict.” According to Mrs. Jodl, ‘Not one person said a word in reply.’”

“Freisler’s remains are interred in the plot of his wife’s family at the *Waldfriedhof Dahlem* cemetery in Berlin. His name is not shown on the gravestone. His funeral was attended by his wife, a few colleagues from the People’s Court, a few Nazi Party functionaries and a representative of the Ministry of Justice.”

“Virgil, I have heard what you said about this man, and I am looking for all these men in this ninth circle, but I cannot see them. What is happening?”

“You must look carefully, Dante. They do not remain in their human form in this circle but are transformed into large hideous frogs. Look closely at the water and we will see our next fiend.”

“Yes, Dante, I see him. Hermann Höfle served as the chief-of-staff and right hand man to Odilo Globocnik during *Operation Reinhard*, the killing of at least 1,700,000 Jews in eastern Poland. Born in Salzburg, Austria on June 19, 1911, Höfle joined the Nazi Party on August 1, 1933. He had previously been an auto mechanic and a taxi driver, rising to ownership of a cab company. Prior to the German takeover of Austria, Höfle was convicted of anti-government crimes and spent time in a Salzburg police prison. Immediately after the Polish Campaign, he was assigned to the *Sicherheitsdienst* in southern Poland. Beginning in November 1940, Höfle worked as an overseer of Jewish work camps southeast of Lublin. Workers from these camps built a large number of anti-tank ditches.”

“Married with four children, he worked in the Lublin area for several years, not including a short stint at Mogilev, Russia, emerging from obscurity to become a leading figure in the Final Solution. With his headquarters at the Julius Schreck Barracks in Lublin, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Höfle procured Ukrainian guards for the three major extermination camps and instructed SS personnel – to include *Action T4* gassing experts from Berlin – in their duties and responsibilities, including administering an oath of secrecy. He coordinated the deportations of Jews from all areas of the General Government and directed them to these death camps.”

“Yes, Dante. On the morning of July 22, 1942, *SS-Sturmbannführer* Höfle began the deportation of Jews from the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto, an operation that ended with the deaths of several hundred thousand people. He also played a key role in the “Harvest Festival” massacre of 42,000 Jewish inmates of the various labor camps in the Lublin district in early November 1943. Months after the end of *Operation Reinhard*, Hermann Höfle joined Odilo Globocnik in Trieste, ostensibly to hunt partisans.”

“After the war, Höfle was in and out of various confinement facilities as numerous proceedings against him were started but then dropped. He also spent three years living under an alias in Italy. Authorities arrested Hermann Höfle a final time in 1961. He committed suicide in an Austrian prison on August 21, 1962, while awaiting trial, by hanging himself.”

“*SS-Gruppenführer* Odilo Globocnik was born in the Imperial Free City of Trieste, Austria on April 21, 1904. Hailing from a family of Slovene descent, Globocnik was the son of a former cavalry lieutenant, turned postman. Odilo moved to Klagenfurt, Austria and became an early member of the Austrian Nazi Party and Austrian SS, joining the Austrian Nazi Party in 1922. He is reported to have been one of the attackers who murdered Jewish Viennese jeweler Norbert Futterweit in 1933. For his early work in the Nazi Party, he joined the German Nazi Party in 1931, Globocnik assumed duties as the *Gauleiter* for Vienna in 1938, but used his position to speculate in illegal foreign currency exchanges and was stripped of the position.”

“However, Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, knew a ruthless man when he saw one and named Globocnik the SS and Police Leader for Lublin, in Poland. In that capacity, “Globus” assumed command of *Operation Reinhard*, the Nazi plan to kill the two million Jews in Poland at the death camps of Treblinka, Sobibór and Belzec.” According to British historian Michael Tregenza, Globocnik took part in numerous drunken outings with Oskar Dirlewanger, when *Sonderkommando* Dirlewanger was assigned to Lublin in 1941 and early 1942 – outings that sometimes ended in the murder of Polish women.

“Globocnik was horribly successful in this task during 1942 – 1943, and was subsequently transferred to duties as the Higher SS and Police Leader for the Adriatic Coast. He would receive the German Cross in Gold and German Cross in Silver in 1945, after receiving the Iron Cross 1st Class and the Anti-Partisan Badge in Silver the year before. Proud of his work, in May 1945 he would state, ‘We finished off two million.’”

“In October 1944, Odilo Globocnik married Lore Peterschinegg, the head of the *Bund Deutsche Mädel* (The League of German Girls) of the Carinthia district in Austria. They had one son, Peter, born in January 1946; Lore died in 1974. Globocnik was a close

associate of Dr. Friedrich Rainer, *Gauleiter* of Carinthia. When the war ended, Odilo Globocnik was apprehended by British forces.”

“Globus committed suicide on May 31, 1945 at Schloss Paternion bei Weissensee, Austria. His last words were, “[I am] a poor merchant from Klagenfurt frightened of the possible Yugoslav invasion.” Then, Odilo Globocnik bit down on a vial of poison. British troops buried him in an unknown grave; his remains have never been found. In fact, he is another Nazi who many believed actually survived and went into hiding.”

“How did these death camps of *Operation Reinhard* work, Virgil? How were they able to kill so many people?”

“It was all based on deception, Dante. The Nazis brought trainloads of people from cities in Europe – you remember how Adolf Eichmann organized that. The people had been told that they were going to work camps in the East and that they would live there. Once the train arrived at the Treblinka, Sobibór or Belzec death camp, the people got off and walked into the camps. The Nazis told them to put their belongings in a pile and fill out a card that would be sent to their relatives, saying that they were fine.”

“Then the Nazis told them that for health purposes, they had to visit the barbers to shave their hair short, so they would not get lice. Then they were told that they needed to take a shower so they would be clean and then they would receive a fresh, clean set of clothes.”

“Then the Nazis marched them into large rooms that had showerheads in them; once the Nazis could not squeeze anyone else in the room, they shut and locked the doors; being a shower room, it had no windows. The Jews looked up at the showerheads, expecting hot water, but instead the Nazis pour *Zyklon B* pellets through holes in the ceiling – you remember *Zyklon B* and *I.G. Farben*. The pellets started to dissolve, releasing a deadly gas. After the people had all suffocated to death, the Nazis used other prisoners to pull the bodies out of the rooms, yank out their gold teeth with pliers and then burn the bodies or bury them in mass graves.”

“Every so often, the Nazis would kill all the people in these work details, so there would be no witnesses later to the crime. Finally, the Nazis sorted through the clothes and belongings of the victims and sent these items back to Germany – or so they were ordered. It was always believed that Globocnik and some of his SS men in Lublin stole some of the jewelry and valuables for their private use.”

“That is horrible, Virgil.”

“Dante, if you think that is bad, wait until you meet the next fiend, Heinrich “*Gestapo*” Müller!”

Heinrich “Heini” Müller was born in Munich, Bavaria, the son of working-class Catholic parents. In the final year of World War I, he served as a pilot for an artillery spotting unit, during which he was decorated several times for bravery, to include the Iron Cross 2nd Class, the Iron Cross 1st Class, the Bavarian Military Merit Cross 2nd Class with Swords and the Bavarian Pilots Badge. Müller joined the Bavarian Police in 1919. During the immediate post-war years, Müller was involved in the suppression of attempted Communist risings in Bavaria and became a lifelong enemy of Communism after witnessing the shooting of hostages by the revolutionary “Red Army” in Munich, during the Bavarian Soviet Republic. During the Weimar Republic, Müller served as the head of the Munich Police Department, where he acquainted with many members of the Nazi Party including Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich.

After the 1933 Nazis rise to power, Heydrich – as head of the Security Service – recruited Müller to the SS. In 1936, as head of the *Gestapo*, Heydrich named Müller that organization’s Operation’s Chief. Heinrich Müller quickly rose to the ranks, achieving the grade of *SS-Gruppenführer* in 1939. With the consolidation of law enforcement agencies under Heydrich in the *Reich* Main Security Office (RSHA), Müller became the chief of the RSHA “*Amt IV*” (Office #4 or Department 4.)

At about the same time, he acquired the nickname “*Gestapo* Müller” to distinguish him from another SS general of the same name. The nickname would soon bring an aura of dread associated with Müller for many. He was also called “Bloody Müller.”

As the *Gestapo* chief, Heinrich Müller played a leading role in the detection and suppression of all forms of resistance to the Nazi regime, succeeding in infiltrating and destroying many underground networks of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party. Müller was also active in resolving the Jewish question; Adolf Eichmann headed the *Gestapo*'s Office of Resettlement and then it’s Office of Jewish Affairs (the *Amt IV* section called *Referat IV B4*), as Müller's subordinate. Müller attended the Wannsee Conference in Berlin in January 1942 that formalized responsibilities for the destruction of Europe’s Jews.

