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The Hitler Diaries: Fakes that Fooled the World

Charles Hamilton

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THE HITLER DIARIES
Fakes that Fooled the World

CHARLES HAMILTON
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Gitta Sereny, investigative reporter for the London Sunday Times, briefed me on the background of the Hitler diaries as they were viewed by the English.

Kurt Groenewold, attorney for the forger Konrad Kujau, furnished me with inside information on the forger and his trial.

Above all, my wife, Diane, and my daughter Carolyn both kept a falcon eye on my work and whenever possible prevented me from making literary lapses or irresponsible assertions.
Characters in the Cast

Baur, Hans. Nazi air force general; Hitler’s personal pilot
Below, Nicolaus von. Hitler’s air force adjutant
Bernard, Marie. New York graphologist and handwriting expert
Bormann, Martin. Hitler’s private secretary; successor to Rudolf Hess
Braun, Eva. Hitler’s mistress
Broyles, William. Editor-in-chief of Newsweek
Chasles, Michel. Nineteenth-century French savant and professor; gullied by forger Vrain Lucas
Cosey, Joseph. American forger
Dacre, Lord. Title of Hugh Trevor-Roper
Daum, Reinhard. Heidemann’s defense attorney
Fischer, “Major General.” Kujau’s brother; actually a railroad porter in East Germany
Fischer, Konrad. Alias of Konrad Kujau
Fischer, Manfred. Managing director of Gruner & Jahr
Frei-Sulzer, Max. Swiss handwriting expert
Giles, Frank. Editor of the London Sunday Times
Gish, Frank. American expert on Hitler’s paintings
Goebbels, Joseph. Nazi minister of propaganda
Goering, Hermann. Nazi air marshal
Groenewold, Kurt. Kujau’s defense attorney
Gruner & Jahr. Parent company and owner of Stern magazine
Gundlfinger, Friedrich. Nazi air force pilot; killed in crash of plane that allegedly carried Hitler’s diaries
Harris, Robert. BBC reporter; author of Selling Hitler
Heidemann, Gerd. Investigative reporter and agent for Stern; handled purchase of Hitler diaries
x Characters in the Cast

Heidemann, Gina. Wife of Gerd Heidemann
Hensmann, Jan. Deputy managing director of Gruner & Jahr
Herr Ohne Namen. Mr. Anonymous
"Herr Ten Percent." Kujau’s nickname for Jakob Tiefenthaler
Hess, Rudolf. Secretary to Hitler; flew controversial mission to England
Hess, Wolf. Son of Rudolf Hess
HIAG. Mutual aid society for Nazi party survivors, principally SS men
Hilton, Ordway. American handwriting expert
Himmler, Heinrich. Nazi chief of SS and Gestapo
Hitler, Adolf. Nazi Fuehrer and dictator
Irving, Clifford. American forger; fabricated Howard Hughes’ “autobiography”
Irving, David. British historian; expert on Nazi era
Ireland, William Henry. Eighteenth-century English forger of Shakespeare
Jaeckel, Eberhard. Professor at Stuttgart University; expert on Hitler and his era
Klapper, Medard (or Medardus). Weapons dealer and confidence man; trained in SS; pretended to know Martin Bormann
Klein, Dietrich. Hamburg district attorney; prosecuted case against Kujau and Heidemann
Knightley, Philip. London Sunday Times reporter
Koch, Peter. Editor of Stern
Kujau, Konrad. Dealer in Nazi relics; forger of Hitler diaries, letters, speeches, sketches, and paintings
Lieblang, Edith. Kujau’s common-law wife
Lucas, Vrain. Nineteenth-century French forger
Maser, Werner. German historian; expert on Hitler and his era
Mertschinsky, Wolfgang von. German-American collector and dealer in Nazi relics; agent for Kujau
Modritsch, Maria. Kujau’s mistress
Mohnke, Wilhelm. Nazi general; intimate friend of Gerd Heidemann
Murdoch, Rupert. Australian newspaper tycoon; owner of London Sunday Times, the New York Post and the tabloid Star
Nannen, Henri. Founder and publisher of Stern
Panvini, Rosa and Amalia. Purveyors of forged Mussolini diaries
Parker, Maynard. Editor of Newsweek
Priesack, August. West German history professor; specialist in Hitler and his era
Rendell, Kenneth W. American handwriting expert
“Rock of Apes.” Humorous designation for Stern magazine
Rosenbach, A.S.W. American bibliophile and manuscript dealer
Schmidt, Felix. Stern editor
Schroeder, Hans-Ulrich. Chief judge at trial of Kujau and Heidemann
Schroeder, Holger K. Assistant defense attorney for Heidemann
Schulte-Hillen, Gerd. Successor to Manfred Fischer as chairman and managing director of Gruner & Jahr
Sereny, Gitta. German-speaking investigative reporter for London Sunday Times
Sorge, Wilfried. Member of sales staff of Stern
Steinhoff, Juergen. Reporter for Stern
Stern. West German weekly photo-news magazine; purchased Hitler diaries
Stiefel, Fritz. Wealthy Stuttgart collector of Nazi memorabilia; bought Kujau's forgeries
Tiefenthaler, Jakob ("Herr Ten Percent"). Nazi-item collector and entrepreneur
Toland, John. American historian; expert on Hitler and Nazi era
Trevor-Roper, Sir Hugh, Lord Dacre. British historian; expert on Nazi era
Walde, Thomas. Modern history and research expert at Stern
Weinberg, Gerhard. American professor of history; expert on Nazi era
Wolff, Karl. Nazi general and aide to Himmler; served time for war crimes
To my son
Brooks Lyman Hamilton
On Friday, April 22, 1983, newspapers in Europe and America headlined the sensational discovery by *Stern* (Star), a West German photo-news weekly, of sixty-two volumes of secret diaries written by Adolf Hitler. With the diaries, some said to be annotated by Martin Bormann and Rudolf Hess, was a massive archive of material by and about the Fuehrer: 300 watercolor paintings by him (including some of his paramour Eva Braun), drafts of speeches, minutes of meetings, important letters to his henchmen, his Nazi party card, and his World War I uniform and helmet.

The collection, *Stern* explained, had been rescued from a burning Nazi aircraft that had crashed while escaping from besieged Berlin on April 21, 1945, nine days before Hitler's suicide. The precious cargo had lain undiscovered for more than thirty years in the tiny village of Boernersdorf, near Dresden, in East Germany.

Stored safely in a bank vault in Zurich, the priceless diaries, alleged by *Stern* to be the greatest historic find of the century, had been authenticated by a battery of handwriting experts and forensic chemists. Chroniclers of the Third Reich, including the noted British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, Lord Dacre, had proclaimed the authenticity and significance of the diaries. They would, said Lord Dacre, drastically alter our views of Hitler and the Third Reich.

The whole world eagerly awaited their publication.
From a distance the ancient toymaking town of Berchtesgaden on the Untersberg in the Bavarian Alps gave the impression of a pleasant medieval village basking in the July sun. To a young American naval officer, only recently discharged from the hospital, it seemed like an idyllic painting of a town; but as his jeep drew nearer, he saw what he had observed in other German cities. The old village was pockmarked and cratered like the moon’s surface. The houses were burnt and topless. There was scarcely a building into which light did not flow through innumerable bomb holes.

The twenty-seven-year-old American drove out of the town and up the winding road that led to Hitler’s villa at Berghof, the famed Eagle’s Nest. His jeep snaked through ten miles of tortuous, narrow road cut into the mountainside. He reached at last a long tunnel drilled through the rock, at the end of which an elevator lifted him to the Eagle’s Nest on the very pinnacle of a lofty mountain.

To the young officer the battered Eagle’s Nest, its splendor sprawled in ruin, was a symbol of the destruction that had engulfed the Germans. Their Teutonic warriors, led by a fiery-eyed god, a new Siegfried, had sought and almost achieved the conquest of Europe. Their steel-helmeted cohorts had proved nearly invincible. When they finally suffered total defeat, in a flaming Göttterdammerung, it seemed like the fall of some fabled Nordic realm. And, as the flames they had lit roared back upon the Germans, their Siegfried, Adolf Hitler, slew himself in a deep-delved cavern in the earth. His last order was that his body be burned on a funeral pyre in the old Viking manner.

The young American climbed the battered steps to Hitler’s summer home and contemplated the majesty of the ruins and the mountains. He stood in thought amidst the toppled eagles. He reflected upon the
great nation that through its own madness and folly had followed its Fuehrer into a maelstrom of destruction. And he thought about the wild demagogue who had caused it all. Hitler was now the most hated tyrant in history, yet there was a frightening, mysterious quality to his lunacy.

What would be Hitler's reputation when all those who knew him, those who loved him, those who hated and feared him, were dead? What would future generations think of this impassioned pagan who had come so close to destroying the world? Would historians be fascinated by him and seek to know what manner of man he was?

That night the American scrawled in his journal that he foresaw the day, not many years distant, when Hitler would cast off the aura of hatred around him and emerge as one of the most important men in world history. Although Hitler had been a menace to world peace, there was a mystery in his life and death that would survive him and continue to grow. The American wrote: "Hitler had in him the stuff from which legends are created." 1 The American’s name was John F. Kennedy and his prophecy about Hitler is coming true.

In the beginning there was a Teutonic overlord with a comic mustache. His lieutenants included Hermann Goering, a World War I ace who designed his own uniforms and sported a chestful of medals; Heinrich Himmler, a former chicken farmer, eyes gleaming behind pince-nez, who was to become history’s greatest mass murderer; and Joseph Goebbels, creator of myths, who could turn an outrageous lie into a fact as certain as a Euclidean axiom. Other strange personalities in this Nordic court ranged from hoodlums and ex-criminals to college professors and brilliant soldiers.

Each of these unusual men was, in his way, a genius. They blended their perversions and skills to build a state based upon hatred and revenge. They implemented their dream of a German superman with Stukas and Panzers and overran most of Europe.

Forty-five years ago their goose-stepping legions were cut to pieces by the Allied and Russian armies, but in the history books they continue to march. They fascinate each new generation. They represent an army of conquering evil, of brute force, and as such they spellbind us. Their banner, a black swastika upon a circle of white against a red field, remains a symbol of terror. And their leader, the pale, frail Siegfried with a ringing voice and a will of Krupp steel, still grips us with his hypnotic eye.

Long before Hitler’s death, people were seeking for fresh tales about his life, mementos of him, any sort of object he might have seen or
touched. Somewhere, I recall, there was a writer who alluded to “the banality of evil.” But there is no banality in the excitement and terror of evil. The savagery of man against man and the underlying cruelty of life forms the subject of much of literature and music and art.

The metamorphosis of Hitler into a legend got off to a good start. His friends and followers laid upon him the mantle of a god. For them he was Siegfried, a flesh-and-blood incarnation of the quintessential Teutonic hero. Biographers invented flattering tales of his intellectual and physical prowess. So idolized was the Fuehrer that in 1937 he very nearly carried off the Nobel Peace Prize.

Most Germans looked upon their leader as a superman. He never drank (or almost never), never smoked, spurned the flesh of animals, and, apparently, looked with Olympian indifference upon sexual joys. He was a fusion of the national idols envisioned by Nietzsche and Wagner. His publicist, the lame sycophant Joseph Goebbels, puffed Hitler’s greatness. From the podium he shouted with raised fist that the Fuehrer was always right and never made a mistake. He was a great star above everyone. Goebbels was mesmerized by Hitler. In his private diary he wrote that the Nazi leader was sly, clever and shrewd and averred that he was Christ.

Hitler was showered with doggerel extolling his greatness. Not a village poetaster but hallelujahed him with fulsome jingles. The Fuehrer’s mail was plumped out with scrolls engrossed in gold, conferring honorary citizenship upon him. They poured in from every burg and hamlet in Germany and Austria. Photographs portrayed Hitler as a deity. The most popular of postcards depicted him as a huge Siegfried, a Nordic superman soaring through space on his way to slay the dragon enemies of the Reich. One German writer proclaimed that Jesus was an impostor and that Hitler was the true manifestation of God. Women strewed his path with flowers and worshiped him as an Adonis. He was known as der shoene Adolf (handsome Adolf). Young girls panted with ecstasy at his mere picture and yearned to embrace him. Whenever the sun burst through the clouds it was hailed as “Fuehrer weather.”

Even after the horrors of war descended upon them, the Germans still believed in the divinity of Hitler. Goebbels continued to describe him as the symbol of victory. With their nation a mass of rubble and Berlin in flames, many Germans preserved their ardent admiration. The news of the Fuehrer’s suicide in the bunker caused a national wave of grief. His followers wept hysterically in the privacy of their bomb-blasted homes. There was a wave of empathetic suicides.

Most Germans were aware that Hitler had been a dangerous demi-
god, a menace to civilization and an implacable enemy of culture, but some thought otherwise. Many of those who had been transfixed by Hitler’s hypnotic eye believed that somehow, in some phoenix-like way, he would rise from his ashes to lead Germany again. They toasted the memory of their departed Fuehrer in secret, sure that he would someday return. And finally, in a manner of speaking, he did.

For a brief period in 1983, a ten-day sojourn in the news headlines of the world, the dictator lived again. He was reborn through the efforts of a petty thief, adroit at imitating handwriting, who forged a whole series of diaries “written by Hitler” in which the Fuehrer presented himself as an amiable, peace-loving leader, misled and tricked by the associates he trusted. For those few days, millions of people, including scholars and historians, accepted as bonafide this “new Fuehrer.”
"What is history but a fiction agreed upon?" said jesting Napoleon, and need not have stayed for an answer. Many historians would concur. Certainly, no one can overestimate the effect that exaggerations and outright lies have upon history. They affect events that have happened, that are happening, and that will happen. A well-told lie, as I am sure Dr. Joseph Goebbels would have attested, is worth a thousand truths.

The entire Nazi regime was built upon a foundation of lies. It hardly mattered that many of those who told the lies believed them to be truths. Lies they were, and when the Third Reich fell apart in flames, their falsity became obvious to all but the most obtuse Hitlerites. What could be more natural than that Konrad Kujau, a dealer in Third Reich relics and a professional forger, should, in the tradition of Goebbels, fabricate a series of "Hitler diaries" based upon the recipe used by all liars, the skillful blending of fact and fiction?

Until Kujau hit upon, or rather stumbled into, the scheme of forging the diaries, his life in Stuttgart was not very exciting. He added to its piquancy, however, by several rackets—smuggling and forging—hazardous occupations that could put an unwary crook behind bars. Still, who would suspect this slightly seedy, balding little man with a whimsical wit of being anything other than an honest ferret after war souvenirs?

Konrad [Paul] Kujau—who operated also under the aliases Konrad Fischer, Peter Fischer, Doctor Fischer, "The Professor," and "The General"—was born in 1938 in Loebau, about forty miles from Dresden, the third of five children. His father, like the begetters of those other imaginative creators Christopher Marlowe and Hans Christian Andersen, was a shoemaker. Konrad (nicknamed "Conny") may have
inherited from his progenitor a knack for telling tall tales and pulling off grandiose schemes.

In 1933 the elder Kujau had succumbed to Hitler’s harangues and become a Nazi, committed body and soul to the party. His son, born five years later, mimicked his father. Conny was infatuated with the colorful martial regalia of the Nazis. Hitler was his idol. “As a young child,” Kujau recalls, “I imagined Hitler three meters [about twelve feet] tall, with the strength of a bull. I began to read everything about him.” Neither the suicide of Hitler in 1945 nor the demise of the Third Reich cooled the boy’s ardor. At fourteen he painted an enormous swastika on his grandmother’s kitchen wall.

A bright, inquisitive boy, Konrad was the teacher’s pet at school and scored high marks in all subjects. His sister Doris, still a resident of Loebau, then in East Germany, remembers: “Conny was always the brightest of us all and got good marks at school.” In chatting about his youth, Kujau recalls that he remained in school until he was eighteen, then attended the Dresden Academy of Art for two semesters. He dropped out when his father was unable to give him any more financial help. His sister, perhaps a bit envious of her notorious brother, contradicts him on both counts. Conny left school at sixteen, she says, and he never went to any art academy. Her contradictions, if true, only make Kujau more remarkable, for his knowledge of modern history is excellent, though porous in spots, and his ability as an artist reveals unusual talent.

Much of our knowledge of Kujau’s modest beginnings comes from the forger’s own meandering, often jocular, tongue-in-cheek recollections. His attorney, Kurt Groenewold, upon whom fell the task of winnowing Kujau’s statements and sifting the lies from the truth, told me: “I do not think you can call Kujau a liar, exactly. He is really more of a romantic who is not too careful to distinguish fact from fiction.”

After leaving school, Kujau perambulated from job to job for several years. By the time he was nineteen he’d worked as a locksmith’s apprentice, a laborer in a textile plant, a painter, a window washer, and, finally, as a waiter in the clubhouse of the Free German Youth in Loebau.

On June 7, 1957, Kujau boarded a train out of East Germany, apparently to elude arrest on charges of stealing a microphone from the youth club. Once away from home, he graduated into a life of sordid crime. He lived precariously in Vaihingen, a suburb of Stuttgart. In November 1959 he was caught stealing tobacco from a Sinalko cooperative store and was fined 80 marks. The following year, armed with brass knuckles and two pistols, he broke into a store and made off with
four cases of Schnaps. He and a bumbling fellow burglar were so noisy that they woke up two night watchmen. They caught Kujau, and a court in Stuttgart sentenced him to nine months in prison for theft. He was out after eight months, but in August 1961 he was again picked up on charges of theft and briefly imprisoned. This time he’d filched four crates of pears and a crate of apples while working for a fruit vendor. Six months later while employed as a cook in a Stuttgart bar, he got into a brawl with his employer and was arrested.

In an attempt to earn an honest living, Kujau opened the Pelican Dance Bar about fifteen miles from Stuttgart in a town called Plochingen. At first the bar made money, but in 1963 it succumbed to financial woes, and Kujau went to work as a waiter in a Haufbrau. Here he first put his hand to the trade that would bring him fame and fortune—forgery. He counterfeited twenty-seven marks’ worth of luncheon vouchers, got caught, and was sentenced to five days behind bars.

By 1963 Kujau had acquired a common-law wife, a plump, pleasant barmaid named Edith Lieblang. He and Edith organized a new business, the Lieblang Cleaning Company. Their slogan, “Guaranteed Clean as a Housewife,” brought them a lot of business but not a lot of income. In March 1968 Kujau was arrested for giving false information on his identity. He had claimed to be Peter Fischer, a cook and a resident of Berlin. However, his papers gave his name as Konrad Fischer and his address as Stuttgart. At the police station Kujau, who often fabricated tales with no reason, continued to lie. He said his name was Peter Konrad Fischer and that he was a deserter from the East German army, in which he’d been a trainee in chemical warfare. A few hours later he thought up a better story: he’d left East Germany to escape military conscription and had got into West Germany on fake credentials, using the name Harald Fuchs. No doubt he would have continued to invent fresh versions of his life if his fingerprints had not revealed him to be Konrad Kujau, a petty thief and brawler who was wanted for failure to report to the police during a suspended sentence. This time he was briefly confined at Stanheim Prison in Stuttgart.

The cleaning plant, meanwhile, continued to struggle for existence. Kujau later described the enterprise as a great success, with thousands of German marks pouring in every week—but the duo sold out in 1977. According to Kujau, who thinks only in exalted sums that would dazzle a Rothschild, he and Edith got 800,000 marks for the business. Edith disagrees: “He’s mad. He’s simply going mad. . . . By the time we sold we had hardly any customers left, no employees. It was worth virtually nothing . . . and that’s what we got—virtually nothing.”

There is always a faint, mocking little smile on Kujau’s lips and a
barely imperceptible twinkle in his eye when he tugs on the long bow. He jokes and banter, almost ridiculing himself, and leaves it to his auditors to discover whether or not he's telling the literal truth, the approximate truth, or a flagrant fabrication. Edith Lieblang has said of his compulsion to exaggerate: "That's his vice. He just can't resist it." By 1970 Kujau had launched himself on a career of forgery that would last as long as Hitler's "thousand-year Reich"—twelve years. This was also the year Kujau visited his family in Loebau and literally staggered back to Stuttgart laden with valuable Third Reich relics: daggers, helmets, regimental steins, paintings, uniforms, badges, medals, rare documents. Kujau had rightly surmised that there were in Communist-controlled East Germany large numbers of relics that could be bought for a fraction of their value, especially because the West German Deutschmark was worth five times as much as the East German mark. The Communists, who held war relics in contempt and had utilized historic Nazi documents in their privies, had outlawed the possession of Third Reich souvenirs, but diehard Teutons laughed at this edict and held on to their treasures. They were, however, easily seduced by bundles of West German marks. Kujau was engulfed in offers, and whatever he bought he could sell for ten times its cost to Stuttgart collectors. Relishing his new opulence, Kujau developed a swaggering air. At times he donned a tuxedo and assumed the manners of a fop. At other times he soldiered up in an SS uniform and roistered away the evening with champagne and women in the Stuttgart beer gardens.

Sometimes Kujau wore a pistol and, after swilling down a large quantity of his favorite, orange juice and vodka, would essay his marksmanship in a nearby field or even pump a few rounds into the "dead soldiers" at the bar. On February 13, 1973, he got into a brawl when he assaulted with a loaded machine gun a man he claimed had slashed the tires of one of his cleaning vans. In the confusion that followed, his victim escaped. Kujau stumbled into a doorway and terrified a prostitute. Her screams fetched a small crowd. They seized Kujau. When the cops arrived, Kujau told them his name was Lieblang. They searched his apartment and found an arsenal of five pistols, a machine gun, a double-barreled shotgun, and three rifles. Conny quickly sobered up, presented his apologies, and was let off with only a fine.

In his swaggering barfly guise as "the General," Kujau had acquired a mistress, Maria Modritsch, a rather homely Austrian fraulein who worked at the Sissy Bar in Stuttgart. Kujau rented an apartment for Maria and her pet rabbit Caesar, but he kept his relationship with Maria
The Hitler Diaries

a secret from Edith. On October 15, 1979, Kujau and Maria were having a drink at the Melodie Bar in Stuttgart when a group of Yugoslav youths, waving pistols, entered the bar. Everyone hit the floor except the General. Conny assaulted the intruders and was beaten on the face. Rushed to the hospital with a three-inch gash in his forehead, he was interviewed by the police. The shoemaker’s son again demonstrated the fertility of his imagination. He was, he told the cops, Dr. Konrad Kujau, only last year released from his post as a colonel in the West German army and soon to be appointed a professor. The police searched a briefcase he was carrying and discovered an air pistol, some artist’s equipment, and a photograph of Kujau in general’s uniform. Kujau claimed he’d bought the pistol at a public sale and that it had once belonged to the Desert Fox, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The police set him down as a lunatic or a military nut.

A week later the authorities summoned Kujau to the station to explain why he was posing as a professor. For this misrepresentation Kujau had a simple explanation. He was the author, he said, of eleven books on Nazi Germany, including Adolf Hitler, the Painter. He’d been invited to lecture at many universities and was the possessor of three honorary doctorates—from Pretoria, Tokyo, and Miami. As for the diplomas, they were packed away in some cartons, but he would shortly produce them for the police to examine. Since the documents never turned up, Kujau was fined 800 marks for parading around with phony titles.

During this period, Kujau became intrigued with the ideal of “racial purity.” This was the same wild dream that had led Goebbels to sponsor “hereditary studies,” had transformed Josef Mengele from a brilliant doctor into a murderous lunatic who used Jews as human guinea pigs, and prompted Dr. Auguste Hirt to sever and collect the heads of Jewish concentration camp inmates who had the “correct” cranial specifications for his “research.” Kujau’s racial pursuits were far more innocent. He joined a Stuttgart Indianer club whose members donned American Indian costumes and war-whooped it up as braves and their squaws.

Kujau and Edith began an annual pilgrimage to Loebau and Dresden. Each time they brought home to Stuttgart a fresh supply of Third Reich memorabilia. The heavy stuff that couldn’t be packed into suitcases or hidden under hats and coats they concealed in pianos manufactured in Loebau and imported to West Germany. With the aid of his family in Loebau, Kujau ran a series of innocuous-appearing newspaper advertisements that were actually designed to obtain Nazi relics: “Wanted for purposes of research, old toys, helmets, jugs, pipes,
Birth of a Forger

Kujau was not long in discovering the trick used in every nation by dishonest dealers in old furniture, paintings, china, and other treasured mementos of the past. He enhanced the value of his relics by forging "authentications," thus creating for them a provenance that proved irresistible to collectors. An old World War II German helmet worth only a few marks could, for example, be transformed into a priceless historic treasure by the fertile imagination and facile art of Kujau. He offered one helmet for sale with the initials A.H. scratched inside the neck guard and an accompanying note: "This is the helmet I wore in my first action at Ypres on October 28–31, 1914, when my right coat sleeve was ripped off by an enemy bullet. A fragment of shrapnel ricocheted off the top of this helmet and it may have saved my life. It should be kept. Adolf Hitler." Kujau was finicky about details and seldom blundered in his historical data. As helmets are the most abundant of all war relics, they quickly became the main objects of his transmutation skills.

At first, with the prudence of a skilled craftsman venturing into a new art, Kujau created only small notes and tiny sketches "by Hitler." He ensconced his freshly created "gems" in a large showcase in his store. They looked more authentic and enticing behind glass. He tried to forge two letters of Napoleon but was not satisfied with the results. Wilhelm II, the symbol of Prussian arrogance in World War I, was represented by five or six signatures, rather easy to forge because the huge, bombastic flourishes of Germany's last kaiser require only a modest imitative talent. Kujau was also delighted with his authentications for "Hindenburg relics." To a reporter from Spiegel he later confided: "I have a helmet from Hindenburg in my collection and some other pieces that belonged to him. For the helmet I fabricated documentary proof of authenticity and placed it in my showcase."

Among the relics for which Kujau provided bogus authentications was the famed "blood flag," the legendary banner carried in the Munich Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, when Goering was wounded and sixteen zealous young Nazis were gunned down by the Munich police. The original blood flag had been ostentatiously displayed at all big Nazi rallies and sacred rites performed with it. The authentication provided
by Kujau bore the forged signatures of Hitler and Baldur von Schirach, the youth leader. There were Nazi symbols, practice swastika designs purportedly by Hitler but actually painted by Kujau and signed with the dictator’s name. A helmet of World War I vintage, handsomely mounted on a metal upright, carried a faked certification that it was worn by Hitler after June 1917. The bogus warranty boasted Rudolf Hess’s “signature” and two impressive red wax seals. Kujau had discovered that collectors and amateur historians are always impressed by seals, especially wax seals over silk ribbons.

Later forgeries reveal the range and vitality of Kujau’s imagination. They included the authentication for a pocket watch that saved Hitler from a flying scrap of shrapnel in World War I, armbands worn by the Fuehrer, a party membership card with the “signatures” of Hitler and Hess, and the dress clothes—jacket, frock coat with tails, and a top hat—that Hitler “wore at the opening of the Reichstag in March 1933,” about two months after he was installed as chancellor. Although the authentication of the frock coat is the usual flamboyant document on early stationery of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), with a brace of red seals, its effect is somewhat diminished by a tailor’s label in the coat that reads “J.H. Schwobram, Bremen, 1911.” It is hard to imagine the fastidious Adolf Hitler showing up on this historic occasion in a suit of old clothes.

It was the joys of art, however, that ravished Kujau the forger. He was, and is, a talented amateur. At first he tried copying Rubens in oils. Deciding that his efforts were pretty good, he hung several “Rubens” paintings on his wall. Gauguin was more difficult. His primitive style has always tempted forgers, but few have managed to capture the subtle colors of the master. Kujau had trouble with the colors because they had a “special rhythm.” A far easier target for his talents was Adolf Hitler, who had made a living of sorts as an artist before the outbreak of World War I.

Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau, Upper Austria, on April 20, 1889. He became a choirboy in the Catholic church at Lambach, a boyhood occupation that helped to develop his remarkable oratorical voice. His father, Alois Hitler, was a minor customs official who drank heavily and frequently flogged his son. He died when Adolf was thirteen. Young Adolf had already displayed flashes of artistic talent, but his father had vehemently opposed so uncertain and frivolous a career as that of an artist. The sudden death of Alois freed the youth to devote most of his time to painting. At eighteen, he brushed the provincial dust from his boots and set off for Vienna to study at the Academy of Arts. Twice he
failed the matriculation examinations, mainly because he was unable to sketch the human figure.

In prewar Vienna, joyous with gaiety and music, Hitler became a virtual bum. Eventually he turned to art for a living. He painted scenes on postcards that he and a friend, Reinhold Hanisch, peddled for a few marks (five or ten dollars), usually to barflies. Hitler wandered through Vienna looking for churches and public buildings to portray. Often he merely copied photographs, for his skills at drawing from nature were minimal. His few efforts to portray the human figure were pathetic failures. The men and women in his paintings look like sacks of barley. His street scenes are bereft of vitality and suggest a plague-ridden city. It was architecture that captivated the young artist. He speedily developed a love affair with brick and stone, and virtually all his watercolors—he almost never ventured into the complexities of oils—are of buildings. He preferred muted colors: greys, browns, dark greens, reds that are not really red. His paintings are pedestrian and punctilious, triumphs of the T-square, competently executed but uninspired.

In 1912 Hitler moved to Munich to escape the Austrian draft. Two years later, the young artist, who was just beginning to make a very modest living from his paintings of architectural landmarks, was caught up in a wild burst of patriotism on the outbreak of World War I and enlisted in the army. He was twice decorated for heroism in combat. During moments of leisure, however, he continued to paint, and his postcard scenes of battered or war-damaged churches and other buildings where his battalion was stationed are by far his best work. They have a touch of vitality and movement and are almost impressionistic. He sold these to officers to send home to their families. Not long before the war ended in 1918, while Hitler was at a convalescence camp, a thief made off with his paints and brushes. Crushed, Hitler ceased to paint and turned to politics. In 1933 he reluctantly permitted his official photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, to issue a little volume of his early paintings. He admitted to Hoffmann that he wasn’t a very good artist.

The forger Kujau scored his first great successes with his counterfeits of the Fuehrer’s early paintings. Kujau painted what his clients wanted—interesting, dramatic scenes, men in action, female nudes, cartoons—subjects, incidentally, that Hitler abhorred or never attempted. The Fuehrer was a moralist, an inflexible zealot. For example, he loved animals, especially dogs, and one of his first acts as chancellor was to put through rigorous laws protecting all wild creatures (even lobsters!) against human cruelty. He did not smoke or drink save on
very rare occasions (though he permitted his associates to enjoy those luxuries). He was compulsive about cleanliness and bathed frequently. He disapproved of female nudity. He was opposed to ostentation and wore only three medals on a plain officer's jacket with a standard swastika armband. The few exceptions he permitted in his rigid moral code were all icily impersonal and for the welfare of the State. For the good of the nation almost any form of brutality or atrocity was acceptable, including murder and genocide. As for war, it developed strength and bravery and manhood and was the cohesive force that unified the State. Thus war was an exalted pursuit.

Hitler is often looked upon by historians as a complex personality, a man of many contradictions. Actually, his character was simple, exactly as I have outlined it. He was really nothing but a George Babbitt run amok. Yet Kujau never understood Hitler or what made him tick, and only the gross ignorance and cupidity of his clients and of Hitler-loving German historians enabled him to pass off his preposterous imitations of the dictator's art as genuine.

