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ALBERT SPEER:
SOME AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF A
NAZI WAR CRIMINAL

A Thesis
by
PHYLLIS GAIL PROCTOR

Submitted to the Graduate School
Appalachian State University
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ABSTRACT

ALBERT SPEER: SOME AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF A
NAZI WAR CRIMINAL. (August 1984)

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Albert Speer is of interest to Americans primarily because he was not the typical Nazi. He appeared to be likable and bourgeois with few of the attributes associated with Hitler's entourage. Even in Hitler's circle of admirers and friends, Speer was considered an outsider. Yet as Minister of Munitions during World War II he used his extraordinary administrative skill to keep the machinery of the Third Reich running. The fact that he pleaded innocent to all charges of war crimes and yet accepted his guilt by stating that he should have known what was happening in the concentration camps, has intrigued many Americans. At the same time this has infuriated others who claim that a man in Speer's position must have known that genocide was taking place. Because of the favorable impression he made at Nuremberg, his literary abilities and public availability, he became the most influential ex-Nazi in the post-war world. His books were so widely read and acclaimed that his views of World War II and its aftermath have gained wide acceptance. Many believe that

every step Speer took--from his pre-trial cooperation with the Allies to his death in London before an interview in 1981--was a move to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the Western public. If this is true his slow progress was, in the end, largely successful.

American perceptions of Albert Speer have been shaped by a variety of factors. Changing impressions about the Nuremberg Trials are just one element. At the time they took place it was widely believed that the Nuremberg Trials would significantly affect the conduct of future wars, particularly the role of individual responsibility. This did not occur as America's Vietnam experience in the 1960s documented. Moreover, domestic issues which convulsed American society, particularly social questions in the 1960s, influenced American views of Speer. To determine the course of America's changing perceptions, material has been drawn from the transcripts of the International Military Tribunal, newspaper and journal articles, the writings of those who knew Speer and Speer's own works. What this investigation documents is that in less than forty years informed Americans generally shifted from hostility to a sense of empathy toward Albert Speer.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of the American public's reaction to Albert Speer and his varied career has been surprisingly positive. Since the time of his association with Hitler, almost every phase of the architect and Nazi munitions minister's life has met with some degree of material and popular success. Even his years of imprisonment were productively used for writing memoirs. The last years of Speer's life created an image as strong as did his association with Hitler.

Albert Speer believed himself to be a voice--a Cassandra perhaps--warning of the consequences of blind ambition, of too much power in the hands of too few, and perhaps most importantly, of how even a sophisticated society can be beguiled. This image of a man trapped by circumstances, most of which were of his own making, has become ingrained in the American image of Speer.

The greatest variety of reaction anywhere to Speer's career has been in the United States. A diverse society consisting of people of all races, nationalities and religions has exhibited opinions ranging from outright condemnation to reconciliation. These opinions have changed over time.

Much of the condemnation of Speer stems from two issues which will probably never be resolved. The first deals with Speer's claim of ignorance about the Jewish genocide. The second problem is the

charge that ever since 1945 Speer's every move was carefully choreographed to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the public. These issues as well as many others reflect a major problem with any study of Speer; the writer is forced to rely heavily on Speer's own words.

American fascination with the Nazi era is reflected in the interest in Speer as an exception to that era. Speer's rationality is in conflict with the deviant society of which he was a part. Speer's impact on American perceptions of himself and Nazi Germany has certainly not been negligible. At the Nuremberg Trials, Speer was sentenced to twenty years in prison for his use of slave labor in German industry. The trials were a milestone in twentieth century American behavior because they seemed to represent a breakthrough in international law and cooperation. They also focused American attention on Speer in such a way that he would never be submerged in anonymity again. Indeed, by the early 1980s two major network television productions appeared in which his life was of major significance. In order to observe how American perceptions of Speer have developed, it is necessary to understand who this man was and then trace his history in the popular media and the impressions of prominent Americans.

I. SPEER AS ARCHITECT AND NAZI, 1932-1945

Until the end of World War II Albert Speer was unknown to most Americans. His name first began appearing in the American press in 1937, when he was appointed by Hitler to begin rebuilding Berlin. He was mistakenly described as being a "disciple of the severe school" of ultramodern architecture.¹ Actually his style was neo-classical. One year later when Speer announced the twenty year rebuilding plan for Berlin it was pronounced "the most ambitious city planning scheme in modern times."² The press seemed quite impressed with his ability to cope with the sudden changes made by Hitler.³ With the onset of the war these building projects slowly ground to a halt and Speer did not reappear in the American press until his appointment as munitions minister.

If Speer had always remained an architect his name might have disappeared into obscurity, but such was not to be. When the war began Speer was instructed by Hitler to continue with his building projects. These slowed due to the demands for manpower and material

¹"Named to Rebuild Berlin," New York Times, 31 January 1937, p. 26.

²"Hitler Fails to Call the Reichstag for Scheduled Meeting Sunday," New York Times, 28 January 1938, p. 1.

³"Sidelights of the Week: Builder," New York Times, 14 November 1939, sec. IV, p. 2.

needed for the war effort. In 1940 he was given increased responsibility over the building of coastal fortifications and other military construction projects because Hitler felt Dr. Fritz Todt, minister of armaments, was overburdened with such duties.⁴ Speer slowly acquired more titles and control. In 1941 Todt put Speer in charge of rebuilding railroads in the Ukraine.⁵ That same year Speer became a member of the *Reichstag*. Early in 1942 Todt was killed in a plane crash and Speer was named to fill his position.*

By assuming Todt's position Speer completed his transition from interested courtier to Nazi leader. He rapidly became totally immersed in the war effort. During his first month in office he quickly made it clear that his authority was not to be doubted by sending two industry managers to concentration camps.⁶ By March an official of the *Wehrmacht's* Armament Office commented:

*Speer had been destined to take that flight with Todt, but remained behind because of fatigue. Not until his imprisonment in Spandau did Speer wonder if the death of Todt was contrived. At the time of the crash American observers believed Todt's accident to be genuine. If it had been planned, Göring seemed the most likely perpetrator as he and Todt were constantly feuding over their overlapping areas of responsibility. It was not believed that Todt was well known enough to have been the victim of anti-Nazi sabotage. George Axelsson, "Todt's Death Seen as Help to Göring," New York Times, 10 February 1942, p. 11.

⁴Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Co., 1970), p. 263.

⁵Robert E. Conot, Justice at Nuremberg (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), p. 239.

⁶"Two Nazis are Interned for Labor Violations," New York Times, 22 February 1942, p. 2.

Speer is the only one who today can say anything. He can interfere in any department. He already disregards all other departments. We must join the Speer Organization and pull together, otherwise Speer will go his own way.⁷

By April, Speer had become General Plenipotentiary for Armaments and Member of the Central Planning Board within Göring's Four Year Plan for economic expansion.⁸

Appointing an architect to the position of minister of armaments and industry was consistent with Hitler's policy of appointing non-professionals or people trained in other fields to high posts. This policy apparently stemmed from the fact that Hitler did not want people in these positions to have knowledge superior to his own. It clearly hampered the efficiency of many departments, but in Speer's case it was a remarkable success. His efficiency and technical ability, at least in the estimates of some historians, may have caused the war to be prolonged for as much as two additional years. Although this fact has been disputed by American economists, it caused the Russians to press for Speer's execution at his trial in Nuremberg.⁹ Speer halted nonessential construction on Hitler's projects and stepped up the previously mediocre industrial output. Because these projects

⁷Conot, p. 241.

⁸The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals, 42 vols. (New York: Weiler Publishers, 1947), Vol. 1, p. 330.