In 1942, Müller successfully infiltrated the “Red Orchestra” network of Soviet spies and used it to feed false information to the Soviet intelligence services. While not the commander of any *Einsatzgruppe*, he received regular reports on their progress in Russia. In February 1943, he presented Heinrich Himmler with firm evidence that Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the German *Abwehr* Military Intelligence Organization, was involved with the anti-Nazi resistance; however, Himmler told him to drop the case. During the war, Müller received the Knights Cross of the War Service Cross.

After the failure of the July 20, 1944 Bomb Plot to assassinate Hitler, Müller assumed responsibility for arresting and interrogating anyone suspected of involvement. Müller's agents arrested over 5,000 people during the next six months. In April 1945, Müller was among the last group of Nazi loyalists assembled in the *Führerbunker*, as the Soviet Army fought its way into Berlin. One of his last tasks was to interrogate SS General Hermann Fegelein in the basement of the Church of the Trinity, near the *Reichs* Chancellery. Fegelein was Himmler's liaison officer to Hitler and after Müller's interrogation, he was shot on April 28, 1945 on Müller's evidence that Fegelein was attempting to flee Berlin.

Müller's fate has been the subject of speculation; many historians believe that he was killed, while others opine that he worked for the Soviet Union or the United States after the war. The most intriguing option of Müller's fate came from Walter Lüders, a former member of the *Volkssturm* (Peoples' Defense Force.) Lüders said that he had been part of a burial unit, which had found the body of an SS General in the garden of the *Reichs* Chancellery, with the identity papers of Heinrich Müller. The body was subsequently buried in a mass grave at the old Jewish Cemetery on Grosse Hamburgerstrasse, then in the Soviet Occupation Sector. There does not appear to have been any investigation of this gravesite since the war to assess the validity of this witness. Müller once boasted, "I've never had a man in front of me yet whom I did not break in the end."

"Well, Dante, what do you think?"

"I am glad that I never had to stand in front of this *Gestapo* Müller; I believe I would have turned in my own mother rather than undergo his tender mercies. I also think that we should head straight up to Berlin, to the old Jewish Cemetery and see if we can find this man's bones, just to ensure that he is dead, so I can sleep at night. Virgil, these men keep getting worse and worse. Does this madness ever stop?"

"In due time, Dante, in due time, although now we will meet a man that truly enjoyed killing. Dante, I give you Dr. Oskar Dirlewanger!"

"*SS-Oberführer* Oskar Dirlewanger was born on September 26, 1895 in Esslingen. He was wounded in combat during in World War I and won the Iron Cross 2nd Class and Iron Cross 1st Class. In the chaos of post-war Germany, Dirlewanger served on an armored train in a *Freikorps* unit that fought Communist insurgents. Dirlewanger then attended the University of Frankfurt, where he obtained a Ph.D. He later joined the Nazi Party, but ran afoul of some local party leaders. A serial sex-offender, Oskar Dirlewanger was convicted of morals' charges and sentenced to several years in prison in the 1930s. After his release, Dirlewanger volunteered to serve with a German military expeditionary force in Spain, known as the Condor Legion; here he helped train Spanish crews in tank warfare."

“Oskar Dirlewanger returned to Germany from Spain in May 1939. After the outbreak of World War II, Dirlewanger wrote to a senior SS officer and volunteered for service as an SS officer, suggesting that a special unit be formed of poachers, with Dirlewanger in command. Promoted to *SS-Obersturmbannführer*, he was named to command the Special Command Dirlewanger (*Sonderkommando* Dirlewanger) a *Waffen-SS* unit composed of these former game poachers to hunt partisans. Oskar Dirlewanger and his unit, initially battalion-size, fought in Poland in 1942, also guarding Jews in forced labor camps and making life miserable for Poles in Lublin and Cracow. They transferred to White Russia in 1943, after the SS chief in Poland said they were too brutal and corrupt to remain there.”

“Dirlewanger fought against partisans through the summer of 1944 in Russia and White Russia, killing thousands of armed – and unarmed – inhabitants in the region. In August 1944, the unit moved to the Warsaw Uprising (August-September 1944) and the Slovakian Uprising in October-November 1944. The Dirlewanger Regiment then moved to the Eastern Front in late 1944, first to Hungary. *Sonderkommando* Dirlewanger expanded throughout the war and finished as the 36th *Waffen-SS* Division in Germany near Halbe. German propaganda correspondents and wartime photographers did not follow them in action. This was for good reason, as wherever the Dirlewanger unit operated, corruption and rape formed an every-day part of life and indiscriminate slaughter, beatings and looting were rife. During the war, Oskar Dirlewanger received the German Cross in Gold and the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross.”

“Dirlewanger avoided death on the Eastern Front after he was wounded in February 1945 and turned the division over to Fritz Schmedes. Subsequently, Dirlewanger attempted to hide in Upper Swabia at the end of the war. French authorities arrested him at the end of May. Polish laborers, under the employment of the French, identified Oskar Dirlewanger and beat him to death on June 7, 1945 at Altshausen/Upper Swabia, while he was in French captivity, although rumors persisted that Dirlewanger had fled to Egypt or Syria in late 1945 to avoid prosecution. French authorities later exhumed the remains of Oskar Dirlewanger, from the *Altshausen Friedhof* on the northwest side of town and confirmed that it was indeed him, although the French file on Oskar Dirlewanger remains locked.”

“Just as with that Müller, should we look in the cemetery here in Altshausen before we leave to see if the bones in the grave actually belong to Dirlewanger? There are just too many of these Nazis, whose deaths are shrouded in mystery. I have another question; so this convict led a unit of other convicts to hunt partisans; why did the Nazis use such a terrible unit, Virgil?”

“Well, Dante, they thought that if men could successfully hunt animals in forests as poachers, they could hunt men, who were partisans, in forests, as well. Oskar Dirlewanger was undoubtedly a serial sex offender and pathological killer. There is strong evidence that Dirlewanger murdered Polish women in Lublin, Poland, to include killing some by Strychnine injections. However, everyone should have known that a military unit, formed under an evil ideology, led by a social outcast and composed of vicious criminals, would sink to its lowest common denominator – hate. At least, Dirlewanger got his just rewards when those Polish laborers identified him in Altshausen in the French jail. That was truly “The Fates” intervening. However, Dirlewanger pales in comparison to this next fellow. Dante, I give you Josef Mengele, the ‘Angel of Death.’”

“*SS-Hauptsturmführer* Dr. Josef Mengele was born on March 16, 1911 in Günzburg, Bavaria. Mengele’s father was a founder of the Karl Mengele & Sons company, a company that produced farm machinery for milling, sawing and baling. In his early years, he obtained a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Munich and one in medicine from the University of Frankfurt. He joined the Nazi Party in 1937. After joining the SS, he served in Russia with the 5th SS Division *Wiking*, winning the Iron Cross 2nd Class and 1st Class. He was also wounded in action.”

“After serving with the division, Mengele transferred to an assignment as a physician at the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp. One of Mengele’s main duties was to serve as the selecting officer at the railroad ramp at Auschwitz, where trains bearing thousands of Jews and other victims arrived from all parts of Europe. As the new prisoners passed in front of him, Dr. Mengele selected who would go to the work groups and who would head directly to the gas chambers – if, in Mengele’s opinion, they were unfit for labor. Mengele, known as the “Angel of Auschwitz” and the “White Angel,” also conducted gruesome medical experiments on children, especially twins.”

“On his human experiment work, he explained: “Scientists have always been able to study twins after they have been born together. But only in the Third *Reich* can Science examine twins who have died together.” As to the aftermath of such experiments, Mengele said, “It would not be humanitarian to send a child to the ovens without permitting the mother to be there to witness the child’s death.” Mengele later served at the Gross-Rosen concentration camp in 1945. Mengele was married and had one son. He was later divorced.”

After the war, Mengele avoided post-war prosecution by fleeing to South America via Innsbruck, Austria and Genoa, Italy (possibly with help from the ODESSA – the Organization of Former SS Members,) where he lived in several locations – remaining one-step ahead of the authorities. He remained unrepentant, saying, “I don’t have anything to hide. Terrible things happened at

Auschwitz, and I did my best to help. One could not do everything. There were terrible disasters there. I could only save so many. I never killed anyone or hurt anyone.”

On July 25, 1958, in Nueva Helvecia, Uruguay, Mengele married Martha Mengele, widow of his deceased brother Karl. Two years before his death, Mengele said of the efforts to arrest him, “There are no judges, only revenge seekers.” Josef Mengele finally died in Brazil on February 7, 1979, when he suffered a massive heart attack while swimming in the ocean off a beach.

