

Correspondence

Commentary on. Post DE, The hypnosis of Adolf Hitler.
J Forensic Sci 1998 Nov;43(6):1127-1132.

Sir:

The article, "The Hypnosis of Adolf Hitler," by Dr. David Edward Post, in the November, 1998, issue of the Journal of Forensic Sciences, illustrates the difficulties in psychoanalysis at a distance of time and space.

One of the descriptions of Hitler's mentation is taken from a 1943 OSS report, which in turn cites a book by Hermann Rauschning, supposedly based on more than a hundred private conversations with its subject and published in Switzerland in 1939. The same book was entered into evidence at the postwar Nuremberg trials and has been quoted by such historians as Joachim Fest, Allan Bullock, and Gerhard Weinberg; it remains in print to this day under the title, *Hitler Speaks*.

West German historian Eberhard Jaeckel, in 1977, and Swiss historian Wolfgang Haenel, in 1983, pointed out that Rauschning, National Socialist President of the Danzig Senate in 1933-34, had four formal meetings with Hitler and no private conversations. His book was described by the periodical, *Der Spiegel* (Sept. 7th, 1985), as "a falsification, an historical distortion"; its passages were lifted from various other works (that cited in Dr. Post's article is derived from de Maupassant's story, "The Horla").

An authentic record of conversations with Hitler may be found in Otto Wagener's *Hitler: Memoirs of a Confidant*, currently out of print.

Concerns about long-distance investigation of the psyche were raised forty years ago after the publication of Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* and appear to remain valid.

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Author's Response

Sir:

Thank you for the comments regarding my article: "The Hypnosis of Adolf Hitler" (JFS, Nov 1998). If I understand the comments correctly, the central message concerns the use of one quotation that I utilized (on p. 1131 of my article) as taken directly from a declassified US Office of Strategic Services Report (a.k.a. The Langer Report). This individual quotation deals with a description of Hitler's sleep patterns.

This quotation in no way deals with any of the central aspects of my article, which focuses on: Hitler's experiences at The Pasewalk Military Hospital; his psychiatric treatment there; and my research to better clarify the historical record regarding the "paper trail" which leads from the hospital and includes the book: *The Eyewitness*.

I do appreciate the comments regarding your concerns about this one quotation, which I utilized simply to provide another example of the traumatic effects that combat exposure had on Hitler, but the fact that Hitler suffered physical and emotional symptoms secondary to combat while serving on the Belgian front is little disputed even from his own self reports.

On another level, I suspect that I should point out that my paper is not a psychoanalysis of Hitler (as your letter suggests). As a forensic psychiatrist, I should know something about that. Before I even decided to investigate Hitler's Pasewalk hospitalization, the historical record was confusing to begin with. I did not go back "in time and space" trying to add to that confusion. Rather, as historians Binion and Toland have both told me, they appreciated my research efforts, which they believe have helped to clarify the historical record better.

I hope others will review my research "*When Viewed as a Whole*." Yet, I guess we must each interpret the data for ourselves and draw our own conclusions. That's what this is all about. Nonetheless, the comments "*When Viewed as a Whole*" were helpful to me.

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