Judging from the vast number of his art forgeries of Hitler, Kujau must have been producing his fakes in the early 1970s—the mid-1970s at the latest. Once the cascade of forgeries started, there was no diverting or damming it. So profitable were the bogus paintings, and so voraciously were they sought by Kujau's clientele, that he invested many hours every week in his efforts to keep up with the demand. His uncritical customers, encouraged by equally imperceptive "art experts" and amateur historians, bought up "Hitler" paintings—usually in watercolors but sometimes in oils—of Hitler's paramours Geli Raubal and Eva Braun in stark naked poses that would have disgusted their supposed creator. Kujau's customers demanded, and got, exciting battle scenes and detailed views that the future dictator had lacked the technical skill to paint. Many of the sketches and drawings were accompanied by little notes in Hitler's forged script. Kujau was learning to imitate with swiftness and a modicum of effort the chirography of his notorious target. Without realizing it, he was preparing himself to write the Hitler diaries.

Meanwhile, news of Kujau's discoveries of rare Hitler relics and paintings had got around in neo-Nazi circles, and the forger found himself the center of a small group of Third Reich devotees. They met in Kujau's showroom, where their host entertained them with exciting tales of how he had tracked down these rare art treasures—on which the paint was often not entirely dry. His suppliers, Kujau explained, were big shots in East Germany—among others, a bemedaled Nazi general and the influential, easily bribed director of a museum. Former
members of the Hoffmann Group, the outlawed neo-Nazi aggregation of young men trained in antisocial military and political techniques, and HIAG,\(^6\) the mutual aid association founded to keep in touch with and assist former Nazis, mostly those who had served in the SS (Himmler’s elite police), were prominent among Kujau’s visitors.

Many of those who delighted in Kujau’s imaginary stories of discovering rare Nazi relics were themselves former Nazi officials, most of whom knew him by the name Konrad Fischer or his nickname, Conny. There was also the wealthy Fritz Stiefel, a Stuttgart businessman and avid relic collector in his early fifties; Erich Kempka, Hitler’s limousine driver, who voluntarily stayed with the Fuehrer in the Berlin bunker and helped cremate his body; and the noted Third Reich historian Eberhard Jaeckel of Stuttgart University. It was a motley gathering, unified by one bond—a fascination with relics of the Nazi era deriving from a veneration for the memory of Adolf Hitler.

Four years before the Hitler diaries appeared, there were already dozens of Kujau’s “Hitler paintings” on the American market. Late in 1977 I began a survey and study of Hitler’s work as an artist. Frank Gish, my collaborator and a distinguished collector, had already gathered transparencies of more than one hundred Hitler paintings—including fifty-six examples from the collection of the Marquis of Bath—that are all, in my opinion, of unquestioned authenticity. They are typical Hitler aquarelles, nearly every one with each detail in its proper place—a draftsman’s delight, precise and regulated. The smoke from chimneys hangs motionless in the air; the branches on trees do not stir, for in Hitler’s art there is no breeze to move them; the people, if any, are motionless blobs, fixtures that the artist can move about like pawns.

In Gish’s collection, however, there were also many curious “Hitler paintings” that neither he nor I accepted as authentic.

Frank later wrote to me of having met a collector-dealer, Wolfgang von Mertschinsky, at a semiannual Great Western Gun Show around 1976: “At that time I was compiling negatives and photographs of any known Hitler artwork for a future book. Of the approximately 115 watercolors, oils or sketches sent to me by Mertschinsky, only about 20 were, in my opinion, originals . . . [of] a series of sketches and paintings that he claimed were recent ‘finds’ . . . none . . . showed any more aging than could be accomplished with a microwave and some mothballs.”

I examined the transparencies of the paintings from “the private German collection” with great care. Most of them were done in sepia or in brilliant colors. There was a profile portrait of Napoleon, standing
with folded arms, sword at his side, painted in bright blue. The hazel-eyed emperor had been endowed with blue eyes for the occasion. There were bizarre cartoons, some of them bearing notes forged in Hitler's hand; a sketch of his mother, copied from the familiar photograph that appears in all biographies of Hitler; soldiers and horses in motion, scenes full of vitality far beyond the Fuehrer's artistic ability.

Because of the considerable amount of Hitler's alleged handwriting that accompanied the fake paintings, I surmised that they were the products of a West German forger. With one painting came an authenticating letter, a fabrication that revealed considerable imagination on the part of the forger:

Munich, the 2/August 1913

Dear Herr Sander:

I am sending you the watercolors made from the photographs. Please let me know in the next few days whether you would like the pictures in oil. The price for one oil painting 30 cm. by 40 cm. will be 120RM [German marks].

Adolf Hitler

Because the forgery was badly done—the spurious writing was poorly executed and totally lacked the plunging ferocity of Hitler's stablike pen strokes—I paid little attention to it. Moreover, I was convinced that it was of German origin, and I could not therefore stop the forger or put him in the dock.

Nobody knows exactly when Kujau began to forge the Hitler diaries. As all astute historians are aware, much of our recorded knowledge of the past is built upon shaky evidence—the recollections of amnesiac oldsters, for instance, or the romantic embroideries of congenital liars. Fritz Stiefel, the wealthy collector to whom Kujau sold enormous numbers of Nazi relics both bogus and genuine, has said that he got the first diary on loan from Kujau in 1975. I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of his memory, however, because it was not until mid-1978 that Kujau’s forgeries began to proliferate in the United States and Germany, and Kujau was not a man who would strike gold and not instantly pan out his claim. The moment he discovered that he could forge hot-selling documents in “Hitler’s handwriting” and bamboozle the eager collectors and pretend historians of Germany, there was no halting the torrent of bogus Hitleriana that cascaded from his facile pen.

Kujau is himself befogged in his recollection of when he started to grind out Hitler documents. Certainly it was before the fall of 1977, for
it was then that the first of the fake paintings, with notes by Hitler, appeared in the United States. I think we might safely place the earliest around the summer of 1976. Apparently Kujau stuck to brief documents for a while. It was easy, he discovered, to inscribe copies of Mein Kampf with greetings and the author's signature.

One of his most ambitious projects was the "complete, original, two-volume manuscript of Mein Kampf." He copied the text assiduously, with no changes, from the published book, but he could not refrain from adding an imaginative touch. On the first page he wrote: "The Struggle of the Times, or The Struggle, or My Struggle [Mein Kampf]. Which title impresses most? Adolf Hitler." Even the most modest of Hitler scholars knows that the original manuscript was typewritten, a few pages by Hitler but mostly by Hess and others to whom Hitler dictated his recollections while he was in Landsberg prison in 1924. And Hitler's original title was "Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity, and Cowardice," a burst of Teutonic flatulence that his business manager and former company sergeant, Max Amann, wisely changed to Mein Kampf. But Kujau's audacity did not end with his forgery of the two published volumes (originally printed in separate editions in 1925 and 1927); he composed an "introduction" to a third volume, never written and probably never contemplated by Hitler. This he sold to his prime mark, Fritz Stiefel, who had also purchased the two fat manuscript volumes. That forgery of Mein Kampf survives in a sumptuous, silk-lined case with a brass eagle bearing Hitler's initials on its cover.

Months before he embarked on the writing of the Hitler diaries, Kujau had screwed his courage to the point where he was inventing and forging documents in defiance of known history. He later said: "I wrote something first to find out what the reaction would be to it. It was the so-called Kommissar Befehl, dated from the Fuehrer's headquarters, June 6, 1941. Everybody accepted it as genuine, and Fritz Stiefel bought it from me." 7

Kujau was so impressed with his own abilities that he began to turn out poems supposedly written by Hitler during World War I. An amateurish jingle, "Der Kamerad," that he dashed off in a few minutes was accepted as an authentic poem by Hitler. Kujau later said of it: "A fourteen-year-old collector would have recognized it as a forgery and would have said, 'My grandfather could write it better.'" 8 But this and other puerile verses were enthusiastically acclaimed by Eberhard Jaeckel, who collaborated with an expert named Axel Kuhn to compile the early writings of Hitler to 1924. The professor drew heavily on the collection of Fritz Stiefel, particularly the material accompanied by a
Kujau warranty on the [forged] letterhead of the NSDAP. Jaeckel announced proudly in his preface that fifty of Hitler’s youthful writings had just been discovered by him in a private source (Stiefel’s collection).9

Not long after Jaeckel published his book (1980) Munich archivist Anton Hock pointed out that one of the “Hitler” poems had been written by the Nazi poet Herybert Menzel and therefore could not possibly have been composed by Hitler during World War I. Jaeckel immediately printed a warning that some of the poems from his “private source” were forged and others were doubtful.

Despite this minor setback, to which almost nobody paid any attention, Kujau was so confident in his counterfeiting skill that he planned a super hoax. He would compose an original opera by Hitler! Kujau had caught a whiff of a rumor, first mentioned by the distinguished and reputable historian Werner Maser, that Hitler had contemplated writing an opera to be called Wieland der Schmied (Wieland the blacksmith), in collaboration with his school friend August Kubizek (later the author of The Young Hitler I Knew). The idea of forging an entire opera was tempting, but Kujau finally threw it over. “I’d have had to learn to read music,” he later said. “What a joke! I could never have done it.”10
"I was sitting at my typewriter," said Kujau, "and it suddenly struck me that I could write a book, Die Tage der Lebens Adolf Hitler [A day in the life of Adolf Hitler]. So I started to type. After fourteen pages I looked it over and said to myself, 'That is the same tripe you see everywhere.' Then I got a better idea. In my cellar I dug out some old copybooks that I'd bought to keep a record of my collection. I decided I'd write a book entirely in Hitler's handwriting." 1

The task faced by Kujau—"only a gag," he later called it—in creating this first volume, subsequently to stretch into a gigantic run of sixty-two volumes, was an awesome challenge to his quick wits and deft fingers. First he spent several weeks learning how to write the Old Gothic script that Hitler used. He copied words he did not understand until he got the hang of Hitler's handwriting. Kujau recalled his problems in writing the first diary: "It was an enormous task. First I took notes in Hitler's typical mixture of Gothic [old] and Suetherlin [modern] letters with a pencil. That took a month. Then I transcribed the contents in ink to the notebook. As I delved into Hitler's handwriting night after night, I began to write with Hitler's script. My own handwriting changed completely. So much so that I once signed with Adolf Hitler instead of Kujau. This happened in a Stuttgart department store. Fortunately, the salesgirl couldn't read my writing. Sometimes I had to read nine books, dozens of newspapers, and my own notes to create one page of the diary." 2

Kujau used the first of the six or seven (his accounts differ on the precise number) copybooks bound in dark covers that he'd purchased for 3.42 East German marks each (about $1.50) in Bautzen at an HO (state department) store. Kujau put an inflated title on the volume: "Political and Private Notes from January 1935 until June 1935. Adolf
Hitler. " Later he said: "I glued inside the diary covers Property of the Fuehrer in typed letters. I typed the letters on an old Adler typewriter made in 1926 that once belonged to Himmler. Then I glued on the upper left corner the letterhead of the Third Reich chancellory, but only at the left edge of the book, so that you could easily lift up the letterhead." 3

How did Kujau match Hitler’s ink? He bought in a department store for 4.80 DM (Deutschmarks) each two bottles of ink: Pelikan black and Pelikan blue, number 4001. These he mixed and watered down so that he could easily write Hitler's script with a cheap, modern pen. Usually he wet the pen to make the ink flow freely. Later, in prison, he used the same kind of ink and pen. He commented then: "I should have put three drops of iron liquid in each bottle of ink; then the experts would never have found out. Liquid iron you can get in any pharmacy, because it's used to prevent bleeding of the gums. It costs 4.20 DM [about $2.00]. They talk about the greatest forgery of the century! That makes me sore. It wasn't a forgery. It was a joke." 4

Kujau paid special attention to the cover. He wanted it dolled up in Hitler's flamboyant manner, with seals and ribbons. He took a black ribbon from an authentic Nazi SS document and affixed it to the cover with a red wax seal of the infantry of the Third Reich—not an official seal of the State, but such a seal as historians often come upon when examining Nazi military documents.

The final dramatic touch consisted of the Gothic initials "F.H." in gleaming, brass-plated tin. Kujau glued them to the cover to give his fake an official look. "I bought these letters in Hong Kong [during a visit to China with Edith] at a thrift shop," Kujau later admitted. "They were simple tin plates. They cost about half a Hong Kong dollar [about ten cents]. And the F—forgive me, I am not that crazy—I knew it was an F." 5

Edith tells the story of the initials a little differently. "Kujau bought these letters FH in a small stationery store in Hong Kong in the Hotel Ambassador where we were staying. We bought a little letter box with single drawers for every letter. Conny and I both thought the capital F was an A. We bought the letter box before the diaries were written, and the letters were just lying around." 6

The diary (Kujau had not yet anticipated that there would be more than one) was complete now, with the final touches that gave it precisely the right look to fool anybody totally inexperienced in historic research or unfamiliar with Nazi documents. The phony seal, the glaringly incorrect initials, the bogus label, all awaited the admiring eye of Kujau's favorite mark, Fritz Stiefel. Only one thing was lacking—
a plausible tale to explain where the diary came from. Kujau never got stumped when it came to inventing a provenance for his wares. In this case, he excelled himself and created an elaborate filigree of lies, a story that might have excited the envy of the Brothers Grimm.

Kujau had learned that a Nazi airplane, apparently from the Nazi chancellory in Berlin, had crashed and burned in April 1945 at Boernersdorf, near Dresden, during the climactic period of Hitler’s Götterdämmerung. The story was confirmed by Hitler’s pilot, Hans Bauer. The crew had been killed in the crash, so nobody knew exactly what the plane had been carrying. Kujau invented a cargo: the complete, intimate archive of Adolf Hitler, comprising hundreds of important papers, photographs, secret documents, even treaties, plus Hitler’s personal diaries. Kujau claimed to have obtained this single diary from his brother, “Major General” Fischer of the National Peoples’ Army in East Germany, who had retrieved the diaries from some peasants who had witnessed the crash (it was true that Kujau had a brother in East Germany, but he was a railroad porter, not a general). As for the rest of the diaries, Kujau said, three were secretly transported to the United States. As time passed and interest in the diaries escalated, Kujau was able to elaborate upon his initial fiction until every loophole was neatly plugged up.

Fritz Stiefel swallowed the fairytale, He coveted the diary, but Kujau did not wish to sell it. However, he let Stiefel take it home with him “to study.” While composing the first Hitler diary Kujau had discovered the immense thrill of bringing the supreme tyrant of history to life. In the diary, Hitler spoke again through the pen of Kujau. The forger could put into the dictator’s mind whatever thoughts he wished, whatever words he wished him to utter. As no other man before him, he held history between his fingertips and could change it by a mere dip and swirl of his pen. He could, and did, alter the image of his boyhood hero. Kujau was aware, as he later stated, that “if people hear only the name Adolf Hitler they get interested. They stare with sparkling eyes at you. It’s like heroine to a drug addict.”

Fritz Stiefel, who at first had doubted that Hitler ever wrote a diary, set to work seeking opinions on the borrowed volume. Kujau had told Stiefel that he couldn’t vouch for its authenticity because it was written in an old German script that he didn’t know how to read. In June 1979, Stiefel called upon a friend, August Priesack, who as an apprentice archivist had worked at the Braunhaus (Brown House), Hitler’s home and headquarters in Munich. Priesack had also been a professor of history, and at the age of seventy-six was still excited by historical
discoveries. He traveled to Stuttgart to examine the volume. After a
careful scrutiny he announced that it was 101 percent genuine.
Several months later, on September 21, 1979, Priesack persuaded the
Third Reich historian Eberhard Jaeckel of Stuttgart University to ex­
amine the "treasures" in Stiefel's collection. Priesack said: "I'm going to
open Hitler's treasure chest for you." Jaeckel was dazzled by the
discovery. He contemplated with ecstasy and awe the heap of for­
geries—articles, documents, poems—and was convinced that they
had been retrieved from the crashed aircraft and were unquestionably
authentic. He proclaimed the diary genuine and said that he would like
to edit it for publication.
Hitler's diary was soon hot news in the world of Nazi collectors. The
snowballing tales worried Kujau, who tried to get the diary back from
Stiefel. Instead, Stiefel announced that August Priesack wanted to talk
with Kujau. They met, and Kujau was stunned by the enthusiasm with
which Priesack acclaimed the forgery. The historian was eager to buy
this volume and any others Kujau could get.
Priesack then copied down a page, the most lengthy entry in the
diary. It was, like all the others, a perfect example of the platitudinous
elaboration of the insignificant obvious, but it impressed Professor
Priesack. The most exciting part read:

E. [Eva Braun] now has two little puppies so time does not lie too heavily
on her hands.
Must have a word with E. about Goering, too. His attitude toward her
isn't quite correct.
All quiet on the health front.

After extolling the importance of these banalities, Priesack said to
Kujau, "You must find more documents. History will thank you." 
Meanwhile, Jaeckel was studying some poems "composed by Hit­
ler," all previously unknown and supposedly written by the future
dictator during World War I. Some were illustrated. One, "An Idyll in the War," consisted of four stanzas recounting how a German soldier
acted as midwife for a French woman:

As the medical orderly Gottlieb Krause heard as he came through
Arras,
The sudden dull cry of a woman from the closest house:
I must help! was his thought, even a German in the field remains
helpful,
And a newborn baby Frenchman arrived in the world with Gottlieb
Krause's help.
And with his typical great care he looked after the child,
Washed it, cared for it, to show we're not barbarians
And held the babe with pleasure in front of his comrades;
This little worm knows nothing of Iswolski and Delcassé's intrigues!

Milk was rare and needed in a hurry; in the meadow grazed a cow,
And two soldiers from the next troop commandeered her at once,
And milked her! It ran in spurts and in rich amounts,
Shrapnel fell close by but didn't stop the work.

Right afterwards, he gave the bottle to the child he had delivered,
And pulled two zwieback out of his pocket for the mother
An idyll proving once again the German's noble creed,
If the Limeys haven't destroyed it, the house is still there.10

Professor Jaeckel was so delighted with this saccharine doggerel and
other discoveries he made in the vast pile of forgeries that in his book of
Hitler's early writings he included fakes from the facile pen of Kujau.
Like many mighty affairs that shake the world, the Hitler diaries got launched during a raucous drinking party. On October 20, 1979, Kujau’s favorite client, Fritz Stiefel, threw a soiree at his mansion in Waiblingen, not far from Stuttgart, to honor the birthday of Senta Baur, wife of SS Lieutenant General Hans Baur, once Hitler’s close friend and personal pilot. Senta was not feeling well, and neither she nor her husband attended. Among the guests, however, were Konrad Kujau and Edith Lieblang, as well as Jakob Tiefenthaler, age fifty-three, who was in charge of audiovisual instruction at a local United States airbase. Tiefenthaler was an avid collector of Nazi memorabilia, especially photographs. He was also a friend of General Baur, a former soldier in the SS, and a member in good standing of HIAG. His wide acquaintance among former Nazis included SS General Karl Wolff, formerly SS commandant in Italy and special aide to Himmler. Wolff (who died on July 17, 1984) was to take a lively interest in the Hitler diaries.

Tiefenthaler, a genial wheeler-and-dealer whom Kujau later dubbed “Herr Ten Percent,” hit it off with Conny and Edith right away. “We drank a lot of wine,” Tiefenthaler commented, “and ended up, all of us, on very familiar terms.”¹ It was one of those bibulous evenings during which every guest turns into a Baron Munchausen. Tiefenthaler boasted about his important friends, including SS General Wilhelm Mohnke, once chancery judge of the Third Reich. Kujau bragged about his big-shot pals, including the bogus major general in the National People’s Army of East Germany (his brother, the train porter). He also paraded his knowledge of the crashed plane at Boernersdorf, which had carried Hitler’s diaries. And then, finally, the big story bubbled out of the wine. Stiefel took Tiefenthaler aside and plied him with glowing tales of the precious relics of the Fuehrer that lay
behind the door of his special "relics room." He made an appointment with Tiefenthaeler to view the treasures the next morning.

At precisely ten o'clock on the morning of October 21, 1979, Tiefenthaeler was ushered through a steel door bearing a warning in huge letters: "BEWARE! HIGH VOLTAGE. DANGER TO LIFE." Once in the sanctum, he was shown a spectacular display in beautifully lit cases of swastika flags, military decorations, weapons, and rare photographs. Hitler paintings and caricatures (all by Kujau) glowed with rich colors. Finally, he held in his hands the supreme treasure, an original diary in the Fuehrer's own hand. As Tiefenthaeler reverently turned the pages, his fingers trembled with excitement. He felt that he was holding the history of the world in his hands. He could hardly wait to convey the news of his spectacular discovery to Gerd Heidemann, crack reporter for Stern, the great German pictorial weekly.

Tiefenthaeler knew Heidemann only slightly. He'd been introduced to him about six months before by General Mohnke. At that time, Tiefenthaeler had explained to the noted reporter that he was the agent for an Austrian syndicate that wanted to buy Heidemann's greatest possession, Goering's private yacht. Heidemann was deeply in debt as a result of trying to maintain the yacht. He owed Stern 94,960 marks, more than a year's salary, that the magazine had advanced him, and he was eager to find a buyer for the seaborn white elephant. On behalf of Heidemann, Tiefenthaeler ran an ad in the United States offering the yacht for sale at 1,200,000 marks. No takers. Then he tried other prospects, including an Arab oil sheik. As he struggled to sell the Goering yacht, he continued to drop the price. The notorious Ugandan dictator Idi Amin almost bought it but finally turned it down because he couldn't figure out a way to get it cross-country to Lake Victoria.

But now Tiefenthaeler had a new prospect. He explained to Heidemann that there was a chance of selling the yacht at a handsome price to a rich Stuttgart collector. He had not intended to reveal Stiefel's name, but with the possibility of a commission from the diary as well as the yacht, he disclosed his hole card. He told Heidemann that Stiefel was not only a prospect for the yacht but also owned the most incredible collection of Hitleriana in existence.

An uncritical admirer of Hitler, Gerd Heidemann was born in Hamburg on December 4, 1931, the illegitimate son of Martha Eiternick. When his mother married a policeman, Rolf Heidemann, Gerd took his stepfather's name. As a boy, he had joined the Hitler Youth. He was fourteen when the Nazi armies surrendered in 1945. At seventeen he left school to become an electrician. Perhaps frustrated because he had been too young to be a soldier in the Nazi army, the adult Heidemann
became fascinated by war. He collected lead soldiers and war games. In the basement of his home he constructed an enormous panorama of a battlefield, complete with toy soldiers, tanks, aircraft, and other battle paraphernalia.

His real love, however, was photography, and he soon found a job in a photographic laboratory. While still in his teens he worked as a freelance photographer for various newspapers in Hamburg. At twenty he got his first commission from Stern, and four years later became a member of the magazine's photographic staff. Then, as a reporter, Heidemann won a reputation for ferreting out facts that eluded less aggressive newsmen. Despite an occasional precipitous decision, his judgment was generally incisive and accurate. He rarely abandoned his innate prudence, and his cleverly feigned modesty and appearance of honesty often beguiled the victims of his interviews into confessing intimate, newsworthy facts—dually recorded by the reporter on a concealed tape recorder. Popularly known among his associates as Der Spuerhund (the bloodhound), Heidemann had built a record of brilliant successes as an investigator. He had scooped other reporters with a colorful story of an airplane crash in Nairobi. He had furnished background material for several big series on television and in the newspapers. Most important, his credibility had never been questioned.

By the 1970s Heidemann was caught up in the last vestiges of the most fearsome empire in history. More than just a Hitler buff, he became deeply immersed in the career of the great dictator. In a sense, his own life—at least the last decade of it—had degenerated into little more than a frenetic quest for fresh and exciting information about the Nazis. He became obsessed with the idea of searching out vanished Nazis, especially war criminals, in their Spanish or South American hideaways and taping their full confessions.

At forty-two, Heidemann had bought from Goering's daughter the long unused yacht of Hermann Goering. He retained the name the air marshal had given it, Carin II. He managed to raise enough money to spruce it up so that it would make a perfect "party vessel" for his important visitors, and he Nazified it with all sorts of Goering souvenirs in an effort to give the renovated yacht an aura of its former glory. He put Goering's fancy dinner service on display, and all over the vessel there were photographs, ashtrays, books, and other relics of the famed Luftwaffe marshal. Even the cushions were covered with fabric cut from Goering's bathrobe. Nearly all of the relics were genuine, and many of them came from Goering's daughter Edda, who had helped out in the decoration and reconstruction of the yacht.
One visitor who spent a lot of time on the vessel was the aging SS General Wolff. Wolff had been an intimate of Himmler, who trusted him completely and dubbed him Wolffchen, an endearing term later used for the general by Heidemann. Of Wolff's war guilt there could be no question. He was appointed Nazi military governor of Italy and, it was said, dispatched 300,000 Jews to the Treblinka death camp. At the Nuremberg trials Wolff was accused of arranging the slaughter of Jews in Russia. However, since he had cooperated with the Allies and had worked out a plan to surrender the German army in Italy to the Americans, Wolff had been given special consideration at the war crime trials, and many of his villainies in the Final Solution were overlooked. In 1946 he was sentenced to four years at hard labor but actually served only a week in confinement. After the war, he worked as an advertising agent in Cologne, but in 1962, as a result of some statements he had made in the press about his wartime activities, plus the disclosure of a letter concerning trainloads of Jews being dispatched to Treblinka, he was arrested, found guilty of complicity in mass murder, and imprisoned. He was released in 1971. Eager to help his old comrades who were still in hiding, Wolff was able to furnish Heidemann with a lot of secret information about Nazis who had escaped to South America. The general hoped to smuggle them back into the homeland with the assistance of pro-Nazis in the Italian church in Rome.

Another of Heidemann’s visitors, General Wilhelm Mohnke, the last defender of Hitler’s Berlin bunker, regaled his host with lurid tales of the “glorious old Nazi days.” Heidemann later admitted: “Suddenly I realized that what they were talking about was much more exciting, more intriguing than any thriller. This extraordinary man, Hitler, rose to those heights from nowhere at all. I became so curious about him, it was finally all I could think of.”

The publisher and big decisionmaker at Stern, Henri Nannen, was the man who approved or disapproved the activities of Heidemann. Although he had never joined the Nazi party, Nannen’s past was slightly tainted because he had played the role of a sports announcer in Leni Riefenstahl’s celebrated film on the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. He had also written a number of articles on popular art for Kunst dem Volk, a Nazi magazine, and his publishing techniques had been honed during the war by his job with a propaganda unit. He thus was tolerant of Heidemann’s fascination with Nazi themes. Nannen’s favorite proverb justified Heidemann’s rather bizarre quests: “If you want to talk to Eskimos, you’ve got to go to Greenland.”

Thus it happened that Heidemann traveled to South America where, with a little aid from General Wolff, he located the notorious
war criminal Klaus Barbie. Heidemann produced his tape recorder, and Barbie unabashedly dictated a recital of his sadistic career. After publishing that interview, Heidemann was inspired to try for bigger game: if he could win the complete confidence of Barbie, he might be able to track down the vicious mass murderer Dr. Josef Mengele, reportedly hiding out in South America. The country of his refuge varied with every report, but perhaps Klaus Barbie knew the real hideaway of the "angel of death." Heidemann showed Barbie the so-called Blutfahnenbrief, Hitler's original oath to revenge the massacre of his comrades who were killed during the Beer-Hall Putsch, or march on Munich City Hall, on November 9, 1923. Then he asked Barbie: "Do you know any reliable man who can be trusted to keep this precious document safe and secure?" Clearly, however, Barbie did not know where Mengele was hiding. (Actually, Mengele had already died in a swimming accident in Brazil in 1979.)

Despite the publisher's tolerance, Stern was a magazine known to be opposed to the propagation of Nazi ideas. Heidemann was frequently criticized by his colleagues for his avid interest in the Third Reich. Some dubbed him "the reporter with the Nazi bug." Others went even further and averred that he "was deeply stuck in the Nazi mud." Heidemann defended himself with vehemence, asking: "Am I a Nazi just because I search for new data about the Third Reich?" 3

It was November 1979 when Heidemann, through Tiefenthäler, was at last treated to a view of Stiefel's collection. He was incredulous at its magnitude and importance. Before him, so he then believed, lay the surviving splendor of the Third Reich, an incredible array of priceless relics plus the cultural remains of Adolf Hitler—not just his paintings and sketches, with many rare and exciting letters, but an intimate, personal diary of incalculable value to historians. The unexpected discovery inflamed Heidemann almost to madness. Here was the greatest news story of the twentieth century, if he could only close his fist on it.

As an aggressive journalist, however, he wanted to locate the rest of the diaries and paintings. Stiefel and Tiefenthäler promised to persuade the anonymous source to step forward, but Kujau was intractable. His objection, he said, was that Stern was too anti-Hitler and thus would not appreciate or understand the diaries. Also, his own source, the East German general, would refuse to do any further business with Kujau if his identity were revealed. His real reason for refusing to meet Heidemann was, of course, that he feared that publicity in Stern would expose the diary as a fake, and that exposure could lead to the detec-
tion of all his forgeries: the hundreds of counterfeit letters, sketches, memos, speeches, and paintings he had sold for huge prices. Although Kujau had long before taken steps to cover his tracks and hide his identity by operating as a dealer under the name of Konrad Fischer, he sensed danger in the tremendous enthusiasm of Heidemann, who as a professional newsman would certainly give worldwide publicity to the diary. For nearly a year Kujau would under no circumstances see or talk to the Stern reporter.

Meanwhile, since Heidemann could not locate the owner of the diary, he decided to check for himself the tale of the plane crash near Dresden. Although nobody then knew it, this event was the only part of the vast fabric of lies and half-truths woven by Kujau that was susceptible of verification. Heidemann discovered that at the very end of the war, as the Russians were smashing their way into Berlin, Martin Bormann had implemented Hitler's final strategy, Operation Seraglio, by which the most valued personnel and equipment were to be transferred by airlift to Hitler's headquarters near Berchtesgaden. According to Hans Baur, who had lost a leg and been captured in his attempt to escape from Berlin following Hitler's suicide, a group of planes left Berlin five days after Hitler's last birthday (April 20, 1945). In his memoirs, Hitler's Pilot, Baur recorded the story of the final flight:

Hitler's last birthday (April 20, 1945) was a lugubrious affair. He gave instructions that as many personnel as possible should be flown out. Every night after that my machine carried people out to the south. The only airfield we had now was Gatou . . . it was from here that people were flown out to Munich and Salzburg for the last time. . . . The last [plane] to leave was piloted by Major Gundlfinger. . . . When he finally took off we reckoned he would have nearly an hour's daylight flying before he reached his destination. All the other planes that flew during the night reported their safe arrival . . . but we heard nothing of Gundlfinger's plane.

Hitler was very upset at this, because one of his favorite personal servants was with this plane.

"And I entrusted him with extremely valuable documents which would show posterity the truth about my actions!" he exclaimed in dismay.