“I cannot speak, Virgil – to do those horrible things to little children who were twins; this is beyond anything civilized.”

“It turns my stomach as well, Dante. I know you are coming to the end of your comprehension, but you must be brave and listen to a few more descriptions – you owe it to the victims to know what went on and never forget it; so toughen up! Do you remember what you have heard about Reinhard Heydrich, how we went to his grave in Berlin and found the portal to the underworld? Well, now you get to see him in person!”

“*SS-Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich served as the chief of the *Reich* Main Security Office, Deputy *Reich*-Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, and one of the main architects of the Holocaust. Many historians regard him as the darkest figure within the Nazi elite. Even Adolf Hitler called him “the man with the iron heart.” Heydrich was born on March 7, 1904 in Halle an der Saale to composer and opera singer Richard Bruno Heydrich and his wife Elisabeth Anna Maria Amalia Krantz. Young Reinhard was very intelligent and excelled in his schoolwork at the *Reformgymnasium*; he was a talented athlete and became an expert swimmer and fencer. However, Reinhard was shy and insecure; he was frequently bullied for his high-pitched voice and rumored Jewish ancestry, which earned him the nickname ‘Moses Handel.’”

“After World War I, Heydrich joined a *Freikorps*, a paramilitary unit that fought Communists near his hometown. In 1922, he joined the Navy and became a naval cadet at Kiel. On April 1, 1924, he was promoted to senior midshipman and sent to officer training at the Mürwik Naval College. Two years later, he advanced to the rank of ensign and was assigned as a signals officer on the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*, the flagship of Germany’s North Sea Fleet. Admiral Erich Raeder dismissed Heydrich from the Navy in April 1931, after a charge of “conduct unbecoming to an officer and a gentleman,” for breaking an engagement promise to a woman he had known. Heydrich was devastated by the dismissal and the absence of prospects for a career. Six months later, he married Lina von Osten, a devoted Nazi Party follower.”

“The same year, Heydrich joined the SS and began establishing a counterintelligence division. Heinrich Himmler interviewed him and was so impressed that he appointed Heydrich to a position as chief of the new “Ic Service” (intelligence service). Heydrich set up office at the Brown House, the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich and created a network of spies and informers for intelligence-gathering purposes and to obtain information to be used as blackmail. Information on thousands of people was recorded on index cards and stored at the Brown House. In the summer of 1932, Himmler appointed Heydrich chief of the renamed security service – the *Sicherheitsdienst*. Himmler named Reinhard Heydrich to head the *Gestapo* on April 22, 1934.”

“Two months later, the SD was declared the official Nazi intelligence service. In 1934, Heydrich assisted Himmler and Hitler in crushing the SA in the “Night of the Long Knives.” He helped organize *Kristallnacht*, a series of coordinated attacks against Jews throughout Nazi Germany and parts of Austria on November 9–10, 1938. On September 27, 1939, the SD, and the Security Police (made up of the *Gestapo* and the *Kripo*) were subordinated into the new *Reich* Main Security Office, which was placed under Heydrich’s control.”

“By late 1940, the *Wehrmacht* had swept through most of Western Europe, to include France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway. The following year, Heydrich’s SD was given responsibility for carrying out the *Nacht und Nebel* (Night-and-Fog) decree. According to the edict, “persons endangering German security” were to be arrested in a completely discreet way: “under the cover of night and fog.” Thousands of people disappeared without a trace and no one was told of their whereabouts or their fate. Prior to the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, Heydrich established four *Einsatzgruppe*, each with several *Einsatzkommando*, whose mission was to kill undesirable elements and potential partisans in Russia immediately after the German Army conquered the area.”

“On September 27, 1941, Hitler appointed Heydrich as Deputy *Reich* Protector of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia – the part of Czechoslovakia incorporated into the *Reich* in 1939 – sending the actual *Reich* Protector, Konstantin von Neurath, on permanent leave, based on his soft approach to the Czechs. Upon his appointment, Heydrich told his aides that he would “Germanize the Czech vermin.” Heydrich, from his headquarters in Prague, enforced German policy, fought resistance to the Nazi regime and maintained production quotas of Czech military equipment and weapons, vital to the German war effort.”

“Heydrich chaired the January 1942 Wannsee Conference, which established the plans for the deportation and extermination of all Jews in German-occupied territory in Europe. A British-trained team of Czech and Slovak agents attacked Heydrich in Prague on May 27, 1942. The group had been sent by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile to

kill him in an operation code named “Operation Anthropoid.” Heydrich died from his injuries a week later, at about 4:30 a.m. on June 4. When hearing of Heydrich’s death, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Sepp Dietrich proclaimed, “Thank God that sow’s gone to the butcher.” After an elaborate funeral, and lying in state at the Hradčany Castle in Prague, SS authorities placed Heydrich’s coffin on a train to Berlin.”

“A second large state ceremony was held in the Mosaic Hall of the new *Reich* Chancellery on June 9. In attendance was Adolf Hitler, who placed Heydrich’s decorations on his funeral pillow. After being transported through the streets on a gun carriage, Heydrich’s remains were buried in Berlin in a large ceremony at the *Invalidenfriedhof*. In attendance were hundreds of SS officers including Himmler and *SS-Obergruppenführer* Josef Dietrich. The Nazis retaliated for Heydrich’s death by linking the assassins to the village of Lidice, razing Lidice to the ground, executing all adult males and sending most of the women and children to concentration camps. Heydrich’s grave and remains were ransacked and destroyed after the war.”

“I see now, Virgil! When we lifted Heydrich’s tombstone at the *Invalidenfriedhof* in Berlin, we found the portal to the underworld – that was ingenious and so apropos. How did Heydrich get so much power, Virgil? Were the other Nazis not afraid he would get too much power?”

“Oh yes, Dante, they were very afraid. What happened was that Hitler appointed Heinrich Himmler the Chief of German Police, after all police forces throughout Germany were unified in June 1936. Then Himmler organized the police into two groups: the *Ordnungspolizei*, consisting of both the national uniformed police and the municipal police, and the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police) consisting of the *Gestapo* and *Kripo* (the *Kriminalpolizei* or criminal police.) At that point, Reinhard Heydrich was head of the Security Police and the Security Service. He could have almost anyone in Germany arrested for any reason, often without a reason at all.”

“A famous historian, Charles Sydnor, later stated that Heydrich had the qualities that Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Hitler valued as indispensable and irreplaceable: a combination of organizational insight, pragmatic tenacity, administrative acumen and unparalleled ruthlessness – all linked to his phenomenal drive and stupendous capacity for work. And he could anticipate, interpret, plan and administer any evil program Hitler could envision.”

“In fact, given Heydrich’s evil genius and demonic desires, he undoubtedly was on a first-name basis with Satan – as was the man who gave Heydrich his marching orders.”

“Heinrich Luitpold Himmler was born in Munich on October 7, 1900 in a conservative Roman Catholic middle-class family. His father, Gebhard Himmler, was a teacher; his mother was Anna Maria Heyder. He had one older brother Gebhard Ludwig and one younger, Ernst. Heinrich was named after his godfather, Prince Heinrich of Bavaria of the royal family of Bavaria, who had been tutored by Gebhard Himmler. Heinrich attended grammar school in Landshut, where Gebhard served as deputy principal. He did well in his schoolwork, although he struggled in athletics.”

“Young Heinrich’s health was poor; he would have lifelong stomach complaints and other ailments. To remedy this, he trained daily with weights as a youth and exercised to become stronger. Fellow students recalled him as studious but awkward in social situations. In 1915, Himmler began training with the Landshut Cadet Corps. His father used his connections with the royal family to get Heinrich accepted as an officer candidate, and Himmler enlisted with the reserve battalion of the 11th Bavarian Regiment in December 1917.”

“After the war, Himmler completed grammar school. Following an apprenticeship on a farm and a subsequent illness, he studied agronomy at the *Technische Hochschule* in Munich. In his second year, he joined an Anti-Semitic nationalist group, the *Reichskriegsflagge*. Himmler joined the Nazi Party in August 1923, with a Nazi Party number of 14,303. He was involved in the Beer Hall *Putsch* on November 9, 1923. From mid-1924, Himmler worked under Gregor Strasser, a leading party leader, as a party secretary and propaganda assistant.”

“Travelling across Bavaria agitating for the party, Heinrich gave speeches and distributed literature; within months, he became the head of the party office in Lower Bavaria and was responsible for integrating the areas membership with the ‘Nazi Party, under Hitler, when the party was re-founded in February 1925. That same year, Himmler joined the SS (SS #168), initially holding a position of *SS-Gauleiter* for Lower Bavaria. He soon became the deputy propaganda chief for the party as well.”