⁹John Kenneth Galbraith, "Albert Speer was the Man to See," New York Times Book Review, 10 January 1971, p. 3. John Kenneth Galbraith and George Ball were two economists who questioned this claim.

had been using up vital resources, armament production soon expanded, reaching its peak in 1944.¹⁰

In order to achieve this production Speer used laborers supplied by the notorious Fritz Sauckel, Plenipotentiary for Labor Action. There was constant conflict between the two men, Sauckel complaining repeatedly that Speer acted unbureaucratically.¹¹ He was frequently correct since Speer used his direct access to Hitler to circumvent normal bureaucratic road blocks.¹² According to Göring,

Speer only requested workers. It didn't matter to him how he obtained them. The Führer would make demands. Speer would say that he couldn't meet them without so and so many more workers and would get the Führer to give a direct order in that direction.¹³

Despite Speer's best efforts to maintain these production levels Allied bombing raids began taking their toll.

Near the end of the war Hitler's plans to decimate "unworthy" Germany through a scorched earth policy were partially frustrated by Speer. Between March 18 and April 7, 1945, twelve conflicting orders were issued by Speer concerning this policy.¹⁴ In the confusion, many industries and transportation facilities were left untouched simply because few were willing to take the responsibility for their destruction in such an uncertain situation.

¹⁰Conot, p. 241.

¹¹Ibid, p. 250.

¹²IMT, Vol. 1, p. 331.

¹³Conot, p. 248.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 252.

Speer was torn between his personal attachment to Hitler and the desires of the men who were his constituency, and when it became clear to him the war was lost, his instinct for self-preservation caused him to start detaching himself from the Führer. By March of 1945 Speer the technocrat was thinking about measures of post-war reconstruction, while Speer the architect was still engaged with Hitler the artist in never-never fantasies of megamonumental buildings, as if they were children dreaming over their erector sets.¹⁵

During these last months Speer claims that he considered murdering Hitler by placing the madness-inducing gas, tabun, in the ventilation system of Hitler's bunker. He was frustrated by Hitler's paranoia which caused the Führer to secure the ventilation shaft.¹⁶ Details of Speer's assassination plot against Hitler were independently confirmed by Dieter Stahl, head of the Main Committee for Munitions in Speer's ministry.¹⁷ It was through Stahl that Speer intended to gain the poisonous gas.¹⁸ Speer's co-defendants at Nuremberg as well as a number of historians were extremely skeptical about the assassination attempt.¹⁹

When Hitler committed suicide Speer helped put a provisional government together under Admiral Karl Doenitz, Hitler's designated successor. Speer was not even slated by Hitler to be in this government, but nevertheless succeeded in becoming Doenitz's Minister of

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ladislas Farago, "Tabun! The Gas that Drives Men Mad," United Nations World 2 (February 1948): 12.

¹⁷Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, The Last Days of Hitler (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 143.

¹⁸Speer, Inside, p. 430.

¹⁹Conot, p. 255; Most skeptics believe Speer conjured this tale in an attempt to ingratiate himself with the Americans.

Economics and Production. He immediately turned to the problems of reconstruction. Some of Speer's directives in this respect were similar to those issued by General Eisenhower in turning the available resources to the immediate needs of the citizenry.²⁰

The Doenitz government was ineffective, but continued to operate until the Allies consolidated their takeover in May 1945. Speer at this time did not feel himself to be in any danger from the Allies. It is possible, although never admitted, that by taking a position in Doenitz's government, Speer naively thought he might win a position in a post-war government sanctioned by the Allies. Everyone was aware of the unconditional surrender that the Allies had demanded, but this may have been a reasonable assumption on Speer's part since following World War I many officials managed to keep their posts in the Weimar government. If this was Speer's plan, every move was designed to ingratiate himself with the Allies. This is one more issue about Speer that may never be resolved. Was he sincere in attempting to ease the transition or was it as Göring said, just an attempt "to save his lousy neck"?²¹

²⁰Clifton Daniel, "Speer Admits Defeat," New York Times 4 May 1945, p. 1.

²¹Conot, p. 255.

II. SPEER AT NUREMBERG

Speculation about the personalities and personal lives of the Nazi leaders made popular copy during the war. Although Speer was not as colorful as some of his associates he did warrant notice. In March 1943 Newsweek reported that labor shortages had caused conscription and the employment of war prisoners, but did not yet term it slave labor. Speer was called a "mystery man" who looked like a playboy, but was really an ascetic. Because of his vast governmental activity and workaholic attitude he had earned the title *Der Grossverdiener* (the big money maker), not untypical of American wartime perceptions of Nazi leaders. German claims of increased production since Speer took office in 1942 were thought to be mere boasts on Speer's part.²²

Although the press may have been skeptical about these claims they piqued the interest of the American military. Towards the close of the war Speer was the subject of intense interest to American intelligence officials. To the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services, he was "the German miracle man."²³ The opinion of the OSS was mirrored by initial scholarly investigations. In 1944 the neo-Marxist,

²²"Critical Reich Economy Brings Output Czar to the Forefront," Newsweek, 22 March 1943, pp. 50-51.

²³John Kenneth Galbraith, "After the Air Raids," excerpt from A Life in Our Times American Heritage 32 (April-May 1981): 71.

German-Jewish exile, Franz Neumann, published his massive study of National Socialism from 1933 to 1944 Behemoth in the United States. Neumann, while biased in his views, nevertheless termed Speer "omniverous" because of his multitude of duties and titles, and believed him to be in total control of the economy. He saw Speer's power as being surpassed only by that of Göring and Hitler.²⁴

Speer's wartime successes with German industry and production were observed with equal interest by spies and industrialists alike. Numerous bombing raids were organized with the sole purpose of disrupting Speer's amazing industrial system and bringing German wartime production to a standstill. After the Nuremberg Trials, members of the United States Department of War Production told Speer that until he and members of his staff had been debriefed concerning the problems they had encountered they had believed that "a stroke of Speer's pen" solved all difficulties.²⁵

Speer cooperated in every way with Allied investigators at the end of the war. He supplied the Strategic Bombing Survey with information on the success of American air raids for use in the air war against Japan. He gave them many of his ministry papers that he had deposited for safekeeping in a Hamburg bank. It does not appear that these documents were tampered with. Although he had reviewed them

²⁴ Franz Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 525, 533.

²⁵ Albert Speer, Infiltration: How Heinrich Himmler Schemed to Build an SS Industrial Empire (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1981), p. 96.

and concluded that there was nothing particularly harmful in them, some were later used as evidence against him at Nuremberg.²⁶

Because of Speer's unique position the American army had a difficult time deciding what to do with him. He was a candidate for two very different detention centers. The first was the Enemy Personnel Exploitation Section detention center, DUSTBIN, near Frankfurt, which was for Nazi scientists, economists and industrialists. The other, code named ASHCAN, was in Spa, Belgium, and served as a holding and interrogation center for high ranking Nazi officials.²⁷ Speer was finally assigned to DUSTBIN because of his responsibility for coordinating most of the industrial activity of the Third Reich.²⁸

Speer allowed himself to be completely debriefed by the British and Americans concerning Germany's wartime economy and production. During this period he recovered from the overwork and strain from which he had been suffering. These meetings turned from being "interrogations to colloquies in which all of the participants were more or less on equal footing."²⁹ One officer even took Speer on an excursion to Paris.

During scores of sessions with British and American engineers, economists and technicians, Speer gained insight into western democratic thinking and adapted himself to it as easily as he had to Hitler's megalomania.³⁰

²⁶Galbraith, "Albert Speer," p. 2.

²⁷Earl F. Ziemke, The US Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-46. Army Historical Series (Washington: Center of Military History US Army, 1975), p. 314.