It was eight years before it was discovered that Gundlfinger's plane had been shot down . . . in daylight. The machine was burnt out. Peasants buried the bodies that were found in the wreckage.4

Accompanied by Stern's crack research expert, Thomas Walde, Heidemann flew to Boernersdorfer, the little town where the plane had crashed and burned. There he heard rumors of an iron chest of papers
that had been hidden away in a barn loft for nearly forty years. He chatted with the old peasants in the neighborhood who recalled the event. He even photographed the graves of the crash victims. Armed with this fresh evidence of the diary's authenticity, Heidemann began making offers via Tiefenthäler to the reluctant Konrad Fischer. And Tiefenthäler, in turn, pressed Fischer-Kujau to accept the fortune that was being thrust upon him. Heidemann's initial offer was one million marks, about $400,000. Kujau was incredulous and bewildered by this potential fortune, but as he had no further diaries to offer, he maintained his anonymity.

The estimated number of diaries supposedly recovered from the plane crash kept escalating. Heidemann at first was led to believe that there were only six. Then August Priesack of Munich, who had officially examined and acclaimed as genuine the 1935 diary on loan to Stiefel, calculated that since the one known volume covered a six-month period, all the diaries, counting from November 1932 when Hitler was elected chancellor until his suicide on April 30, 1945, should amount to twenty-seven. Kujau said later: "At the time [I first met him] Heidemann was talking about six volumes. The number twenty-seven popped out of the brain of Priesack. We were all in a restaurant, and Priesack added the diaries up to twenty-seven, writing on a beer label. Heidemann would love to have had at least eighty." 5

Heidemann faced another problem. Should his offer be accepted, he still had to raise the money, and his relationship with Stern had deteriorated. Some of the editors didn't believe his story about the diaries, the management had refused to give him a raise, and most annoying of all, they had declined to assign him to any further Nazi stories. Clearly they felt that his zeal for the Third Reich should be curbed before it became an uncontrollable obsession.

Heidemann cast about wildly for a partner to help him finance the purchase of the diaries, of which three (not yet written) were, according to Kujau, in America and several others (not yet written) in East Germany. Having unsuccessfully tried to sell Goering's yacht, Heidemann toyed with the idea of raising money by offering a half-share in it. He approached an interested millionaire in the Netherlands. He even considered as a partner British historian David Irving, who had written several books about the Third Reich. At this point in his desperate search for someone to finance the purchase of the diaries not yet written and not even for sale, the research specialist Thomas Walde, offered to help. Walde had a great deal of confidence in Heidemann's ability to ferret out both the hidden documents and the facts
about them. Spurred by his interest, Heidemann authorized Tiefenthaeler to up the offer for the diaries to two million marks. And Tiefenthaeler, in an unguarded moment, gave Heidemann the name of the diary owner—"Konrad Fischer." It was an incredible blunder. In a world of rogues, where huge sums change hands and all human values are based upon money, anyone who ceases to be of use is jettisoned. Heidemann had the name he wanted and so now had only a limited use for Tiefenthaeler.

Heidemann and Walde became human bloodhounds. In searching for Konrad Fischer, they rooted through telephone directories of Stuttgart and every hamlet in the vicinity. They mortgaged their days and nights to the quest. But Fischer-Kujau, living with Edith Lieblang, had craftily registered only her name in the telephone books.

Heidemann took time out to prepare a presentation to Stern in which he outlined the entire situation. He wrote down, with appropriate embellishment, all the information he'd picked up about the crashed plane. He tabulated the cost of the diaries project. For about two million marks, Stern could acquire twenty-seven Hitler diaries, an unpublished third volume of Mein Kampf (contemplated by Kujau but never written), and the opera Wieland der Schmied, supposedly written by Hitler in collaboration with schoolmate August Kubizek. At the end of the outline, Heidemann noted that if Gruner & Jahr, owners and publishers of Stern, found the price too high, he would try to find a first-run publisher in the United States and give the West German rights to Stern. The company agreed to finance the purchase.

Under pressure from Heidemann, Tiefenthaeler now conveyed the latest offer to Kujau in writing:

Dear Conny,

I've got something to tell you which I don't think we should discuss on the telephone because you never know if the line is bugged or not. . . .

A large Hamburg publishing company has come to me with a request that I should establish contact between you and them. It's about the diaries of A.H. which you have or could obtain. I was quoted an offer of 2 million marks. . . . In addition, these gentlemen were not so much interested in possessing the diaries as in taking photocopies. The diaries could stay, as before, in your possession. Should you indicate that you are interested in making contact, this would be done as quickly as possible. The whole thing would, of course, be handled in strict confidence, and silence on both sides is a
precondition. Should you prefer gold to currency, there would be an unlimited amount.\textsuperscript{6}

To this letter Kujau made no reply. And in the ever-widening intrigue that already involved (1) two million marks, (2) a voracious publisher, (3) a mad reporter, and (4) a frantic agent intent on getting his 10 percent, only Kujau remained unruffled.
While Herr Ten Percent was dispatching fruitless appeals to the elusive Kujau, Heidemann continued to dog the footsteps of Konrad Fischer with the relentless determination of a German Javert. Eventually, purely by accident, he discovered that Fischer lived with a girlfriend, Edith Lieblang. This provided the clue the reporter was looking for. He quickly found out that his quarry was listed in the telephone book under the name Lieblang.

An avid believer in the adage “money talks,” Heidemann decided to let money do most of the talking during his first meeting with Kujau alias Fischer alias Lieblang. To obtain the necessary funds, Heidemann approached Manfred Fischer (no relation to Fischer-Kujau), the managing director of Gruner & Jahr, parent company of Stern. A partner in the plan to buy the diaries and known for his speedy decisions, Fischer was immensely excited at the prospect of actually landing the biggest prize in journalistic history. There was plenty of money at Fischer’s fingertips. Gruner & Jahr’s holdings included not only Stern but a network of West German magazines, with outlets in Spain, France, and the United States, where it owned Parents and Young Miss. The firm’s annual gross from twenty periodicals was about half a billion dollars.

Fischer and Heidemann reached a speedy agreement. Heidemann would offer 85,000 marks for each of the twenty-seven volumes. For the third volume of Mein Kampf Gruner & Jahr would offer 200,000 marks and for the balance of the papers and paintings a total of 500,000 marks. Heidemann required 200,000 marks as a down payment. With this sum he planned to fly to Stuttgart that very night and close the deal.

Without taking a single step to verify the authenticity of the diaries, Manfred Fischer instructed the company accountant, Peter Kuehsel,
to provide the 200,000 marks in cash. It was almost seven o'clock in the evening, and Kuehsel protested that the banks were closed, but Fischer merely repeated his order. Thinking that the Deutsche Bank at the Hamburg airport might still be open, Heidemann and Kuehsel sped there in a car, and an astonished but obliging cashier counted out the money. Heidemann put the 200,000 in 100-, 500-, and 1,000-mark notes into his valise and hopped the first plane to Stuttgart.

Here is Kujau's later version of his first contact with the reporter:

One evening—it must have been around Christmas of 1980 [actually January 1981)—I was home watching the news. The telephone rang. "My name is Heidemann from the Stern magazine in Hamburg," the caller said. "I'm ready to pay two million marks for the Hitler diaries." He did not stop talking. He pitched at me all the names of famous Nazi leaders with whom he was personally acquainted. . . . Finally he threatened if I refused to help him in his research on the diaries, he would close my shop. I asked his address in Hamburg, and he said, "I am standing in a telephone booth about twenty meters from your house." . . .

I was utterly dumbstruck. I wasn't in the mood to let him come up. My girl friend [Edith] had just prepared dinner, and we wanted to get into bed right afterward. Still, I didn't dare offend this man who had tracked me right to my door, so I said, "By all means, come on up."

[Once] in my living room, he steered right to the point. "You must turn over to me instantly the volume locked up in the safe of your colleague-friend Fritz Stiefel. And I must have the other twenty-seven volumes."1

Realizing that his little "joke" had placed him in an untenable position, Kujau listened and inwardly squirmed. Finally his terror turned to anger. He shouted at Heidemann: "Let me alone with your diaries. I don't know anything about them." Kujau recalled: "Just as I was going to throw him out, he lit his first bomb. He opened his small valise, then a secret drawer in the valise, and a shower of 500-mark banknotes exploded into the open. Heidemann watched me, then said: 'This is your 100,000 marks. It belongs to you, if you promise to get me the diaries.'"2

Kujau was unaware, of course, that members of the top brass of Stern, including Manfred Fischer, were in a state of wild turmoil over the prospect of landing the actual handwritten diaries of the world's most infamous tyrant, diaries that would for the first time disclose Hitler's real motives and take the world right inside his aberrant mind.

Kujau made no reply to Heidemann's offer. No amount of money could summon new diaries out of a vacuum. Then Gerd Heidemann
closed the money valise slowly. He excused himself for a moment and returned with a suitcase. Unsnapping the locks, he lifted the cover and lobbed his second and most powerful bomb at Kujau.

Neatly folded in the suitcase lay the blue-gray uniform of Air Marshal Hermann Goering—exactly what Kujau needed to complete his famous set of original uniforms of the leading Nazis. He already had uniforms of Hitler, Himmler, Rommel, and Heydrich the Hangman. Kujau was dazzled speechless at the sight of the one thing in the world he most coveted—a collector's item of extraordinary rarity and value that would make his uniform collection of Third Reich leaders the finest in the world.

Heidemann never took his eyes off his quarry. He watched the fish strike at his lure. He let him run with the bait for a few dramatic seconds, then set the hook: "If you get me the diaries, this uniform is yours. Otherwise it is not for sale at any price." Kujau later recalled: "How often I was nearly ready to buy an imitation of a Goering uniform. Now I was actually looking at the original. Even the label of Goering's tailor was sewed in. I swallowed and tried to speak but I could only fumble with words. Finally I came out with, 'I... will... try... it.'" 3

Heidemann cautioned Kujau: "Right now, Herr Fischer, we've got to keep everything a secret. It would be best not to reveal the connection with Stern. Listen: This is a very complicated, very secret project. And there is only a small circle of people at Stern who know about it." 4

By then it was three in the morning. Heidemann kept on talking, Kujau nodded as words gushed unceasingly from his visitor. Over and over again Heidemann warned Kujau to keep the project secret. He explained that he had located Martin Bormann, Hitler's intimate and once the second most powerful man in Nazi Germany, and planned to meet with him in neutral Switzerland and show him the diaries. It would be the most sensational maneuver of the century. At last Heidemann rose to go, taking with him the cash and the Goering uniform. When he tried to start his rented car, the battery was dead. Kujau, who perceives symbolism in every event, later reflected that it was a bad start for the Hitler diaries.

The next day, however, Heidemann was back to put the finishing touches on their agreement. He offered 150,000 marks (about $60,000) for the diary in Fritz Stiefel's safe, but he insisted that Kujau telephone Stiefel instantly. Kujau pretended to call but chatted instead with Edith. Then he announced to Heidemann that Stiefel didn't answer and was probably on vacation. Kujau bragged about an offer from the United States, where someone wanted to buy all the diaries for two
million dollars. Lies flew between these two men who believed, or pretended to believe, each other. Kujau promised to leave three diaries at his lawyer's office for security (the lawyer later confirmed that Kujau did so, although he probably did not examine the documents the forger left with him). In the end, Heidemann left without any diaries. However, he entrusted the Goering uniform (which subsequently turned out to be a fake) with Kujau, and in return, Kujau presented Heidemann with a "rare" oil painting by Hitler.

Within a few days, about the middle of January 1981, Kujau turned over to Heidemann a quickly fabricated mid-1932 diary to begin the long series. The reporter took it at once to Manfred Fischer. To the disgust of Peter Koch, editor of Stern, a number of high-on-the-staff reporters and editors had been let in on the operation. They were present at the dramatic moment when Heidemann delivered the diary.

And did Manfred Fischer react to the diary with that skepticism which marks all experienced newsmen? Did he cast upon the volume his sharp, questioning eye? No, he did not. By his own admission, the mere touch of this cheap, dime-store notebook gave him a sensual thrill that was close to ecstasy. Waves of almost orgasmic joy swept over him as he fondled the tea-stained pages and caressed the sleazy leatherette cover. His staff gathered around him to rejoice in collective ecstasy and to touch the precious volume. Seldom in history has there been so flagrant an exhibition of the willing suspension of disbelief. These grown-up men actually believed that these repetitive platitudes had been penned by the man whose fiery, impassioned harangues had led the Germans to destruction, by the inspired demagogue who had conquered most of Europe. The magic name of Hitler had stripped these tough newsmen of their wits. They read with loud acclaim and exclamations of joy the tedious meanderings attributed to Hitler. Anyone else would have glanced over the pages of insignificant, ho-hum scribblings and gone to sleep. Not this aggregation of Stern's experts. They were in quest of the unutterable pedantic and they had found it. In their hands they held the quintessence of the banal, and they rejoiced. They slapped one another on the back and swapped compliments on the great find. They read aloud passages from the flat, punctured prose of Kujau and winked knowingly and nodded. They caressed the crudely imitated Old Gothic script on which the ink was barely dry and buoyantly recalled the excitement of the Hitler years.

Once unanimous in their belief that the writings were authentic, they set about the task of making the acquisition top secret. They acted precisely like a tiny band of twelve-year-old schoolboys creating a new
secret society. *Stern* already had in the works another top secret project: Operation Martin, devoted to the quest for Martin Bormann, who, as all prudent scholars were then aware from a vast amount of evidence, had died early in May 1945. By 1972 sixteen different Bormanns had been arrested in South America; all were discovered to be the "wrong man" and released. However, the quest continued in Spain, South America, and elsewhere and provided a lot of fun and excitement for newsmen and Israeli avengers.

Manfred Fischer told his crew that lives were in danger. Secrecy was essential to protect the truck drivers who had risked their lives to smuggle the diary out of East Germany. On a bitter cold night in January, the top echelon of *Stern* met to give the project a code name. The whispering circle of scoop-minded editors invented the designation "Operation Green Vault"—a name they then believed would become immortal in the history of journalism. And so it did, but not in the way they hoped. As Karl Heinz Janssen later put it: "The ball of disaster had now started to roll at the Affenfelsen [monkey cage; literally, Rock of Apes] on the Alster." 5

As the editors at *Stern* cavorted gleefully on "the Rock of Apes," Kujau in Stuttgart was facing the problem of creating more diaries. The balding little man with the crafty eye of a cheating skat player now perceived the full extent of his opportunity to remake the character of Hitler. He would write, as Heidemann demanded, a series of diaries and in so doing would bestow upon the Fuehrer a new personality. He would transform the tyrant who had no political conscience into "Mr. Nice Guy." Kujau felt a power welling within him. He, the little military relics dealer, could project himself into Hitler's mind and take control over a dead Messiah. He could alter or distort history. Even the learned professors at the universities would slavishly praise and consider his thoughts. Indeed, he could create the future blueprint for the neo-Nazis. His ability to imitate Hitler's handwriting could turn him into a prophet—if he could pull off this masterpiece of forgery.

Kujau worked out a formula for producing the diaries with speed. Heidemann was in a hurry, and Kujau proposed to oblige him. Although the first diary—the one still in Stiefel's possession—had been based mainly on a magazine article, the forger was aware that he needed more reliable and more detailed sources. He already had five or six additional dime-store notebooks, a supply of Pelikan ink, a rampant imagination, and most vital of all, the knack for telling a convincing lie. Plus this, Kujau had built up an excellent working library of more than four hundred books and hundreds of periodicals about the Third Reich. Most of his books he marked with slips of
The Hitler Diaries

paper—Edith helped—to clue him into the more colorful or interesting passages.

Kujau also pumped his ex-Nazi friends for information about Hitler. He knew some of the people who had been friendly with Eva Braun, and he had accumulated a vast file of anecdotes about the mistress and eventually the wife of Hitler. One of the most useful sources, Kujau later said, was Die Bild Zeitung, a mass-media pictorial journal with a right-wing, slightly pro-Nazi slant (it later published an in-depth story about Kujau's forgeries, lampooning the left-wing, conservative Stern). “I’m really grateful to Die Bild Zeitung,” Kujau told London Times reporter Gitta Sereny, laughing. “Their long stories on Hitler and Eva Braun provided a rich harvest.”

Kujau’s schedule called for three diaries a month. He maintained this rigorous schedule by working on the diaries from midnight until three or four in the morning in his second floor office. When Edith Lieblang wondered why he didn’t come to bed until early in the morning, he explained that he was writing a series of articles on the Nazis for Stern magazine. His method of composition was simple. He cribbed the diary dates from Max Domarus’s two-volume work Hitler’s Speeches and Proclamations, then filled in the skeleton of facts with data from other books or old newspapers, supplementing the factual information with the spontaneous inspirations of his imagination. The formula worked so well that Kujau once, so he claimed, whipped out an entire volume in three hours and another time produced three volumes in three days.

When his supply of notebooks ran out, Kujau flew to Berlin in June and again in the fall of 1981 to buy more of them. He had bought the first notebooks in a state department store in Bautzen, East Germany, but he acquired his fresh supplies at a store on Friedrich Street near the Weidendammer Bridge. In 1982 he purchased four more notebooks in a state department store in Goerlitz, East Germany.

Kujau completed the first three new diaries in three weeks, still unaware of the madness going on at the Rock of Apes on the Alster. In Hamburg, the editorial staff of Stern had set up a suite of offices exclusively devoted to Operation Green Vault. There, in the annex to the main building, Thomas Walde, expert in contemporary history, and Leo Pesch, a youthful journalist with a history degree, worked with two secretaries. They were prepared to run a thorough check on every volume as it arrived and to transcribe it into modern German. There was a fearsome suspense at Stern as the editors awaited news of further diaries.

As the ink was drying on the last page of the three diaries, Kujau
telephoned Heidemann with the good news. It was Tuesday, February 17, 1981, at seven o'clock in the evening. Heidemann, who had already taken 200,000 German marks from Stern on little more than his promises, was crazed with joy and enthusiasm when he heard that three more diaries "had arrived." He told Kujau to take the night train from Stuttgart to Hamburg. Instead, Kujau took the nine o'clock Lufthansa, but the airport at Hamburg was closed down because of fog and ice, and the plane had to land in Hanover. Three hours later Kujau reached Heidemann's apartment by taxi. Heidemann had asked him to change taxis en route just in case he was followed.

Kujau later recalled what happened when he handed the three diaries to the eager Stern reporter:

Heidemann produced only 35,000 of his promised 120,000 marks. He explained that "I must first get an expert opinion about these volumes."

On the telephone he'd told me "the money lies before me on the table." But the worst thing was, I was hungry, and when I asked him to give me something to eat, he did not listen to me and drove me to his Goering yacht and tried to sell me his yacht instead of giving me the promised money. On the yacht there wasn't a thing to eat, not even champagne, and I was forced to look through Heidemann's guest book with all the names of the great Nazis. Finally it was time for the six o'clock afternoon plane back to Stuttgart, and I swore to myself: "This is one man you'll never see again."7

The next day Heidemann called and smoothed things over. And on that day, February 18, 1981, the records show that Heidemann turned over three diaries to Manfred Fischer. The price he named: 85,000 marks. Heidemann pledged that he would deliver twenty-seven diaries before the middle of 1981 for a total of 2,200,000 marks. And Dr. Fischer signed the first check for one million marks.

Heidemann's domineering personality and duplicity constantly irritated Kujau, and clashes between the two were frequent. Neither dared break up the winning combination, however, for Stern was delighted with the fabricated diaries and was shelling out money as fast as they could be delivered. Kujau acquired two fancy residences, both of which he put in Edith's name. A handsome apartment in Stuttgart cost him 230,000 marks with a down payment of 100,000. In Bletigheim-Bissingen he purchased a house for 660,000 marks with a down payment of 500,000 marks (about $200,000) in cash. Kujau's plan, almost immediately copied by Heidemann, was to build a museum of World War I and World War II relics. When Heidemann visited Kujau's private
museum, he was "quite upset," Kujau recalled. "He explained that he himself planned to establish a museum . . . and demanded that I limit my collection to the period of World War I and leave to him the exclusive exhibit of Third Reich collections." And when Heidemann spotted the "marvelous glass-blue uniform" of Marshal Goering in a showcase at Kujau's new place—the uniform he had presented to Kujau earlier—he burst out, "The uniform was only a loan, not a gift. I want it back." Kujau was furious. Eventually Heidemann calmed down and retracted his demand. On his next visit he even bought a Hitler uniform. Kujau did not want to sell it and demanded an outrageously high price—100,000 marks—but Heidemann calmly took the money out of a little plastic bag and paid the sum in cash.

Alluding to the collections of Nazi relics he and Kujau had amassed, Heidemann observed: "We are the guardians of the Holy Grail."
"Right from the very start," a German journalist said to me, "the editors at Stern had under their noses the damning evidence that the diaries were faked. They'd published Kujau's forgeries before, you know—those rhymes supposedly by Corporal Hitler. And they were aware that the first 'Hitler diary' came from the same source—Fritz Stiefel's collection." As you know, Eberhard Jaeckel published a bunch of these Kujau-Hitler poems, all provided by Stiefel, in a book on the early writings of Hitler. Jaeckel got into trouble when a clever Munich archivist pointed out that one of the poems was actually written by the Nazi poet Herybert Menzel, and therefore couldn't possibly have been written during World War I. Jaeckel then printed a warning that some of the poems were highly suspect." A faint smile of contempt flickered over the journalist's face (he worked for a rival of Stern). "So what did Stern do when they realized the poems and the diary came from the same place? They made a routine check and dropped the matter."

Actually, what took place at Stern was more than a routine check. When the editorial department realized that the suspect poems and the original diary had a common origin, a wave of fear and horror crashed over "the Rock of Apes," and Stern decided to make a full inquiry into the provenance of the suspected poems. They found out, of course, that the poems had come from Kujau. At this point, the editors had enough evidence to clap the forger behind bars. Instead of informing the police, however, they let the sly shoemaker's son talk his way out of the mess. The truth is that Heidemann and his associates were too submerged in a quagmire of euphoria to force an issue with Kujau. If there was anything amiss, they didn't want to know about it.

Thomas Walde, Heidemann's immediate superior, suggested asking Kujau point-blank whether the poems came from Kujau's collection.
The forger's reply was prompt and decisive: they did not come from his personal collection but had been obtained in East Germany. The entire gaggle of editors at Stern cackled with relief. To quiet their alarm, Kujau dashed off an original guarantee for the poem "Der Kamerad"—the authenticity of which had been questioned—signed with the enormous, bold, almost unreadable signature of the chief librarian in East Germany and addressed to Kujau's brother, "Major General Fischer," from the "State Archive for Literature":

Comrade Fischer:

I inform you that the text of the document "Der Kamerad" was originally written, in a slightly different form, by Xaver Kern in the year 1871. This verse was published repeatedly under different titles until 1942, always with slight textual variations. It was also published in 1956 in Volk and Wissen (East Germany, volume nine). I will send you a photocopy of the original within the next few days.

(Signed) SCHENK

The forger likely dashed off the authentication while roistering in a Stuttgart bar and after finishing it, cast about him in search of a suitable bogus name to sign to it. He selected Schenk, the German word for bartender.1

Jaeckel had meanwhile turned over to the Hamburg district attorney's office a group of seventy-six poems (all forged by Kujau) from the collection of Fritz Stiefel. He explained that they'd been published in his book on Hitler's youthful writings but were now under suspicion because of the presence of a Menzel poem among them. The department took two years to examine the suspect poems and in the summer of 1983 published its report. They found the poems to be forged, but by this time it was too late to save Stern from one of the worst scandals in the history of journalism.

To process the diaries as they arrived, Stern had established a special suite of offices in the annex to their main building where a small group of people worked solely on Operation Green Vault. In charge was Thomas Walde, who, although he held the title of chief of contemporary research, was actually a specialist in modern politics. His assistant, Leo Pesch, was a university graduate in history and an expert on the Reformation period. There were also two secretaries. The group was aided by Heidemann, who undoubtedly possessed more knowledge about the Hitler era than his two associates. The failure of Stern to provide a Third Reich expert was one reason for Kujau's initial success with the diaries.
As the ink dried on the diaries and they reached Stern’s offices, Walde and Pesch checked them over briefly, then had them reproduced in three photocopies and transcribed into modern German. Among the arrivals was a special volume devoted to Rudolf Hess, with details of his flight to England and Hitler’s own account of the role he had played in Hess’s peace mission. This separate volume occupied most of the attention of Walde and Pesch, who planned to publish Hitler’s account of the Hess flight to “test the waters” before releasing the other diaries. Their preoccupation with the Hess volume left them little time to examine the chronological diaries that were soon pouring in at the rate of almost one per week.

Even before Stern began a concerted attempt to establish the authenticity of the diaries, there were murmurs of incredulity and dissent among historians. Historian Eberhard Jaeckel, who had examined the original diary forged by Kujau, now declared that he was “extremely skeptical, first, from my knowledge of Hitler’s person, and also from my knowledge of the material.” Werner Maser, one of Germany’s most competent Third Reich experts and the author of a detailed biography of Hitler based upon the Fuehrer’s authentic handwriting, was contacted by Stern. He expressed incredulity. He pointed out that there was no evidence that Hitler ever kept a diary. The editors ignored Maser’s negative remark and furnished him no further information about the diaries.

When Gitta Sereny, a trilingual reporter for the London Sunday Times, was dispatched to look into the rumor that there were diaries of Adolf Hitler on the market, Heidemann gave her a royal welcome. She found his personal collection “breathtaking” and was enormously impressed by a letter from SS General Karl Wolff appointing Heidemann his literary heir and executor. Sereny was, she later reported, stunned by Heidemann’s collection of bogus Hitler paintings, which she immediately proclaimed to be genuine. She tried to track down the diaries, but the Sunday Times, trapped in an economy drive by owner Rupert Murdoch, refused to advance the money for a visit to Professor Eberhard Jaeckel in Stuttgart. There is, of course, the possibility that had the jaunt been approved, Sereny might have met Stiefel and Kujau. She said later that the Times had missed a chance to expose the entire fraud: “I could have stopped the whole goddam thing right there.”

While Kujau was scribbling the second installment of diaries, he got an urgent phone call from Heidemann, who was alarmed that Professor August Priesack, now on the alert because of the questioned Hitler poems, was investigating the NSDAP letterhead in the first diary, still in Stiefel’s safe. “A colleague of mine,” said Heidemann,
The Hitler Diaries

"has asked me to be more cautious. It's possible the diaries could be forged." Before Kujau could retort, Heidemann dropped the subject and urged Kujau to hurry up with the delivery of the next volume.

Noted historian David Irving also passed up an opportunity to condemn the Hitler diaries. He'd been invited to examine the Priesack collection for possible publication by Macmillan. Having previously been taken in by a spurious diary of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of German espionage, Irving was very wary. But Irving did make an astonishing discovery in the papers that Priesack showed him. In a letter purportedly written by Hermann Goering in 1944, the word Reichsmarschall in the letter was spelled Reichsmarsall, an orthographic blunder unlikely to have escaped the falcon eye of the former German ace. "By lunchtime," reads an entry in Irving's diary, "I was unfortunately satisfied that the Priesack collection is stuffed with fake documents." Since the entire collection of bogus documents in Priesack's collection had come from Stiefel, the question immediately arose as to what credence might be placed in other Hitler items, including the diary, in Stiefel's collection. Heidemann met this challenge by buying Priesack's entire collection for 30,000 marks in cash. This neat trick enabled him to avoid possible exposure from that quarter, although Irving's skepticism remained a lurking menace.

Concluding that it was wiser not to refine his forgeries—the cruder the better—Kujau stopped using the forged letterhead of the NSDAP that he had inserted in the first three diaries. On June 1, 1981, Heidemann picked up two more diaries. Of this visit Kujau later commented:

I'd just finished the fourth and fifth forged diaries, and Heidemann instantly was on the plane to Stuttgart. As he entered my house I asked for the rest of the money for the first three diaries. I didn't want to be put off with empty words as I had been after the initial delivery.

Heidemann then took out of his valise a package with this remark: "We agreed on 40,000 marks per diary. I've received three diaries—120,000 marks less 10 percent for my commission. [Heidemann had insisted upon a 10 percent commission from Kujau; he was also collecting an average bonus of 25,000 marks for each diary from Gruner & Jahr.] I paid you 35,000 marks in Hamburg. Here are 104,500 marks."

I did not open my mouth to discuss a thing. I took the money and I handed him diaries four and five. He leafed through them, then thrust them in his valise. Not a word about the missing letterheads of the NSDAP.

It was now clear to me that Heidemann knew the diaries were forgeries.
The editors at *Stern* received the new volumes with ecstatic acclaim, too eager or too greedy to detect the startling omission of the letterheads.

They muffed another chance to halt the impending cataract of disaster on the Alster when General Mohnke, in looking over the diaries, discovered that the wrong dates were recorded for the existence of the group forming Hitler's bodyguard, a very serious blunder on Kujau's part. As Hitler was known to have a photographic memory, such an error would under ordinary circumstances have marked the end of the forger's deception. But Heidemann insisted that it was a harmless slip on the Fuehrer's part and that any diary writer could make a small mistake, even the great dictator. With all his journalistic training, Heidemann did not know, or did not want to know, that even the tiniest error in any written record should alert a prudent historian and prompt a complete examination of the document under consideration. Later Kujau was to comment, "It's incredible how irresponsibly *Stern* handled the forged material." 8

Some of the editors at *Stern* were pressing Heidemann to reveal the source of the diaries. The "Bloodhound" protested that his source would dry up if he mentioned the name to anybody. As *Stern* began to implement Plan 3, a much-deliberated scheme by which the magazine would publish the account of Hess's flight to England first, partly to stir up interest in the diaries and partly to test the market, Heidemann became more and more alarmed. He feared the publication would lead to the disclosure of the entire scam by which he had bilked his trusting employers out of millions of marks. Not all the diaries had yet reached *Stern*, and there was more money to be pumped from the coffers of Gruner & Jahr so long as publication was delayed. In a confusing memo to Gerd Schulte-Hillen, who had succeeded Manfred Fischer as managing director of Gruner & Jahr, Heidemann tried to stall. He could not, he said, guarantee when the missing volumes would arrive, and asked: "How are sales negotiations to proceed if we cannot offer those who are interested a complete set of diaries?" He went on to list additional Hitler material that his "business associate" had told him would soon be offered:

1. Six diary-like volumes which Hitler wrote alongside the diaries which are known to us.
2. Adolf Hitler's handwritten memoirs, *My Life and Struggle for Germany*, written in the years 1942–44.
3. Hitler's book about women, in which there are said to be descriptions of his experiences with women.
4. Hitler's plan for the solution of the Jewish question, written after
the Wannsee Conference on 28 January 1942, in which he gives Himmler precise orders as to what is to happen to the Jews (eighteen handwritten pages).

5. Hitler’s handwritten Documents about Himmler, Ley and Others, including notes about the Jewish origins of those concerned.

6. Hitler’s notes from 18 April until his death on 30 April 1945.

7. Goebbels’s notes following Hitler’s suicide.

8. Hitler’s handwritten testament and marriage documents.

9. Hitler’s record about his alleged son in France.

10. Hitler’s papers about his genealogy and relatives.

11. Secret Thoughts about Different Military and Political Problems.


14. Hitler’s opera, Wieland the Blacksmith.9

No doubt some of the editors at Stern were convinced that the diaries were authentic but hesitated to let an expert pronounce on their great find for fear that he would spread the news of their discovery and thus tip off the competition. Operation Green Vault was an endeavor so top secret that it almost precluded examination of the diaries by an outside authority. What Stern’s editors did not know was that a real handwriting expert would have required only half a dozen words of Kujau’s amateurish forgery to pronounce upon it.