“In September 1927, Himmler briefed Adolf Hitler on his vision to transform the SS into a loyal, powerful, racially pure elite unit. Hitler’s response was to appoint Himmler as the Deputy *SS-Reichsführer*, with the rank of *SS-Oberführer*, under Erhard Heiden. Heiden fell into disgrace, after allegations surfaced that he was in business with a Jewish tailor, and on January 5, 1929, Heiden was dismissed by Adolf Hitler and succeeded by Heinrich Himmler as *SS-Reichsführer*.”

“Never one to underestimate a potential rival, in April 1933, Himmler ordered Erhard Heiden arrested at the *Kaffeehaus Orlando* in Munich. Heiden was murdered shortly after, presumably at SD headquarters in Munich, but his corpse was only found months later; he was buried on September 15, 1933.”

“During the 1930s, Himmler set up an SS empire in Germany, to include the concentration camp system in March 1933. He led the purge of the SA, *Sturmabteilung* Brownshirts on June 30, 1934. In addition to assuming control of the police, Himmler established an SS military branch that later became known as the *Waffen-SS*. Growing the *Waffen-SS* became a Himmler priority, as did establishing the *Einsatzgruppe* beginning in 1939 with the invasion of Poland. During the war, he was a major architect of the Final Solution.”

“The *Waffen-SS* grew in scope to dozens of divisions and 800,000 troops. Hitler relied on these forces even more after the failed July 20 Bomb Plot against his life. Hitler appointed Himmler the commander of Army Group Vistula on the Eastern Front in January 1945, but replaced him on March 20, 1945, when Himmler’s military incompetence proved too great. That spring, Himmler attempted to negotiate an independent peace settlement through the Swedish Red Cross, using Jewish prisoners as bargaining assets. The Allies refused.”

“Virgil, didn’t Himmler and Hitler meet for the last time on April 20, 1945, on Hitler’s birthday, at the *Führer* bunker, where Himmler swore total loyalty to Hitler? And then at a military briefing later that day, Hitler stated that he would not be leaving Berlin, in spite of Soviet advances?”

“Yes, Dante. Along with Hermann Göring, the head of the *Luftwaffe*, Himmler quickly left the city immediately after the briefing. Himmler made his way to Flensburg in northern Germany, where he reported to Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, who had been named by Hitler as his successor. Dönitz, knowing that Himmler was of no value at this point, dismissed Himmler from all his positions.”

“At the end of World War II in early May 1945, Heinrich Himmler attempted to go into hiding. Although he had not made extensive preparations for this, as other high-ranking Nazis had, he had equipped himself with a forged paybook under the name of Sergeant Heinrich Hitzinger. With a few companions, he headed south on May 11, 1945 to Friedrichskoog, without a final destination in mind. The group continued to Neuhaus, before splitting up; Himmler and two aides were stopped at a British checkpoint on May 21, 1945 and detained.”

“Over the following two days, Himmler – still in disguise – was moved around to several camps, before arriving at the British 31st Civilian Interrogation Camp near Lüneburg on May 23, 1945. During a routine interrogation, Himmler admitted who he was and was immediately searched. After finding nothing, military police took him to the headquarters of the Second British Army in Lüneburg, where a physician conducted a medical exam.”

“When the doctor attempted to examine the inside of Himmler’s mouth, Himmler jerked his head away, bit into a hidden cyanide pill and collapsed onto the floor. He was dead within fifteen minutes. Shortly afterward, the British buried Himmler’s body in an unmarked grave in a woods near Lüneburg. The precise location of the grave remains unknown – another mystery of the war.”

“Well, Virgil, it seems that Himmler died a quicker death than many of his victims did.”

“Perhaps, Dante, although pictures of the deceased Himmler appear to show that his nose had been broken, and rumors persist that a British physician gave him an injection of some unknown substance just before he died.”

“I am sure that they were just helping him get over his anxiety, Virgil!”

“Perhaps. Dante, can you see all the frogs yet?”

“Ah, yes, Virgil; I see them now in the water. They look to be almost freezing. They are making some kind of noise, but I cannot tell what it is. Look! A man with an evil-looking frog gig is trying to spear them! Oh, this is terrible! He impales the frogs on the spear and the sharp barbs prevent the frog from breaking free as it hopelessly struggles and dies. Then, back in the water, the frog returns to life and the hunter attempts to spear it once again, over, and over. Who is this terrible man?”

“That, Dante, is Adolf Hitler, the Austrian-born German politician and the leader of the Nazi Party, who hailed from Ranshofen, a small village in the municipality of Braunau am Inn, Austria. He was born on April 20, 1889, the fourth of six children of a minor customs official, Alois Hitler – and Klara Pölzl. At age three, Adolf moved with the family to Passau, Germany, but remained there only two years before locating in Leonding, near Linz, Austria. This early traveling between the two countries helped Adolf later adopt the feeling that he was more German than Austrian.”

“In June 1895, the Hitler family moved to a small landholding at the village of Hafeld near Lambach, Austria, when Alois retired from customs and tried his hand at farming and beekeeping. Young Adolf attended school at the village of Fischlham. However, he rebelled against the school discipline, as well as that of his father, and began to emotionally separate from members of the family. With the farming attempt in shambles, Alois moved the family back to Lambach and a year later to Leonding.”

“In February 1900, Edmund, Adolf’s younger brother, died from measles, which further pushed Adolf to being a sullen and detached boy, constantly bickering with his father and schoolteachers. That September, Alois sent Adolf to the *Realschule* in Linz, Austria, hoping the son would become a customs bureau employee. This event soured Adolf further, as he had wished to become an artist and attend a classical high school. On January 3, 1903, Alois suddenly died. Adolf transferred to the *Realschule* at Steyr, Austria for a year, before leaving school completely.”

“From 1905 to 1913, Adolf lived in Vienna, Austria. Following a bohemian lifestyle, he was financed by orphan’s benefits; his mother also supported him. During this time, Hitler worked as a part-time laborer and eventually as a painter of watercolors. The *Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna* rejected Hitler for admittance in 1907 and 1908, because of his inaptitude for painting; the academy’s director subsequently suggested that Hitler study architecture.”

“Meanwhile, Klara Hitler, Adolf’s mother, died on December 21, 1907, an event that crushed Hitler’s spirit. Running out of money, he lived in a homeless shelter in 1909 and by 1910, he had settled into a house for poor working men. He probably began his virulent Anti-Semitism at this time. Hitler left Austria in February 1914 and moved to Munich, Bavaria. This was not a cultural problem for young Adolf, as years before Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had opined that, ‘A Bavarian is half-way between an Austrian and a human being.’”

“Apparently Otto liked neither! I see where at the outbreak of World War I, Hitler volunteered to serve in the Bavarian Army as an Austrian citizen. He was assigned to the 1st Company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, *List Regiment*, and served as a dispatch runner on the Western Front in France and Belgium. He was in combat at the First Battle of Ypres, the Battle of the Somme, the Battle of Arras and the Battle of Passchendaele at the Third Battle of Ypres. Hitler was soon decorated for bravery, receiving the Iron Cross 2nd Class in 1914. During the Battle of the Somme in October 1916, he was wounded in the groin area and left thigh by shrapnel from an artillery shell that exploded in the dispatch runners’ dugout.”

“Hitler then spent almost two months in the Red Cross hospital at Beelitz, not returning to his regiment until March 5, 1917. Hitler received the Iron Cross 1st Class on August 4, 1918, having previously received the Black Wound Badge on May 18, 1918. On October 15, 1918, Hitler was temporarily blinded in a mustard gas attack at the front and was hospitalized in Pasewalk. At this hospital, he received word of Germany’s defeat, and suffered a second bout of blindness.”

“Yes, Dante. Now a decorated veteran of World War I, Hitler joined the German Workers’ Party a precursor of the Nazi Party in 1919, and became the leader of the NSDAP in 1921. On November 9, 1923 in downtown Munich, Hitler and his followers attempted a coup d’état, known as the Beer Hall *Putsch*. The failed coup resulted in a conviction for treason and imprisonment at Landsberg Prison, during which time he dictated his memoir, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle.) After Hitler’s release from prison in 1924, Hitler gained popular support by attacking the Treaty of Versailles and promoting Pan-Germanism, Anti-Semitism, and Anti-Communism through the use of charismatic oratory, superb organizational skills and Nazi propaganda.”