²⁸Galbraith, "Albert Speer," p. 3.

²⁹Conot, p. 253.

³⁰Ibid.

Speer was gradually becoming accepted as part of the "Allied technical management team." When it was announced that he was going to be tried as a major war criminal he was in the middle of directing a two week symposium for the Americans called "The Organization of German War Production." Even so, Speer's information was considered so valuable that he was assured that if he continued cooperating the information he supplied would not be given to the Nuremberg prosecution.³¹ Nor was it. The prosecution was never able to gain access to the DUSTBIN files.³²

Prior to the Nuremberg Trials all of the twenty-two defendants were given psychological tests. Although Speer's sanity was never questioned, the popular belief was that individuals so deeply involved in such a regime must certainly be mad. American psychiatrists were not particularly sympathetic to Speer, viewing him as a morally weak-willed man with vaulting ambitions who would let nothing, not even the suffering and deaths of millions, stand in the way of his goals. Speer was later described as follows.

Speer's confession of guilt...was probably partly authentic, but also partly phony, revealing not only his psychopathic propensity for dissimulation and his readiness to adjust to whatever structure surrounds him, but also his ability to pursue his ego-inflating pretentiousness in a new setting.³³

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid, p. 433.

³³Florence R. Miale and Michael Selzer, The Nuremberg Mind: Psychology of the Nazi Leaders (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1975), p. 267.

Obviously, the psychologists believed Speer confessed because it was exactly what the Allies wanted to hear.

The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg indicted Speer for participating in,

military and economic planning and preparation of the Nazi conspirators for Wars of Aggression and Wars in Violation of International Treaties, Agreements and Assurances...Crimes against Humanity...the abuse and exploitation of human beings for forced labor and the conduct of aggressive war.³⁴

Each of the defendants pleaded not guilty. Speer's plea of innocence was entered November 21, 1946.³⁵

Throughout the trial Göring tried to have all the defendants present a united front of defiance against the Tribunal, which he believed had no authority to try them. Speer strove equally hard to break up this front. Speer convinced Fritzsche to join him in denouncing Hitler and worked on Frank and Schirach to do the same. During one afternoon recess following Speer's recounting of his assassination plot against Hitler, Göring tore across the dock to attack Speer. Göring raged that night, "Damn that stupid fool Speer! Did you see how he disgraced himself in court today?...How could he stoop so low?...I nearly died of shame!...I could have sunk through the floor!"³⁶ This hostile attitude further emphasized to the observers the differences between Speer and his fellow defendants.

³⁴IMT, Vol. I, pp. 73-74.

³⁵Ibid, p. 94

³⁶Ibid, pp. 255-256.

Prosecutor Thomas Dodd introduced the evidence on the slave labor program against Speer and Sauckel.

The Nazi foreign labor policy was a policy of mass deportation and mass enslavement...of underfeeding and overworking foreign laborers, of subjecting them to every form of degradation, brutality, and inhumanity...a policy which constituted a flagrant violation of the laws of humanity.

We shall show that the Defendants Sauckel and Speer are principally responsible for the formulation of the policy and for its extension.³⁷

The American prosecution later continued:

Unlike Sauckel, Speer's activities went substantially beyond the realm of slave labor. He was one of the masterminds in the plan for the systematic robbery and spoilation of the lands overrun by the German war machine.³⁸

The use of slave labor was contrary to several Articles of the Hague Regulations of 1907 and violated the Geneva Convention by using prisoners of war.³⁹ Curiously enough, part of Speer's defense followed the argument that Germany was within its rights in using Russian prisoners of war since Russia had not signed the Geneva Convention. This argument was rejected by the court.⁴⁰

As the dominant member of the Central Planning Board, which had supreme authority for the scheduling of German production and the allocation and development of raw materials. Speer took the position that the Board had the authority to instruct Sauckel to provide laborers for industries under its control and succeeded in sustaining this position over the objections of Sauckel. The practice was developed under which Speer transmitted to Sauckel an estimate of the total number of workers needed. Sauckel obtained the labor and allocated

³⁷IMT, Vol. III, p. 404.

³⁸Ibid, Vol. IV, p. 531.

³⁹Conot, p. 433.

⁴⁰Bradley F. Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977), pp. 218-219.

it to the various industries in accordance with instructions supplied by Speer.

Speer knew when he made his demands on Sauckel that they would be supplied by foreign laborers serving under compulsion. He participated in conferences involving the extension of the slave labor program for the purpose of satisfying his demands.⁴¹

Even so, Speer did not sanction the violent measures Sauckel used to recruit workers. At his trial Speer explained:

...through violent measures of that kind a regular allocation of manpower in the occupied countries would not have been possible in the long run.... Measures of violence meant to me a loss of manpower in the occupied countries, because there was the danger that these people would in increasing numbers take to the woods so as not to go to Germany, and thus strengthen the lines of the resistance movements. This, in turn, led to increased acts of sabotage and that, in turn to a decrease of production in the occupied countries.⁴²

Speer's case followed Sauckel's throughout the trial.

Speer's attorney, Hans Flächsner, characterized "Speer as moderate and rational in contrast to the brutal Sauckel." He stuck to "his stratagem of seeking to exonerate Speer at Sauckel's expense."

Even though Speer used 80 to 90 percent of the workers Sauckel brought in, he succeeded in giving the impression "of having attempted to exercise a moderating influence on Sauckel's radical roundups."⁴³

Speer stated, "I had no influence on the methods by which workers were recruited.... Besides this was no concern of mine...."⁴⁴ Speer contended

⁴¹IMT, Vol. I, p. 331.

⁴²IMT, Vol. XVI, p. 457.

⁴³Conot, pp. 467, 434.

⁴⁴IMT, Vol. XVI, p. 457.

that "modern wars were won with superiority in technology and firepower, not manpower..." He resisted the drafting of German workers who had to be replaced by foreign labor.⁴⁵ Starving, mistreated workers were not terribly productive, so Speer sent investigators to determine how their health could be improved. Speer complained to Hitler that price-less experts were being lost through mistreatment. These reports were unfortunately left in the hands of Himmler who did nothing to improve conditions.⁴⁶

If the prosecution had made a real effort Speer could have been faced with life in prison or execution, but the spark was gone from the normally feisty interrogator, Robert Jackson. He had just learned that President Truman had passed him over for a Supreme Court nomination.

For Speer...it was one more stroke of luck...all the animosity seemed to go out of Jackson. In place of the bellicose questioner of Göring and Schacht, the man who confronted Speer appeared to regard him almost with compassion as a fellow sufferer in the game of life.⁴⁷

Speer was taken aback by Jackson's approach and was greatly relieved when he realized it was not a cleverly laid trap. Under this questioning it was brought out that the deportation of the Jews took away workers that would have been invaluable to Speer. Speer denounced the Oath of Loyalty to Hitler saying that Hitler had broken faith with Germany. He also said (to Jackson's delight) that as part of the leadership he must accept his share of the responsibility.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Conot, p. 251.

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 441-442.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 443.

⁴⁸Ibid, pp. 443-444.

The judges, like much of the American public, were left with the impression that at least Speer had, towards the end, "seen the light."⁴⁹

...Speer's consciousness of, and deep shame for, his own and Germany's crimes was in marked contrast with the attitudes of the rest of the defendants, and made him a civilized and sympathetic character.⁵⁰

Speer was found innocent of the charges of conspiracy in planning aggressive war since he took his post long after the war had commenced. The Tribunal found that he knew that the workers he requested from Fritz Sauckel could only have been forced foreign slave laborers and prisoners of war.⁵¹

In mitigation it was noted that the court lacked evidence that Speer was cruel; that he had established "blocked industries" which were still illegal, but managed to keep workers near their homes rather than be deported to Germany; that he was one of the few who told Hitler that the war was lost; and that he attempted to halt the scorched earth policy.⁵² The Tribunal's sentence of twenty years was a compromise between ten years and death.⁵³ On the whole the American public seemed to feel that the trials were as fair and impartial as possible under the circumstances and that the sentences were just.