The secretive attitude of Stern was the fatal flaw in its operation. The history of forgeries is full of similar cases in which those who bought or owned fakes were destroyed by their own clandestine custodianship. In the fall of 1928, for example, the Atlantic Monthly, bulwark of staid philosophy and literary criticism, acquired a collection of newly discovered letters, diaries, and books purported to be Abraham Lincoln’s. They kept this discovery a dark secret from all authorities on Lincoln lest some “thieving historian” make off with their precious properties. Upon publication, however, the letters of Lincoln to Ann Rutledge and her letters to him, were instantly denounced as forgeries even by amateur scholars.10

But it was more than Stern’s secretive attitude that kept them from discovering that the diaries were fake. Their enthusiasm blinded them. The first volumes contained enough blunders to arouse the suspicions of any historian. The brief entries were trite and banal, lacking the incisive force of the dictator’s usual remarks. The notebook covers were made of cheap, artificial leather, totally unlike the sumptuous, gold-embossed bindings preferred by the Fuehrer. Several of those who examined the diaries commented on their dirty look: Kujau had poured tea over the leaves to give the volumes an antiquated ap-
pearance. Actually, even documents dating back four or five hundred years generally show little sign of aging unless they have been abused in some way. The staining of the pages should have been an instant tipoff, but the "experts" at Stern conveniently blamed the stains on the humidity in the hayloft where the diaries allegedly had been stored. Because nobody in Stern's office was old enough to remember the old German Gothic script, many of the writing errors committed by Kujau passed unnoticed. But even his typed notations, such as "Deputy of the Fuehrer," contained glaring errors: for example, the use of a modern U instead of the early U, with an umlaut. Any expert would instantly have detected this anachronism.

Stern missed a final, dramatic opportunity to expose the forged diaries. The dates of the volumes Kujau had delivered began with June 1932. Still in the possession of Fritz Stiefel was the original diary, for the first half of 1935. Without it, the series would be incomplete. Hence, Heidemann began putting tremendous pressure on Kujau to get the diary back from Stiefel. Once again, Kujau pretended to call Stiefel, then reported to Heidemann. "What a pity: Stiefel's forgotten the 1935 diary in his summer home in Italy." The reporter continued to fume: "If Stiefel doesn't return the 1935 diary at once, I'll put him in prison." 11

Finally, Kujau decided to appease Heidemann by copying the diary that Stiefel had on loan from him, this time using superior ink and more accurate handwriting. Heidemann turned the copy over to Stern—though having examined and memorized portions of Stiefel's copy, he must have known that Kujau had delivered a duplicate. In fact, shortly before the date scheduled for publication of the diaries, Heidemann again approached Kujau and offered 15,000 marks in cash for the 1935 diary in Stiefel's steel-doored room. This time, when Kujau requested the diary, Stiefel returned it. To Kujau's astonishment, however, Heidemann did not destroy this initial effort but asked only for a new first page with the title "Notes for the working team of the party." Kujau wrote the new page and Heidemann then delivered this very first forged diary to the editorial staff at Stern.

Even to those purblind newsmen, the coincidence of two diaries for the same period was suspicious. For a few minutes it appeared that the gig was up. But the alarm was quickly silenced by a specious explanation from Heidemann. Sometimes, he said, Hitler wrote double volumes, one for himself and one for the party. This satisfied the skeptics, and the editorial department had lost its final opportunity to expose the balding little man who was shortly to plunge them all into disgrace.

In death, as in life, the great dictator had mesmerized those around him and rendered them devoid of reason.
To get the top price for the Hitler diaries, *Stern* decided early in 1983 to issue a prospectus to all potential buyers—*Newsweek, Time, Paris Match,* and the Rupert Murdoch syndicate.

For a year and a half, the editors at *Stern* had maintained their excitement over the tedious, meandering comments of Kujau's Hitler. Apparently they were so ignorant of the Fuehrer and his character that they really imagined they were reading the thoughts of the great dictator. They had some four million dollars in the diaries, however, and they felt it was now time to find out if they were authentic.

There were available in Germany, England, and America many experts competent to pass judgment on the diaries. They included persons who had known Hitler intimately and historians who had studied his life and career. There were also experts in Hitler's script who could recognize it instantly and who could read with ease the Old Gothic hand in which the diary was penned.

Still alive in Germany were some of Hitler's aides and secretaries who had not only been with the Fuehrer every day over a period of years but were familiar with his handwriting, his ideas, and his mode of expression. Most of them could instantly have passed upon the authenticity from looking at nothing more than a typescript. They were experts on what went on in Hitler's mind, were living in retirement, and were easily accessible to *Stern.* Colonel Nicolaus von Below, age seventy-five, had served as Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant from 1937 to 1945. He was with the Fuehrer, standing at his side, during Germany's greatest triumphs and disasters. Only hours before Hitler killed himself, von Below had cosigned the dictator's last will and testament as a witness.

Gerda "Dara" Daranowsky Christian, age sixty-nine and residing in
Duesseldorf, had been termed by Hitler his “best secretary.” Gerda was near the Fuehrer during almost every crisis in his life. She was standing next to him when he heard the news that England had declared war on Germany, and she recalled the terrible pallor that spread over his face when he learned that the British had called his bluff. She was with Hitler in the bunker and was a guest at his marriage to Eva Braun and at the intimate, grim champagne party held only a few hours before the newlyweds carried out their suicide pact. Like any clever secretary, Gerda had taken so much dictation from Hitler that she knew precisely his manner of expressing himself and could often set down the end of a sentence before Hitler ever reached it.

SS Major Otto Guensche, age sixty-six, was (with time out for the combat duty he insisted upon) Hitler's adjutant from January 1943 until the end of the war. Guensche was at Hitler's elbow on July 20, 1944, during the bomb attempt on Hitler's life. Guensche's eardrums were pierced and his eyebrows burned off in the explosion. Nine months later he was present in the Berlin bunker when the Fuehrer made his final farewells to his staff, and he helped to cremate Hitler's body.

Gertrud "Traudl" Junge, age sixty-three and living in Munich, was Hitler's devoted secretary during the last days in the bunker. Hitler often dined—and flirted—with Traudl when she was a pretty young war widow. She too was a guest at Hitler's wedding on April 29, 1945. It was to Traudl that Hitler dictated his final will and his testament to the German nation. Traudl was intimately conversant with Hitler's habits, turns of expression, and handwriting.

Then there was Karl Wilhelm Krause, age seventy-two, Hitler's orderly and bodyguard from 1934 until 1939. Krause stuck so close to the Fuehrer that Hitler jokingly called him his Schatten (Shadow). Krause knew all the intimate details of Hitler's life. He was the last to see the Fuehrer every night after the dictator had donned his nightgown and crawled into bed, and the first to see him in the morning when Hitler awakened and asked the orderly to read him the latest telegrams and newspapers. Krause could have determined unequivocally whether Hitler ever kept a diary.

Christa Schroeder, age seventy-six, had also been personal secretary and, in a sense, intimate friend and confidante to Hitler. Christa was with the Fuehrer for twelve years, almost the entire span of his career in power. She was at his side when the news of the French surrender arrived and recalled later that he was "shaken by a frantic exuberance." She was with Hitler in the bunker and dined with him on April 20, 1945, his last birthday, after which Hitler insisted that she leave while there
was still time to escape. He put her on one of the last planes out of Berlin.

Johanna Wolf, age eighty-three, had been Hitler's chief private secretary. It was to her that the Fuehrer observed, when Czechoslovakia surrendered to him without a battle, "I shall go down in history as the greatest German." Johanna left Hitler, at his insistence, only ten days before his death.

Lieutenant Colonel Max Wuensche, age sixty-nine, was Hitler's ordnance officer from 1938 until 1940; and Richard Schulze-Kossens, age sixty-nine, was Hitler's adjutant from October 27, 1942, until mid-December, 1944 (with brief intervals of combat duty) and head of the SS-Begleitkommando, the group responsible for the Fuehrer's personal safety. Hitler bestowed upon Schulze an almost avuncular affection.

There were other experts available to Stern. One of the world's leading manuscript dealers, Klaus Mecklenberg of the old firm of Stargardt in Marburg, Germany, reads the outmoded Gothic hand with ease and would require no more than two or three seconds to make a positive determination of Hitler's script. Peter Jahn, the genial expert on Hitler's paintings, was a member of the committee personally selected by the Fuehrer in the mid-1930s to round up and authenticate all the paintings attributed to him. Peter has been a leading authority on Hitler's artwork for more than fifty years. And finally, there was a group of skilled historians who had spent years in studying the life and career of Hitler: notably, in America, John Toland, author of an outstanding biography of the dictator (1976); and in Germany, Werner Maser, whose Hitler Letters and Notes (1973) is based upon letters and speeches all set down in the Fuehrer's own hand.

Given this array of available experts, any one of whom could have given a devastatingly accurate off-the-cuff analysis of the diaries and the accompanying letters, speeches, and paintings, what did the Stern editors do? They made an "aggressive search" for competent judges and came up with probably the only "experts" who would concur that the diaries were genuine. To these presumed authorities they submitted three (sometimes four) pages, not originals but photocopies, from the Kujau-Hitler diaries. With these pages they provided for comparison five examples of Hitler's authentic handwriting from the Federal Archive in Coblenz, Germany. It was ominous that Stern chose experts not already conversant with Hitler's script, two of whom could not read German.

In its subsequent report to the London Times, Time, Newsweek, and other prospects, Stern chronicled the results:
The famous American officially recognized expert Ordway Hilton ... concluded: "[The diary] was written by Hitler." Even the experts of the office of the District Attorney for the state of Rheinland-Pfalz and staff experts for the Federal Archive in Coblenz ascertained on the basis of the documents presented: "With a probability bordering on certainty, the manuscripts in question come from Hitler." And Dr. Max Frei-Sulzer ... one of the most prominent European handwriting authorities, [reported]: "The range of forms and the physiological characteristics of authentic handwriting features and signatures of Adolf Hitler also occur in precisely the same configuration in the documents examined. There can be no doubt that these documents were written by Adolf Hitler personally."²

Now ready for the Big Sell, Stern prepared a glowing account of the discovery, authentication, and importance of the diaries. It was, by and large, a presentation that would have excited the approval and envy of Joseph Goebbels, for unknown to Stern there was scarcely a true word in it, yet it carried the ring of truth. It had the simple, prosaic narrative style of the Bible; one could hardly contradict it without appearing to be an iconoclast.

The memorandum dragged along like a scotched snake. For thirty-two pages the editors dilated on the history of the diaries. Apparently they wanted to make sure that the reader was drowsy before they delivered the punch lines. According to Newsweek's much revitalized version, they explained that when Martin Bormann activated Operation Seraglio, his plan to transfer Nazi headquarters to Berchtesgaden, two planes left Berlin at dawn, one carrying Hitler's private documents in the charge of Wilhelm Arndt, Hitler's valet. When word reached Berlin that evening that one of the planes had crashed, the Fuehrer's chief pilot, Hans Baur, reported the loss. Told that the downed plane was the one on which Arndt was a passenger, "Hitler expressed perfunctory regret over the death of his valet. Then he shouted: 'In that plane were all my private archives, what I had intended as a testimony for posterity! It is a catastrophe!' Nine days later Adolf Hitler was dead. For all that his official family knew, the diaries were lost—or had never existed."

The story went on to tell of Heidemann's discovery that Friedrich Anton Gundlfinger, pilot of the plane, was buried near Boernersdorf; of Heidemann's visit, with Walde, to the village churchyard, where they found the graves of Arndt and Gundlfinger; and of Heidemann's interview with farmer Richard Elbe, who had witnessed the crash.
The plane, Elbe said, had fallen on its back and caught fire; people were still screaming inside. Villagers hovered around the wreck grabbing what they could from the flames. . . .

Probing deeper, Heidemann learned that Nazi troops had arrived on the scene soon after the crash. And he was told about odd bits of paper that had been thrown out of the wreck. There were sketches of Hitler’s parents and of Eva Braun. There was a note dated 1909 in which someone, presumably art student Adolf Hitler, wrote: “Dear Professor, May I send you 10 of my drawings?” There was Hitler’s Iron Cross from World War I. And, at last, Heidemann was told about a metal box full of notebooks marked “Property of the Fuehrer.”

This appealing tale won the enthusiastic interest of nearly all the prospects on Stern’s list. The memorandum continued in the present tense, a favorite device of German authors designed to leave the reader breathless with excitement, but the information it suppressed—precisely how the diaries were hidden and precisely how they got to Stern—was the information that everybody on the list of possible buyers wanted to know. Not many realized that the lack of such data is characteristic of nearly all forgeries. The provenance of a fake is always ambiguous. If the forger does reveal his source, it turns out to be someone who is dead, or who has just left for parts unknown, or whose life or reputation would be jeopardized if his name is revealed.

At first, in their effort to sell the diaries, Stern put out tentative feelers. In February 1983 they approached Lynn Nesbit, a literary agent in New York, with the suggestion that she represent Stern in vending periodical and syndicate rights to excerpts from the diaries. The New York Times quoted the agent:

“I was selling three parts that would be running in Der Stern, containing valuable documents from the Third Reich, from which the American magazines and syndicates could draw,” the literary agent, Lynn Nesbit, said yesterday. . . .

Miss Nesbit, senior vice-president of International Creative Management, would not disclose the asking price except to say, “Stern paid millions for all the material, so they were looking for the biggest bidder.”

She added, “When I took on the magazine rights, Bantam was apparently going to do the book.”

When the plan to sell portions of the diaries through a literary agent collapsed, Stern decided to hold an auction sale. The editors set up an impressive exhibit room in the huge vault of a Swiss bank. Here, amid the terrifying surroundings of Nazi memorabilia—battle flags, portraits of Hitler, and all the awesome trappings of the Third Reich—they
displayed the forged paintings, letters, and manuscripts. The centerpiece, the stellar exhibit, was a two-foot-high pile of diaries—sixty-two volumes in cheap, black (one was blue) imitation leather bindings, each adorned with a garish red seal—displayed against a background of swastika banners. For the visitor, Heidemann would step forward and reverently turn the pages of the diaries.

The prospects who looked at the diaries noted that the entries were generally brief, about three to five on a page, separated by two or three lines of space. Many volumes started simply with the months written in the middle of a clean page. There was writing only on the right-hand side; the left-hand pages were blank. Often, under the name of the month, there was a record of events followed by what appeared to be a personal memo from the diarist to himself, usually headed “Personal” or “Additional Thoughts” and all signed by Hitler.

Some of the pages were browned at the edges, apparently damaged by exposure to damp. Other pages were held only loosely by the stitching. On some, the spine of the binding was chipped. Careful observers noted the signatures of Bormann and Hess several times. In the later entries, especially those supposedly written in the bunker, the writing became sloppy and sloped downward, dates further and further apart. Finally, after April 15, 1945—two weeks before Hitler killed himself—there were no more dates, only scrawls.

Rupert Murdoch, the Midas-fingered Australian publisher whose News International corporation controlled thirty newspapers, three TV companies, and four book publishers, expressed a keen interest in the diaries. He hadn’t seen them, but the prospect of spreading Hitler’s private views to millions of people apparently appealed to the sensation-minded magnate. For him, the purpose of newspapers was not to inform or instruct but to entertain, and what could be more entertaining than the aberrant opinions of the greatest tyrant in history? One of Murdoch’s main fears was that the Israeli avengers might heist the diaries before he could get his hands on them.

As owner of the Times and the Sunday Times of London, which he had purchased in 1981, Murdoch had signed an agreement to respect the integrity of the Times; but as Hitler himself often observed, agreements are made to be broken: “I would sign a treaty today and break it tomorrow,” he frequently said, “if it would serve my country’s cause.” Still, Murdoch was wary and wanted proof that the diaries were genuine.

Selected by the Times to inspect the diaries, then ensconced in a Swiss bank vault, was Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper, Lord Dacre, an experienced historian and an expert on the Third Reich. A logical
choice for this responsible task (although he spoke little German), Trevor-Roper was not much liked by Murdoch, who considered him a flotsam-and-jetsam scholar and resented his seedy, tweedy arrogance. Born in Northumberland on January 15, 1914, Trevor-Roper was educated at Oxford, where he took first-class honors in modern history and ultimately rose to be Regius Professor of Modern History. His *Last Days of Hitler* (London, 1947) is considered a classic work on the Götzterdammerung of the Nazi regime, although recent disclosures by the Soviets have somewhat outdated it. Trevor-Roper had also edited *Hitler's War Directives, 1939-45*, an excellent documentation of the Fuehrer's strategy during World War II. In 1979 Sir Hugh got a fresh print-up in Burke's *Peerage* when Margaret Thatcher raised him to the nobility. He became Lord Dacre, honorary fellow of two Oxford colleges, a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and member of three exclusive clubs.

In 1961 Trevor-Roper got involved in a historic confrontation with A.J.P. Taylor, who contended in his book *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York, 1961) that Trevor-Roper attributed to the Nazi dictator ideas that were his own, not Hitler's. Trevor-Roper retaliated with an attack on Taylor as an "apologist for Hitler." The bitter controversy was never fully resolved.

The Nazi era was only one of Lord Dacre's historic specialties. He had delved deep into the arcane and produced scholarly treatises on the ancient Scottish constitution, the seventeenth century witch hunt in Europe, and the celebrated "Hermit of Peking," Edmund Backhouse. Lord Dacre was and is a skilled, prudent historian, yet his innate skepticism could not protect him against the clever machinations of Stern.

Only hours before Trevor-Roper left for Switzerland, the Bundesarchiv, official records repository of the West German government, had agreed to accept the diaries as a gift after publication. In effect, this agreement cleared the copyright, for by accepting the gift as "political and historical documents," the West German government became collaborators of Stern and could be counted upon to back the magazine in its copyright ownership claims. Heidemann had previously obtained a written clearance from Hitler's executor:

Professor Dr. Werner Maser receives, as the administrator of Hitler's will on behalf of Hitler's descendants, a fee of 20,000 marks, paid in cash. For this sum he allows Gerd Heidemann the rights to all the discovered or purchased documents or notes in the hand of Adolf Hitler, including transcribed telephone conversations and other conversations which have
so far not been published and which could be used for publication. Professor Dr. Werner Maser gives to Gerd Heidemann all the rights necessary for this, including personal rights and copyrights. Dr. Maser affirms that he is empowered to do this on behalf of the family. This document is completed in the legal department in Hamburg and is valid in German law. 

During his flight to Zurich, Lord Dacre read Plan 3, the proposal to publish the Hess volume first, and thought it a little ridiculous. He had misgivings that his trip might turn out to be a snipe hunt. At the Handelsbank, the historian was pleasantly greeted by three men in a ground-floor room. There was Peter Koch, an Erich von Stroheim look-alike and editor of Stern; Wilfried Sorge, the supersalesman entrusted with the task of plugging the diaries throughout the world; and Jan Hensmann, deputy manager of Gruner & Jahr. Sorge, who had memorized a speech for the occasion, was the spokesman for the trio. On a large table lay the mighty array of forgeries—the precariously high pile of dime-store notebooks, together with paintings, drawings, letters, speeches, flags, and other memorabilia, including Hitler's World War I helmet authenticated with a note signed by Rudolf Hess.

Trevor-Roper was cautious, but the enormous number of diaries gave an aura of authenticity to the collection. He could not read the Old Gothic hand in which they were written, but he was impressed, as others had been, by the red seals, dangling cords, and printed labels. The presence of Hitler's helmet in the collection, however, might have alerted almost any ex-soldier to the fraud. The last vestige in modern armies of medieval armor, a soldier's helmet has more valid uses than an inch-thick Swiss army knife. Its primary purpose is to protect the head and neck, but it also serves nobly as a pot in which water may be heated for shaving, cooking, or a warm bath (known to all soldiers as "a whore's bath"). For soldiers who dwell in a tent pitched in a sea of mud, a helmet often dubs as a chamber pot. Still, it is a heavy, cumbersome article and, once the war is over, no more useful than a gas mask. It becomes a despised object, the first thing a soldier casts away. Show me a German soldier who wore his helmet home, and I'll show you a shell-shocked veteran. Hitler may have been crazy, but not crazy enough to wear a three-pound helmet after the fighting stopped, or to preserve such an awkward, space-occupying article after its usefulness had ended.

The Stern trio produced for Trevor-Roper not only the sixty-two manuscript diaries but also an imposing array of authentications from German experts on handwriting and old paper. Koch told him, so
Trevor-Roper said later, that he personally knew the identity of the Wehrmacht officer who had rescued the diaries and preserved them for posterity. No doubt it was this monumental lie, plus the personal assurance of the editor of Stern, that finally convinced Lord Dacre of the diaries’ authenticity.

Koch seemed fearful that the historian might discuss with others the treasures he’d viewed. And since the editor was not the sort of a man who would make a gentleman’s agreement, especially with an Englishman, he produced a pen and paper and wrote an oath for Lord Dacre to sign. It was a formal promise not to talk about the diaries with anybody except those persons on the Times staff who were involved in the project.

Trevor-Roper signed. He was by this time virtually certain that the diaries were genuine, but he wanted at least a few days to check the “facts” provided to him by Stern. It was his intention to get the “feel” of the actual diaries in Zurich and then to study a transcript of them before delivering a verdict. However, while still in Zurich, he was informed that even though he had received an earlier assurance from the Times that he would not be required to give a snap judgment, Rupert Murdoch required an immediate decision. The Times owner wanted to negotiate for the publication rights before other organizations could obtain them. Although startled and annoyed by the haste imposed upon him, Lord Dacre gave Murdoch the decision he wanted: genuine.

Rupert Murdoch received the news with delight. He was already formulating circulation-boosting headlines for his various newspapers. The next day he personally visited the bank vault in Zurich and looked over the diaries. With him was a translator, who read some of the flat, lifeless entries to the Australian tycoon. The wary Murdoch was impressed. On April 9, 1983, he offered Gruner & Jahr $2.5 million for the American serial rights and $750,000 for British and Australian rights. Murdoch shook hands with Hensmann on the deal and was promised a final okay in two days.

The trio from Stern had pulled it off. They had hooked—or, rather, gaffed—their first customer.

Newsweek was also trying to capture the serial rights. Landing the diaries would at last give its publishers a chance to overtake Time, a magazine with almost double the 3.5 million circulation of Newsweek. Editor-in-chief William Broyles and editor Maynard Parker, who inspected the diaries in the sanctified atmosphere provided by Stern were also caught up in the magnetic but unseen spirit of Adolf Hitler. Broyles, age thirty-eight, was fascinated by romance and preferred
feature stories to news. Because his staff, mostly hard-core journalists, railed secretly at his editorial approach, Broyles' position at Newsweek was a little precarious, and landing the Hitler diaries might add to his stature as an editor. He and Parker offered $500,000 for the serialization rights. The offer was rejected. Stern had Murdoch's offer totaling $3.25 million, and even that they regarded only as a bid against which others could compete. They were playing a dangerous game with Murdoch. He had made a magnificent offer and did not expect to have it used against him in a private auction.

Hensmann told Broyles and Maynard that he would not take less than $3 million. On their return to America, the Newsweek editors telephoned that they would pay the $3 million contingent upon the authentication of the diaries by their expert, Gerhard Weinberg. The historian flew to Switzerland to examine the notebooks. Weinberg was wary and suspicious but allowed that the diaries were possibly genuine and described his reactions in a full-dress report that helped persuade Newsweek to continue purchase negotiations. Later published in Newsweek, "A Scholar's Appraisal" was preceded by a brief biography: "No historian knows Adolf Hitler better than Prof. Gerhard Ludwig Weinberg of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A Jewish refugee who fled Germany in 1938, Weinberg wrote the definitive post-World War II guide to captured Nazi documents."

The report itself admitted that "there were good reasons to doubt the authenticity of the volumes. First, in all the years since Hitler's rise to power, no one had referred to the existence of these diaries. . . . Second was the fact that Hitler had always been known as a reluctant writer. He dictated 'Mein Kampf,' for example." Still, their "sheer scope" had impressed Weinberg: "The notion of anyone forging hundreds, even thousands of pages of handwriting was hard to credit." Further, he was struck by the presence of Hitler's signature on almost every page: why would anyone "forge gratuitously" the one element of handwriting most easy to check?

Weinberg would have felt "more comfortable," he said, had a German expert on the Third Reich and handwriting specialists already examined the material: "There is still room—however unlikely—for suspecting that the whole thing is a hoax. An obvious motive would be money. Another would be an attempt to rehabilitate Hitler." 6

But Newsweek was still in the market, so Stern called Murdoch and told him that if he wanted the diaries, he would have to up his bid $500,000 to $3.75 million. Murdoch was furious at this shady conduct but simmered down long enough to accede. However, he got in touch with Newsweek, and they agreed to buy the diaries together and later
divide the material. He and Mark Edmiston, president of Newsweek, Inc., arrived together on Friday, April 15, 1983, at the Gruner & Jahr headquarters, prepared to close the deal. A perceptive bargainer would have noted that their limit in bidding and their limit in patience as well had been reached. Yet managing director Schulte-Hillen suddenly announced at the conference table that the price for the diaries had just gone up to $4.25 million. Murdoch and Edmiston and their entourage pushed their chairs back from the conference table, rose, donned their coats, and left. Stern had overreached itself and bungled a chance to recover its entire investment.

These colorful negotiations were all recorded in "The Stern Report, an apologia issued by the magazine months later." Murdoch himself has never commented on the subject. But four days after the discovery of the diaries was announced, when their authenticity was under fire, Newsweek editor Maynard Parker stated in my presence on the Nightline program that Newsweek had passed up the diaries because it suspected a forgery!

Greed had reduced Stern to a state of beggary. Its avarice had offended and eliminated as purchaser every wealthy periodical in the world. For a bargain $800,000 Murdoch now bought the American rights and British and Australian rights for another $400,000. Other important sales of European rights were to Paris Match ($400,000), the Spanish company Grupo Zeta ($150,000), the Netherlands ($125,000), Norwegian Press ($50,000). The Italians, remembering the regime of Hitler's flunky Benito Mussolini, viewed the diaries in the right perspective; their leading pictorial magazine, Panorama, drove the asking price down from $1 million to $50,000.

And where was Time during all these negotiations? "We never came close to an agreement on the price," said Brian Brown, publicity manager. "We were unable to resolve the differences between Time and Stern's closing deadlines. . . . And there was insufficient time for us to conduct our own investigation into the legitimacy of the documents." Newsweek, in the end, got the story for nothing. With the few salient portions of the diaries acquired during the negotiations with Stern, its editors pieced together a "feature" that cost the magazine not a penny in purchase money. This "theft," as it was termed at Stern, was to prove a costly blunder, however, for Newsweek's treatment of the story brought savage criticism and ultimately led to a shakeup in the entire editorial staff.

To launch the diaries in Germany, Stern's staff planned the biggest splash in publishing history. They arranged for a press conference in Hamburg, ads in Germany's top newspapers, and a television docu-
mentary to appear throughout the world. The Hitler issue would be the largest in their history—356 pages, with a 48-page supplement in both black-and-white and color, devoted exclusively to the diaries. The press run would be 2.3 million copies. The additional production costs would come to about half a million dollars, but they calculated that increased sales would more than compensate for the higher costs.

With the first pages from the diaries set for German publication, the Times of London, Murdoch's chief property, went into action. It asked Lord Dacre to write up his own account of the diaries in his usual, impeccable prose. It was a rush job. The Times wanted it for Saturday, April 23, the day following Stern's planned announcement of the discovery of the diaries. For the English-speaking world—indeed, for the entire world—an authentication by the distinguished historian Hugh Trevor-Roper would carry enormous weight. Who would dare say nay to his yea? A messenger rushed Trevor-Roper's hurriedly written article to the newspaper, and on Saturday it appeared as scheduled—an authentication that led to unconditional, uncritical, worldwide acceptance of the diaries:

I confess that, when I first heard of this discovery, I was sceptical. No historian, as far as I know, has ever even hinted at this private diary. None of Hitler's associates or servants—not even Goebbels or Speer—referred to it. Hitler himself said that he found writing physically difficult, and it is generally supposed that after 1933, or perhaps even after 1924, he practically ceased to write in his own hand. The very idea of Hitler as a methodical diarist is news. . . .

However, when I had entered the back room in the Swiss bank, and turned the pages of those volumes, and learned the extraordinary story of their discovery, my doubts gradually dissolved. I am now satisfied that the documents are authentic, that the history of their wanderings since 1945 is true, and that the standard accounts of Hitler's writing habits, of his personality, and even, perhaps some public events may, in consequence, have to be revised.
"Sixty volumes of hitherto unknown diaries kept by Adolf Hitler," wrote Michael Binyon on the front page of the prestigious *Times* of London, "have been discovered after lying for almost 35 years concealed at an undisclosed location in East Germany. The documents . . . have been painstakingly tested and analysed by experts including handwriting analysts from the Federal Archives in Koblenz for the past two and a half years . . . . Extracts from the astonishing documents . . . will significantly alter historical judgments on Hitler's strategic thinking, exercise of power and personality."¹

This impressive introduction to the Hitler diaries in a journal that had, during World War II, been the implacable enemy of the Nazis marked the bow of the renovated Fuehrer—Adolf the Amiable. Beneath the ranting, tyrannical, uncompromising, ferocious, murderous exterior of Hitler, we learn, beats the loving heart of a kindly, gentle, and not-very-bright utterer of platitudes.

Binyon’s front-page *Times* article continued:

Hitler approved the ‘peace’ flight to Scotland in 1941 by his deputy, Rudolf Hess, but then declared him insane.

He ordered his troops not to destroy the British Expeditionary Force trapped at Dunkirk in 1940 in the hope that he could conclude a negotiated peace.

He thought that Neville Chamberlain, whom history has judged harshly, was a skilled negotiator and admired his toughness.

Michael Binyon reined up at this point. He appeared to be on the verge of suggesting that Trafalgar Square be renamed Dunkirk Square, with a statue of the peace-loving Hitler to replace that of the pigeon-
peppered naval hero Lord Nelson. Right away we learn that Hitler has sheathed his bloody dagger. Indeed, we may well ask: "What bloody dagger?"

When interrogated in prison about the charge that he had transformed Hitler into a nice guy, Kujau replied: "In my opinion the picture of Hitler is accurate. I couldn't write in the diary, 'Order Linge [Hitler's valet] to bring me a bathtub full of blood every morning' just to convey the impression he was bloodthirsty when he was not. He was a human being, and he had needs like a human being. . . . I couldn't write a diary portraying a Hitler who runs around with blood on his jacket, the way some honorable Bundesbuerger [citizen of West Germany] might like to visualize him."  