Slowly, but surely, the Nazi Party gained traction in Germany. After his appointment as Chancellor of Germany in 1933, Hitler transformed the Weimar Republic into the Third *Reich*, a single-party dictatorship based on the totalitarian and autocratic ideology of Nazism. Now as *Führer* and *Reichskanzler*, his public aim was to establish a New Order of absolute Nazi German hegemony in continental Europe. His private discussions revealed Hitler’s foreign and domestic policies that had the goal of seizing “living space” (*Lebensraum*) for the Germanic people in Eastern Europe and Russia.

“Hitler was ruthless in his pursuit of power, evening purging the old guard SA, and now directed the rearmament of Germany – which also provided jobs to millions of unemployed workers, conducted the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia and accelerated the invasion of Poland by the *Wehrmacht* in September 1939. These actions led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Under Hitler's rule, in 1941 German forces and their European allies occupied most of Europe and North Africa and invaded Russia. The Nazis Final Solution accelerated at this point. By 1943, Hitler's military decisions led to escalating German defeats. In 1944, the Western Allies invaded France and the Soviet Union reached Poland in the east. In 1945, the Allied armies successfully invaded Germany.”

“Virgil, please let me interrupt you. This is the second time that you have mentioned Hitler’s purge of the SA. What was that about?”

“Well, Dante, from the rise of Adolf Hitler, the SA – the *Sturmabteilung* or Brownshirts – had given the Nazis an iron fist with which to disrupt other political parties’ meetings. The SA was also used to enforce law after Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933. They were under the control of Ernst Röhm, a loyal follower of Hitler since the early days of the Nazi Party. By the summer of 1934, the SA's numbers had swollen to 2 million men. Although after Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933, the remained the enforcers of the Nazi Party and there is no evidence that Röhm was ever planning anything against Hitler.”

“However, all was not well. By June 1934, the German Army leadership saw the SA as a threat to their authority. The SA outnumbered the Army and Röhm had openly spoken about taking over the Army by absorbing it into the SA. This talk alarmed Army leaders. Röhm had made enemies within the Nazi Party. Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring and Josef Goebbels were angered by the power Röhm had gained and convinced Hitler that this was a threat to his position as *Führer*. Hitler was worried that the Army had not yet given an oath of allegiance and in the eyes of many generals, Hitler was disdained as a former corporal.”

“Hitler knew he would need the Army for Nazi expansion, so he could kill two birds with one stone if he not only removed the SA leaders, but also got the Army’s oath that he so needed. Hitler made a pact with the Army – if Röhm and the other SA leaders were removed, the rank-and-file SA men would come under the control of the Army, but the Army would have to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler.”

“The Army agreed. In the dark of night early on June 30, 1934, the SS arrested the leaders of the SA at an SA retreat at the *Hotel Hanselbauer* near the Wiessee in Bavaria. Across Germany, other political opponents with no connection to Röhm were also apprehended, as Hitler saw an opportunity to get rid of many malcontents. The arrests carried on for two additional nights. At least seventy-seven men were executed on charges of treason. Röhm was shot on July 1, as were a few others, while still others were bludgeoned to death. The SA was brought to heel and placed under the command of the Army. Hitler received his valued oath of allegiance from all those who served in the armed forces.”

“The German public first officially knew about the event on July 13, 1934, when Hitler told the *Reichstag* at the Kroll Opera House in Berlin, that for the duration of the arrests, he would be the sole judge of who was a traitor in Germany and that the SS would carry out his orders. From that time on, the SS became the most feared force in Germany.”

“*Canis canem edit* – Virgil – dog eats dog.”

“May I continue now, Dante?”

“Yes, certainly, Virgil; I just wanted to get that cleared up.”

“In the final days of the war, during the Battle of Berlin in 1945, Hitler married his long-time mistress, Eva Braun. On April 30, 1945, Hitler finished dictating his final testament and the pair committed suicide, Hitler by biting down on a cyanide capsule, while simultaneously shooting himself in the head with a pistol, to avoid capture by the

Red Army. SS troops doused the corpses with gasoline in the garden of the *Reichs* Chancellery and burned them. Rumors persisted for three decades that Hitler had fooled his enemies and had fled to South America, but all the stories proved false.”

“The attempts to burn his body were only partly successful and his remains were recovered by Soviet forces on May 2, 1945. The discovery was kept secret, allowing Stalin to perpetuate a myth that Hitler survived. In early June 1945, the Soviets buried the bodies in a forest near Berlin. On February 21, 1946, they secretly re-buried the remains in the Soviet Army's garrison in Magdeburg, in an unmarked grave beneath a paved section. In March 1970, the Soviets decided to abandon their garrison in the town and turn it over to the East German civilian authorities.”

“Fearing that the burial place of the Nazi leaders would become known, after the Soviet departure, the KGB, Soviet Secret Police, chief Yuri Andropov ordered a top secret operation to destroy the remains of Hitler and his wife Eva Braun, as well as the remains of Nazi Germany's propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels and Goebbels' entire family. On April 4, 1970, KGB agents exhumed the remains – found in five wooden boxes containing ten or eleven bodies – and burned them on a bonfire, outside the village of Schönebeck, about eight miles from Magdeburg. The agents then ground the material into ashes and fragments, collected the material and apparently threw it into the Elbe River near Magdeburg. Archivists later discovered Hitler's jaw and skull in secret archives in Moscow; U.S. academics claimed that DNA tests showed the skull to be that of a woman and not the German *Führer*.”

“My God, Virgil, this man was the Devil! How many people died because of his actions?”

“Hitler's nationalistic and racially motivated policies resulted in the systematic murder of eleven million people, including an estimated six million Jews, and in the deaths of between 50 and 70 million people in World War II. He was, Dante, quite simply, one of the most evil men who ever lived.”

“But should he not have a special punishment, here in this ninth circle of Hell? It does not seem right that he suffer only the same as the others do, Virgil.”

“Ah, look closely, Dante, and you will see the punishments. Note that the traitors of mankind, standing in the Cocytus or “the river of wailing.” Each increasingly evil person is encased in ice to progressively greater depths. The frogs you observed initially are in ice to their feet and cannot move. Satan is waist deep in ice, weeping tears from his six eyes and beating his six wings, trying to escape, although the icy wind that emanates from his exertions only further ensures his imprisonment. In

between, there is Hitler. The ice extends only to his knees; he is not quite the Devil, but he is very close.”

“Should not his punishment be greater than this, Virgil?”

“It is, Dante. Listen closely to the lowly frogs trapped in the foul slime and what they are croaking. They are saying, ‘Jew, Jew...Jew, Jew.’”

“You see Hitler's father, Alois Hitler, was the illegitimate child of Maria Anna Schicklgruber. The baptismal register did not show the name of Alois’ father, so Alois received his mother's surname. In 1842, a Johann Georg Hiedler married Maria Anna. After she died in 1847 and he in 1856, Alois was brought up in the family of Hiedler’s brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler. In 1876, Alois was legitimated, and the baptismal register changed by a priest before three witnesses.”

“However, many in the family – and others as well, although they kept quiet – were convinced that Maria Anna, Alois’ mother, was employed as a housekeeper for a Jewish family in Graz, Austria and that this family's 19-year-old son, Leopold Frankenberger, had actually fathered Alois. That would make Hitler – who hated all Jews and wanted to exterminate them – a quarter Jewish himself.”

“Is this story true, Virgil, about Hitler’s parentage and that he might have been partly Jewish?”

“No one knows for sure, Dante. The important thing is what did Adolf Hitler believe? There are many who say that Hitler demonstrated many facets of self-loathing. How maddening must it have been for Hitler to believe that he was one of the Jews he was trying to kill? To in perpetuity be called a Jew by his loyal SS men – in the form of these trapped frogs – for him to know that his loyal-unto-death SS men know his terrible secret and are mocking him – that is Adolf Hitler’s ultimate punishment.”





Conclusion

“That indeed was a terrible journey, Virgil. I agree with you that this Landsberg Prison and Spöttinger Cemetery, where we are now, has an aura of evil about it. It is indeed a portal to the underworld. So much death, so much destruction and these men just continued their evil ways until their régime was overwhelmed in the end. I am surprised that more of these Nazis did not commit suicide, as Hitler did – after which they burned his body – when they realized the enormity of their crimes.”

“Well, of course, Dante, many of them did. Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, committed suicide a few days before the war ended. Dr. Rudolf Lange, who had attended the Wannsee Conference, committed suicide in Posen in February 1945. Dr. Ernst-Robert Grawitz, a high-ranking SS doctor, detonated two hand grenades under his dinner table at home at Potsdam-Babelsberg, killing his family and himself as Russian troops approached. Josef Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister, was in the bunker with Hitler in Berlin and committed suicide along with his wife – after they had poisoned their children – shortly after his leader did.”