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 255.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 445.

⁵¹IMT, Vol. I, p. 331.

⁵²Ibid, p. 332.

⁵³Smith, pp. 220-222.

III. THE SPANDAU YEARS

The image that Speer projected during the trial and the pre-trial period at DUSTBIN made quite an impression on the Americans who dealt with him. This in particular is true of two prominent and highly respected men who were part of the team conducting the Strategic Bombing Survey--George Ball and John Kenneth Galbraith. Ball served as Under-secretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Galbraith served as ambassador to India and is a noted professor of economics at Harvard. These men continued to concern themselves with Speer's fate through his years of imprisonment in Spandau and beyond, and their views have done a great deal to shape informed opinion in the United States.

When these men began preparing for their investigations at the end of the war they soon found that the little known Albert Speer had "established himself as the man we most wanted to know."⁵⁴ Their goal was to get as much information from Speer as possible, and they did so, cataloging volumes of invaluable knowledge gleaned from numerous interviews. After the debriefing Speer wrote letters of introduction for Ball, Galbraith and several others to his former assistants "who dutifully followed their chief's injunctions to tell all."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ John Kenneth Galbraith and George W. Ball, "Interrogation of Albert Speer: Inside Story of Nazi Collapse," Life, 17 December 1945, pp. 63-66

⁵⁵ "Speer Cooperates Fully with US Investigators," New York Times, 31 October 1945, p. 8.

Over the years both Ball and Galbraith have voiced their uncertainty concerning Speer's version of Hitler's scorched earth plans for Germany. They felt the role Speer claimed for himself in obstructing the destruction was a bit exaggerated since with a retreating army and an advancing one, there would be little opportunity to follow through with such a plan. They also questioned Speer's sincerity in condemning his former associates.⁵⁶

Galbraith even questioned Speer's production miracle. He noted that when Speer took office German industry was operating far below capacity and that much of Speer's success was due to the previous work of Dr. Todt. He accused Speer of poor planning and of being unable to prevent hoarding. Galbraith believed Speer's achievements, real or imagined, were due to his "aptitude for bureaucratic politics" and "his instinct for personal success."⁵⁷ Even so, Galbraith largely refrained from making moral judgments about Speer.

Even though Ball and Galbraith questioned some of Speer's motives and viewpoints they never ceased to be impressed with the man. Over the years Galbraith wrote about Speer frequently, and in his autobiography included an entire chapter devoted exclusively to Speer.

In his autobiography, Ball attempted to describe his continuing fascination with Speer. He felt that in his original encounter he was still too unfamiliar with the horrors of the Nazi regime to view Speer properly. His perspective was broadened by this knowledge,

⁵⁶Galbraith and Ball, pp. 51, 63-66.

⁵⁷Galbraith, "Albert Speer," pp. 2-3, 31.

Speer's writings over the years, and finally an interview with him for the BBC in 1970. Ball felt that Speer "evoked in us a sympathy of which we were all secretly ashamed." Knowing the truth about the Nazi atrocities, Ball believed he should have felt repelled by Speer because he was a man "who had touched evil." Yet he was not [repelled] because Speer seemed so much "like us." After Ball's experiences in government he did not doubt that many of the bureaucrats he had known would have followed a path similar to Speer's, believing that once the government had achieved its aims all would return to normalcy. He felt that if events had occurred differently situations comparable to those in the Third Reich might have arisen during the McCarthy years or the Nixon administration during Watergate.⁵⁸

The Spandau years were not totally unfruitful for Speer. He spent the years compiling his memoirs and keeping a diary. The Spandau prison where he and the six other Nazi inmates were confined was jointly administered by the British, French, Americans and Russians. Each of the four administering countries supplied food and other necessities to the prisoners every fourth week. The prisoners found themselves looking forward to the American week and dreading the Russian week because of the quality of the food. At the height of the Cold War, Spandau was sometimes the only place Americans and Russians could be found communicating, even if it was only petty bickering over day to day details. When Stalin was alive the prisoners were not always treated well by Soviet guards and administrators, but after his death, contrary to

⁵⁸George W. Ball, The Past has Another Pattern (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982), pp. 66-68.

news reports depicting primitive conditions inside Spandau, the prisoners were treated reasonably well.⁵⁹

During the twenty years Speer was in captivity references to him in the press were rare, but members of his family began making news. Throughout this period there were various attempts to gain his release by his children, often through American diplomats. Of course, none of these attempts was successful, although they did solicit a margin of sympathy from many highranking American officials.

During 1952, for example, Speer's sixteen year old daughter, Hilde, was repeatedly frustrated in her attempts to become a foreign exchange student in the United States under the American Field Service program. The State Department would not grant her an entry visa. A State Department official insisted that "she would be an embarrassment to herself and to the Department," because of the notoriety of her father. An American Field Service official who helped select her said, "This is a wonderful opportunity to show we practice what we preach."⁶⁰ After some debate her application was flatly rejected on the grounds that she would attract unfavorable publicity. A spokesman said "it was in the best interest of the Speer child herself and in the best interests of the program."⁶¹ American High Commissioner in Germany, John McCloy, approached Secretary of State Dean Acheson and her way was finally

⁵⁹"Speer and Schirach Freed at Spandau," New York Times, 1 October 1966, p. 1.

⁶⁰"US Debates Visit of Nazi Criminal's Child Under State Department's Exchange Plan," New York Times, 5 June 1952, p. 8.

⁶¹"US Bars Speer Daughter," New York Times, 6 June 1952, p. 4.

cleared. A Jewish family even volunteered to take her into its home. However, she ultimately resided with a wealthy Quaker family in Pennsylvania.⁶² It seems likely that there may have been some attempt to keep news of her final clearance quiet as there was no mention of it in the national press. This split in the State Department is perhaps a symptom of the Cold War. It occurred at a time when the United States was trying to gloss over residual anti-Nazi sentiment in order to prepare Germany for its role as an anti-communist ally.

This is also reflected in American diplomatic attitudes towards Speer throughout the fifties. According to Speer, John McCloy repeatedly went out of his way to be helpful to Speer's family. Throughout that decade he repeatedly wrote to the family pledging his help in trying to gain Speer's early release. From time to time Speer recorded in his diary that other State Department officials expressed an interest in his early release. Robert Murphy, Undersecretary of State in 1956, expressed a desire to put through a decision abolishing Spandau. In 1957 he wrote that the State Department was sympathetic to early release if the Russians could be pressured to agree. In 1958 the American chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, Telford Taylor, supported Speer's release. Later that same year the American ambassador, David Bruce, visited Speer at Spandau and told him that the stubbornness of the Russians was blocking his release.⁶³ In a 1955 article about the wives of former Nazis it was noted that Speer's wife, Margarethe, had the most

⁶²Albert Speer, Spandau: The Secret Diaries (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), p. 223.

⁶³Ibid, pp. 223, 337-338, 361.

to look forward to since Speer would be released in 1966, "but it is likely he will be freed sooner."⁶⁴ In 1960 the Eichmann case apparently put an end to what could have been an American diplomatic movement to gain Speer's release due to the renewed anti-Nazi sentiment the trial of this infamous SS bureaucrat aroused.