As previously noted, the celebrated flight of Hess to Scotland occupies a full volume, separate from the series of sixty chronological diaries. As all historians know, Hess's flight is one of the great mysteries of World War II and one that is not likely to be solved, for although the lone prisoner of Spandau, during the four decades of his incarceration, wrote a complete record of his life and actions, the Russians destroyed the pages as quickly as he penned them. Virtually all we know is that Hess flew to Scotland on May 10, 1941, in his Messerschmitt-110 fighter aircraft and parachuted down near the Duke of Hamilton's estate under the impression that the Duke, whom he had met during the 1936 Olympic games, would help him to present a peace proposal to the British government. No doubt Hess sincerely sought peace, but the peace he desired was far too favorable to Germany, and Hess was imprisoned.

According to the diary account, however, Hess presented his plan to Hitler on Sunday, June 25, 1939—about two years before the flight to Scotland—and so excited was the Fuehrer about the crackpot scheme that he jettisoned all other work to concentrate on Hess's plan. Before retiring on June 26, 1939, the make-believe Hitler wrote in his diary: "Hess sends me a memorandum concerning the problem of England. Would not have believed that Hess could be so sharp-witted. The memorandum is very, very interesting:" And the next day: "Could not help thinking about Hess's memorandum all night. Must absolutely discuss it with him in confidence." On June 28 the Fuehrer is back again at the diary, still spouting platitudes: "Read Hess's memorandum once more. Simply fantastic, and yet so simple!"

Two days later, Hitler (rather unnecessarily, one would think) records that he has told Hess not to talk with anyone else about the proposal. On July 6, 1939, Hitler takes times to scribble another pointless entry in his diary: "Hess must work through the ideas he commu-
nicated to me in his memorandum and I expect him for a discussion in absolute privacy.”

The bogus Hitler now turns his attention to the impending invasion of Poland and writes in his diary on July 12: “The last few days I [have] studied the plans for Operation White [invasion of Poland] over and over. This plan must now be ready. I believe everything has been considered. Have also spoken with Hess again. As soon as he has thought it all through thoroughly, he will let me know. Would not have believed it of Hess, not of Hess.”

During the next few days, Hitler continues from time to time to discuss the secret plan with Hess, especially the complications of the flight to England. July 22: “Have Goering here once again. Inquire cautiously what the range of our best airplane is. Conversation with Hess. Tell him about my talk with Goering. Hess says a special plane would have to be built. He is already working on the design. What a fellow! He does not want anything about his plan to be said to Goering from now on.”

On August 8, 1939, after Winston Churchill’s denunciation of Hitler as a warmonger (“If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one else is going to make war”), Hitler is at last peeved. He writes in his bogus diary: “When I read the text of yesterday’s speech by Churchill, I know at once who the greatest poisoner in London is. Now I can understand why Hess thinks Churchill must be circumvented or eliminated.”

On August 15, 1939, Hitler notes three possibilities if Hess's plan is carried out. In the black notebook devoted to the Hess affair, under the heading, “The Plan,” Kuja-Hitler writes:

1. Should the mission succeed and Hess bring it off, he has acted with my consent.
2. If Hess is interned as a spy in England, he will have mentioned his plan to me at one time, but I turned him down.
3. Should his mission miscarry completely, Hess was driven by delusions.

The mission did miscarry completely, and Hitler elected to go with option 3. In his notebook he drafts the official party version of the case, designed to deceive the whole world and most especially his associates: “Party member Hess—who, because of a progressive illness from which he has suffered for years, was strictly forbidden by me to continue to participate in any aeronautical activities—nevertheless recently managed, contrary to my specific command, to gain possession
of a plane.” A letter Hess left behind had “in its muddledness unfortunately given evidence of mental derangement.”

Officially, Hitler did declare his deputy mentally incompetent, and this is the version that contemporary historians accept.

In diary entries about Eva Braun, the mistress whom he would marry only a few hours before they died together in a suicide pact, the Fuehrer expresses his concern for Eva, especially in July 1941: “Eva had to endure much suffering. The doctors . . . informed me that it was only a false pregnancy, but she believes it was a miscarriage.” At times, however, the amiability of Hitler is tested by Eva’s constant insistence that they marry and raise a family. As early as June 30, 1935, Hitler writes: “Had to tell [va] again that she is a young woman and if she goes on putting pressure on me to spend more time at my side and also to have a family one day then I will have to separate myself from her. We have had to talk about this several times already.”

In writing the word pressure, the pretend Hitler commits a spelling error of which the real Hitler was almost certainly incapable. The German word Draengt is spelled in the diary with a capital T instead of a D.

On the page following the entry about Eva, writing under “Personal Notes,” the Fuehrer declares: “My knowledge of human nature has not let me down. Von Ribentrop is the right man.” After leaving three spaces empty, he continues: “What worries me is the pain in my chest, as my doctors when they are examining me look at each other in a strange way.” Another three spaces and Hitler slips back into banality: “Had some nice days during the holidays.”

Consistent with the image of Adolf the Amiable are the diaries’ frequent attacks on the evil members of Hitler’s intimate circle. Of Ernst Roehm, the homosexual Brown Shirt leader whom Hitler liquidated during the infamous Night of the Long Knives, he writes: “I gave him the opportunity to take the noble way out [suicide] but he was too cowardly to do even that.” Of Goebbels, who remained faithful to the end and died with Hitler in the Berlin bunker: “That little Dr. Goebbels is up to his old tricks again with women. Shall issue a secret instruction that I do not wish to have any more of these love affairs by my closest associates and party leaders in the Reich.”

Of Heinrich Himmler, ruthless chief of the Gestapo, he writes in April 1935: “I don’t need any kind of investigations by Himmler. He is also snooping on [va].” And four years later: “I have threatened to send him before a party court. I shall show this deceitful little animal breeder [Himmler was once a chicken farmer], this unfathomable little penny pincher with his lust for power, what I am really like.” In 1943,
he again hammers away at Himmler, complaining that the Gestapo leader has failed to liquidate the guerrilla fighters in occupied lands: "[Himmler] lives in another world, and it seems to me that he exists in an ancient Germanic world in the heavens."

The ersatz Hitler has higher praise for his enemies than for his friends. September 30, 1938: "[Chamberlain] nearly outsmarted me. This smoothie Englishman . . . I would have made quite different conditions for Mussolini and Daladier, but I couldn't do so with this cunning fox, Chamberlain." And early in 1942 he writes of the man who annihilated his legions: "How on earth does Stalin manage it? Always imagined that he had no officers left, but he did the right thing [in purging the officer corps]. A new command structure in the Wehrmacht is what we need too." Hitler then complains about his own generals: "These old officers let themselves be hung with titles, decorations, and property, but they don't obey my orders." Of his bumbling ally, the sawdust Caesar, he writes in 1939: "[Mussolini] does not have the courtesy to face me. I have already told Goering that I regard Mussolini as my 'pro-consul' in Rome."

In his entries that deal with the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem," Hitler ceases momentarily to be amiable. A passage in the diaries summarized by Guy Hawtin in a New York Post article includes an anti-Semitic outburst:

In a hate-filled passage, Hitler raves on about how the Jews expect to be fed and clothed by the Reich, while remaining its enemies. He says that they cannot be settled within the borders of the Reich and the occupied territory, and that nobody else will take them. Because of this, the entry reads, the Jews should be loaded into ships, sent out to sea and sunk.\footnote{3}

Sending six million Jews down to the sea in ships, of course, would have required an armada that even the Lord might be stumped to provide. Actually, however, this entry does not reflect the "tolerant" views of the new Herr Hitler, who writes elsewhere in the diary that he is very much in favor of resettling the Jews in the East (possibly Russia). There is in the diaries absolutely no evidence that he knew about the gas chambers, the crematories, the death camps, the shooting down of women and children, the mass graves with many victims being interred alive. We are led to believe that the Hitler of the diaries would never sanction such murderous conduct towards the Jews. In fact, in his mention of Kristallnacht ("Crystal Night," or "Night of the Broken Glass," November 9, 1938), when mobs of Germans broke thousands of windows of Jewish stores, burned or destroyed 177 synagogues, and
left the streets covered with broken glass, the Nazi dictator is apparently unaware of the extensive destruction and atrocities. He bemoans only the broken glass.

The London Times did not accept all the statements of Hitler in the diaries without skepticism. And, in defense of Lord Dacre, I should point out that he had reservations about the veracity of the diaries, however genuine they might be. As Michael Binyon observed:

A vital question is how much Hitler tells the truth in his diaries. He was consciously writing for posterity, compiling a document for his adulators to draw on, and has therefore presented himself in a favourable light. . . . Lord Dacre says that the diaries must be treated with caution. It would be a mistake for historians to see an overwhelming revelation, for most of the content was overt propaganda, and has to be read as such. . . .

The National Socialist era has for many years been a very difficult subject for both East and West Germans to discuss openly, and they have been extremely anxious not to be seen in any way to be glorifying or promoting the memory of Nazi leaders. The flood of revelations which have poured out in the past few years has worried some West German thinkers.

Scepticism and disbelief are likely to be the two main reactions to the diaries' discovery.4

Despite the tip-toe approach of the Times, the new image of Hitler as Adolf the Amiable that emerged from the diaries must have rekindled the hopes of thousands of neo-Nazis in Europe and America. Certainly, at Stern, where the swastika was sighted again, there were those like Gerd Heidemann who rejoiced and lifted their steins to salute the renovated, revamped, and revitalized Fuehrer.
On the morning of Friday, April 22, 1983, a madness was about to infect the literate world, a madness that in many cases warped and corrupted the ability to think and showed how easily mortals can succumb to a delusion. Before it ran its course, it had pitted historian against historian, publisher against publisher, and expert against expert and had confused half the world’s populace.

My first hint of the mass lunacy that followed the announcement of the discovery of Adolf Hitler’s “authentic diaries” came at 11:30 in the morning that Friday when a young reporter from *Newsweek*, Maks Westerman, walked into my gallery. His mission, he said, was to show me three pages from a diary written by Hitler. (I am able to record this meeting with exactitude because of the awesome and at times disconcerting skill of my assistant, Dianne Barbaro, in setting down trivial data.)

Maks said, “Have you heard about this discovery of Hitler’s diaries?”

I said, “No. Am I going to hear about it now?”

Maks sat down five or six feet from me. He started to pull three photocopied pages from his briefcase, and as a corner emerged, I said: “That’s not Hitler’s handwriting.”

Maks said: “My God! How can you tell that? You haven’t even looked at it yet.” (I was later criticized by other manuscript experts for what they termed a “snap judgment.” My critics contended that instead of delivering an instant decision based upon half a century of experience, I should have taken time to reflect and make microscopic examinations. I was frequently asked the question “How can you tell the diaries are fakes on the basis of only three pages?” I had a short answer: “You don’t have to eat a whole egg to know it’s rotten.”)
I explained to Maks that it was utterly impossible for Hitler to have kept a diary without his aides and secretaries being aware of it. In all the scores of books I’d read about the Fuehrer, there was no mention of a diary. I asked: “What sort of a report on the diaries have you had from Hitler’s surviving adjutants?”

“Why, none, so far as I know.”

“That’s the first source you should go to for accurate information.”

“But these diaries have been authenticated by a leading historian and a leading handwriting expert.”

I asked who.

“Trevor-Roper has examined the originals and pronounced them beyond question to be authentic.”

I said: “Trevor-Roper is not infallible. Are you aware that Trevor-Roper impeached the accuracy of the Warren report on John F. Kennedy’s murder even before it was released and he’d read what was in it? Afterward, I am glad to say, he retracted his remarks.”

Maks refused to leave any copies of the diary pages with me. The following morning I discussed what I had observed in some detail with a reporter from the New York Daily News. My remarks, the first public condemnation of the diaries, appeared in a full-page Sunday feature article that listed the points on which I based my judgment that the diaries were fakes:

From neither scholars and journalists nor Hitler’s personal aides and servants has there never been any hint that Hitler kept diaries.

Hitler rarely wrote anything by hand. Even his personal letters were usually dictated to secretaries, typed, and signed.

When Hitler did write, he always crowded his words. On the pages I saw, the words were much too far apart, and the lines did not collapse at the end in Hitler’s characteristic downward slant.

The writing lacked the tumultuous force of Hitler’s pen. The handwriting was halting and indecisive because the document was drawn, the way an artist would draw a picture. The forger simply could not draw as fast as Hitler could write.

In the script I was shown, certain letters were identical throughout. That’s typical of forgeries. The forger learns how the subject makes a letter and then he repeats it precisely. In reality, we vary our letters greatly.

The so-called diaries were said to continue until shortly before Hitler’s death. But in his last weeks Hitler was unable even to lift his arm to shake hands.

The documents I saw were written on cheap lined paper, but Hitler used only the very finest paper, usually with a gold-embossed Nazi
crest. He was not a man who was going to use some cheap, schlocky
tablets to record his opinions for posterity.

Despite the reported certification of Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper and a
Coblenz archivist, the _Daily News_ concluded, "Hamilton was not intim­
itated. . . . 'Gee, maybe they'll get the same handwriting experts who
authenticated that Howard Hughes stuff in Clifford Irving's book,' he
said, in a reference to the fake Hughes 'autobiography' that sent Irving
to jail during the 1970s."1

On Sunday, April 24, two days after _Stern's_ announcement of the
discovery of the diaries and as the world awaited the publication of the
German magazine's first excerpts from them, Robert D. McFadden of
the _New York Times_ called me at noon. We chatted for almost an hour,
and the interview was published on Monday. I was in a capricious
humor when McFadden called.

"I'm sure it's a hoax," Mr. Hamilton said in an interview in New York
yesterday after seeing three photostatic sheets from the purported di­
aries, including two bearing Hitler signatures. "The whole story is a
misbegotten prevarication. The forgers are probably luxuriating right
now in the south of France." . . .

Referring to the story of the loss (in a crashed aircraft) and rediscovery
of the documents, Mr. Hamilton said: "It's something Wilhelm and Jacob
Grimm could have written. Stern said they have not got some parts of the
diary ready for release yet. The only thing I can suggest is to tell the
forger to hurry up and get them ready—and to make sure the ink is dry
before he delivers them."2

By Monday I was not alone in my attack. Skepticism over the bogus
diaries was gathering like a great storm cloud, and even the most
ardent touters of authenticity were starting to have doubts. Two of
Hitler's adjutants, who should have been consulted by _Stern_ at the very
beginning, had vehemently denounced the diaries. The _Daily News_
reported a Combined Dispatches story on Monday:

> With big money, heavy-duty reputations and a major rewrite of the Nazi
era on the line, a former aide to Adolf Hitler yesterday scoffed at reports
> that the dictator's secret diaries had been found. . . .
>
> "The discovery of Hitler's alleged diaries is one of the many fairy-tale
> lies that we have known since the war," said Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant,
> Nicolas von Below, who was quoted by the _Bild am Sonntag_ newspaper in
> West Germany.

> "We often sat until 3 or 4 at night, and Hitler would then go to bed. He
> had no more time to write," von Below said. "The whole thing is a pack
> of lies."3
A great many historians, not familiar with air crashes, had acclaimed the story as plausible, and the *New York Times* reporter had said to me: “A lot of people think that the diaries are genuine because they came right off a plane sent out from Hitler’s headquarters. Hitler’s own pilot, Hans Baur, says the plane was carrying Hitler’s private papers and it crashed and burned near Dresden.”

But as witnesses of airplane crashes know, it is extremely hazardous to approach a burning plane, as it is likely to explode at any moment. Generally the occupants are either killed on impact or very quickly burn to death. According to Stern: “Rear gunner Franz Westermeier had survived the crash but died of a kidney tumor just months before Heidemann learned his name.” This is plausible, because the tail gunner always has the best chance to survive. Sometimes in a very rough crash, in which the plane bounces over the earth, the entire tail assemblage is torn loose and catapults wildly away, carrying in it a battered and bruised but still alive tail gunner. It seemed to me impossible, however, that any papers could have been saved. Certainly not papers in as fine condition as the Hitler diaries, with not a page scorched by a roaring inferno you probably could have seen five miles away and so blistering hot that nobody could come within thirty yards of it.

Maks Westerman, the *Newsweek* reporter who first brought the diary pages to me, was dispatched to Boernersdorf to check on Heidemann’s story. He reported that the farmer Richard Elbe, now seventy-two, had been the first to reach the wreck of the Junkers 352 on the morning of April 21, 1945. Westerman summarized Elbe’s recollections:

> The doors on the plane were locked, the survivors could not escape. One passenger, his legs blown off, was screaming for help. The next moment an ammunition cache exploded and the wounded man disappeared in the flames. . . . The only survivor was a young German named Franz Westermeier. . . . The corpses of the crash victims were placed on a horse-drawn wagon. . . . A farmhand named Eduard Grimme, who died in 1979, brought the bodies to the cemetery. ‘It was just a bunch of charred bits and pieces lying on that wagon,’ said Elbe. ‘You could hardly see they were people.’”

In a blazing aircraft the heat is often so intense that it melts steel. Any documents in Grundlfinger’s plane would have been reduced to ashes. If they were in a wooden, metal-lined box, as alleged, the heat from the burning plane would have charcoaled them.

The ludicrous nature of some of the diary entries evoked further criticism and hilarity. British historian Norman Stone of Cambridge
University, who read the two volumes that Stern turned over to the Sunday Times of London, was later quoted as saying: "This reads like a 'Charlie Chaplin' Hitler." And Hans Booms of the German Federal Archives, who examined four other volumes, remarked: "At midnight I said to my wife: 'I don't care whether they are real or forged. They are so boring, so meaningless it hardly makes any difference.'"6

Especially obvious as forgeries were the comments allegedly made by Hitler about Himmler, Goebbels, Goering, and other members of his inner circle, who were devoted to him and enjoyed his complete confidence. On Thursday, April 28, the Daily News ran a UPI story from Bonn that reported an earlier interview with the second Hitler aide to declare that the "remarks attributed to the Nazi leader" did not "ring true."

The statement by Richard Schulze-Kossens in the Bild newspaper was one of many casting doubt on the authenticity of the diaries the West German magazine Stern says it found in East Germany after a three-year search.

Schultze-Kossens, one of Hitler's former adjutants, cited specifically the entry about [Heinrich] Himmler.

"I find it completely impossible that Hitler would ever describe Himmler as "this deceitful little animal breeder," said Schulze-Kossens.

. . . "I never heard Hitler express himself in that way."7

In London, Trevor-Roper's faith wavered. Realizing that for the first time he had been misled by the false statements of Stern editor Peter Koch, Lord Dacre said: "I have studied the handwriting and I believe it to be Hitler's, but on the technical side, I would prefer to leave it to the graphologists. There is a possibility that the diaries are forged."8

Also on Monday, April 25, there appeared on the newsstands the two periodicals that between them damned the Hitler diaries as amateurish fakes. From Hamburg came the heralded April 28, 1983, issue of Stern, crammed with enough bogus handwriting to convince the most obdurate believer that the diaries were fabrications. And in America appeared the infamous May 2, 1983, issue of Newsweek, ultimately to cost the editor his job, in which the evidence of fraud was laid out before every reader who had eyes to see.

Taken merely at face value, this issue marked a low point in the history of journalism. The front cover, depicting the Fuehrer delivering a stiff-arm salute, carried this double-talk caption: "Special Report / Hitler's Secret Diaries / Are They Genuine? / How They Could Rewrite History / Hitler and the Jews." And even though the bogus Hitler handwriting was not illustrated, there was other evidence of
forgery. Page 54, for example, reproduced the cover of Stern, which pictured the first diary bearing the Gothic initials F.H.

It seemed remarkable to me that no one at Newsweek had pointed out that these were not Hitler's initials. Years of experience have taught me that if there is a single thing wrong in a document, then that document is strongly suspect and should be subjected to a searing, highly critical examination. However, I must confess that in one way I was misled by the initials. I presumed, and so stated at the time, that they stood for Fuehrerhauptquartier or Fuehrer's Headquarters, usually written in German as one word but occasionally as two. Since Hitler had headquarters all over Germany and Austria, the initials F.H. were found in abundance. I presumed further that the forger had transferred them from some old headquarters record book to the first volume of the Hitler diaries. It never occurred to me that any forger would be so stupid as to mistake a Gothic F for an A.

The May 2 issue of Newsweek also summarized the opinions of the experts retained by the magazine to evaluate the Hitler diaries. Except for Ordway Hilton, who—possibly misled by false data provided by Stern—boldly proclaimed the diaries to be genuine, the experts on the payroll of Newsweek were all fence-sitting Mugwumps—that is, they had their mug on one side of the fence and their wump on the other. Even though Hilton was later proved wrong, he merits respect for his courage in casting aside all equivocation and venturing an honest opinion. Newsweek reported:

[Hilton] photographed the pages, enlarged some photos to make a chart and examined others under binocular microscopes. . . . [T]he handwriting was nearly illegible, an odd mixture of old German and Latin script. Hilton noted that the "s's", "f's" and "h's" were virtually indistinguishable, the "n's" and "m's" were little more than wavering lines and the "i's" and "e's" were so short they were almost invisible. "These are the individualities that help to identify," he said. He compared the signatures—the curious "Adolf" resembling a double y, the stylized H, followed by descending zigzags. He looked for telltale signs of forgery, such as odd breaks between letters. After two weeks, Hilton said he reached the point "where there was just no question"; [these] documents were written by Adolf Hitler.9

Kenneth W. Rendell, one of America's most distinguished handwriting experts, had been hired to give a full, soup-to-nuts analysis of the writing in the diaries. He therefore proceeded with caution, hoping for an early opportunity to make a complete, scientific examination of the original manuscripts. He suggested, according to Newsweek, that
the diaries could be part authentic and part fake: "There's a possibility that the first five years of this are genuine, and then somebody made up the rest." Examination with ultra-violet light and a microscope could determine the difference, but the investigator would need access to the entire collection. In my fifty-five years of examining manuscripts and thirty-five years as a dealer and manuscript historian, however, I have never seen a manuscript of any length that was part genuine and part fake. Forged notes added to genuine letters are abundant, and copies of genuine letters (sometimes altered by the copier) are very common and can often be a nuisance to unwary historians. But a sixty-two volume diary mixing genuine and forged material is simply out of the question. Considering the rarity and value of Hitler's holographic documents, no sane forger would mutilate an authentic manuscript by gilding it with forgeries. To accept such a hypothesis would, in my opinion, be tantamount to arguing that the rock samples brought back from the moon represented only a tiny portion of the moon's surface; ergo, how did we know that the rest of the moon's surface was not green cheese?

Rendell had other reasons for wanting to see the originals. He would, he said, "investigate everything—from paper to ink to handwriting to bindings." He would also check the diaries against historical records and "notes staffers made of Hitler's dinner conversations" for inconsistencies. And he would examine the seals and backup signatures, which are often "shoddily produced in forgeries."

"I have no evidence whatsoever to believe that the diaries are fakes," Rendell said. "But there's no evidence (so far) to believe they're genuine." Stern's document experts were given "very, very little to work with," he observed. "They were denied access to what they really needed to see." Rendell believes the volumes may well be genuine because the risk of error is so great in a forgery of that size. But without proper investigation, their authenticity may never be completely accepted. "Those who want to believe it will," he laments. "Those who don't can dismiss it. It could be a very important part of history and nobody will really know."

I was often asked: "How can you judge the authenticity accurately without looking at the original diaries?" In cases where a person's handwriting is virtually unknown to experts, it may be advantageous to look at the original manuscripts to see whether the photocopy had failed to catch the marks of a forgery, such as the color of ink, retracing, or tracing over pencil. I once mistakenly identified a Howard Hughes document because the telephoto copy I used was five times removed
from the original and had lost all the marks of forgery, including retracing that was instantly visible on the original. However, the three copied pages of the Hitler diaries showed marked dissimilarities to Hitler's known handwriting. They were naively executed.

Nor does access to originals necessarily result in accurate conclusions. The official German criminal lab, according to Newsweek, "had conducted a chemical analysis on a sample of notepaper from the diaries and reported that the sample was 'typical of paper used by the Germans in the 1930s and 1940s.'" 11

It's always been my firm belief that the most effective of all instruments for the detection of forgery is the human eye attached to the human brain. Hilton used enlargements, binocular microscopes, and charts—and came up with the wrong answer. The official German crime laboratory used chemical analyses—and came up with the wrong answer.

Any questioned document must, of course, be subjected to a whole battery of tests. My own method is to consider its provenance, or where the document came from; to examine its external evidence—paper, ink, binding, and other instantly visible features; to look for internal evidence in the document's content to determine whether it reflects the style and mode of thinking of the alleged writer and whether the facts put forth jibe with other known facts about the writer; and, finally, to examine its paleographic or handwriting evidence. The failure to satisfy any one of these tests automatically brands the document as a forgery.

Most of these tests can be administered in a few minutes. An experienced handwriting expert can glance at a letter of George Washington or Napoleon and almost instantly pass upon its authenticity from paper, ink, handwriting, postmarks (if any), name of addressee, seals, and contents. Because the opinions on the Hitler diaries were diverse and scarred by controversy, they required a more detailed examination than is customary. However, the issues of Stern and Newsweek that appeared on Monday, April 25, provided enough new information to condemn the diaries beyond question, and revealed the following important clues.

Their provenance, the tale of the rescue or escape of the diaries from the fiery inferno of a crashed airplane, has a deus ex machina quality that would have delighted the early Greek dramatists who counted upon the gods to save their hero from the jaws of disaster. That the diaries survived unscorched from a furious, petrol-fueled blaze that left only a twisted, metal skeleton of the crashed aircraft is miracle enough, but when we add to it the quiet repose of these precious, historic volumes for forty years in a hayloft, the miracle is brought full circle.
The external: the lined paper in imitation leather notebooks of the dime-store variety does not comport with Hitler's known partiality to rich leather bindings and elegant paper. Nor were the initials on the first volume those that Hitler would have used. A New York Post reporter who saw the diaries wrote: "One volume carried the brass initials in old German script. The initials were placed on that particular notebook, apparently as a gift to Hitler. It is said he decided the A looked too much like an I and the procedure was dropped on further notebooks." Further, each volume was ornamented with a grotesque, beribboned Nazi infantry seal, whereas Hitler's personal seal—familiar to all experts—depicts a flying eagle clasping an enwreathed swastika, with the initials A.H. on either side of the wreath.

As for internal evidence: the diary excerpts provided by Stern and Newsweek were superficial, childish, and petulant. They lacked the force and vitality of Hitler's usual remarks and often are totally at odds with Hitler's accepted views. His hostile opinion of the Jews was vehemently recorded in the first edition of Mein Kampf (1925) and repeated throughout his political career even as late as his testament to the German people of April 29, 1945, the day before his suicide.

Of three American experts who examined the handwriting on the three photocopied pages, Ordway Hilton stated his positive opinion that the diaries were genuine: I condemned the diaries as blatant forgeries; and Kenneth W. Rendell said that three pages were inadequate for a decision and he needed time to examine the entire archive before reaching a decision. Subsequently, however, when Rendell examined two of the sixty-two volumes (but none of the huge archive of paintings, drawings, speeches, letters, and photographs), he concluded that the two volumes were forged and conceded the probability that the other materials were also fakes.
By Monday, April 25, 1983, the fourth day after the discovery announcement of the diaries, millions of people throughout the world had been tricked into believing that Adolf Hitler was a peace-loving statesman. Neo-Nazis were rendered ecstatic by the Fuehrer's reincarnation as an amiable leader who abhorred brutality and war. However, the forger's whitewash had only glossed the tyrant's mask. Here and there the gloss was beginning to rub off, and the original handful of doubters was adding to its ranks hour by hour.

To silence their critics, Stern's editors held a huge press conference in their brilliantly lit basement. They summoned a few of the doubters, some of the believers, and their "big gun" Trevor-Roper, Lord Dacre. But the British historian, upon whom they counted heavily, had unfortunately for them uncovered fresh information that brought him to the point of "serious doubts." By the time the conference was held, in fact, Lord Dacre had been forced to the conclusion that Peter Koch had lied about having personal knowledge of the source of the diaries. He had heard two other stories: (1) that the diaries had come from an officer in West Germany; and (2) that the diaries had been delivered to Hamburg by Boernersdorf peasants. With the source of the diaries in dispute, their authenticity was, Trevor-Roper correctly surmised, grievously in doubt. At the press conference he sat only a few feet from the diaries. He declared: "The whole question of the authenticity of the documents is inseparable from the history of the documents. . . . This, to me, is the central problem. The link between the airplane and the documents is not absolutely established. . . . [A]s a historian I regret that the normal method of historical verification has to some extent been sacrificed to the journalistic scoop."

The New York Times on April 26 carried a report on Trevor-Roper's
views as expressed immediately after the conference: “I am not saying they are not genuine. I am saying they cannot be pronounced genuine.”

Professor Trevor-Roper, who is also a director of The Sunday Times of London, said The Sunday Times would not begin publication of the diaries “until satisfaction on this point can be had.” The newspaper originally planned to begin publication May 8. . . . He said it was “ludicrous that [Stern officials] have had them for three years and have not committed them to the judgment of historians. . . . Questioned as to whether he thought he had been misled by Stern officials, he said there had merely been a “misunderstanding.”

Professor Gerhard Weinberg objected to what he regarded as undue emphasis on the provenance: “The authority of these documents does not depend on a name of someone who tossed these things over a wall or sneaked them out on a subway. . . . What matters is the documents themselves.” Nevertheless, he added further doubts in a sharp criticism of Stern. He was troubled that “no knowledgeable experts in the Federal Republic, of which there are no lack,” had been called in. “We are not on a South Seas island. There are many capable scholars,” he said.

David Irving, a distinguished Third Reich historian, felt certain that the diaries were forged. At the press conference he repeatedly asked whether they were part of a consignment that contained drawings, oil paintings, and other writings of the Nazi leader, including an outline for a third volume of Mein Kampf and a Hitler family tree. He said he believed that similar documents he had rejected as forgeries the previous year stemmed from the same source as the Stern documents. Peter Koch denied Irving’s allegation but insisted, “We will not disclose our source.”

Finally, in exasperation, Irving burst out with a rabid denunciation of the documents. Officials of Stern wrenched the speaker out of his hands. Fists thudded against bodies. In the struggle Irving was dragged, punching as he went, from the conference room, yelling, “Ink! Ink! Ink!” By which outcry, of course, he was demanding a chemical test of the blue-black Pelikan ink in which most of the diaries were written.

On Tuesday, April 26, in a dramatic New York Post article, reporter Guy Hawtin insinuated that the conflict was chiefly about money:

Battle lines are forming for what must surely be the academic slugfest of the century.
At issue: Did Nazi Dictator Adolf Hitler actually write 60 volumes of intimate diaries or is his “Testament to Posterity” the world’s most elaborate literary hoax?

This is not the time for faint hearts. Reputations are to be made and lost, egos to be built up and bruised.

Above all, huge sums of money are at stake.

Sensational but “scholarly” works on the Hitler regime form one of the most lucrative ends of the academic publishing.

Furthermore, the trade in historic Nazi documents and autographs is a multi-million dollar industry.

If the Hitler diaries are genuine, they could knock the bottom out of both markets.6

After discussing a few of the opinions of historians on the diaries, Guy Hawtin continued:

The handwriting experts are in much less disarray. The only major doubter is Manhattan autograph and document dealer Charles Hamilton. He says he examined copies of some of the documents on behalf of Newsweek.

