

[Back to Article](#)

[Click to Print](#)



Monday, Apr. 14, 1941

World War, STRATEGY: A Dictator's Hour

(See Cover)

The crucial spring of his career came last week to Adolf Hitler. He could see it in sheltered, sun-struck places around the Berghof where lilies of the valley, violets, Alpine roses, blue gentians, and wild azaleas bloomed, and in the green showing through the white on the Untersberg's slopes across the way. But he could feel it even more strongly in his bones: spring, when armies march.

If the campaigns Hitler launches this spring are as successful as those he launched a year ago, he will almost indisputably soon be master of at least half the world. If they fail, the least that can be expected is that the tide of world power will begin to run against him as the weight of U.S. economic power begins to pour to the aid of Britain. For Hitler this spring is destiny.

He must have been keenly aware of that fact one morning last week when he stretched a tentative toe into his green-tinted bathtub, while he gazed at his face with its little mustache and flopping hair, as he covered his chin with lather (at the Berghof the great dictator is his own barber), while he sipped his Chinese tea, spooned his porridge and chewed his morning toast covered with a mountain of jam.

There must have been an extraordinary meeting that morning in his pine-paneled workroom, with his aides: General Alfred Jodl, the powerful, anonymous chief of his personal staff; huge Julius Schaub, his personal adjutant and bodyguard; Chief Adjutant Colonel Schmundt of the General Staff; Army Aide Major Engel; Navy Aide Captain von Puttkammer; Air Aide Major von Below, and a few others—Adolf Hitler's trusted links with the fighting forces whose preparations were already made.

If his blue eyes were sharper than April sky, and if he rubbed his hands with queer, excited jerks, that was only natural. Excitement makes him thrive and happy. Moreover he was about to compose his own words of destiny.

He called for a secretary, one of his three confidential secretaries—Frau Wolf, Frau Schroeder or Frau Daranowsky—and began to dictate. When the draft was brought to him, typed on special typewriters with huge letters designed to save his eyes, he slashed it making revisions in green, blue and red pencil.

Finally he was done. Copies were wired far & wide, one to each division of the armies poised in Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Italy; one for Propaganda Minister Paul Joseph Goebbels to read to the world over the radio next morning; copies for the press. Excerpts:

Soldiers of the Southeast Front:

Since early this morning the German people are at war with the Belgrade Government of intrigue. We shall only lay down arms when this band of ruffians has been definitely and most emphatically eliminated, and when the last Briton has left this part of the European Continent, and when these misled people realize that they must thank Britain for this situation, they must thank England, the greatest warmonger of all time. . . .

In accordance with the policy of letting others fight for her, as she did in the case of Poland . . . Norway . . . France and Belgium . . . Britain again tried to involve Germany in the struggle in which Britain hoped that she would finish off the German people once and for all. . . . In a few weeks the German soldiers on the Eastern Front, Poland, swept aside this instrument of British policy.

After long effort we finally succeeded in securing the cooperation of Yugoslavia by its adherence to the Tripartite Pact without having demanded anything whatsoever of the Yugoslav nation except that it take its part in the reconstruction of a new order in Europe.

At this point the criminal usurpers of the new Belgrade Government took the power of the State unto themselves, which is the result of being in the pay of Churchill and Britain. . . . Members and officers of the German Embassy, employes of our consulates in Yugoslavia, were daily subjected to the most humiliating attacks. The German schools, exactly as in Poland, were laid in ruins by bandits. Innumerable German nationals were kidnapped and attacked by Yugoslavs and some even were killed. In addition, Yugoslavia for weeks has planned a general mobilization of its Army in great secrecy. This is the answer to my eight-year-long effort to bring about closer cooperation and friendship with the Yugoslav people, a task that I have pursued most fastidiously. . . .

The fight on Greek soil is not a battle against the Greek people, but against that archenemy England. . . .

Soldiers of the Southeast Front: Now your zero hour has arrived.

Seasons in Reverse. Thus did Adolf Hitler apostrophize his beloved season, spring. His ambition, which he has often avowed, is to be an architect—not only of

heroic buildings; but also of mankind in his image. And spring is his building season. "Just now," he said in a recent speech, "I am feeling particularly vigorous. Spring is coming."

Though not noisily sturdy like Mussolini, Hitler is a healthy man, who in ten years has changed physically less than most men between 42 and 52, and who has suffered no greater hurts than a finger broken in an automobile accident and a polyp removed from his larynx. The wig-like wad of hair which hangs across his forehead has no grey in it; nor has his curt mustache.

For Adolf Hitler is an ascetic. He never smokes, and says: "I like to have my enemies smoke as much as possible, but I do not like to have my friends smoke." He never drinks anything stronger than his private near-beer, 1.5% alcohol. He eats no meat. Sex has no place in his life. In springtime, with Germany at war, he gives up even his little pleasures:

He tells his long, slim chauffeur Kempka to put away his long, slim, black Mercedes-Benz touring car, in which he loves to ride by the day across the Fatherland. In its place appears the grim six-wheeled, field-grey car of war, also a Mercedes-Benz.