Speer and Hitler Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach were released at the same time in 1966. As they came out of Spandau they were faced with four hundred reporters. It was believed their release generated more interest than previous Nazi criminal releases due to "a measure of sympathy held for Speer." Speer was quoted as saying that "he hoped to get back to work and be a better architect than he ever was before." At the time of the release, Schirach was criticized for announcing the planned sale of his memoirs for \$125,000.⁶⁵ Speer remained quiet, waited a few years, and sold his memoirs for many times that sum. Although never published by Knopf, Mrs. Alfred A. Knopf had made inquiries about purchasing the as yet unwritten memoirs as early as 1948. A rough version of what was to become Inside the Third Reich was ready by the mid 1950s and smuggled out of prison by a friendly male nurse to await Speer's release.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Richard Greenough, "Then and Now," New York Times, 21 August 1955, sec. VI, pp. 37-39.

⁶⁵"Speer and Schirach," p. 1.

⁶⁶Speer, Spandau, p. 125.

IV. AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF SPEER

When John Kenneth Galbraith reviewed Inside the Third Reich he was amazed that Speer's memories so closely corresponded to his own. He was critical, but did not deny the book's historic value. He still believed, as he did in his first article about Speer in 1945, that his goal was "personal rehabilitation" and that the memoirs were the keystone.⁶⁷ If this truly was Speer's objective at the end of the war and during the trials his writings and activities following his release from prison insured its success.

In 1948 British academician Hugh R. Trevor-Roper wrote that Speer's "would be the only Nazi memoirs worth reading." Trevor-Roper has written extensively about Speer. A British intelligence officer during the war, he subsequently investigated Hitler's death and met and studied Speer. His prediction about Speer's memoirs was made in an article entitled "Portrait of the Real Nazi Criminal." The title refers to his belief that Speer's character traits of loyalty and love of work are reflected in most of German society and these traits are what permitted the rise of Nazism. He called Speer a genius who resisted disastrous policy and ultimately deduced his own guilt. He called Speer's appointment to minister of armaments and industry the "Speer Revolution," claiming that "it was Speer, not Hitler, who created the

⁶⁷Galbraith, "Albert Speer," pp. 2-3.

Führer state and total war." He called Speer a phoenix who "may yet have a career." He wrote that Speer seemed more western, not really a German. "This problem of divided personality makes Speer even more interesting and enigmatic than before."⁶⁸ In Trevor-Roper's book, The Last Days of Hitler, he said of Speer:

If he sometimes seems to have fallen too deeply under the spell of the tyrant whom he served, at least he is the only servant whose judgment was not corrupted by attendance on that dreadful master, at least he retained the capacity to examine himself, and the honesty to declare both his errors and his convictions.⁶⁹

The great expectations made so many years before publication were not to be disappointed. Inside the Third Reich sold millions of copies all over the world. Much of its success was due to the fascination many Europeans and Americans felt for the Nazi era as an aberration from sanity. This has been most recently seen in the craze for Nazi paraphernalia and the uproar over the fraudulent Hitler diaries. The fact that Speer was offering a peek "inside" at what it was really like at the top of the Nazi order was intriguing. In the eyes of most reviewers the book appeared highly accurate. The numerous positive reviews and the corresponding belief in Speer's veracity was a major influence on the success of the book. As a result of its popularity, Speer came increasingly into the public's eye in interviews and personal appearances.

Although most reviewers were favorable to Inside the Third Reich, some were disturbed by the fact that a book on such a topic became

⁶⁸Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, "Portrait of the Real Nazi Criminal," New York Times Magazine 29 February 1948, sec. VI, p. 7.

⁶⁹Trevor-Roper, Last Days of Hitler, p. 138.

such a best seller.⁷⁰ Others were thankful that Speer was not executed so that we now have this version of what it was really like at the top of the Nazi hierarchy. The compliments abounded, Speer had "an inborn literacy and wit uncommon among Nazis and an accomplished air of seeming to write as the privileged observer of a madhouse rather than one of the inmates...."⁷¹ Nearly all reviewers agreed that it was the best first person story to originate from the German high command.⁷² "He has revealed himself layer by layer not in self-flagellation, but in an earnest attempt...to atone for his mistakes and to warn others...."⁷³

Most reviewers are confused as to whether or not they should believe Speer's claims of ignorance about the Final Solution. One reviewer wrote that only men martyred by the Nazis, such as Simon Weill or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, would be capable of giving a fair review, but that it "may be the prose masterpiece of World War II."⁷⁴

A few reviews were not quite as generous as those mentioned above. Historian and German exile, George Hallgarten, was dissatisfied with

⁷⁰G. Steiner, "Love Story" review of Inside the Third Reich, by Albert Speer, in The New Yorker 47, July 24, 1971, p. 70.

⁷¹William Harlan Hale, "Der Führer Dead Center," review of Inside the Third Reich, by Albert Speer, in Saturday Review 53 (August 29, 1970): 19.

⁷²Keith R. Johnson, "Mephistopheles Remembered," Time 7 September 1970, p. 216.

⁷³John Toland, review of Inside the Third Reich in New York Times Book Review, 23 August 1970, p. 1.

⁷⁴Lincoln Kirsten, "Prison of Possibility," review of Inside the Third Reich, by Albert Speer, in Nation 211 September 14, 1970, p. 216.

Speer's story, noting that he omitted statistics and documentation. While some pointed to the humanitarian acts Speer performed, Hallgarten viewed them as being opportunistic. Even so, the most he could accuse Speer of was playing "ostrich" in ignoring what was happening around him.⁷⁵

Victor Bernstein, a member of the press at Nuremberg, believed Speer never really admitted his guilt since he entered a plea of not guilty at Nuremberg.

By insisting on his guilt for everything in general, he manages to absolve himself of guilt for anything in particular.... What an elegantly contrived expression of remorse. The guilt almost disappears in the confessor's humility and ignorance of wrongdoing.⁷⁶

Bernstein noted that the American edition of Inside the Third Reich contained a passage concerning the Jews which extricated Speer from his guilt. The original German version did not contain this passage. It was inserted at the request of Speer's American publisher who wanted a clearer confrontation of the moral issues to please American readers.⁷⁷

The National Review found Inside the Third Reich to be a valuable study of abnormal psychology and also noted the *apologia* concerning the Jews in the American edition. The Review felt it was added because Americans would be expecting such a statement of explanation.⁷⁸

⁷⁵George Hallgarten, "Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer: An Appraisal of Speer's Memoirs," Maryland Historian 2 (1) (1971): 58, 62-63.

⁷⁶Victor Heine Bernstein, "How to Succeed Though Innocent," Nation 212 (March 22, 1971): 376-378.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Marcia L. Kahn, "Teufeldämmerung," National Review 22 (September 8, 1970): 958-959.

Macmillan's editor-in-chief, Peter Ritner, was quoted as saying the decision to publish Speer's memoirs was not easy, but that the publisher was convinced by their client, Eugene Davidson, author of The Trial of the Germans, that Speer offered new material.⁷⁹ It was Ritner who convinced Speer that American response to the book would depend on his confrontation with his own responsibility.⁸⁰ The fact that this passage was inserted at the urging of a publisher and not a calculated move on Speer's part perhaps lightens the charges of using it as part of his plan for self-rehabilitation. If it was true that his memoirs were the key to this attempt, then they served the purpose by guaranteeing Speer's reknown as a repentant Nazi.

In general Inside the Third Reich was reviewed favorably. It was praised for its style, content and accuracy. Controversy came into play over moral issues. The most distinct split among the reviewers dealt with Speer's reasons for writing. Many reviewers felt Speer's contrition was genuine while an equal number believed it to be a self-serving front.