Hamilton, of course, could see a decline in a valuable trade if the diaries depressed the value of Hitler documents.6

Actually, the status—true or false—of the Hitler diaries did not have the slightest effect on the value of Hitler’s documents. Since the diaries and other papers in the archive were never for sale and would never be offered for sale, the only possible influence on value was imperceptible and oblique. The diaries may even have slightly increased value by stimulating greater interest in Hitler.

On April 30, 1983, Peter Koch, editor of Stern, arrived in New York City to launch a media campaign to prove that the diaries were genuine. He had in tow the son of Rudolf Hess, an attorney who was only a small child when his father flew to England. Koch was fighting to save his career. Wolfgang Ruediger Hess, a pleasant, mild man, was hopeful that he could establish his father’s innocence and get him out of the fortress of Spandau, in which he had languished for more than four decades and in which, as it later turned out, he was to die. The Stern editor brought with him two original diaries, the first and the last in the series. He had barely unpacked when someone arranged for me to face him in a nationally televised debate.

Koch was a stolid, arrogant man with a great bald head that gleamed like a pink alabaster globe in the television floodlights. His cohort, Wolf Hess, moved like a shadow in the burgeoning presence of his debating partner. Hess’s only point was that the diaries proved his
The Hitler Diaries

father guiltless: as Hitler’s emissary, the senior Hess had acted under orders. A logical question for Wolf Hess was: “Why don’t you ask your father about the diaries?” His answer: “Visitors have to sign a paper that sets out nine conditions for the visit. If you break even one condition, you risk going to prison. It is absolutely forbidden to talk [to my father] about the period from 1933 to 1945, the Nazi era.”

Koch could not conceal his immediate contempt for me. His heavy face formed an impassive mask, the features never moving, like a stone visage from whose mouth words are made to issue. He pointed out that on Tuesday, less than a week earlier, the West German Federal Archive chief Hans Booms had declared absolutely genuine eight of the diary documents submitted to him the previous year by Stern. Koch said further that the diaries had been okayed by handwriting experts from the Rhineland Palatinate police, the Bundeskriminalamt (West Germany equivalent of the FBI), and experts of the American FBI.

In rebuttal, I pointed out that the text of the diaries was infantile and nothing like the powerful remarks of the great dictator. The script was a ridiculous imitation. The diaries were written on cheap paper that Hitler under no circumstances would have used. The seals were preposterous. Finally, I mentioned Hitler’s aversion to setting down his ideas on paper.

Koch gave me his stock response: “I expected the uproar and expected that many incompetent people would denounce the diaries as fakes. This is because everybody is jealous of us and every historian will envy us.”

A few days later, in Boston, Kenneth W. Rendell gave Koch a demonstration to prove that the diaries were fakes (see chapter 12). (Koch offered Rendell only one comment about me: “Hamilton has big feet.” In this, at least, he was correct.) But the editor remained obdurate and returned to Germany to continue his battle for authentication. Time reported that Stern editor Koch, who had flown to the U.S. to defend the diaries’ authenticity, brushed aside all objections to the journalistic scoop of the post–World War II period. Koch admitted, however, that his magazine had relied for certification almost entirely on the assertions of Gerd Heidemann.

Just as it seemed that scholars were becoming virtually unanimous in their belief that the Hitler diaries were not genuine, British historian David Irving made a dramatic about-face. Only four days after being dragged from the press conference for denouncing the diaries as fakes, he declared that following a weekend meeting with top staffers of Stern—including Peter Koch and Gerd Heidemann—he had changed his mind. Moreover, he had compared the Hitler documents with data
compiled from the diaries of Dr. Theodor Morell, Hitler's physician, and was absolutely convinced that although some of the material was phony, the bulk of the diaries were genuine. Morell's diaries, which Irving discovered in the archives in Washington, revealed that Hitler was suffering from Parkinson's disease, a neurological affliction. Irving said:

People suffering from Parkinsonism tend to write smaller as they go along a page and they slope the line downward.

Stern magazine showed me an entry in the diary dated April 16, 1945 and the signs were there. The writing was sloping downwards regardless of the page rulings and the script got smaller.

I don't think a forger could possibly have known this.7

Apparently Irving was unfamiliar with the widespread medical opinion that Hitler may have suffered from Parkinson's or some similar disease. Those who shared the bunker with him during the final days all reported that Hitler's hands and the left side of his body shook, his gait was shuffling, saliva poured from his mouth, and he was unable to focus his mind. Every biographer has written about the Fuehrer's rapid deterioration near the end of the war. In The Psychopathic God, Robert Waite provides an admirable summary of the medical views on Hitler's impaired brain and central nervous system:

Some German specialists have concluded that Hitler's mental and physical condition was due entirely to Parkinson's disease (paralysis agitans), an illness of uncertain origins that attacks the nervous system and typically produces involuntary tremors, slowness of movement, insomnia, speech impairment, sweating, hypersalivation and excitability. Delusional paranoid trends may also develop. . . . Others have a different explanation for Hitler's physical and mental condition: it was caused by the malpractice of his quack doctor, Theodor Morell . . . who slowly destroyed him through bizarre and irresponsible medication [that] included massive doses of vitamins and sex hormones . . . thousands of "Dr. Koester's Anti-Gas Tablets" (prescribed for the Fuehrer's chronic flatulence) . . . and a potency pill which Morell concocted out of "pulverized bull testicles."8

The official score of opinions on the diaries ten days after the announcement of their discovery, on Monday, May 2, 1983, lined up as follows: In favor of authenticity—Ordway Hilton, Peter Koch and associates, David Irving; opposed—Trevor-Roper, John Toland, Werner Maser, Gerhard Weinberg, Charles Hamilton; uncommitted—Kenneth W. Rendell.
The motive of an uncaught and unidentified criminal is always a guessing game—a nagging problem for the police and great sport for amateur sleuths. Even after the malefactor is apprehended and confesses, the guessing goes on. For each of us, whether he knows it or not, usually has at least three motives for every overt act: the motive he admits to others, the motive he hides from everyone except himself, and the subconscious motive.

Long before the forger gave himself up to the police, there were wild guesses about why he had sunk so much time and effort into fabricating the Hitler diaries. Historians and criminologists, reporters and psychiatrists, were all hard at it to probe his mind. And after he was arrested, there were still doubters who believed his willing confession was splotched with lies. Some were convinced that he was part of a gigantic plot; others claimed that he had at least one and perhaps three or four accomplices.

Werner Maser almost at once rejected the crashed aircraft tale. His belief was that the diaries had been produced in East Germany by forgers aided by the KGB (Soviet secret police) and East German Army operatives. Maser’s theory won quick support. Those who blamed Russian agents concluded that the diaries had been forged in a top-secret Soviet “factory” in Potsdam, East Germany, in order to disrupt Western economy and foster enmity between the NATO allies, and that the forgers were aided by five Nazi sympathizers at Stern, all working for the Soviets, who agreed to publish the bogus diaries. Maser said:

I’ve known for many years that the KGB is behind all the forgeries of Hitler's letters, personal documents, and even his paintings that seem to be cropping up.
I met one of the forgers in Moscow in 1978. He asked me if I wanted to buy a painting by Hitler for $10,000. I told him it was false as I knew where the original was hanging. He finally admitted it was made in the “Hitler Factory” in East Germany.

He also told me they were set up to manufacture all kinds of material pertaining to the Nazi era and hinted that they were working on a Hitler book.¹

Nikoli Khokhlov, a former KGB agent and now a professor of psychology at California State College, concurred. He was convinced that the Mr. Nice Guy image was a product of the Soviets. “Making it appear that Hitler was anxious to stop the war while the Allies wanted to prolong it could also discredit the American and British motives in World War II.”²

In commenting on what Maser called an East German “counterfeiting workshop,” the New York Times only four days after the announcement of the discovery of the diaries wrote that a number of experts had agreed that “a central thesis that might be developed in . . . a manipulation of history by the East German and Soviet secret services would be that the West turned down opportunities to end World War II, prolonged the suffering it created, and holds the historical responsibility for the eventual division of Germany.” The Times quoted an unnamed West German official: “If I were faking such a diary for the East, I’d want Hitler to be a bore, a monster, and a fool. But I’d like England and America to have given him the chance to make things worse.” Among other West Germans who scorned the idea that the documents were real, the article continued, was former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who said, “I just can’t believe it’s true.”³

Radio Moscow claimed that Kujau was “an American stooge” involved in a CIA plot “to exonerate and glorify the Third Reich.”

Half a century ago the Nazis set fire to the Reichstag building and accused the insignificant provocateur Marinus van der Lubbe of arson. Van der Lubbe was supposed to provide proof against the communists, and he did. Now, another van der Lubbe has been found, a small-time dealer, possessed by the mad idea of going down in history, psychologically as unstable as van der Lubbe. Even now the West German bourgeois press predicts that this new van der Lubbe will testify against East Germany.⁴

The noted Nazi hunter Simon Wisenthal, one of the Israeli avengers who aided in the capture of Adolf Eichmann, blamed the same men who had forged hundreds of millions of British pound notes for Hitler
during World War II. Wilhelm Hoetti, a former SS officer and forger and an associate of Gerd Heidemann, was quoted as saying: "The sixty handwritten volumes could have been produced by his wartime forgery associates, some of whom may be working for East German intelligence services." 5

A related widespread theory was that East Germany was seeking to make money out of the forgeries. Newsday reported the contention of some observers that "Communist nations have 'disinformation' units that counterfeit CIA and other official documents to embarrass western nations, so they certainly have the capability of producing this volume of bogus documents. One reason East Germany might do this would be to generate hard currency for itself." 6

Although I have sold enormous numbers of Nazi relics and documents at auction and my life has occasionally been threatened (once my entire staff resigned in terror after a bomb threat), I'd never heard of a Potsdam factory or of Soviet implication in Nazi forgeries. It is true that in East Germany a great many phony Nazi daggers, medals, swastika flags, and uniforms were being turned out for the American market, but such fakes are usually easy to spot, and I never paid much attention to them. Virtually all the fake Hitler paintings and drawings I've encountered can be traced back either to the lone forger of the Hitler diaries, or to Albert Speer (see Chapter 16), and I am still inclined to regard the "Potsdam factory" as a myth.
Adolf Hitler’s handwriting is violent and explosive, a torrential cataract of anger and power that plunges across the page, then often collapses in depression. This savage Teutonic script holds the key to the Fuehrer’s psyche. It is hard, brutal, determined. The forger’s imitation, on the other hand, is dainty, tripping, almost effeminate. The swift dagger thrusts of Hitler are transformed by Kujau into delicate, thread-like strokes.

What I have described above is basically the feel of the handwriting, the instantaneous impression created by a writer’s script rather than the way he forms his letters and words. It is by feel that an expert can often make a split-second decision. The Germans have a more precise word for this skill—fingerspitzengefuelle (fingertip feel), which exactly describes what I am talking about. To put it plainly, it means that at a single glance the expert, through methods he might be hard put to explain, can determine with almost scientific exactitude the authenticity of a document.

In a recent book I pointed out that feel “is the key factor in comparing scripts or in judging authenticity.” The occasional examiner of questioned handwriting may be impervious to feel. He may study laboriously the formation of individual letters in a document. He may, if he has had some experience, notice how “key” words—words that seldom vary in a person’s script—such as and (or the ampersand), the, of, in, by, with, for, to, from and similar common words, are formed. He will observe the capital letters to see if they conform with other known-to-be authentic examples. This method of comparing scripts to determine authenticity is, in my opinion, a rather oblique way to approach a suspect document. Many people constantly vary the formation of their words and letters, so that such a comparison, without
An excerpt from the first entry in the Hitler diaries: “From now on I shall record my political actions and thoughts in notes, in order to preserve them for posterity like every other politician. November 13, 1932. Af. Hitler.”

considering the preliminary feel, might be very misleading. In the case of forgery, a skilled fabricator may imitate individual letters and words so perfectly that only an expert with years of experience can detect his fakery. But feel, on the other hand, is a subtle, telltale clue that mocks the most adroit forger.

Some of the factors that contribute to the feel of a manuscript are: the amount of space between words and between lines; the size of the script; the ease, or lack of ease, with which the script flows; the pressure of the pen in forming strokes, especially descending strokes; the length of the descending strokes, as in y’s and g’s; the overall legibility of the script; the position of the dots over the i’s and the crossbars of the t’s; the thickness of the pen strokes; and the haste, or lack of haste, with which the words and letters have been formed.

You can often take in the feel of documents very quickly by examin-
Forgery of a handwritten letter, dated January 23, 1931, from Adolf Hitler to Wilhelm Frick as minister of the interior and education in Thuringen: “My joy is great. You are the first Nazi minister. Others will follow. I hope you quickly recover your health.” Kujau has drawn rather than written this letter. The handwriting has none of the stabbing fury of Hitler’s own script, and the signature was penned so slowly that the halting strokes caused the ink to “feather,” or blot slightly.
ing or comparing them upside down. Whenever I have any initial doubts about the authenticity of a manuscript or wish to compare it with another example of handwriting, I upend the papers so that the words become obscured and only the feel is perceptible.

Once a manuscript passes the feel test, a thorough examination of individual words and letters is in order.\(^1\)

If Konrad Kujau, the Hitler forger, were rated four on a scale of one to ten, then Clifford Irving, who created one of the most brilliant forgeries of all time in his autobiography of Howard Hughes, would merit a ten. Experts are fortunate that it was the fumbling Kujau who executed the Hitler diaries and paintings. Had it been Clifford Irving, a lot more of us might have been taken in. Irving's reaction to the Hitler diaries was published by *Newsweek*:

Reached at his home in Mexico, Irving said that it would be possible to forge a set of Hitler diaries. "I'd get a few lengthy samples of Hitler's handwriting—they don't have to be original, copies will do," he said. "I'd shop around for the proper paper and ink. One wouldn't have to do much research—so much has been written about the man." Mastering the handwriting might take only a couple of weeks, Irving mused, and a skillful forger could easily adapt changes in the subject's style. It doesn't take much to fool "internationally renowned handwriting experts," he said. "We learned that back in 1972."\(^2\)

There are two pitfalls in making the feel test. The first, not applicable to the Hitler diaries, is the frequent similarity in scripts between parent and offspring or between close members of the same family. This consanguinity has been the undoing of many an expert in the past, especially in cases involving signers of the Declaration of Independence, of whom there were fifty-six with more than double that number of close relatives. Many of the signers passed their names on to their sons. Thus we have William Ellery, Sr., and William Ellery, Jr.; Thomas Stone, Sr., and Thomas Stone, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Sr. (father of the signer) and Thomas Lynch, Jr. and so on.

The second trap that may catch the unwary is the tendency of some persons to alter their scripts over the years or according to the purpose of their handwriting. A formal letter may be indited in a Sunday-go-to-meeting script and differ markedly from a hastily scrawled memorandum. A note penned at the age of twenty may be different in feel from a letter written at eighty. But deliberately faked changes are easy to spot. The feel of Hitler's script varied somewhat throughout his life, but even his early, well-regulated hand bears a fairly close resemblance to his later, more tumultuous and undisciplined writing. The letters and
Forged signatures of World War II leaders. The upper signatures are by Konrad Kuja, with authentic examples below. Notice that all of the imitations have a family resemblance and lack the vitality of the originals. Furnished by O. Spronk in the Hague.
words are formed differently in some cases, but the feel of the script leaves no doubt that both early and late writings are by the same individual.

In the Hitler diaries there was so little similarity between the crude Kujau forgery and Hitler's own dynamic handwriting that virtually no possibility existed for error on the part of any expert who relied upon the feel test for authentication. You have only to compare Hitler's powerful script with the mincing, regulated, penmanship of the forged diaries to see that the two scripts could not possibly have been penned by the same person.

Examine the illustration in which the two handwritings are placed one above the other. In the authentic example, at the top, the lines rush like a freshet and then plunge precipitously as if they were going over a falls. The pen strokes vary in intensity but never abandon the sharp, dirklike points of the Gothic long s's and t's without crossbars. The words are irregularly formed and packed close together, and the lines are erratic.

In the forgery by Kujau, the script moves with pleasant and orderly movement over the page. The words are far apart (in later diaries the distance between the words became much greater), probably because the forger wished to fill as much space as possible with only a few words and thus create the impression that the diaries were longer than they actually were. In this, he succeeded, for many of those who examined the diaries were impressed by their length, whereas in reality they averaged only a meager \(800\) words per volume. There is a methodical, uninteresting character to Kujau's script, a kind of fastidiousness. It does not weave, like the dynamic chirography of the dictator. It holds obediently to the lines that guide it. Every word is meticulously formed, as though according to plan. It lacks the spontaneity we find in the swift outpourings of Hitler. The lines too, like the words, are far apart.

An instant betrayal of the diaries to any knowledgeable person is the signature that stands naked and alone at the end of every entry. The signatures are set far apart from the text above them, again to create an impression of length in the diaries. But the cagey dictator would never have left a space to be filled in later by a forger; he invariably put his signature right at the end of whatever he wrote. He almost never signed autograph albums (despite posed photographs of him that would indicate the contrary), nor did he ever put his signature on slips of paper or little cards. He feared the unauthorized use of even the tiniest space above his name. When he wrote in elaborate guestbooks, he usually made sure that his signature was flanked by other names, or
The "feel" of Hitler's handwriting, genuine and forged. Top: Hitler's authentic handwriting. The lines move like a cataract across the page, the pen strokes are swift and decisive, varying in intensity, the words are close together, and at the end of each line the final word collapses. Bottom: Forged lines from the bogus Hitler diaries. The lines are methodical and fastidious, regulated and carefully penned. The lines are too far apart. There is very little similarity to Hitler's spontaneous, explosive script.

he penned some polite sentiment above or next to his signature that precluded its use for other purposes. When Hitler was requested to provide an admirer with an autograph and agreed to do so, he invariably signed a large postcard photograph by his official photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann.

In addition to their spacing, the very number of signatures in the forged diaries is suspicious. Nobody but a lunatic with a surplus of leisure time would put his name on every page of a diary—in fact, most people don't even sign their diaries at the front, and I make this statement after having examined hundreds, perhaps thousands, of diaries and journals.
Hitler's signature, at top, dated March 5, 1933, is genuine; the bottom one, dated 1932, is from the diaries. In the forged signature the top of the A is too long and bent, and the stem in the f is bowed. The large loop of the forged capital H is drawn, not smoothly and swiftly written, and followed by six peaks instead of five. The forger was evidently unable to count.

Hitler's last signature. Top: A bogus signature from the last entry in the diaries. At this time, April 16, 1945, Hitler was actually crippled with Parkinson's disease or some similar ailment—he could barely sign his name and could not eat without spilling food all over his shirt—but the exuberant forger put a large, triumphant signature at the end of the diaries. Bottom: An authentic signature of Hitler, dated April 29, 1945, enlarged four times to facilitate comparison. The tiny original looks like a crushed insect, every letter of it unrecognizable.

Nor do the signatures look like Hitler's. They are flaccid. They have curves where they should have straight lines. Often the A in Adolf (abbreviated to Af by Hitler) bears a curved bar (instead of straight) forming the first line of the A and a curved bar (instead of straight) forming the f. The bottom curve of the H is usually labored and awkward in the forgeries, without the swift, rhythmic power of the original. The number of pointed letters following the H in Hitler is often greater in the imitations than in the originals. Sometimes the crossbar on the f is horizontal, or even angled upward instead of sharply downward as in the genuine signatures.

Hitler's authentic last (or next to last) signature looks like a swatted fly. Not a single letter of it is distinguishable. It is a pasty, indecipherable ink smear from a mentally and physically debilitated man who is almost a zombie. Indeed, both Hitler and his new wife could be numbered among the living dead, for they had already made their
An excerpt from the last entry in the Hitler diaries (April 16, 1945):
“The long-awaited offensive has begun. May the Lord God stand by us.” Weary with forging, Kujau put his words and letters farther and farther apart, making the text look much longer than it really was.

suicide pact, and their watches had been wound for the last time. By contrast, the Kujau forgery dated only thirteen days earlier is buoyant, ebullient. The handwriting that precedes it is fluent and easy to read; it has a joyous quality. The writer clearly has the world by the tail and swings it around like a boy with a horse chestnut on a string. “The forger,” as I told a reporter from Life, “was almost finished and he was tired—almost as tired as Hitler was—and he couldn’t wait to get through. That loopy signature in the diaries reflects his joy and relief at having reached the end of his labors at last. That’s not the signature of a sick dictator. That’s the signature of one happy forger.”

Even when the feel evidence in handwriting is conclusive, a word-by-word examination is a simple task and an effective method of convincing the non-expert. A few examples will demonstrate the ineptitude of the Hitler forger. Not only did he fail utterly to capture the sweep and power of Hitler’s script, but he exhibited a singular inability to perceive the characteristics of Hitler’s individual letters and words. My friend Marie Bernard, one of the world’s leading handwriting experts, decided as soon as she received the copiously illustrated first diaries issue of Stern that it would be interesting to catalogue a few of the major chirographic blunders of the forger. Marie performed her examination without any of the fancy and unnecessary stage props that one often associates with handwriting experts.
Years ago, perhaps forty-five or so, when I was relatively new at the game, I thought I needed a microscope to examine recalcitrant documents. I bought one with triple objectives ($50 \times$, $100 \times$, $500 \times$). The years passed and I never used it. About ten years ago I gave it to an impoverished medical student. High magnifications tend to distort and almost never reveal anything that can't be perceived with the naked eye or with a small jeweler's loupe.

Marie Bernard has one of the sharpest eyes in the business. In her monograph on the Hitler diaries, she listed twenty-seven errors made by the forger. I am indebted to her perceptive manuscript for most of my graphic examples of inaccurate words and letters in the diaries (the comments that accompany them are my responsibility).

The rudimentary approach to handwriting authentication, a simple comparison of letters in the words, was used by Ordway Hilton. An expert with forty-five years of experience in handwriting, Hilton, age sixty-nine, was living in retirement when he was approached by Thomas Walde and Wilfried Sorge of Stern. They were impressed by Hilton's credentials. He had been employed by the New York Police Department for almost thirty years and was a prominent member of the handwriting fraternity, a contributor to the proceedings of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, the American Academy of Forensic Science, and the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners. Hilton welcomed his German visitors. They placed before him a fistful of notes, letters, and signed photographs, together with two pages from the book devoted to Hess's flight to England. So fearful was this timid duo of German publishing potentates that their great discovery would be found out that the papers they allowed Hilton to examine dealt only with facts already well known—Hitler's indictment of Hess after the flight, and a telegram from Hitler to Miklós Horthy, his Hungarian puppet leader. (These were the same documents of which I was allowed to see photocopies.) As Hilton could not read German, however, this dark secrecy was wasted on him.

After Hilton finished his report (cited in a previous chapter), the same documents were turned over to Max Frei-Sulzer, a document expert in Zurich, the former head of forensic services for the Zurich police department. He also received a dossier compiled by Heidemann to show how the Fuehrer's handwriting had changed between 1906 and 1945 and a guide to the Gothic script. Frei-Sulzer worked on the project for two months, and his analysis of the two forged Hitler documents ran to seventeen pages. Robert Harris described the results:
Marie Bernard's evidence. The capital letters of Hitler's script are usually much smaller than the forged letters from the diaries shown below each authentic example. Hitler's handwriting varied greatly.
Evidence provided by Kenneth W. Rendell in *Newsweek*, May 16, 1983. Hitler's handwriting is at top, the forger's at bottom. In writing H and K the forger used a more elaborate form of the letter than Hitler. In the E, the forger used a straight line at the bottom, while Hitler used a loop. The fake signature is looser and shows a faulty crossbar.

"The script of Adolf Hitler," wrote Frei-Sulzer, "is highly individualistic and offers a good basis for the examination of questionable handwriting." He singled out fourteen special characteristics, analysed the i's, the h's and the t's, the gaps between the letters and the pressure that had been applied to the pen. He made large photographic blow-ups of individual passages, and at the end of it all his conclusion on the Hess communiqué and the Horthy telegram was unequivocal: "There can be no doubt that both these documents were written by Adolf Hitler." 5

Although Kenneth W. Rendell, *Newsweek*’s expert, was at first denied the complete examination of the diaries he had insisted upon and declined to venture any opinion in print pending such an examination, he was, during Koch’s American visit, permitted to study two volumes of the sixty-two. He was not shown the massive numbers of letters, speeches, sketches, and paintings and was thus obliged to judge from
less than 1 percent of the material the authenticity of the entire collection. "I had intended to fly to Zurich . . . with my assorted microscopes, cameras and other paraphernalia to pore over the diaries methodically," he said in his subsequent report. "But the opportunities for sensible research disappeared as Stern raced into print with its sensation." Not until Peter Koch brought the 1932 and 1945 diaries to the United States did Rendell have an opportunity to examine the original documents: "I had only about a half hour. . . . But that was all the time I needed."

Having seen "Hitler's fine leather desk set," he recognized at once that these "leatherette notebooks did not resemble documents he would have left for posterity," and the same black ink, used in both volumes, looked too modern.

The main problem was that the signatures themselves were terrible renditions. Hitler's signature changed often through the years. Basically, it became smaller and more cramped as his health deteriorated and his war fortunes declined. These signatures showed precisely the opposite trend: tight in the early version, open and expansive at the end. The technical mistakes were just as glaring. The crossbar on the "f" of the abbreviated "Adolf" slants from the upper left to the lower right in genuine signatures. In Stern's diaries the crossbar slanted from the lower left to the upper right; on at least one signature, the stroke was executed backward.

Rendell and his helpers then photocopied the 22 pages of the 1932 diary, snipped out all the capital letters, and pasted on sheets of paper "separate collections of 21 letters and an additional assortment of numbers."

Comparing these with authentic characters, we found numerous errors. The bottom line of Hitler's capital "E," for example, almost always curls upward; those in Stern's diaries cut straight across. Hitler's simple "K" was always executed in sharp strokes; those in Stern's diaries were highly stylized. The forger made a common mistake on Hitler's "H." Specifically, the "H" in Stern's diary looks exactly like the "H" in Hitler's signature. In reality, Hitler, like most people, used a much simpler style in text than he did in his signature.

Rendell repeated that "only a thorough examination of the complete body of Stern's material" could determine whether any parts of it were
genuine: "As a professional, I can only lament that such an inspection was not made at the very beginning." 

Unfortunately, Rendell's opinions were not published until ten days after a team of West German experts had put the official coup de grâce to the forgery.
By the morning of Thursday, May 6, 1983, two weeks after the diaries had burst upon an amazed world, the fierce debates over their authenticity had pretty much ceased to rage. A deceptive lull lay over the battle-field. Opponents of the diaries had expressed their views and were silent. *Newsweek'*s Kenneth W. Rendell had still refused to give a pro or con opinion in print. The *New York Post*, ignoring all warning signals, was busy exploiting lurid excerpts from the diaries. In Hamburg, ruffled by his humiliating reception in America, *Stern’s* editor Peter Koch angrily proclaimed his abiding conviction that the diaries were genuine. Contrary opinions, he repeated, were inspired by jealousy. He even accused Trevor-Roper of changing his mind only because of his previous connections with the British secret service. And to his detractors in Europe and America he flung the challenge: “More enemies, more honor.”

Those were Koch’s last defiant words. In a dramatic May 6 press conference held with little or no warning to reporters, Hans Booms, the president of West Germany’s Federal Archive, announced that “no authenticity can be attributed to these documents” and labeled the diaries “a grotesquely superficial forgery.” West Germany’s Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann issued a terse statement that “the Federal Archive is convinced that documents they were originally given (three diaries subsequently increased to seven) did not come from Hitler’s hand, but were produced in the postwar period.”

The evidence upon which I had condemned the diaries was apparently not considered or noted by the Federal Archive. Instead, its investigators concentrated on the purely scientific approach, a method of forgery detection that had originally misled them into believing that the diaries were genuine. This time, however, their examination was
more searching and far more successful. The evidence on which they
condemned the diaries, based upon small portions of three of the seven
volumes (dated 1934, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1942, and 1943) provided by Stern,
was presented in detail at the Coblenz press conference by Louis
Ferdinand Werner, the state chemist who had supervised the analysis
of the paper, cover, bindings, labels, and glue. Werner characterized
the forged diaries as obvious fakes, astonishingly inept. He noted that
it required only two days of examinations to reach an unequivocal

First, much, if not most, of the text—including factual errors—had
been cribbed from a book published in 1962 by former West German
state archivist Max Domarus, Hitler’s Speeches and Proclamations. In the
twenty years since the book appeared, historians had discovered new
evidence that occasionally contradicted Domarus, and Kujau was igno­
rant of the new evidence. For example, Domarus reported that a crowd
at a Hitler rally in Breslau numbered about half a million, but more
recent data revealed that the crowd had been estimated at the time at
around 130,000. Both the diaries and Domarus had General Franz von
Epp congratulating Hitler in 1937 on his fiftieth anniversary, when in
fact Hitler was only forty-eight years old. The actual circumstance was
that Hitler had commended Von Epp for Epp’s fifty years in the army.
In noting these blunders by the forger, Booms declared: “You get the
impression of a very limited understanding from a person who had an
interest in making entries only when Domarus did.”¹ This, Booms
stated, established the forgeries as being done after 1962. His guess was
about 1964.

Second, the archivists who had earlier acclaimed the handwriting in
the Hitler diaries as genuine deliberately refrained from comment on
the script this time but reported a thorough examination of the typed
labels. They discovered under microscopic inspection that the type was
in fact from a 1925 typewriter, but in a label purportedly typed in 1943
they found absolutely no sign of wear on the keys when compared
with a label allegedly typed in 1934.

Third, the cheap notebooks provided telling chemical proof of the
forgeries. Careful analysis of bits of paper from three of the notebooks
established that the pages had been manufactured at least ten years
after the end of World War II. Threads of polyamide, a substance
produced only after 1945, were found among the fibers used in the
bindings. The glue on the back of labels signed by Rudolf Hess and
Martin Bormann contained chemicals not used during Hitler’s lifetime.

In the face of this devastating evidence, Henri Nannen, Stern’s
publisher since its founding in 1948, appeared on German television
with the scornful comment: "The Federal Archive is not God Almighty." He continued: "The magazine will not accept the statements from the Federal Archive, but will take them into consideration in further publication. A final explanation of the details in not possible at this moment." Nannen insisted that at least the Hess volume was genuine, since a number of internationally known handwriting experts had pronounced it authentic.

Nannen was alluding to the pages from this volume shown to me and other experts, some of whom accepted the pages as genuine. Yet of all the diaries, the Hess volume may be the silliest, for it reveals a Fuehrer who not only records inane and pointless comments but approves the moronic scheme of Hess to fly to England. It amazes me that Henri Nannen, who surely must have studied the history of his own country, could not instantly detect the un-Hitleresque style of the writing, as well as the impracticality of the Hess plan. Further, I am astonished that Nannen was so ill informed on the capabilities of the German long-range aircraft of World War II as to suppose that Hess required a special airplane. In fact, there is scarcely a single remark in this preposterous volume that does not disintegrate under intelligent scrutiny. Kujau did, it is true, copy into it several authentic documents, one of them Hitler's official announcement made right after Hess's ill-fated flight. But aside from these, the Hess diary is one palpable absurdity piled upon another.