There are no more evenings now of dressing to the ears and listening for hours on end to the stupendous heroics of Richard Wagner; no more evenings lying on his army cot at home as his Siemens record-changer ruffles through the ponderous Germanisms of his other favorite, Anton Bruckner.

No more evenings now of cinema in his living room, no more comedies, no more mystery films, no more grandiose biographies. Now the only movies are Wochenschauen—weekly newsreels—and the terrifying records of campaigns.

No more lavish entertainments now, no more evenings amusing everyone by mimicking the fat Göring and the thin Goebbels, no more long, lazy conversations about art. And no friendly picnics in Bavaria. His society now must be his soldiers, who he says are "quick as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel."

No more tenderness to animals now. He must forget now how he once made pets of mice, how he wept when his canaries sickened and died, how he gave nuts to the squirrels around the Berghof, how, when a huge crowd was gathered for the ceremonies in Vimy last summer a cur dog appeared from the forest and came through those hundreds of people straight to him.

Now he must attend to the business of war.

Assets in the Bank. All these sacrifices are worthwhile to Adolf Hitler, for this spring all that he has accomplished is at stake. Now his work will come to fruition or else will be blighted.

He has increased Germany's size from 180,976 square miles to 323,360 square miles, plus 290,000 more in occupied but unannexed lands. He has spread his boundaries to include not 65,000,000 but 106,000,000 people. He has built a Party of 3,000,000, a youth movement of 11,750,000, a compulsory labor movement of 25,000,000. Before war came, he had built 1,300 miles of roads, given 315 new vessels to the merchant marine, more than doubled the carrying capacity of railroads, more than doubled the distance flown by commercial airlines. Starting with unemployment of some 7,500,000, he ended with such a labor shortage that 600,000 laborers have been imported from Italy, 750,000 from Poland, 150,000 from The Netherlands, over 1,000,000 from France.

It is no wonder that Hitler today is a far different creature from the man who deferentially greeted President von Hindenburg in January 1933 when the old Field Marshal reluctantly accepted him as Chancellor. Since then he has taken the measure of most of Europe's statesmen including Britain's own Prime Minister Chamberlain. His once co-equal ally, Mussolini, is now only his stooge (see p. 32).

Even war that has cost Germany much, has not stopped the steady accretion of Germany's strength. From the nations he invaded or persuaded—Austria, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Poland, Norway, the Lowlands, the Balkans, France—Hitler eased to varying extents strategic shortages of oil, iron, aluminum, manganese, cellulose, molybdenum and food. By developments of substitutes he eased pressure for rubber, to some extent for gasoline and quinine. He is still hard up for copper (but hopes to increase his stores by the conquest of Yugoslavia) and nickel (but has eased that shortage by seizing the nickel coinage of occupied countries).

His extraordinary accomplishments in increasing his naval, military and air strength, not only from 1933 to the beginning of the war, but since war began, is suggested by the estimates of the table (see p. 27). Not all this was achieved by Hitler. Some of it belongs to his predecessors, for instance to General Hans von Seeckt who organized the seven division (100,000-man) Army that Hitler inherited in 1933. Today virtually all Seeckt's well trained 100,000 are officers of the Nazi Army. Otherwise its rapid expansion would not have been possible.

The most significant evidence of the table is that in most material respects Hitler today has greater armed power than at the beginning of the war. In addition, his fighting men who were untried in 1939 are now veterans with all the experience that helps to win battles. This spring his assets in the bank have reached a new high.

Losses Not Taken. But if his assets are up, Hitler has now acquired a great many contingent liabilities that he did not have when war began. His ally, Italy, is now a hollow shell. And while he has grown in physical strength, his moral strength has waned. This can cause him severe setbacks, and has already cost him one. A tiny nation, Yugoslavia, had dared to defy him, with the result that the plans for his spring campaign in the Balkans had to be completely revised. Now his armies are committed to crush Yugoslavia, from Hitler's standpoint a useless and costly campaign—costly at any rate in time.

Not only are his persecutions of minorities abhorred, but all his overtures are distrusted. No longer has he the advantage, of being able to distract, divide and suborn his opponents. All the world as yet unconquered is united in distrust of him.

According to Nazi accounts, Adolf Hitler's brilliant mind does not merely remember what he reads; it photographs it, frames it, and tacks it to the side of his skull. If this is so, somewhere in Hitler's mind lies the picture of the words he once wrote about his own sensations in World War I: "I felt fully the whims of fortune which kept me at the front in a place where any lucky move on the part of a Negro could shoot me down." If defeat ever comes to his armies, his people may begin to feel as he did 25 years ago.

Victory depends among other things upon relative strength. Although Hitler's legions are greater than ever before, the strength of his enemies is now mounting rapidly. When the U.S.—with perhaps the whole of the Western Hemisphere to follow—gave its aid to Britain, Hitler lost far more in relative strength than all his victories since war began had gained him.

Henceforth, the clock ticks against him. This is his spring. Last week he grasped it avidly.

 Click to Print

Find this article at:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,932213,00.html>