Albert Speer also aroused American interests in another forum-- architecture. In 1970, concurrent with the publication of Speer's memoirs in the United States, there was an exhibition at the New York Cultural Center of sketches by Hitler and photographs of Speer's architectural plans, models and buildings. Much of the material was taken from Speer's personal archive. The showing received a torrent of

⁷⁹Henry Raymond, "Ex-Nazi Writes of Hitler's Grandiose Berlin Plan," New York Times, 7 April 1969, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁰Roger Jellinek, "Talk with Albert Speer," New York Times Book Review, 23 August 1970, p. 2.

criticism. The display was called both "horrifying and instructive," "...like sweets mixed with poison." The designs for Berlin ignored all human considerations by minimizing the importance of the individual by dwarfing him with his surroundings.⁸¹ Speer's architectural vision was condemned as impoverished and his talents mediocre. His memoirs were found to be a "classic tale of corruption both of man and the art of architecture,"⁸² quite a contrast to the praise heaped on Speer's designs thirty years earlier.

There was no Nazi style as such, it was eclectic. Speer favored neo-classicism which stressed "Prussian" qualities such as order, permanency and distinct lines.⁸³ Because it was like government architecture that could be found almost anywhere in the world some believed the use of the neo-classical style in conjunction with the Nazi ideal would ruin the style for any future government use.⁸⁴ This fear seems to be unfounded since the style still seems to be popular in political architecture.

In his early training Speer had learned simplicity, but his later designs tended towards the Baroque that Hitler favored when he was younger. This may have been due to the "bleak professional outlook"

⁸¹Douglas Davis, "Design for Evil," Newsweek, 28 September 1970, p. 82.

⁸²Ada Louise Huxtable, "Passport to Power," New York Times, 1 November 1970, sec. II, p. 25.

⁸³Robert R. Taylor, The Word in Stone: The Role of Architect in the National Socialist Ideology. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁴"Hitler as Architect," Time, 5 October 1970, p. 76.

of the Depression years or a "professional hazard" to which many architects succumb.⁸⁵

If Speer's architectural plans had been fulfilled they would have been the most fantastic government structures since ancient Egypt. In a way, architecture of this type was stretched as far as possible by Speer and defeated by its vastness. Not only did the individual in the audience lose his identity, but the center of attention, the Führer, would be lost in the immensity. Speer attempted to solve this problem, but was never able to do so. If it had been corrected, the unity of mind that Nazi absolute authority was seeking would have been lost.⁸⁶

The controversy surrounding the showing of Speer's work only spurred sales of his already best-selling memoirs. It also made Speer extremely popular with interviewers. Speer had learned to speak English after his imprisonment and was therefore especially receptive to British and American interviewers, and they were equally eager to talk to him. Journal articles about Speer by those who had had personal contact with him were much more positive than those by authors who used other materials. Speer's charm and ability to communicate his personal tragedy to these people made him an appealing subject. This personal touch often caused the interviewer to wonder what he might have done in Speer's position.

⁸⁵Willow von Moltke, review of Inside the Third Reich, by Albert Speer, in Architectural Forum 136 (May 1972): 8.

⁸⁶Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), pp. 99, 102.

One such interview was conducted by Eric Norden for Playboy, an interview Speer criticized as too Americanized and sympathetic.⁸⁷ This interview was quite extensive, but broke no new ground as it was primarily a discussion of the persons and events covered in Inside the Third Reich.⁸⁸ The fact that Speer would grant an interview with such an unconventional publication showed his desire to put his story before as many people as possible. Since his memoirs were already selling quite well it is doubtful that money was a consideration.

Some interviewers found that when faced with a difficult question, Speer would refer them to his books for the answer rather than discuss it. Whether he simply did not want to re-explore the issue or he was afraid he might stray from his established answers is debatable. Most interviewers were taken in by his friendliness and charm. Janet Barkas, interviewing Speer for the Contemporary Review, intrepidly visited Speer in his home even though she had visions of being gassed in his bathroom. Ultimately, she got him to divulge that large sums of money he had made from his book went to a nursing home for German Jews who had immigrated to the United States. Although Barkas found Speer to be quite genteel and likable, she, like most other interviewers, remained largely ambivalent, afraid to commit herself to a belief in Speer's sincerity for fear that what she perceived as truth and remorse was all an elaborate façade.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Janet Barkas, "Face to Face with the Planner of the Third Reich," Contemporary Review 222 (February 1973): 72.

⁸⁸ Eric Norden, "Playboy Interview: Albert Speer," Playboy, July 1971, pp. 69-96, 190-203.

⁸⁹ Barkas, pp. 73, 76-77.

Marcus Billson conducted an interview that was slanted against Speer. He briefly discussed Speer's statements and then went on to expound his own views. To him, Speer's memoirs bring out all the best instincts in his readers, because human nature being what it is, most want to believe him, and believing, forgive him. He believed Speer's conscious mind suppressed the unpleasant memories with which he found difficulty dealing. He called Speer a "bureaucratic criminal" and compared him to the Watergate participants. "His honesty was intended to mask rather than disclose." He did not feel that Speer's relationship to the Jewish question had ever been fully explained. He questioned Speer's ignorance about the diversion of vital war material to the concentration camps. He stated, "This fabricated innocence of the Final Solution has been a prudent fiction."⁹⁰ Billson did not feel Speer was lying--rather, that as an intellectual, Speer had a greater capacity for rationalizing away what he did not wish to see.

Billson's theory may have some merit. Speer may have been part of a recently identified sociological phenomenon uniquely associated with Germany. According to this theory the German elite, because of their ethical diversity, never developed common values. Because of this, and their unique political circumstances, morality was considered to be a personal matter which seemed "hopelessly romantic" and futile in the public realm.⁹¹ Speer would be a prime example of this sort of thinking.

⁹⁰Marcus K. Billson, III, "Inside Albert Speer: Secrets of Moral Evasion," Antioch Review 36 (1979): 464-465, 468.

⁹¹Steven E. Ascheim, review of The Holocaust and the German Elite: Genocide and National Suicide in Germany, 1871-1945, by Rainer C. Baum in The American Historical Review 87 (October 1981): 1124.

Speer enlarged and confirmed the views he had expressed in his memoirs in his second book, Spandau: The Secret Diaries, which was published in the United States in 1976. This was the prison diary that he had secretly composed and smuggled out of prison. It contained details of his daily life in prison and reflections on his past, but no new revelations of any significance. The public was still interested in Speer and made Spandau a best seller, but it was not quite as successful as Inside the Third Reich. Nor did it attract as much attention from reviewers, probably because it seemed to be a follow up to his first work. It continued to shape Speer's image, intentionally or not of a repentant sinner.

Shortly before his death in 1981 Speer published Infiltration: How Heinrich Himmler Schemed to Build an SS Industrial Empire. This work was not the popular success the earlier works were, nor was it meant to be since it dealt largely with the statistical and factual machinations of the SS under Himmler. It involved a considerable amount of research in government documents on Speer's part. It did not tell the human story that made the earlier works so popular, but it did contain the facts and figures some reviewers felt his earlier works lacked. It was considered to be an important work in explaining the internal conflicts of the Nazi bureaucracy.

During his later years Speer was often sought as a consultant by film makers eager to use his knowledge to authenticate their films.⁹³

⁹²Walter Lacquer, "Inside Himmler," New York Times Book Review, 4 October 1981, pp. 14-15.

⁹³Mel London, "Of Speer and Hess and Trotsky and Stalin," New York Times, 13 September 1981, sec. IV, p. 20.