Nannen was not the only diehard. Gerd Schulte-Hillen, chairman of Gruner & Jahr, remained unconvinced that the diaries were fake and that Heidemann was involved in a swindle. Within a few hours after the Federal Archive's disclosure, he gave Heidemann $125,000 to buy the original manuscript libretto of Wagner's Die Meistersinger, believed to have been owned by Hitler. The purchase of this precious musical document from Heidemann's secret source, Schulte-Hillen believed, would prove the authenticity of the sixty-two volumes of diaries. Neither Heidemann nor Schulte-Hillen was enough of a scholar to know that Wagner's original manuscript had been sold at auction during the depression to A.S.W. Rosenbach, the grand mogul of morocco and the prince of rare book dealers. Rosenbach offered it at $25,000 and got no takers. In early 1952 John Fleming, aide to Rosenbach and subsequently his successor, sold the manuscript to Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. of Corning Glass for $12,500, the bargain of the century. Houghton was the mainstay of the great Houghton Library at Harvard. Thus, even after his public exposure and disgrace, Heidemann was still enough of a con man to swindle Nannen out of an additional small fortune.
A forged Hitler note sent to Stern magazine by one of its readers, May 9, 1983: "I hereby confirm to Stern that my diaries are genuine. November 1933. Af. Hitler."

Publication of the diaries was immediately suspended by Stern, where an employee reported that panic prevailed in the editorial department and heads were rolling. One of the first heads to be lopped off bore the stony, scornful visage of Peter Koch. The day after the Federal Archive announcement, Koch submitted his resignation, as did associate editor Felix Schmidt. Each took with him a bonus of over $1 million as a bribe to seal his mouth.

Other publications that had planned to run excerpts pied their type in a pique. Among them Paris Match and the London Sunday Times. The Times had received two diaries for examination and at once announced that in spite of the devastating report of the German archivists—so convincing that few people in the world now doubted that the diaries were fakes—it would proceed with its own planned examination of them.

It is significant, perhaps, that the methods of examination used by me (judging by feel, with a later look at individual letters and words), by Marie Bernard (judging by feel, with a detailed examination of individual letters and words), and by Kenneth W. Rendell (judging authenticity by comparing individual letters) resulted in a conclusion identical with that of a detailed scientific and chemical examination. Rendell had, as he explained, intended to combine both methods. If I may be permitted to generalize, however, I’d like to point out that the method of judging authenticity by a comparison of individual letters in
a genuine document with those in a suspect document is very fallible because it is relatively easy for a skilled forger to imitate individual letters, especially capital letters. The technique of comparing individual letters was used by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Ordway Hilton, and others who reached the wrong conclusion.

The techniques of modern science in examining suspect handwriting can be astonishingly effective, provided the suspect script is not too old nor too recent. In the case of the Hitler diaries, where there was a span of about thirty-five to fifty years between the writing of the forged subject and the forger's fabrication, laboratory procedures provided conclusive evidence. But I do not know of any chemical or microscopic examination that can identify the date of two handwriting samples penned only a few months or even a year apart: the examination of the paper or watermark proves little or nothing; the glue (if any) would be virtually the same; the paper might easily be from the same batch; and the ink could have been produced by the same company at the same time. In older documents—say, documents written two or more centuries ago—the difference in ink (since the same basic recipe for iron-gall ink was used over a period of four or five centuries) would be negligible, and a forger working in the year 1800, using paper dating from the sixteenth century, could easily outwit the most sophisticated modern machinery. It is in very old examples and very modern examples of disputed handwriting that the evidence of feel is so vital.

One of the most amazing of modern machines, invented by researchers at Mannheim University in West Germany, is able to detect minute pressures applied by writers on paper. They are now at work on an even more sophisticated machine, an electric grid microscope to measure precisely the indentations made by a pen. They have already developed a clever device known as a Verisign. A pen secured to a computer retraces an example of writing; the computer then analyzes sixteen different tendencies, such as the swiftness of the writing, its spacing, and crossbars on key letters. The team that developed this device made a recent test: five thousand forged signatures were fed into the machine for comparison with authentic examples. The machine detected every fake except one.

Among the successful devices available to chirographic experts who prefer to use laboratory techniques are neutron activation analysis, X-ray fluorescence, and thin-layer chromatography, or the use of a device to show the synthetical production of color tones by the rotation of a circular disk bearing virtually every possible combination of colors. According to Lydal L. Shaneyfeld, a private document investigator with many years of FBI experience, chemists who are interested in inks
get standards from all the manufacturers and establish ink libraries. They then punch out little sections of a line from a document under investigation, put it into solution and run it through the equipment."

Since ink undergoes a metamorphosis after it is joined to paper, it is often possible to detect from the electrically charged atoms in ink the approximate date of the writing. In the case of documents of the fourteenth to nineteenth century, an expert can tell at a glance their approximate age. But with relatively modern documents—say, documents that were backdated for some purpose—the modern use of "trace elements," a tiny portion of a different element added each year by the paper manufacturer, makes it easy to identify the age of paper. If a document glows under ultraviolet examination, it very likely contains optical brighteners, ingredients not used prior to the 1950s. Documents of modern origin (after 1950) often contain synthetic and glass fibers.

Watermarks may provide another clue: even manufacturers who use the identical watermark occasionally make minute, virtually undetectable changes from year to year. I occasionally use my own private chart of dated Arches paper markings, with each page bearing an almost invisible watermark, to supplement my identification of forged Salvador Dali lithographs, now very abundant on the market. With documents written before 1800, however, the value of watermarks for age detection is tenuous, at best. Some watermarks were used over a period of centuries with few or no changes and were imported from one country into another, so that even if the expert establishes the country of origin (which is not difficult), even the exact mill in which the paper was laid, he cannot be certain that the document itself originated in that country.

The effectiveness of scientific methods in detecting forgeries often depends upon the skill of the individual operating the laboratory equipment. Frequently, too, chemical and microscopic tests can be very misleading. In its preliminary authentication of the Hitler diaries, the Rhineland-Palatinate criminal laboratory used virtually the identical equipment and the identical methods as the West German Federal Archive in Coblenz.

Is the detection of forgery an exact science? The answer is yes. In the hands of a competent, skilled, experienced person, as demonstrated in this chapter, any one of the accepted methods of detecting forgery is exact, and the same conclusion will be reached by different methods.
The forgery of the Hitler diaries was a crime that left almost no clue for the Bonn police. In fact, the scenario appeared to have run its course in a dense fog. A credulous publisher (Henri Nannen) claimed he had shelled out over $4 million in cash (no receipts required) to an unseen and unnamed recipient; and a mendacious middleman (Gerd Heidemann) alleged he had tossed the huge bundles of marks into a speeding car from which, in turn, the Hitler diaries were pitched into his car.

From the very start there was another big problem that hampered the Bonn sleuths. As the enforcing arm of the West German government, they were subject to the orders, and perhaps whims, of the West German Interior Ministry. Less than twenty-four hours after the official announcement that the diaries were fakes, the Interior Ministry, with the usual ruffle of drums that accompanies political promulgations, stated that it had opened an investigation to track down the source of the diaries and bring the miscreants to justice.

Instantly, the quest for the forger became a political as well as a police problem. The relations between East Germany—where the forgeries were thought by most experts to have originated—and West Germany had ten days earlier been strained when Erich Honecker, the East German leader, canceled a visit to Bonn because of the hostility of the West German press. An East German connection for the diaries would further imperil the relations between the two Germanys, and any effort of Stern to recover the vanished eight million marks from East Germany would almost certainly end in failure.

The sensitivity of the situation was further exacerbated by a rumor that Thomas Walde, Stern's editor in charge of contemporary history and close associate of Heidemann, had three years earlier negotiated with an East German intelligence officer in Erfurt for some rare docu-
ments. The source of this disturbing story was the newspaper *Die Welt am Sonntag* in Hamburg, where the West German Interior Ministry had just opened on May 8 a second investigation into the source of the diaries. The editors of *Die Welt am Sonntag* claimed to know of a secret West German intelligence report that implicated Walde. He had visited Erfurt secretly to examine documents concerning the 1979 defection of Inge Goliath, secretary of a senior Christian Democratic member of parliament. The documents had subsequently formed the basis for a *Stern* article. Walde also was shown hitherto unpublished documents about the last days of Hitler. If these assertions were true, they suggested an unusually close connection between the editorial staff of *Stern* and officials in East Germany. Earlier, in the mid-1950s, Heidemann had revealed an unusual ability to travel without hindrance in East Germany when he investigated the story that Chou En-lai, the Chinese prime minister, had sired a son while a student at Goettingen. Of Heidemann's visit to East Germany another journalist, Wolfgang Alexander, noted his astonishment. He said: "I know how much trouble I had when I went to East Germany to take pictures or write a story." ¹

The key to the source of the diaries, detectives concluded, was Heidemann. When the Federal Archive announced that the diaries were "grotesquely primitive forgeries," Heidemann was in southern Germany, somewhere between Munich and Berchtesgaden. He was, so he later said, in search of evidence to prove conclusively that the diaries were genuine. It was nightfall on May 6 by the time the editors of *Stern*, even more zealous in their pursuit than the police, managed to locate him. *Stern* had at least four million good reasons to be zealous. The magazine wanted its money back. The editors dispatched a private plane to Bavaria to pick up their crack reporter and bring him to Hamburg for what was to be a vigorous, prolonged interrogation. Heidemann arrived at the airport in Hamburg a few minutes after eleven o'clock in the evening. His wife, Gina, was at first refused permission to meet him but then was allowed to ride from the airport to the offices of *Stern* with her husband. They were told to have no private conversation. "All Gerd could say to me in the car was, 'I know they are genuine, I know.' He looked shaken to the core." ²

In a special report to the *New York Times*, James M. Markham wrote: "Two nights ago, in a telephone conversation with the New York Times, the journalist's wife spoke warmly of Hitler and insisted on the genuineness of the diaries even after they had been exposed as fabrications. The Heidemanns are known to have befriended several convicted Nazi war criminals." ³
Meanwhile, the savage interrogation of Heidemann on the eighth floor of the Rock of Apes had evoked from the bloodhound of the press several confused and contradictory accounts of what happened to the missing marks. His inquisitors included Henri Nannen, Gerd Schulte-Hillen, and Felix Schmidt. Nannen’s promise to uncover the full story and lay it before his readers inspired a rash of mixed-up lies from Heidemann. Between lies and excuses he interposed protests that the diaries were genuine. Finally, under terrifying pressure, Heidemann took a cassette recorder from his briefcase, and played a fifteen-minute recording of a phone conversation he’d had with Medard Klapper, a weapons dealer and confidence man. According to Klapper, Martin Bormann had heard of Heidemann’s difficulties, and although old and infirm, he’d agreed to fly from South America to Hamburg and testify that the diaries were genuine.

This disclosure momentarily stunned the Stern officials. Schulte-Hillen broke the silence to ask how Bormann proposed to get to Hamburg. Heidemann replied that he would fly to Hamburg in a Lear jet. This remark roused the interrogators to fury. Schmidt pointed out that a Lear jet did not have the range to cross the Atlantic but would plunge into the ocean in midflight.

Heidemann’s disclosures seemed to change almost from hour to hour during the prolonged third degree. A middleman he named turned out not to exist, or to have vanished under an assumed name. Heidemann claimed that the middleman had run off for fear that the discovery of the forgeries would endanger his relatives in East Germany, one of them a general. The tale of hurling the bundles of money from one speeding car into another, a feat that many professional stuntmen would envy, was recounted by both Heidemann and his wife, who claimed she had accompanied the reporter on some of his jaunts to exchange marks for diaries. But their stories did not agree, and in later versions the speeding cars were slowed down and eventually came to a halt. Still the stories did not ring true. Heidemann, said Frank Mueller-May, a colleague at Stern, “went crazy on this whole thing. He lost his professional instincts and went bananas.”

On May 9, Nannen publicly apologized for Heidemann during a telephone interview. “I was always of the conviction that Heidemann believed in the diaries,” said Nannen. “I think he acted in good faith. But then I think he saw dollar signs in his eyes.” Despite this remark to the press about a man whom he surely knew by then to be a liar and a crook, Nannen did not fail to take the proper steps. That same day he filed fraud charges against Heidemann in a Hamburg court. The complaint intimated that Heidemann had made off with at least some of the
money turned over to him. Only two weeks earlier Nannen had acclaimed Heidemann as the greatest reporter of modern times, responsible for the biggest scoop of the twentieth century. Now he was threatening to put his prize news-scooper behind bars.

At Stern the leading journalists had banded together to disclaim all responsibility for the discovery and publication of the bogus diaries. They issued an apology to their readers for printing excerpts from the pro-Nazi forgery. Even if the diaries had proved to be genuine, they declared, “Stern is not the publication in which Nazi justification should be able to find its place.”

Heidemann continued to face a barrage of questions. Reporters were relentless. Slowly, very slowly, truth began to infiltrate his lies. Bits of fact now and then cropped up in the morass of impromptu inventions and premeditated falsehoods. After his initial interrogation, Heidemann retired into monkish seclusion at his home in Hamburg. During the public castigation of his conduct that followed, the half-crazed reporter was so despondent that he considered shooting himself. He lay crumpled on the floor, weeping and sobbing out his apologies to his wife. According to testimony during his trial in September 1984, Heidemann roused himself only to confront what amounted to another third degree from the press. It was the charge of fraud from Nannen that flushed him out. On Tuesday, May 10, Heidemann and his attorney, Evon Geis, met with the press. Both men were solemnly attired in dark suits and ties. Seated together on a couch in Heidemann’s Hamburg residence, they looked almost like brothers. Their somber suiting radiated an aura of respectability that was hardly sustained by the manner in which they eluded the questions hurled at them by a jostling mass of shouting reporters and photographers.

Gerd Heidemann, of whom his publisher had said only a few days earlier, “Gerd would shoot himself before he’d write a fraudulent article,” now denied his expertise. The man who had regaled ex-Nazis aboard Goering’s yacht and clicked beer mugs with former Gestapo leaders was suddenly transformed into a credulous reporter caught in the mantrap set by a villain named Konrad Fischer, who operated under the name of Dr. Kujau. Heidemann’s flashing eye and hot temper vanished for the moment and were replaced by a look of bland innocence as he explained: “Stern’s owners are trying to make a scapegoat of me. We were all gullible. I did not think that they [the Hitler diaries] were forgeries. The forgers must have tremendous knowledge. I fooled myself. It was the job of the magazine to check the authenticity. I am no Hitler researcher.”

In a forceful denial of guilt, Heidemann laid all the blame on the
editors of Stern: "I never said, 'Don't examine the notebooks.' I limited myself to supplying them. Of course the first notebooks should have been examined immediately. It's not my fault that in the two years Stern had access to some of the diaries they didn't properly authenticate them." When asked whether Konrad Fischer really existed, Heidemann shouted, "Of course he does!" To the question as to how the purveyor of the bogus diaries was paid, the former crack reporter replied: "Easy. One thing in exchange for another." 9

Heidemann had furnished Stern with a clue when he told his interrogators that the disclosure of his source would endanger the life of the source's brother, a general in the East German army. Armed with this lead, Nannen investigated and learned that Fischer's (Konrad Kujau's) brother was actually a railway station porter. Heidemann had tried to throw Nannen off the track when he stated during interrogation that Fischer's sister had placed an advertisement in an East German newspaper asking for World War II memorabilia and through the ad had contacted an elderly man who offered her the Hitler diaries in exchange for a guaranteed annual pension. There was a ghost of truth in this remark, since Kujau had obtained a great many of his authentic Nazi rarities by advertising in East German periodicals.

To some observers the unfolding tale of a Nazi memorabilia dealer who had sold, and possibly forged, the diaries seemed implausible. It was too mundane. There must be, some critics insisted, a more darkly mysterious origin of these diaries that whitewashed the black deeds of history's most notorious tyrant.

A West German newspaper, Die Welt, came up with a story that delighted its more romantic readers. They stated that an East German state security agent, identified only as Manfred G., had recently defected to the United States. He brought with him a satchel of top secret documents. Manfred G. had worked for the East German ministry that was suspected of forging the diaries. His defection had been confirmed by United States sources, according to Die Welt, and it was quite possible that Manfred G. had smuggled the diaries out of East Germany with him.

This pleasant voyage into fiction ran aground the very next day when Gerd Heidemann at last decided to tell the approximate truth. He concealed only his own role in the creation of the forgeries. In a second press interview in Hamburg on May 11, Heidemann confessed that he had obtained the diaries from Konrad Fischer, also known as Konrad Kujau, a forty-six-year-old Nazi memorabilia dealer in Stuttgart. Heidemann described Kujau as a calligrapher and artist. Without identifying him as the forger, Heidemann left the impression that
Kujau possessed a mysterious, inexhaustible supply of Nazi letters and documents. The previous day Heidemann had told reporters that he hadn’t heard from Fischer-Kujau but was expecting a telephone call at any time. He now admitted that Kujau had telephoned him several days earlier from a roadside pay phone, probably in Austria, although Kujau claimed he had escaped to Czechoslovakia.

On instructions from the West German justice department, the Stuttgart police began closing the net around Kujau. On May 13 they raided his shop and carried off sacks full of books, documents, and photographs. They confiscated huge quantities of Nazi-era manuscript material, together with documents written by Kujau. Among other items the police discovered some books that were signed by top Nazi leaders. To the press they reported that they’d found nothing significant.

As the turmoil following the official condemnation of the diaries raged, the journalists at Stern’s Hamburg headquarters staged a dramatic sit-in. They demanded that the temporary replacements for Stern’s now disgraced editors Peter Koch and Felix Schmidt be themselves replaced. The new editors, both conservatives, were Johannes Gross and Peter Scholl-Latour, appointed by Gruner & Jahr. Gross was the publisher of a business magazine called Capital, and Scholl-Latour was the Paris correspondent of West Germany’s second television channel. The striking journalists passed by a vote of 162 to 2 a resolution to reject the appointment of the conservatives, who tended to take a less critical view of the Nazis and seemed to represent a continuation of the policy that had allowed the secret editing and publishing of parts of the Hitler diaries in which the notorious Nazi dictator was portrayed as Adolf the Amiable. A columnist for the newspaper Die Welt am Sonntag, Paul Martin, had asked the public prosecutor to file charges of forgery and spreading Nazi propaganda against the publisher of Stern magazine.

In England Trevor-Roper issued a manly apology: “Whether misled or not, I blame no one except myself for giving wrong advice to The Times and Sunday Times, whose editors have behaved throughout with more understanding than I deserve.” This eloquent and simple apology did much to mitigate Trevor-Roper’s error. He further claimed that he had been given a bad lead by samples of Hitler’s handwriting not connected with the diaries that had been authenticated by three international experts. These were, however, the identical pages of which photocopies were submitted to Kenneth W. Rendell and me, excerpts from the bogus account of Hess’s flight to England, and were of course in the same hand as the rest of the diaries. Although Lord
Dacre did not mention the false and misleading information given to him by Peter Koch, he noted: “How Stern, in so important a matter, came to submit such irrelevant samples and cite the authentication (of them) as proof of the authentication of the diaries is a mystery to me.”

In the midst of the wrangling at Stern and the apologizing at the Sunday Times, the forger himself showed up. Konrad Kujau, accompanied by attorney Rolf Schmidt-Diemitz and a supply of lies, surrendered to police at the Austrian border. Kujau was immediately placed under “investigative arrest.” He read a statement notable for its total abandonment of truth: “I have given myself up voluntarily,” Kujau declared in his press release, “in order to defend myself against the accusations of fraud made against me in connection with the Hitler diaries.” This opening statement set the tone for the lies which were to follow. Unfortunately, Kujau’s denial was not very credible, because police had already learned from neighbors of Kujau’s that he’d been hard at work writing “articles” for Stern. And, said his friends and neighbors, whenever he talked about his highly connected relatives in East Germany, he varied his story, because after tilting a few steins he couldn’t remember what he’d said a while earlier.

Kujau stretched his vigorous imagination almost to the snapping point. He began by denouncing as “absurd” the idea that he had forged the Hitler diaries. Why, he couldn’t even read or write the old German script. He’d got the diaries, he said, from a man in East Germany named Mirdorf, whom he’d met in 1978 and from whom in 1981 he’d bought two volumes of the diaries. Later, after supplying more volumes, Herr Mirdorf got cold feet and refused to turn over to Kujau any more of the diaries in East Germany. The transfers were then made through a Herr Lauser in Switzerland. Finally, with regard to the missing $4 million, Kujau stated that he’d got only about $1 million of it. The difference between Heidemann’s story and Kujau’s story was the first volley in what was to be a whopping battle between two of the biggest liars who ever lived.
Forgery is the most audacious of all the arts. At its best it is an adroit meld of impertinence and skill, of daring and brilliance. For two hundred years every generation has had its spate of historical or literary forgers who created their moment of mayhem in the world of scholarship and were then forgotten. There was Baron von Gerstenbergk in Germany, who turned out hard-to-spot Schillers over a century ago; "Antique" Smith in the 1890s, whose output of Robert Burns almost doubled the known writings of the Scottish poet; Charles "The Baron" Weisberg, a master of Lincoln’s script who created rare letters that fooled, and continue to fool, unwary collectors and auctioneers; Henry Woodhouse, who had a forgery for every occasion and fabricated the handwriting of famous people he knew; Eugene Field II, who started modestly by faking his father’s manuscripts and wound up with a repertoire that included Lincoln, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Frederic Remington. On and on the list of forgers goes, most of them far more prolific and certainly far more skilled than Konrad Kujau.

Nothing about forgers should really amaze us by now, yet we continue to be astonished at the alleged "fecundity" of each new master of deceit. The remarkable thing about the Hitler diaries is certainly not their length, despite the bulk of the notebooks, for Kujau’s output was modest compared with that of many other forgers, and the diaries averaged only about 850 words per volume. You could put the entire contents of the average diary volume on three double-spaced typewritten pages. No, the remarkable thing about them is that honest-to-God historians actually accepted Kujau’s adolescent entries as those of the fiery, impassioned dictator who virtually destroyed Europe with his masterful rhetoric.
Trevor-Roper, as we know, was impressed by what appeared to him a vast quantity of writing; Gerhard Weinberg commented on the “sheer scope of the record,” and Rendell decided the forgeries might be genuine because “the risk of error is so great in a forgery of that size.”

Even the forger was impressed with himself. A reporter said to Kujau: “An article in the scientific magazine Criminology, written in 1975, noted that ‘It’s unusual for a long, sustained text to be forged.’ Now, after your work, not only the history of the Third Reich must be rewritten, as Stern loudly proclaimed, but the chapter on forgeries in the history of criminology.”

Kujau said: “Yes, it must.”

The reporter continued: “Professor [Lother] Michel [of the University of Mannheim] . . . admits that your work is the longest forged text in the whole history of forgery. A place in the literature of criminology is waiting for you.”

Kujau said: “Yes, I write Hitler’s handwriting faster than my own.”

Commenting on the length of the Hitler diaries, William F. Buckley, Jr., wrote in an editorial:

Ordway Hilton of South Carolina went over document after document, until—as he put it—“there was just no question” that they were written by Adolf Hitler. Satisfied? Well, expert Charles Hamilton, going over the same documents, said, “This is not only a forgery, but a bad forgery.” They sound like economists predicting what will be the rate of national growth in fiscal 1984.

The layman comes most naturally to the presumption that the documents are genuine for the reason given to Newsweek by Kenneth Rendell. . . . He believes, to quote Newsweek, “the volumes may well be genuine because the risk of error is so great in a forgery of that size.” Ask yourself whether you could convincingly write down snippets dating back for 15 years about people and events if your life and thought has been subjected to the kind of scrutiny given over to Hitler’s. Almost inevitably, someone would rise to give you the lie, and the whole thing would come down in ruins.

As forgeries go, the output of Kujau was not particularly impressive. In the diaries the words and lines were far apart, designed to make a meager page look meaty. The paintings, drawings, speeches, and other jottings were easy whip-offs for a competent artist and chirographic mimic. I was unimpressed from the start with the amount of material. Most forgers tend to be prolific. They turn out as many fakes as the market will ingest.

Take Joseph Cosey, an American forger who flourished in the late
The Hitler Diaries

1920s and early 1930s. I once said of him: "If Franklin had signed all the pay warrants that Cosey forged for him, he would have bankrupted the State of Pennsylvania." Like most creative men, Cosey was prolific. It was not unusual for him to turn out a dozen or more fakes in one evening. He whipped out his forgeries with great ease, never resorting to the amateurish device of tracery. The speed with which he penned his fakes is one of the reasons they are so hard to detect. They lack the usual marks of a forgery, retouching and labored or shaky handwriting. And once Cosey learned to mix rusted iron filings with Waterman's brown ink, he was able to simulate almost perfectly the rich brown iron-gall ink of the Revolutionary period.

That the genius of Cosey could thrive under all the adverse conditions he daily faced is remarkable. He sold his forgeries for very little, usually from two to fifty dollars each. Today most of them are worth five times what their creator got for them. When in New York, Cosey stopped at 268 Broadway, a flophouse with rooms no larger than closets, no furniture except a cot and a locker and no lighting except a yellow bulb in the corridor. The air smelled of creosote, an acrid disinfectant that brings tears into the eyes. It was hard to be creative in this setting of misery and poverty, but Cosey managed to turn out convincing and often inspired forgeries.

In his pockets Cosey carried all the tools of his trade—penholders, nibs of various sizes, doctored ink and sheets of antiquated paper ready for the out-pourings of his creative art.

Cosey's specialty was Lincoln, and he wrote thousands of Lincoln legal briefs, many of them running well over five hundred words. A New York dealer, "Radio" Roberts, at one time had on hand nearly one hundred Cosey-Lincoln briefs, the total number of words in this group alone running close to the grand total of the sixty-two Hitler diaries.

Although Cosey was a far more skilled forger than his British and Continental counterparts, and certainly as prolific, he has not had the press accorded to foreign malefactors. There was, for example, William Henry Ireland, an eighteen-year-old youth who forged the complete manuscript of Shakespeare's Lear, plus select fragments from Hamlet, with hundreds of letters and documents by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. His naive productions gullled the British Museum and a whole concourse of British scholars. Perhaps Ireland had duped so many famous scholars that he finally came to believe his own story. Their testimonials were given with such confidence that Ireland may have begun to confuse his identity with Shakespeare's. But whether he was supremely naive or had merely lost touch with reality, the young
rogue ultimately surrendered to the irresistible temptation—he wrote a play for Shakespeare.

This was the most daring fake of all time—an original manuscript play of William Shakespeare. Ireland created the plot, developed the characters, and wrote every line of blank verse without aid. When it was completed he titled it *Vortigern and Rowena*. And what’s more, he found a lot of people who were convinced that Shakespeare wrote it. It was the find of the century. Covent Garden and Drury Lane vied for the honor of producing it. The manager of Drury Lane, Richardson, paid an unprecedented price for the drama—three hundred pounds down and half the receipts of the house for the first sixty nights of the performance, after expenses.

With John Philip Kemble playing Vortigern, the play was presented under the management of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Although the acting was excellent, the poetry was rotten and the plot was worse. In the fifth act there was the line “And when this solemn mockery is o’er...” which, according to the author, convulsed the house with laughter:

No sooner was the above line uttered in the most sepulchral tone of voice possible... than the most discordant howl echoed from the pit that ever assailed the organs of hearing. After the lapse of ten minutes, the clamour subsided; when Mr. Kemble, having again obtained a hearing... in order to amuse the audience still more, redelivered the very line above quoted with even more solemn grimace than he had in the first instance displayed” (*The Confessions of William Henry Ireland*, London, 1805).4

The number of forgeries turned out by Ireland is immense. They continue to plague the unwary. The inspired eighteen-year-old ground out his bogus products with dazzling speed. He devised the first of his forgeries, a mortgage deed, on December 16, 1794, when he was only seventeen. The balance of his forgeries, except for the manuscript of *Lear*, which was almost finished, was completed by the end of January 1795. He worked much faster than Kujau. The immense quantity and variety of his Shakespearean documents disarmed critics. It seemed incredible that any forger, man or boy, could have turned out so huge an archive in less than six weeks. Many experts of the time were so impressed by the quantity that they rejected the possibility of forgery.

A modern effort similar to Kujau’s, and certainly equal to it in length, was the forgery of Mussolini’s diaries—probably the work of a
mother-daughter combine. In 1957 Rosa Panvini, seventy-five, and her
daughter Amalia, forty-three, both of Vercelli in northern Italy, offered
for sale a series of diaries they claimed were penned by Mussolini. The
daughter explained that one of Il Duce’s ministers of state had con­
signed the diaries to her father’s care: “For the love of God,” he had
said, “hide them in a safe place.” Signor Panvini had concealed them
effectively and passed them on to his wife. Now Signora Rosa Panvini
and her daughter needed money and wished to sell the precious
diaries.

The tale had the usual provenance of a forgery. A certain unnamed
person had turned over to another person, named but dead, the
priceless records. Yet Mussolini’s son Vittorio examined the diaries and
affirmed they were in his father’s handwriting. An expert from
Lausanne University conducted the usual chemical tests, compared
the diaries with Mussolini’s known handwriting, and pronounced
them authentic. Mostly, I suspect, the Swiss expert was taken in by the
great length of the forgery. He declared: “Thirty volumes of manuscript
cannot be the work of a forger, but of a genius. You can falsify a few
pages, but not a series of diaries.”

Like the Hitler diaries, the Mussolini forgeries were penned in
school exercise books and contained absurd, pointless observations,
such as: “Hitler is mad! Our ideas are diametrically opposed.”

Before the Panvini duo could deliver the Mussolini diaries to a
buyer, however, the Italian constabulary was tipped off and raided
their home. The cops discovered and seized all but four of the diaries
and charged the two women with forgery and fraud. Rosa confessed.
She admitted that she had spent four years in perfecting her imitation
of Il Duce’s script. This prompt admission of guilt drew a suspended
sentence for both women.

Twenty-one years later, the four volumes that had eluded the Italian
police were sold to the London *Sunday Times* by Amalia Panvini. After
paying more than $70,000 (though David Irving had condemned them),
the newspaper learned about the hoax and cancelled publication of the
diaries. In 1983 Amalia Panvini, who was living with a menage of nearly
two dozen cats, stated that her mother (who died in 1968) had con­
fessed to the forgery only to escape going to prison. But Amalia was
unable to explain the origin of the diaries.

Clifford Irving, the forger of Howard Hughes’s memoirs, was unim­
pressed by the length of either the Hitler or Mussolini diaries. Irving
observed that after a forger masters his subject’s way of thinking and
the quirks of his handwriting, sheer quantity is no problem: “Once you
do one page . . . you can do twenty. Once you do twenty, you can do a book."

The "reincarnation" part of my story involves the remarkable parallel between the lives of Konrad Kujau and Vrain Lucas, a French forger and creative genius who between 1862 and 1870 fabricated nearly 30,000 letters of famous persons—amounting to about six million words—most of which he sold to a single mark, Professor Michel Chasles. So amazing is the similarity between Vrain Lucas and Konrad Kujau and their victims that one can almost imagine Vrain Lucas reborn in the person of Konrad Kujau, and his prize mark, Professor Chasles, returned to earthly existence as Gerd Heidemann.