“Martin Bormann, Minister for Nazi Party Affairs, possibly committed suicide shortly after fleeing the *Führer* bunker. The *Gauleiter* for Niederrhein, Hugo Jury shot and killed himself on May 9, 1945. Philipp Bouhler, another chief of the euthanasia program, swallowed a poison cyanide capsule three weeks after the war ended in an internment camp at Zell am See, near Dachau. *SS-Oberführer* Hans Loritz, who served as *kommandant* of Papenburg, Esterwegen, Dachau and Sachsenhausen concentration camps, committed suicide in January 1946.”

“Hermann Göring, the head of the German *Luftwaffe* – Germany’s birdmen – took poison at Nürnberg shortly before he was to be executed. Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front, hanged himself in his cell at Nürnberg the year before. *SS-Obergruppenführer* Herbert Backe also hanged himself in his cell at Nürnberg. Dr. Robert Conti, another senior SS doctor, hanged himself in his Nürnberg cell by tying a towel to the window bars and using it as a noose. Karl Jäger, who commanded *Einsatzkommando 3*, committed suicide by hanging in 1959 in his prison cell.”

“Heinrich Himmler, the chief of the SS, also took poison shortly after the war ended, as we have seen. Odilo Globocnik, who masterminded the mass murder of two million Jews in Poland, took poison right after he was captured as well. Richard Glücks, who was the chief of all these concentration camps, also bit down on a poison capsule after the war. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Rolf Günther, Eichmann’s deputy, committed suicide at an American stockade at Ebensee, Austria in May 1945.”

“Rudolf Querner, commander of an *Einsatzkommando* in Czechoslovakia, killed himself in May 1945 at Magdeburg. Ilse Koch hanged herself. Dr. Manfred Pechau, commander of *Einsatzkommando 1b*, committed suicide in 1950. Dr. Horst Barth, of *Einsatzkommando 2*, killed himself in 1961 before the start of his trial. *SS-Obergruppenführer* Walter Buch slashed his wrists and drowned himself in the Ammersee. Maybe Heinrich Müller committed suicide as well. In fact, well over 100 prominent Nazis committed suicide.”

“*Nemo malus felix* – Virgil – peace visits not the guilty mind. After the war, did the Germans come to grips with what happened?”

“I would say that they tried, Dante, but they failed. First, perhaps because of the shame, perhaps because they did not want the circle of guilt to widen, Germany did not teach their youth about the war. This allowed many generations of post-war Germans to remain in ignorance over much of what happened. Then the Germans tried to say that every combatant nation did bad things during the war and that the Germans were no different from any other country.”

“While that may have been true to a small degree, only the German reprehensible conduct rose to a magnitude that had never been seen in the recorded history of mankind. Then the Germans who were alive during the war, chimed in with the, “we didn’t know defense.” While many may not have known about the exact details, they certainly knew that many, many people were being murdered. They knew that when their Jewish neighbors disappeared, they would never see them again.”

“Still, other people attempted to make the argument that some Nazis did terrible things, but that the *Waffen-SS* did not. It was merely a noble frontline combat organization that fought shoulder-to-shoulder with its German Army brothers-in-arms. These apologists overlooked the hundreds of incidents involving *Waffen-SS* actions such as the destruction of the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, and the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944.”

“Finally, the revisionist historians tried to rewrite history, presenting the Nazis and the SS as the defenders of Europe and European culture against the primitive, conquering hordes from Russia. The only words these historians did not use were *Untermensch* (sub-humans) for the Russians and Nordic Man for describing the Germans. Many of these elites even opined that the Jews in Europe had it coming to them and that the perpetrators were the real victims. The revisionists certainly tried to turn many of the men executed at Landsberg into heroes, and in modern times attempted to erase the stigma of the *Spöttinger Friedhof*.”

“I will be glad to leave this Landsberg Prison and return to my own place in eternity. However, I have one more question, Virgil. When we were at the ninth circle of Hell, I saw this short, squat man back in the shadows. He looked like a little bear and had a moustache that was much bigger than that of Hitler. You did not talk about him. Was he another Nazi, as well?”

“No, Dante that was Josef Stalin. He was the leader of Russia during the war. In fact, he was a mortal enemy of Hitler and the Nazis.”

“So Virgil, he must have been a good man, if he fought Hitler, an evil man?”

“No, Dante, Stalin was as evil as Hitler. But that is a story for another time and place.”





Postscript

“Well Dante, our journey is at an end. I guess the last time I saw you was the night before Good Friday in the year 1300. It is now time to say goodbye once again.”

“Where will you go now, Virgil?”

“I will go back to Gabriel, Dante, and give him my report on the Nazis and the additional new portals to the underworld.”

“What will you tell him, Virgil?”

“I will tell him, Dante, that the war was between good and evil, and involved honor, glory, culture, history and hatred. I will remind him that I lived in a time of great strife in Rome. At the time of my birth, Spartacus, a former slave and gladiator, led the Third Servile War against Rome. He was defeated and killed – although his body was never found – and the victor Crassus crucified the 6,000 survivors of Spartacus’s army along the Appian Way. As a young boy, I heard of Pompey clearing the Mediterranean of pirates and the Fall of Jerusalem. I heard how Pompey was stabbed to death and his head severed to be presented to Caesar. As a young man, I remembered the exploits of Julius Caesar, before he was assassinated when I was twenty-six. In my middle age, I saw Octavian defeat Antony and Cleopatra and then heard of their suicides. I went to many gladiatorial contests, during my life, and saw many men gruesomely mutilated and killed.”

“Then, I will tell him that in my life or our previous visit to the underworld – captured in your play, *The Divine Comedy* – I never saw anything like the Nazis that we have seen

over the last several weeks. For sheer brutality, these men – and some women – exceeded anything that occurred in my era, or since on Earth, from what I have been told. As you have seen, the punishments in Hell have been very severe and brutal for these men, but they deserved every moment of agony.”

“*Bellum omnium contra omnes*, Virgil – war of all against all.”

“You are right, Dante. I will also tell him that despite what the apologists said, or what the post-war Germans wanted to believe, World War II was a conflict between good and evil and evil lost. While not every German was evil, every facet of Nazism was. There were no shades of gray in the Nazi Party; it was all black and white; *Untermensch* or *Übermensch*, and who would live and who would die. I will also tell him that unfortunately, mankind seems to have forgotten that era and know little about what happened, let alone why it happened. This will lead, sadly, to the possibility that it could happen again.”

“And finally, Dante, I will tell Gabriel that the most evil thing about the Nazis was that they thought that they could play God.”

“And what of the portals to the underworld, Virgil, the ones where the demons can come through from the realm of the dead to the land of the living, in order to do evil here? What will you tell Gabriel about these?”

“That is a more difficult answer, Dante. We now can be certain that new portals to the underworld were caused by World War II. We found one each near the Landsberg Prison in the *Spöttinger Friedhof*, in Berlin at Heydrich’s grave in the *Invalidenfriedhof*, at Auschwitz under the selection ramp at Birkenau; and at Lublin at the smelting oven for *Operation Reinhard* at the *SS-Standortverwaltung*. The war may have led to the formation of even more portals; I have heard during this trip of some very evil doings in Russia and the Far East.”

“The problem is, Dante, I do not know how many portals were in existence before the war; we must know that before we can assess the damage that these new ones have caused. Perhaps Gabriel will send me out again to look for those other openings to the underworld. Would you like to go with me again if that happens, Dante?”

“Dante? Dante?”



“Dante! Perk Up! Time travel is relatively simple. All one has to do is follow the instructions of Gabriel and one can hurtle through time either forward or backward. The problem is the travel once one arrives at the new time. Travel within the same time is exactly like travel in our normal world; it takes movement and effort. That is exactly what you found, although modern conveyances such as trains made traveling a little easier. Now, I must tell you, Dante, of another task that Gabriel gave me. Do you recall when we visited the *Führerbunker* in Berlin in 1945?”

“Yes, of course, Virgil; we were looking for the portal to Hell in Berlin and thought it might be there.”

“We also went there for another reason, Dante, a reason that I kept secret from you. Let me give you some background.”

“*SS-Obersturmbannführer* Erich Kempka served as Adolf Hitler’s chauffeur from 1934 through the end of the *Führer’s* life. Born on September 16, 1910 at Oberhausen in North Rhine-Westphalia, he was one of ten children of a coal miner. He was trained as an auto mechanic and worked for the *Dampf-Kraft-Wagen* auto firm. After joining the Nazi Party in 1930, Kempka joined the SS and became one of the eight initial members of the *SS-Begleit-Kommando* – the SS Escort Command of the *Führer*. A member of Hitler’s inner circle, Kempka was present at the arrest of Ernst Röhm in 1934. Two years later, he replaced Julius Schreck, who had died of meningitis on May 16, 1936, as Hitler’s chauffeur and the chief of the *Führer’s* fleet of cars.”