One example was "The Bunker," a made for television movie about Hitler's final days. It appeared on American television in early 1981. In order to make it as realistic as possible Speer supplied a great deal of information and numerous photos so that the film reflects many of his views and experiences, including his final confrontation with Hitler.⁹⁴

Speer died in September 1981. In May 1982 Inside the Third Reich was dramatized on network television in the United States. Although many important aspects of Speer's career were made light of and his life somewhat romanticized, it did have the effect of reaching many more people than the book. Because the movie was presented in a popularized form many of the moral questions the book raised were brushed aside or glossed over. Perhaps if Speer had lived to supervise the filming as he had planned, the messages that he wanted to emphasize might not have been lost.

Producing Inside the Third Reich for viewing in the United States was a very tricky business. It had been slated for production three times and then shelved because of its controversial nature. It was finally aired on ABC, even though NBC had originally planned to produce it. The top executives at NBC were afraid of lawsuits from Holocaust victims and other special interest groups because of the possibility that a Nazi might look like a hero. Actors and technicians actually turned down jobs in the movie because they did not want to do, or were afraid of doing, anything that might glorify the Nazis for fear of risking future job security.⁹⁵

⁹⁴"The Bunker Speer Helpful," New York Times, 25 January 1981, sec. IIA, p. 5.

⁹⁵John Vinocur, "The Third Reich According to Albert Speer," New York Times, 9 May 1982, sec. II, p. 25.

The director was Marvin Chomsky who had previously directed another controversial, but successful film, Holocaust. Dutch actor Rutger Hauer starred as Speer. There were a number of philosophical differences between the director and Hauer, who wanted to portray Speer as being blinded by his ambition to the conditions around him. Chomsky wished to show Speer's conscience coming into conflict with his ambition. As a result the film did not clearly state where Speer really stood, which is perhaps true to form since only Speer knew the truth about his position.⁹⁶

A television drama has to have a hero no matter what may be wrong with him. The film succeeded in this by depicting Speer as Faust selling his soul to the devil [Hitler]. By doing this Chomsky used the "standard line on Speer (essentially Speer's line on himself)."⁹⁷ There are definite problems with the television version of the book. As counterweights to the evil in the story the film uses Speer's wife, father and teacher. The wife's character is the least plausible. Speer's memoirs mentioned her very little out of his desire to protect his family, but she is a major character in the television drama. Although there is no evidence to show that she was anti-Nazi she was portrayed as being extremely so. Nevertheless, she stuck faithfully by her husband and produced numerous offspring like a good Nazi mother. Other key elements of the story were left out or unexplained, such as Speer's serious illness at the end of the war. Speer suffered a pulmonary embolism and was cared for by a doctor under Himmler's control. Although the illness

⁹⁶M. A. Lipton, "How Guilty was Speer?," TV Guide, May 8-14, 1982, p. 28.

⁹⁷John J. O'Connor, "Albert Speer's View of the Third Reich," New York Times, 7 May 1982, sec. II, p. 25.

is included, no mention is made of the fact that Speer believed Himmler was trying to kill him during this time.⁹⁸ The way in which Speer detailed his involvement in the Nazi regime is reflected in the film. Because of this his version of what it was like "inside" the Third Reich has received a "sheen of special authenticity," it gave audiences an "element of identifiability."⁹⁹ This is a prime example of how popularization by the media can sometimes distort historical reality.

Albert Speer was preparing for a television interview in London when he died in September 1981 of an apparent aneurism. Speer's obituaries were surprisingly generous. Many omitted mention of the more controversial aspects of Speer's life, such as slave labor, noting only that he had been Hitler's architect, had served his time for his Nazi involvement and had spent his later years in writing his memoirs.¹⁰⁰ A few went further, but covered both sides of the controversies in Speer's life. One noted that in his later years Speer's writings and appearances were considered by some to be self-serving while others believed he was sincerely making an attempt to expiate the horrors of the war.¹⁰¹ The New York Times ran an editorial which described Speer as being ahead of his time rather than as a penitent since it seemed that in recent years accepting generalized guilt for crimes had become quite fashionable--a veiled reference to the Watergate scandal.

⁹⁸Speer, Inside, p. 426.

⁹⁹Vinocur, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰"Albert Speer: 1905-1981," Progressive Architecture, October 1981, p. 56.

¹⁰¹Paul Montgomery, "Albert Speer dies at 76; Close Associate of Hitler," New York Times, 2 September 1981, p. 18.

His active opposition to Hitler's scorched earth plans for Germany was described as a Pavlovian response, since architects are builders, not destroyers. He was found to be an invaluable witness to history since unlike Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, Speer's sanity was never in doubt.¹⁰²

In the multitude of World War and German histories written since the end of the war, Speer has fared rather well. In the popular work, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich journalist William Shirer saw Speer as honest, but faced with a dilemma between "personal loyalty and public duty." He noted Speer's disobedience at the close of the war and commented that Speer, "had, like some other Germans, a late--too late--awakening."¹⁰³

The moral issues which plague many segments of American society where Speer is concerned have had little effect on the business world. The American business community has always been somewhat awed by Speer's industrial accomplishments. In general he is considered to be the first technocrat of the modern age. He has been called a genius of business administration who abolished old rules, instituted industrial self-responsibility and applied methods considered to be American. He has also been compared to the colonel in "The Bridge on the River Kwai," because he was so involved in his feats of industrial production that he saw little else.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²"Speer, Hess and Punishment," New York Times, 3 September 1981, p. 18.

¹⁰³William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Pub., Inc., 1960), p. 1450.

¹⁰⁴Otto Friedrich, "Nazi Who Looked Away," Business Week, 19 August 1970, p. 6.

In 1970, S. K. Oberbeck's Newsweek review of Speer's memoirs shared the belief of much of the business world by stating that Speer "presaged the corporate Germany of today" in his highly systemitized means of industrial production. Oberbeck went on to make the rather bizarre and highly questionable statement that France and Germany owed their immediate post-war economic success to Speer.¹⁰⁵ One year earlier another Newsweek reviewer had condemned Speer as the "ultimate criminal."¹⁰⁶ This divergence of opinion from the same source emphasizes the split in American opinion about Speer.

Nowhere is Speer more controversial than in the religious community. There has been a dearth of comment from Christians, who perhaps because of their philosophy of forgiveness have been noticeably reticent in assigning guilt. The Christian Century saw Speer's acceptance of his guilt and remorse for his actions, or lack of action, as evidence that even the most intransigent sinner can be forgiven.¹⁰⁷

The most distressed Christian group were the American Lutherans who were appalled at what many of their German brethren had come to, including Albert Speer. At the end of the war they began a program to re-Christianize Germany led by many German churchmen just released from concentration camps.¹⁰⁸ A leader in this effort was Pastor Martin

¹⁰⁵S. K. Oberbeck, "Architect of Nazism," review of Inside the Third Reich by Albert Speer in Newsweek 31 August 1970, pp. 74-76.

¹⁰⁶Bruce Van Voorst, "Memories of Crimes Past," Newsweek, 8 September 1969, p. 41.

¹⁰⁷Markus Barth, "Albert Speer and the Miracle of Forgiveness," Christian Century 87 (December 23, 1970): 1537-1538.

¹⁰⁸S. C. Michelfelder, "Situation in Germany," The Lutheran 28 (8) (November 21, 1945): 12-15.

Niemoeller who was particularly distressed by the Nuremberg Trials, especially since defendants Doenitz and Raeder had been his comrades in arms during World War I. He did not blame the men who were being tried for what became of Germany, but stated, "it is an open question as to whether the SS hangmen are more guilty before God than we who were silent and should have spoken."¹⁰⁹ He may have included Speer in this silent majority.

The Christians can better afford such a gracious attitude since the most atrocious Nazi crimes were not committed against them, but against the Jews. Therefore, the majority of Jewish opinion in this country is hostile to Speer. There are some who felt that since Speer actually tried to insure humane treatment and stalled Jewish deportation for no better reason than that they made better and more efficient workers than Poles did, that he is worthy of some forgiveness. The most extreme Jewish view is that no amount of remorse on Speer's part will ever make up for the past. This group believes that he consciously knew about and aided the Final Solution. This belief in Speer's complicity causes many American Jews to support the view that he should have been hanged at Nuremberg.

In the Jewish publication, Midstream, reviewer Erich Goldhagen dismissed Speer's claims of ignorance, and was baffled as to why so many people readily accept Speer's explanations. Cited as evidence against him was a speech given by Himmler on October 6, 1943 at which Speer was present. One sentence in particular condemns Speer in Goldhagen's eyes,

¹⁰⁹Martin Niemoeller, "Niemoeller Speaks to Germany," The Lutheran 28 (34) (May 22, 1946): 15-19.

"It is these alleged defense enterprises that Comrade Speer and I [Himmler] jointly will cleanse during the coming weeks and months."¹¹⁰ In his memoirs Speer mentioned that he was present at the speech, but omits any mention of its content. Robert Conot, author of Justice at Nuremberg, commented that "Himmler's speech sent the *Gauleiter* and *Reichsleiter* out reeling, and there was no one attending the Posen meeting who could be left with any illusions." He went on to say that Speer later claimed he had left before Himmler's speech, but gave his presence away by complaining the next day to Hitler about the drunken orgy that took place after the speech.¹¹¹

Speer claimed that he was not anti-Semitic, that he believed that the Nazi's belligerent anti-Jewish stance was party rhetoric. There is no record of Speer making any sort of Jewish denunciation as many of his associates were known for doing, possibly because Speer was not fond of public speaking and avoided it.

The September 26, 1981 issue of Nation carried an article that claimed Speer had confessed knowledge of the Jewish Genocide to Gitta Sereny, a writer who interviewed him in 1978. The reasons for this alleged confession had to do with Speer helping South African Jewish leaders suppress a neo-Nazi pamphlet titled "Did 6 Million Really Die?"¹¹² It is quite curious that the original interviewer did not write this article and that the interview took place in 1978--yet no mention seems

¹¹⁰Erich Goldhagen, "Albert Speer, Himmler and the Secrecy of the Final Solution," Midstream 16 (8) (1971): 47.

¹¹¹Conot, p. 256.

¹¹²Christopher Hitchens, "Speer's Guilt," Nation 233 (September 26, 1981): 260-262.

to have been made of it in this country until after Speer's death three years later. At any rate, this highly questionable accusation seems to have had no effect on the general American view of Speer. No other claims of confessions on Speer's part have been forthcoming.

Of all the American special interest groups the Jewish community has been the most consistent in its view of Speer. All other groups vacillate in their opinions. They are receptive to Speer's version of his role, but reserve their judgment because much of Speer's stand is questionable and can be verified only by himself. The answer to whether Speer knew the truth about the Final Solution and if his remorse was sincere has in all probability died with him.

CONCLUSION

Through the varying perceptions of interested segments of the American population a certain generally accepted view of Albert Speer has developed. With the popularity of his books and in recent years the appearance of several biographical films, people with the vaguest knowledge will sometimes reply when questioned about him--"Oh yes, he wasn't like those other Nazis was he?"

The seeds which were to develop this image were planted at Nuremberg. The interaction there between Justice Robert Jackson and Speer over the issue of the Jews created a strong impression on the judges and press which probably influenced Speer's verdict.¹¹³ The fact that Speer had disobeyed Hitler near the end by trying to block the scorched earth plans, told him that the war was lost and his alleged assassination attempt on Hitler, were precedent setting enough, but Speer went on to decry his former associates and accept a form of generalized responsibility for the horrors of the war. This was in sharp contrast to the belligerent stance of his fellow defendants.

When the unity of the countries that made up the International Military Tribunal fell apart during the Cold War the legitimacy of the trials and verdicts came under close scrutiny because of their nontraditional nature. During the 1950s many western diplomats

¹¹³Conot, p. 444.

were in favor of commuting the sentences of some of the "less guilty" prisoners like Speer. Public sentiment and lack of cooperation among the former Allies prevented his release until his time was served. When he was released from prison in 1966, part of the reason for his favorable impact on American opinion makers resulted from the unique political conditions of the 1960s. The United States had become increasingly involved in Vietnam and serious opposition to the war was beginning to coalesce at home, raising the question of individual responsibility in an entirely new context.

At Nuremberg the United States and the Allies had tried to set precedents that would deter future war crimes. Many had hoped those decisions would be adopted as international law by the United Nations, but such was not to be. Nuremberg unfortunately became an abstract idea with little influence on actual practice. Without worldwide support there was little means to enforce those decisions unilaterally. Even so, many Americans felt that this country was breaking rules of behavior in Vietnam that it had helped to set up. Historian Barbara Tuchman wrote:

The simple West Point answer is that Duty and Honor consist in carrying out the orders of the government. That is what the Nazis said in their defense, and we tried them for war crimes nevertheless. We undercut our own claim at Nuremberg and Tokyo.¹¹⁴

At one point, Speer was invited to this country to participate in a mock trial of the United States for war crimes in Vietnam, but politely refused.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Barbara Tuchman, Practicing History: Selected Essays (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p. 285.

¹¹⁵ Eugene K. Bird, Prisoner #7: The Thirty Years In Jail of Hitler's Deputy Führer (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 221.

Americans are fascinated by the Nazi era because it was a descent into barbarism in a supposedly civilized age. Speer managed to make himself an exception to the era. Most special interest groups in the United States are ambivalent about Speer. With the exception of the Jewish community almost every segment of the population views him in two ways. He is either seen as a man who allowed nothing to stand in the way of his ambition or as a basically civilized man caught up in an uncivilized time. He is seen as a brilliant organizer, a self-serving politician and as a penitent sinner. Thus Americans are fascinated by Albert Speer because he symbolized both virtues admired by American society and moral weakness feared by almost every American.

The question of whether or not Speer knew about the Final Solution will probably never be satisfactorily answered. If he did know it would probably not have been within his power to stop it and if he had tried he would probably have only accomplished his own downfall. Being an extremely pragmatic individual Speer could not have understood the rationale behind such waste; if he could have stopped it he probably would have done so.

At the close of the war his actions were dictated by logic. Speer realized the futility of a rebellious stance against the Allies and also realized that his cooperation could be beneficial to his and his family's future. The fact that his attitude in this respect was in such marked contrast to the obstinate intractability of most of his fellow defendants at Nuremberg called attention to him.

With his release from prison and the publication of his books he regained a margin of the respectability that he has often been accused

of working so diligently toward. Although he never overtly sought publicity, his availability to the curious and the press prevented him from sinking into the obscurity that some of his wartime associates preferred.

Speer saw himself as Faust and Hitler as Mephistopheles. This theme of Speer selling his soul to the devil for an architectural commission is echoed throughout many of the writings and commentary about Speer. Although this image was largely generated by Speer Americans have found it extremely appealing. This reflects the general notion that he was basically a good man who fell into corruption. Speer not only survived Spandau and the ignominy of his former associates, but prospered and regained respectability in the eyes of many. Although Speer's claims of *mea culpa* at Nuremberg and the course he followed could be construed as an effort to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the public, most likely it was a path he fell into because it was the most rational course to take. In truth his memoirs were probably not just an effort to explain his life to the world, but to himself as well.

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