“Present in the *Führerbunker*, on April 30, 1945, Kempka received instructions from Otto Günsche to deliver two hundred liters of gasoline to the garden behind the *Reich* Chancellery. Kempka assembled a small detail of other SS men and brought ten Army gas cans to the emergency exit of the *Führerbunker*. He later admitted that when Hitler and Eva Braun locked themselves in a room to commit suicide, he lost his nerve and ran out of the *Führerbunker*, returning only after Hitler and Braun were dead. By the time Kempka returned to the bunker, Hitler and Braun’s bodies were already being carried upstairs to be burned. Kempka claimed to have taken Eva Braun’s body from Martin Bormann and finished carrying her to the garden.”

“After dark on May 1, 1945, Kempka left the bunker complex with a small group and successfully evaded the Russians, arriving in Bavaria in June. On June 20, 1945, American troops arrested him at Berchtesgaden. At the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg, Kempka testified that he had seen Martin Bormann killed by a Soviet anti-tank rocket. Erich Kempka died on January 24, 1975 in Freiberg am Neckar, near Ludwigsburg, in Baden-Württemberg.”

“Heinz Linge served as the chief personal valet for Adolf Hitler. His routine, for most of the war, was to wake Hitler each day at 11:00 a.m. and provide morning newspapers and dispatches for him to review, ensuring that the *Führer* had plenty of writing materials and his reading glasses. Linge then assisted Hitler getting dressed, ensuring that he had a light breakfast.”

“Yes, Virgil, I think I know a little about him. Linge was born on March 23, 1913 in Bremen. Prior to joining the SS in 1933, he worked as a bricklayer in his hometown. After joining the SS, Linge was assigned to the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, where he was part of the security guard for Hitler’s residence on the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden. On January 24, 1935, Linge was chosen to be one of three valets for Hitler and served in this capacity at both the *Reich* Chancellery in Berlin and at Hitler’s residence on the Obersalzberg.”

“In mid-September 1939, Linge replaced Karl Wilhelm Krause as chief valet for Hitler, after the *Führer* discovered Krause had lied to him about a bottle of mineral water. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Linge also accompanied Hitler whenever he visited his wartime headquarters at the Wolf’s Lair in Rastenburg.”

“On April 28, 1945, Hitler confided his suicide plan to Linge and asked Linge to wrap Hitler’s body and that of Eva Braun after their deaths, in blankets and take the bodies to the garden outside, where they would be burned in an attempt to prevent the Soviet Red Army from capturing Hitler’s corpse. Linge later wrote that Hitler spent the last night of his life lying awake and fully clothed on his bed. Linge guarded the door, when Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide in Hitler’s private room in the bunker. After hearing a muffled shot, Linge went into Hitler’s private study and found both dead. He then assisted in transporting the bodies to the garden.”

“Late on May 1, 1945, Linge teamed up with *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Erich Kempka in an escape attempt. He was captured early on the morning of May 2, near Seestrasse, in the Wedding District of Berlin. Soviet authorities escorted him to Moscow, where he was thrown into the Lubjanka Prison. He spent ten years in Soviet captivity, before being released in 1955. Linge died in Bremen, West Germany on March 9, 1980.”

“There is one more individual we must know about. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Otto Günsche became Hitler’s personal adjutant in March 1944 for a second time and held this position through the end of Hitler’s life. He was born on September 24, 1917 at Jena in Thuringia. In 1933, Günsche became involved in the Nazi Party and soon joined the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*. He served as Hitler’s orderly from 1940 to 1941.

Günsche then fought on the Eastern Front, winning the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Class, the Infantry Assault Badge and the Wound Badge in Silver.”

“At the *Führerbunker*, Adolf Hitler personally tasked Otto Günsche with ensuring that his body was cremated after death, along with the body of Eva Braun. Günsche stood guard outside Hitler’s room on April 30, 1945 as the *Führer* and his recent bride committed suicide. He supervised the burning of both bodies in the garden outside the bunker. It was Günsche who threw a burning rag that started the cremation fire. Günsche later left the *Führerbunker* after midnight on May 1, 1945. He was apprehended in Berlin by Soviet forces on May 2. He spent the next eleven years in prison. Günsche died of heart failure at his home in Lohmar, in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2003. His ashes were thrown into the North Sea.”

“But, why are you telling me this, Virgil? We have found the portals and visited the nine circles of Hell again. Now you can report your findings to Gabriel!”

“Yes, of course, Dante; and I will do so. You see, Gabriel also wanted me to confirm that Adolf Hitler had died, because Gabriel was worried that more portals might be created if Hitler survived and the evil of Nazism went on. So, while we were searching the *Führerbunker*, I left you for a few minutes to confirm that indeed Hitler had committed suicide. I found that these two SS officers had told the truth after the war. Hitler had killed himself and they helped burn the body.”

“Yes, Virgil, I understand. That was a prudent question for which Gabriel needed to know the answer.”

“There is more Dante. You see, I had one other task, but I did not know how I would do it. The additional task that Gabriel gave me was to determine if Hitler, indeed, died at the end of the war. It was also clear that if Hitler was not dead, I was to kill him.”

“Kill him, Virgil? That is unbelievable; I mean, I understand why Gabriel would say such a thing – this Hitler was the devil incarnate. But, why us, Virgil; why did he put this terrible burden on us? How would you have killed him?”

“Perhaps, Dante, Gabriel sent us because we visited Hell before and survived the journey. Perhaps it was to try to stop the portals from forming; it is possible that he believed that if Hitler remained alive, more openings from Hell would erupt. Now, as to how we might kill him, when we were in Auschwitz I saw one of those SS killers use this little tool to kill people. When he laid it down and walked away, I picked it up and took it and because we were invisible time-traveling, he had no idea where his device was. On the side of it, it says *Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür) Mod PPK* – stop; do

not touch that lever! That is what makes it go off! If a person is in front of it, I believe that something hurtles out of it and kills him!”

“That is witchcraft, Virgil! They would burn you at the stake back in the old days.”

“That may be true, Dante, but we are not back in ‘the old days.’ What I do know is that we are getting better at traveling through time and I suspect that Gabriel may call upon us again. When that happens, we will take this little witchcraft PPK with us.”

“I take it that you want me to come with you again, Virgil, when we time travel – if we time travel, that is. I will agree to do so on one condition – that we now enjoy a good meal and some fine wine here in Landsberg, before we go back to the afterlife. Hell has made me quite thirsty...quite thirsty indeed.”

“Infernum est locus sitiendi – Dante – Hell is a thirsty place.”

“Yes, Virgil – we will need every bit of fortification that we can get. Should we ever get the call from Gabriel to search for evil again on Earth – and if need be Hell – he will expect us to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

The End



SS Rank Structure

General Officers

<i>SS-Reichsführer</i>	SS Leader
<i>SS-Oberstgruppenführer</i>	General (4-star)
<i>SS-Obergruppenführer</i>	Lieutenant General
<i>SS-Gruppenführer</i>	Major General
<i>SS-Brigadeführer</i>	Brigadier General

Field-Grade Officers

<i>SS-Oberführer</i>	Senior Colonel
<i>SS-Standartenführer</i>	Colonel
<i>SS-Obersturmbannführer</i>	Lieutenant Colonel
<i>SS-Sturmbannführer</i>	Major

Company-Grade Officers

<i>SS-Hauptsturmführer</i>	Captain
<i>SS-Obersturmführer</i>	First Lieutenant
<i>SS-Untersturmführer</i>	Second Lieutenant

Noncommissioned Officers

<i>SS-Sturmscharführer</i>	Sergeant Major
<i>SS-Hauptscharführer</i>	Master Sergeant
<i>SS-Oberscharführer</i>	Technical Sergeant
<i>SS-Scharführer</i>	Staff Sergeant
<i>SS-Unterscharführer</i>	Sergeant
<i>SS-Rottenführer</i>	Corporal

Selected German and Key Terms Used in this Work

Abwehr – German military intelligence unit headed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.

Aktion Reinhard – Code name for murder of Jews in Poland in 1942-1943 in three extermination camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibór; believed to be named for Reinhard Heydrich.

Aktion T4 – Code name for the euthanasia program of mentally ill and handicapped patients by Nazi authorities in Germany, the name came from the mailing address of the headquarters, Tiergarten 4.

Anschluss – the annexation of Austria in March 1938.

Aryan – Germanic “Master Race.”

Bund Deutscher Mädel – League of German Girls, the female branch of the Hitler Youth.

Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (Chief of the Security Police and SD) – Title first conferred on Reinhard Heydrich and after his death, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, when chief of the Reich Main Security Office (which included the *Gestapo*, SD and *Kripo*.)

Drittes Reich – *Third Reich*, predicted as the next step beyond the First *Reich* (the Holy Roman Empire, 800-1806) and the Second *Reich* (the German Empire, 1871–1918.)

Einsatzgruppen – Special-operation units that were death squads under the command of the RSHA and followed the *Wehrmacht* on the Eastern Front to engage in the systematic killing of mostly civilians, including Jews, communists, intellectuals and others. Subordinate units were *Einsatzkommando* and *Sonderkommando*.

Eiserne Kreuz (Iron Cross) – originally a Prussian royal military decoration for valor or combat leadership, revived by Hitler in 1939. There were three grades, the Iron Cross, Knights Cross (*Ritterkreuz*) and Grand Cross (*Grosskreuz*); the basic grade was awarded in two degrees, 2nd and 1st Class. Holders of the 1914 Iron Cross were awarded a device (*Spange*) to be worn with the original decoration in lieu of a second medal.

Endlösung (final solution) – short for “final solution to the Jewish question,” a Nazi euphemism for what post-war became known as the Holocaust.

Führer – leader. Adolf Hitler was called *Der Führer*.

Führerbunker – literally meaning “shelter [for the] leader” it was located about 36 feet beneath the garden of the old Reich Chancellery building at Wilhelmstrasse 77 and about 130 yards north of Hitler’s New Reich Chancellery building in Berlin. This underground bunker was Hitler’s last headquarters. Further, it is where Hitler and his wife Eva Braun spent the last few weeks of the war and where their lives came to an end on April 30, 1945.

Gau, plural *Gaue* – Nazi Party regional districts that functioned as the *de facto* administrative organization of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945.

Gauleiter – the head of a *Gau* or of a *Reichsgau*. They had to swear unconditional personal loyalty to the *Führer* and were directly answerable to him.

Geheime Staatspolizei (Gestapo) – Secret State Police. Originally the Prussia secret state police and later (as part of the SiPo then merged into the RSHA) the official secret police of Nazi Germany.

July 20 Bomb Plot – failed attempt on July 20, 1944 to assassinate Hitler at his field headquarters “Wolf’s Lair” at Rastenburg (now Kętrzyn, Poland) and overthrow the Nazi regime, by Army officers led by Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg and retired Colonel General Ludwig Beck.

Konzentrationslager (often abbreviated KZ) – concentration camp. The correct abbreviation would be KL, but KZ was chosen due to its tougher sound. Concentration camps were established for the internment of those who were declared “enemies of the *volk* (people) community” by the SS.

Kriminalpolizei (Kripo) – Criminal Police. In Nazi Germany, it became the national Criminal Police Department for the entire *Reich* in July 1936. It was merged, along with the *Gestapo* into the *Sicherheitspolizei* (SiPo). Later in 1939, it was folded into the RSHA. The *Kripo* was also known as the *Reich* Criminal Police Department or RKPA.

Lebensraum (living space) – served as the motivation for the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany, aiming to provide additional space for the growth of the German population, in a Greater Germany. To gain the required land, the Nazis planned to kill, deport or enslave the Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and other Slavic populations, and to repopulate the land with Germanic people.

Mein Kampf – “My Struggle,” Adolf Hitler's autobiography and political statement, written in 1925.

Nacht und Nebel – Night and fog, code for some prisoners that were to be disposed of, leaving no traces.

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) – the National Socialist German Workers’ Party of Adolf Hitler: the Nazi Party.

Night of the Long Knives – also known as “Operation Hummingbird” or more commonly known in Germany, the *Röhm-Putsch*. It took place throughout Nazi Germany between June 30 and July 2, 1934, where Hitler and the SS murderously purged the ranks of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), the “Brownshirts,” starting at the top with Ernst Röhm, arresting hundreds and killing most of them.

Putsch – German word meaning coup or revolt; has also entered the English language meaning the same.

Reich – Often translated as “Empire” or “State,” perhaps the most accurate translation is “Realm.”

Reichssicherheitshauptamt [RSHA] *Reich* Main Security Office – an SS subsidiary organization made up of seven main departments including, the intelligence and security forces, and secret police forces for Germany and occupied territories; also oversaw the *Einsatzgruppen*. Originally led by Reinhard Heydrich, it was headquartered in Berlin on *Prinz Albrecht Strasse 8*.

Schutzstaffel (abbreviated SS) – Protection Squadron; a major Nazi organization that grew from a small paramilitary unit that served as Hitler’s personal body guard into militarily what was in practical terms the fourth branch of the *Wehrmacht*. It was not legally a part of the military and therefore wore the national emblem on the left sleeve instead of over the right breast pocket.

Sicherheitsdienst (SD) – Security Service, the intelligence arm of the SS and later a main department of the RSHA.

Sonderbehandlung (Special Handling) – Nazi euphemism describing death; prisoners with this designation were killed quickly, with their deaths often unrecorded.

Sonderkommando 1005 – Nazi operation to conceal evidence of the largest mass-killings.

Übermensch (above human or super human) – term was a favorite of Hitler and the Nazi regime, and was racial in nature. The Nazi notion of the master race also spawned the idea of “inferior humans” (*Untermenschen*) that could be dominated, exploited, enslaved, or even killed with no repercussions.

Untermensch (sub-human) – term used in Nazi racial ideology to describe “inferior people,” especially those masses from the East, to include Jews, Gypsies and Slavic peoples – especially Poles, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russian Asiatics.

V-1 and V-2, *Vergeltungswaffen* (weapons of retaliation) – used to attack Britain and other countries controlled by the Allies. The V-1 was the world's first operational cruise missile. The V-2, the first ballistic missile. Scientists involved in both programs were “recruited” by the victorious powers to assist in their post-war technology development.

Volk – People, folk-community, nation, or ethnic group. It is extremely difficult to convey the full meaning of this word in English. It implies a “*volk* community” rooted in the soil of the homeland, with many centuries of ancestral tradition and linked together by a spiritual ideal of the time.

Wannsee Conference – a conference held on January 20, 1942 beside Lake Wannsee in Berlin in which it was decided and made official Nazi policy that the total annihilation of European Jews was the only rational means of a “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”

Wehrmacht (Defense Force) – the name of the armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. Prior to that time, it was known as the *Reichswehr*. Consisted of the *Heer* (Army), *Kriegsmarine* (Navy) and *Luftwaffe* (Air Force), but not the *Waffen-SS* or the Police, even though they both fielded combat units during the war.

Zyklon B (also spelled Cyclon B) – trade name of a cyanide-based insecticide used to kill more than one million Jews, Gypsies, communists and prisoners of war in Nazi gas chambers.

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Peter Chemy

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August Eigruber

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Friedrich Hildebrandt

Dr. Fritz Hintermayer

Dr. Waldemar Hoven

Josef Jarolin

Dr. Willi Jobst

Johann Kick

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Otto Moll

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August Blei (Roll 075)	Friedrich Wilhelm Ruppert (Roll 056B)
Paul Blobel (Roll 076)	Max Schobert (Roll 094B)
Dr. Karl Brandt	Karl Schöpferle (Roll 097B)
Fritz Braune (Roll 102)	Rudolph Heinrich Suttrop (Roll 170B)
Dr. Werner Braune (Roll 102)	Dr. Hans Trummel (Roll 191B)
Heinrich Eisenhöfer (Roll 182)	Dr. Hellmuth Vetter (Roll 205B)
Dr. Friedrich Entress (Roll 188)	Erich Wasicky (Roll 221B)
Otto Förchner (Roll 214)	Dr. Waldemar Wolter (Roll 013C)
Dr. Karl Franz Gebhardt (Roll 005A)	Martin Weiss (Roll 231B)
Dr. Wilhelm Henkel (Roll 085A)	Christian Wirth (Roll 251B)
Reinhard Heydrich	
Heinrich Himmler	
Dr. Fritz Hintermayer (Roll 100A)	
Rudolf Höss (Roll 105A)	
Dr. Waldemar Hoven (Roll 117A)	
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Johann Kick (Roll 166A)	
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Dr. Josef Mengele (Roll 308A)	
Dr. Joachim Mrugowsky (Roll 325A)	
Erich Naumann (Roll 344A)	
Artur Nebe (Roll 345A)	
Otto Ohlendorf (Roll 356A)	
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