Both Lucas and Kujau were raised in poverty. Lucas was the son of a laborer. He attended the village school at Châteaudun where, in the manner of many ill-educated Frenchman, he learned to turn a pretty alphabet with his pen. He couldn't spell very well, but his fine hand won him a post as a clerk. For five years he sat on a stool turning out copperplate script. During this time he invested all his spare moments in the study of history and literature at the public library. Old books and manuscripts fascinated him. He longed to spend his life pouring over dusty old tomes and burrowing in arcane documents. Unfortunately, he hadn't studied Latin, so he was barred from a career as a librarian.

Lucas finally threw over his clerical job and went to Paris, where he found a post as a genealogist with a firm that specialized in family trees. For a fee its researchers would trace you back to Charlemagne or the ancestor of your choice. To do this, of course, they had to fabricate phony deeds and titles when the genuine papers didn't exist—a practice that still thrives. Lucas soon became skilled in providing bogus genealogical evidence. For example, when a prominent marquis came to the firm seeking a certain famous ancestor, the job of manufacturing the necessary proofs was turned over to Lucas. His deftness with the pen enabled him to come up with a dossier that delighted the marquis. Not long after this success, Lucas's employer retired and left with his protégé a small collection of genuine autographs on paper and parchment.

These were the nucleus of Lucas's business, almost identical in kind with Kujau's starting inventory. Both Lucas and Kujau quickly learned to improve on genuine documents by adding notes in the handwriting of the famous. They also created new forgeries to fill the special demands of their customers. Lucas began simply, as did Kujau, with little more than unimportant missives or inscriptions in books by noted
persons, then gradually worked into the manufacture of extremely significant letters and documents of the great men and women of history and literature. From Lucas's agile pen poured a cascade of "rare and unique" letters. He learned to copy material from reference books, to create from genuine historic data letters to which he added a little personal touch. This was the precise *modus operandi* of Kujau more than a hundred years later. Kujau created Hitler diary entries by cribbing from history books and now and then introducing some startling, previously unknown idea that he attributed to the Fuehrer.

Lucas almost immediately made the same discovery that Kujau was to make more than a century later: amateur historians are prime targets for any sort of fraud. They are so submerged in footnotes and bibliographies and arcane knowledge that they lose touch with the world. None of the rabid collectors and scholars who purchased or examined his wares appeared to marvel at letters of Cleopatra and Caesar indited in modern French. Lucas aged the letters a bit with dirt and water and scorched them under a lamp. Sometimes he added a few small tears and, now and then, an impressive wax seal. Both Lucas and Kujau were avid believers in the power of a globule of red wax to convince and convert the skeptic.

In peddling his bogus wares Lucas assumed the role of the ignorant country bumpkin and sold to his greedy customers for a few francs letters and documents that would have been, if genuine, worth a fistful of gold louis. Kujau likewise feigned an ignorance of his wares. He couldn't read—so he said—the Gothic script he had just forged. Whenever Heidemann came to pick up a package of diaries from "General Fischer," Kujau would pretend to be curious about the contents. Heidemann would then open the package and read a few entries to the oohs and ahs of Kujau, who would simulate astonishment at the historic importance of the diaries.

The man to whom Vrain Lucas was to sell 27,300 letters, supposedly written by six hundred different persons, was a member of the French Academy of Science and a professor of geometry at the Imperial Polytechnic of Paris. His admission to the prestigious Academy of Science came when a Florentine count named Libri vacated his seat and fled to England with more than 25,000 rare books and manuscripts he'd stolen from libraries in Paris. Chasles began to build a collection of rare books and documents that he hoped one day to present to the Academy to show his gratitude for membership and to replace the great losses sustained by the thefts of Count Libri. His collection grew rapidly and in a few years became the talk of academic Paris. Vrain Lucas heard about it and approached Chasles.
“Self-portrait” of Adolf Hitler by Konrad Kujau.
Two authentic sketches by combat soldier Hitler. Above, a dugout in Fournes, Flanders, ca. 1917. Below, a farmyard in Ardoye, Flanders, summer of 1917.
Two watercolors by the real Hitler. Above, a ruined monastery in Messines, Flanders, captured by the Germans after a fierce battle in November 1914. It is dated December 1914. Below, A battle-damaged house. Hitler reached the pinnacle of his artistic career while a soldier in the front lines.
Left, the helmet that impressed Hugh Trevor-Roper and others who viewed the collection of fakes exhibited by Stern. The "authentication" bears a very crude imitation of Hermann Hess's signature flanked by two preposterous red seals. Above, the red wax seal that won Heidemann his release from prison.

Kujau’s blundering forgery of the Munich agreement (September 30, 1938) between Chamberlain and Hitler. The letterhead is one Hitler never used and was printed in the late 1970s, and the agreement is full of spelling errors.
Two “Hitler” sketches by Kujau. The real Hitler would have found the nudity of the sketch of an orgy (*above*) distasteful. In addition, he was utterly unable to sketch the human figure and confined himself to buildings and occasionally a vase of flowers. *Below*, a lively scene in a Munich bar. Hitler seldom drank and almost never visited taverns.
Many of Kujau's forgeries are still on the market. The drawing above was recently offered for sale in New York. The caption reads: “The captain [the Kaiser] and his dog. After an actual occurrence in the field, August 1916, in Flanders.” The drawing below, also by Kujau, shows a technical skill in portraying humans and animals far beyond the real Hitler’s attainments.
Three caricatures by Kujau sold at auction October 20, 1984. In all cases the sale prices far exceeded the estimates of the auctioneer. Above left, Kujau leads the venerable Hitler by the hand. “Herr Heidemann, you see here my most recent purchase for my militaria collection.” Above right, Heidemann displays for Kujau a gift presented by Bormann—“the brassiere of Eva Braun.” Center, Hitler peers through binoculars and sees the face of Kujau.
"I have for disposal," he explained to the elderly scientist, "a large collection of manuscripts, rare letters, and books of extraordinary value. The collection was formed by Count Boisjournaid, who fled from the revolutionists in Paris in 1791. He sailed for America with his entire collection but was shipwrecked and drowned. Much of his collection was saved, although some of the old documents were water damaged." This specious tale, so familiar to manuscript collectors, has hundreds of variants. Kujau's story of the airplane wreck in Boernersdorf is the shipwreck tale revamped for modern readers. Chasles tumbled for this moss-frilled story. He became tremendously excited at the prospect of obtaining precious documents from this Châteaudun rustic who apparently had no idea of their true worth. Lucas's first offerings were spectacular. There was a letter of Molière at 500 francs ($100) and two others, by Rabelais (of legendary rarity) and Racine, at 300 francs ($60 each). Chasles bought them all.

Vrain Lucas now introduced another ploy of forgers, many of whom create documents "to order." The Boisjournaid collection, he explained to Chasles, was the property of an old fellow who would part with his treasures only when he needed money. But as the man was a bit of a spendthrift, there was a good chance that Lucas could obtain for Chasles a great many, if not all, of the superlative treasures in the Boisjournaid collection. And because neither the old man nor Lucas had any idea of the values, Chasles could pay whatever he thought the letters and books were worth.

With his mark set up, precisely as Kujau later set up Heidemann, to expect material in installments as fast as the mythical owner could be beguiled into selling, Lucas began offering huge quantities of rarities. The distinguished professor bought everything. Over a period of eight years (as compared with the three years during which Kujau bilked Heidemann), Chasles purchased letters and documents of Roger Bacon, Caligula, Nostradamus, Pythagoras, Attila the Hun, Julius Caesar, Pliny the Younger, Plutarch, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Pompey, Archimedes, El Cid, Juvenal, Cicero, Ovid, Leonardo da Vinci, Alcibiades, Boccaccio, Montaigne, Raphael, Charles Martel, Columbus, and Albrecht Duerer. When the professor was especially interested in any one person, Chasles furnished multiple examples. There were five letters from Abelard to Heloise, six from Alexander the Great to Aristotle, three from Francis Bacon to Montaigne, eight from Amerigo Vespucci to Rabelais, 135 letters of Charlemagne, two of Chaucer to Boccaccio, ninety letters of Galileo to Francis Bacon, five letters of Gutenberg, fifty-four of Rabelais to Nostradamus, four of Richard the Lion-Hearted to his troubadour Blondel. Vrain Lucas especially en-
joyed forging letters that unexpectedly linked the famous figures of
history: Herod to Lazarus, Socrates to Euclid, Mahomet to the king of
France. He even raised Lazarus from the illiterate dead to write a letter
to Saint Peter.

At the peak of his career, Lucas produced 10,000 letters in one year,
an average of twenty-five letters, or about three thousand words—the
equivalent of at least three Hitler diaries—per day. Kujau’s record, as
previously noted, was an entire diary in one day, amounting to nearly a
thousand words. Both Lucas and Kujau were in their mid-forties
during the period of their greatest productivity.

The variant scripts of Lucas’s work showed verve and imagination,
many of them indited in ancient Roman letters or in the uncial style of
the Middle Ages. Whenever Lucas had a model to work from, as was
generally the case with most personalities of the previous three or four
centuries, his imitations were fairly accurate. I would rate Lucas seven
on a scale of one to ten, three points higher than Kujau.

Occasionally Lucas tripped up. He made orthographic errors, for
example, on the one occasion when he tried to write in a foreign
language. Kujau did the same: his forged, typed agreement in English
between Chamberlain and Hitler, “signed” by both, is at once obvious
as a fabrication because of Kujau’s inability to cope with English orthog­
raphy. Lucas’s blunder occurred when he tried to write in Italian.

Whenever Lucas was trapped in an error, he managed to extricate
himself by oral explanations or by forging “proof” that he had not made
an error. Once he wrote several letters of Pascal to Newton on highly
technical subjects, the equilibrium of fluids and the principles of grav­
ity. Sir David Brewster, the Scottish scientist, pointed out that the dates
of these letters showed they were penned when Newton was only
eleven. Why should the great French author write to an English boy on
scientific matters? Confronted with this problem, Lucas worked all
night to produce a letter from Newton’s tutor explaining how, under
the tutor’s guidance, the youthful Newton had corresponded with
Pascal. The technique of writing a forgery to explain a forgery is an old
one. When, like Lucas, Kujau was trapped by an anachronism, he
wrote a letter by an imaginary chief librarian explaining a forged poem
of Hitler’s that experts had contended was written in 1870–71 during the
Franco-Prussian War.

The falsity of another letter of Pascal, this one addressed to Queen
Christina, was demonstrated by Lucas’s use of certain words that were
unknown in Pascal’s time and by the discovery that the contents of the
letter were similar to, and in part identical with, the language of a well-
known eulogy on Descartes. Yet Chasles had unbounded faith in the
A letter of Vercingetorix, the Gallic chief, to Julius Caesar, granting free passage to Trogus Pompeus. No handwriting of Vercingetorix is known to exist, so the forger was on safe ground in inventing a script.

A salutation of Julius Caesar to the chief of the Gauls.

A forgery of Galileo's signature, followed by an authentic signature.
forger. Like Gerd Heidemann, he was utterly blinded by the dazzling importance of the material he was buying for a fraction of its value. He supplied Lucas with lists of letters that he needed. He even outlined a program for the forger to follow. A hint of what sort of letter Chasles required was sufficient for Lucas to “discover” the letter among the Boisjourdain papers. In 1869 Vrain Lucas wrote to Chasles from prison: “Did you not teach me yourself how Newton and Galileo wrote and what they said?” According to Kujau, Heidemann also prompted him and provided exciting data to incorporate into the diaries of Hitler.

That Vrain Lucas was far more imaginative than Kujau is undeniable. He adroitly turned history to his use, and his talents in scrawling italic and cursive have rarely been surpassed. At first, he relied for his paper upon flyleaves from old books, as do most forgers. Later, he abandoned this device (just as Kujau abandoned the inconvenient NSDAP letterheads) and brazenly used locally produced paper, some of which revealed the watermarks of the Angoulême mill. Lucas was most successful with his ink, which resisted water and acids and was proclaimed authentic by chemists, one of whom, Antoine Jérôme Balard, was a distinguished scientist. Lucas died without revealing his recipe.

Eventually, after the Belgian Academy had published in its Proceedings (not without misgivings) two forged letters from Charles V to Rabelais, and after Chasles read before the French Academy of Science in 1867 “A Historical Note on the Foundation of the Academy,” which included a bogus letter from the poet Jean de Rotrou to Cardinal Richelieu suggesting the formation of the academy and a reply from Richelieu approving the idea, further questions about the Count Boisjourdain’s collection arose. Lucas met all objections by forging proofs of authenticity.

Lucas’s undoing came when several of his Galileo letters were challenged by authorities. One expert pointed out, in reference to a 1641 letter complaining of eyestrain, that the astronomer had been blind from 1637 until his death in 1642; moreover, he never wrote in French. Chasles insisted that Galileo’s biographers were in error. An astronomer from the Paris Observatory disclosed that many of the Galileo letters produced by Chasles were taken from a book written in 1769. Vrain Lucas forged “proof” that the author of the book had been lent the Galileo documents from Madame de Pompadour’s collection for use in his biography. One Galileo letter, Lucas’s only effort in Italian, was submitted to a special commission in Florence, which concluded that its author did not know Italian. For example, he had
written *scuelo* instead of *scuola* and had hyphenated words in the wrong places.

As the dispute over the authenticity of the Boisjourné papers seethed, the police began a series of inquiries into their source. Chasles, like Heidemann, at first adamantly refused to reveal the name of his supplier, explaining that he was pledged to secrecy. If he gave the name to the police, it would jeopardize future chances to buy rare letters. Only under tremendous pressure did he give them Lucas's name.

The police then kept Lucas under close observation. Like Kujau, Lucas lived with his mistress. After working at the Imperial Library most of the afternoon, he would return home to create his forgeries late at night. Perhaps for some psychological reason not known to historians, forgers prefer to work at night or very early in the morning, before dawn. Kujau, as we know, usually produced his Hitler diaries between midnight and three o'clock in the morning. Joseph Cosey executed some of his lengthiest and most nearly flawless manuscripts in the flop houses where he spent his nights.

When the police arrested Lucas, they searched his rooms and found nothing but paper, ink, and pens. Evidently, he sold his forgeries the moment the ink was dry. However, after the archivist Henri Bordier and the chief of manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Impériale, Émile Mabille (authors of the exposé on which I have based much of this chapter), gave a full report on the manuscripts they had examined in Chasles's collection, Vrain Lucas, aged fifty-two, faced the tribunal of the Seine (in Paris) on February 16, 1870.

At the trial, Lucas's defending counsel pointed out that a man of Chasles's education and scholarly reputation could not possibly have regarded as authentic documents written in modern French before the Christian era. He cited letters of Plato and Cleopatra signed "Platon" and "Cléopatra." He pointed out that fraudulent transactions become criminal only when they are such that they could deceive a man of ordinary prudence. Chasles certainly did not act as a prudent man but bought without question everything offered. And by leading Vrain Lucas into forging letters he desired, Chasles became a collaborator in the fraud. This line of defense was precisely the tack taken by Kujau's attorney.

Although Chasles became convinced that he had bought forgeries, on which he had expended 140,000 francs ($28,000), he never conceded that the fabulous collection of Boisjourné was a fabrication of the forger. To the very end of his life he insisted that there had been a shipwreck and that the collection was rescued. The great letters still
existed, he claimed; only copies of the originals had been palmed off on him by Vrain Lucas. Curiously, Heidemann, who bought hundreds of faked letters and sketches of Hitler in addition to the diaries, also continues to believe that the wrecked airplane from Hitler's headquarters was carrying documents of great importance that still survive somewhere, perhaps in an iron box concealed in a hayloft.

Vrain Lucas was found guilty of swindling and sentenced to two years in prison. He later continued his activity as a forger and, near the end of his life, became that most menial of all literary criminals, a library thief. Vrain Lucas's victim, Michel Chasles, died as he had lived, rather foolishly. He choked to death on a marshmallow.
In the spring of 1945 I was with the United States Army in Namur, Belgium. The collapse of Nazi resistance and the surrender of all German forces in Europe on May 7, 1945, had brought me three new friends, M. and Mme. Tricot and their son, who had invited a fellow soldier and me off the street to share a drink with them on the Allied victory. Within a few weeks we were fast friends. The Tricots amiably tolerated my fractured French. Late that May I picked up a little French paperback that had just been published in Namur: *La Vie amoureuse d'Adolf Hitler* (*The Love Life of Adolf Hitler*.) Before I had ingested half a dozen pages I realized that the author’s research drew almost exclusively on his own imagination.

The Tricots had another guest that evening, a rather intelligent young man who, like my hosts, knew only two words of English—“jeep” and “chewing gum.” I showed the little paperback to M. Tricot with the comment: “A delectable fabrication. This book is a masterpiece of invention. The author has transformed Hitler into a sex maniac.” And I read a few passages aloud.

“What do you think of the author?” they asked.

“He definitely needs the services of a Pinel.”

My mention of the famous French doctor who treated the insane brought howls of delight from the Tricots and a brief flush to the face of the young man. But he laughed, too, and then observed: “I’m the author and what you’ve said is true. I made up the entire book. But would you believe it, the critics, some of them, have praised the work for its accuracy. I did the book as a joke and never expected anyone to take it seriously.”

Books about Hitler like this spoof or books that pretend to be factual but are based upon imaginary conversations and fictional events can be
Sirens for the unwary historian. They are alluring and exciting, and the scholar must blindfold his eyes to them. Fiction is often stranger than truth when it comes to forgeries. Some historians took very seriously the first bogus memoir of Hitler published in America. "I Was Hitler's Buddy" was written by a youthful associate of Hitler's, Reinhold Hanisch (alias Fritz Walter) and published in 1939 in three magazine installments. Although this portrayal of Hitler as fledgling artist in Vienna was widely used by biographers, the infamy of its author, whom Robert Waite called "a petty thief, forger, and confidence man," strongly suggests that many of the events recorded were his inventions. The New Republic's introductory note stated that in 1936 Hanisch was charged with faking Hitler's paintings, arrested, and—"as might have been expected"—died in prison "after a sudden illness." But the facts appear to be that he was arrested for embezzlement and hanged himself in his prison cell.

In "I Was Hitler's Buddy" Hanisch, who peddled Hitler's paintings on the streets and in the bars of Vienna, adroitly mixes truth with fiction. The most effective way to ferret out the author's fabrications is to judge his statements by the reliable information we do have about the early Hitler. Hanisch writes:

He always wanted me to tell him stories about Germany, because he was quite enthusiastic about the Reich. We met every night, and kept up our spirits in spite of our troubles. We sang "Die Wacht am Rhein," and what a sparkle came into Hitler's eyes when we sang the Bismarck song, with the refrain:

Wir Deutschen fürchten Gott da droben  
Sonst aber nichts auf dieser Welt.  
(We Germans fear God above  
But nothing else on this earth.)

Hitler had never heard this song before.

But even as a boy, Hitler was a fervent nationalist and frequently debated political issues with his boyhood friend August Kubizek. It seems inconceivable that he was unfamiliar with one of the most celebrated of all German patriotic songs. Hanisch also reports that Hitler was lazy and never had enough self-control to force himself to work—certainly another falsehood, for Hitler was a workaholic and often put in an eighteen-hour day.

Of Hitler's appearance Hanisch writes: "Hitler wore a long coat that Neumann [a mutual friend] had given him because he couldn't dispose
of it in the Jewish quarter, and he wore an incredibly greasy derby hat on the back of his head. His hair was long and tangled and he grew a beard on his chin such as we Christians seldom have, though one is not uncommon in Leopoldstadt or the Jewish Ghetto." This description is in direct contradiction to what we know of Hitler: that he was compulsively clean, almost to the point of absurdity.

Perhaps the following passage from "I Was Hitler's Buddy" is sufficient to demonstrate its spurious nature:

In those days Hitler was by no means a Jew hater. He became one afterward. He used to say even then that the end sanctions the means, and so he incorporated anti-Semitism into his program as a powerful slogan.

Hitler was able to sell his watercolors almost solely to Jewish dealers. [He] often said that it was only with the Jews that one could do business, because they were willing to take chances. He also appreciated the charitable spirit of the Jews.

Hitler . . . didn't agree with [Heinrich] Heine's views but [said] his poetry deserved respect. When it was argued that there were few artists among the Jews, Hitler replied that there might be few, but there were some, and he mentioned Mendelssohn and Offenbach.

It is remotely possible that Hitler was not rabidly anti-Semitic at the period when Hanisch knew him, but from the future dictator's remarks in Mein Kampf we know that he had formed an intense dislike for the Jews, amounting almost to hatred, during his early years in Vienna.

Most historians would agree, I think, that in any forged or suspect document, such as a memoir, the statements that are most unusual or most startling turn out to be imaginative forays of the author. An alert or experienced historian can often detect the lies in a forgery merely from their dramatic impact.

Another spurious work, ghost-written under the name of the Fuehrer's sister-in-law Brigid Bowling Hitler, describes Hitler's alleged visit to Liverpool in 1912-13. The original typescript, "My Brother-in-Law Adolf," is preserved in the New York Public Library. Apparently written in the 1950s, the typescript bears a rubber stamp indicating that it was submitted to literary agent Edmond Pauker at 1639 Broadway, New York. The work was first printed as a series of articles in the London Daily Post in 1973. The historical blunders in this curious memoir are numerous. At the time when Hitler was presumably visiting his half-brother Alois Hitler, Jr., then a waiter in Liverpool, police records show that he was a resident of the Home for Men on the Meldemannstrasse in Vienna. Hitler did not like his half-brother or his
sister-in-law, and it seems most unlikely that he would have visited them. Brigid thus describes her brother-in-law:

My [half] brother-in-law Adolf remained with us from Nov. 1912 until Apr. 1913, and a less interesting or pre-possessing house guest I cannot imagine. At first he remained in his room . . . I had an idea he was ill, his color was so bad and his eyes looked so peculiar. . . . When I washed his shirt—he had no luggage with him—the collar was so frayed and worn it wasn’t even worth turning. . . . I found him only weak and spineless . . . I didn’t pay a great deal of attention to his ravings.6

Brigid interpolates into letters and conversations all the popular and inaccurate ideas about Hitler. Hitler did not, for example, believe in astrology, but Brigid claims that she introduced him to the subject and he became an enthusiastic convert. Some years ago I sold at auction a letter of Hitler’s in which he denounced astrology as a false science and ordered the arrest and imprisonment of any person or persons who claimed to read the future from the stars.

Much of the memoir by Brigid Hitler is devoted to conversations between Alois and his celebrated half-brother. During one visit to Berlin, Hitler allegedly told Alois: “In a few generations no one will know that a Jew called Jesus ever existed and no German will be ruled by a man in Rome. Germany will be our religion. . . . Germany is in chains, thanks to the Jews and the Catholics.” 7

Almost ignoring fact and drawing largely upon the author’s imagination is a curious volume ascribed to Kurt Krueger, M.D., Inside Adolf Hitler.8 Dr. Krueger claimed to be Hitler’s psychiatrist and alleged that Hitler was frequently analyzed by him between August 1919 and August 1934. However, as historian Robert Waite has pointed out, Hitler regarded psychiatry as a pseudoscience and alluded to it as “Jewish medicine.”9 The errors in Dr. Krueger’s book are so profuse that it is difficult to single out the most flagrant of them. Almost every page discloses blunders, many of which are those popular with other bogus biographers. Dr. Krueger claimed that Hitler wore a goatee and went by the name Adolf Schickelgruber during the period when he was under analysis. Hitler not only never used this name but was aware of its comic sound and had a strong aversion to it.

Inside Adolf Hitler is replete with lengthy conversations in which the future dictator strips naked his mind and psyche to Dr. Krueger. Nowhere in the book is the imagination of the author more fertile than in his discussions with his patient (the doctor never hesitates to betray a
confident!) on matters of sex. This single sample illustrates the tone and flavor of the whole volume:

“They were mostly women of the cafes, the women you carried on with in these days?”
He shook his head mournfully.
“No, none of them were women of the cafes. . . . I was a poor man, just barely able to pay for my own coffee. Those female leeches rarely could pay for their own, or wanted to. The man who paid for their bills at the end of an evening, not the most interesting or the most eloquent man, was the man they granted the pleasure of taking them back to their lodgings.” . . .
“What did you do?”
He smiled grimly.
“The next best thing, Doctor. I picked women off the streets . . . in the long run it was cheaper. . . . Then there was something else. . . . A Jewish street-walker was a pearl you could afford to forget the next morning.”
“Then you preferred Jewish street-walkers?”
He nodded. . . .
“How could you tell a Jewish street-walker from one who was not Jewish?”
He made a grimace which engaged only the upper part of his face and his eyes. . . .
“By the eyes, Doctor,” he said thoughtfully, “but mostly, I think, by the smell.” . . .
“Why, in your searches along the sidewalks of Vienna, were you so careful to pick up Jewesses?”
He grimaced.
“In those days I felt that the whole sex business was an unclean act, best consummated with a member of an unclean race.” . . .
“You do not care any more about Jewesses?”
“I have no more traffic with them,” he said stubbornly. . . .
“Suppose—as is possible—that your years in Vienna have tainted you forever?”
He shook his head with fortified certainty.
“Whatever taints I may have acquired in Jewish Vienna I have managed to purge from my body completely in the fires of the World War.” . . .
“Then you have not had relations with a Jewess since your return from the wars?”
“No, Doctor.”
“Nor with any woman?”
“You know that, Doctor,” he said resentfully.
I looked steadily at him and held his eyes.
“I don’t know anything of the sort,” I told him.
His face became deadly white.
The Hitler Diaries

"Are you insinuating," he asked, "that I am faking my impotence?"
"Certainly not. I am suggesting that whereas you cannot have a
normal relationship with any woman, you might find no difficulty what-
ever if you knew that the object of your passion was a Jewess."
"I would not touch another Jewess if it were my remaining hope of
happiness on earth," he declared . . . "in such a matter Germany's
interests are above my own. . . .
"I am teaching racial purity to my people and by God, I intend to
practice it!"
"You would prefer to remain a eunuch in order to give Germany a
consistent Fuehrer?"
"Whether or not I remain a eunuch is not of the faintest importance
to my country. I am submitting to the humiliation of these conversations
of ours for my own good entirely. I limit their scope to the confines of my
private life, but where the interests of my country are involved, my
private life doesn't even exist."10

Perhaps the most startling aspect is that in Krueger's pages we
observe the anomaly of a psychiatrist who is obviously a bumbling fool
deftly manipulating a man celebrated for his hypnotic eyes, hot temper,
strength of character, and ability to impose his will upon others.

One of the most entertaining excursions into Fuehrerian fiction is
The Private Life of Adolf Hitler, based upon the forged "Intimate Notes
and Diary of Eva Braun." This diverting work is very different from the
authentic diary of Eva Braun, the manuscript of which is in the Library
of Congress. The genuine diary, mainly a peroration on Eva's sporadic
love affair with Hitler, covers only twenty-two penciled pages.11 The
spurious diary, replete with startling incidents and written with verve,
was typed on loose pages and, according to its introduction, personally
handed by Eva Braun to Luis Trenker, the noted Italian-German actor
and director, with a request that Trenker keep it for her. Only after the
war, when Eva Braun was dead, did Trenker reveal the diary's existence.

The entries in the forged diary of Braun, as might be expected, are
full of extraordinary disclosures, with penetrating asides on Hitler and
some of the more unsavory members of his entourage. Virtually all the
villains of the Nazi hierarchy speak out in this fake, each playing a new
and more nefarious role. In December 1937, the year in which the
forged diary begins, Eva Braun writes:

Goering has the unpleasant habit of pinching my posterior. I don't know
where he got the habit, probably he learned it from his intercourse with
waitresses. And then he always greets me with the same question: "Am I
getting a kiss to-day?"—The Fuehrer has a revulsion against baths, he
only bathes once a month; at the same time he is amazingly clean, he
washes himself thoroughly every day. I believe he does not like to be naked and I don’t know whether anyone has ever seen him in swimming trunks. But he does not object to my nudity. He sits there, completely dressed and always very neat, the neatest man I know, and watches me carefully as if he wanted to memorize every movement.12

These remarks are clearly faked. Goering would never have dared to pinch the posterior of Hitler’s mistress, later to become his wife. And Hitler’s compulsive bathing was a fact noted by nearly all his aides.

In June 1938 (the exact days are never provided), Eva tells a patently apocryphal tale about Julius Streicher, the Jew-baiter and editor of the vulgar Der Stuermer:

Streicher’s favourite game is to keep a large ox without water for days in the greatest heat—and then give him so much to drink that he bursts. That tickles his sense of humour! . . . He is proud that some Jews still have shops in Nuremberg. True; the wives and daughters of these Jews must visit Streicher once a week at his Gauleiter’s office where they are forced to walk naked in front of him. I wonder whether it’s true?—In the evening there was a lot of drinking. It ended by Streicher making his appearance on the staircase at midnight, dressed in nothing but his Gauleiter’s cap, gloves, high-boots and sword.13

The bogus Braun frequently quotes Hitler. The Fuehrer is reported as saying that Himmler “was nothing but a mixture of middle-class mentality and the deepest depravity.” Speaking of the idea of establishing a dynasty to follow him, Hitler is made to remark: “I am a unique phenomenon which cannot be repeated; my successors could only be imitations, copies. And a copy is the more ridiculous as it resembles the original. A ‘little one’ bearing my name would be a bad joke in world history.”14

Although medical reports on Hitler, including a complete dossier prepared by the United States military forces, disclose no evidence that Hitler ever had syphilis or any other venereal disease, the “diary” of Eva Braun contains a lively description of how Hitler acquired syphilis. On his seventeenth birthday Adolf asked a friend to lend him the money for an illustrated art history book. The friend agreed, “but only on condition that Adolf would first go with him to the girls. It was his first experience.” To “remove his inhibitions,” his friend gave him a glass of Schnaps—his first taste of alcohol. “Truly, this is a terrible story of what happens to such innocent young people. . . .
He woke up many hours later in the grey dawn, lying in a wide, dirty French bed; at his side there was sleeping a fat, naked, no longer young female. He was sick. The woman woke up, grinned, yawned and said: “It’s all paid for!” and turned on her side to go on sleeping. “Don’t make a mess!” she told him, and as he opened the door: “Bye, bye, little boy!” He told me he had never dressed so quickly in his life.

Once in the street his only idea was to get a doctor at once.

The doctor gave him a disinfectant and told him he would have to wait out the twenty-one day incubation period. “Instead of reassuring the seventeen-year-old boy, he treated him as if he were a pimp who had made a night of it. I believe Adolf’s stubborn dislike of doctors and medicine in general springs from this experience.” When the three weeks passed, and no symptoms had appeared Adolf swore that he would never again visit a prostitute and never again drink to excess. In the middle of the night he awoke—he had a queer feeling of tension. Half mad, he jumped out of bed, dressed quickly and rushed to the doctor. It was two o’clock in the morning. He woke the doctor and forced him to examine him again. The result was unfortunately only too evident. I can imagine how desperate he was over this sad story. But he possessed the iron will not to drink a drop of alcohol for twenty years. His diet, at which many people mock, also began in those days and he has never deviated from it, not even during the world war. That also explains his complete cure.15

Many historians have leaned heavily upon the fables of Josef Greiner, author of Das Ende des Hitler-Mythos [The End of the Hitler Myth], published in Zurich in 1947 and not yet translated into English. Greiner claimed to have known Hitler and other leading Nazis intimately. He had, so he asserted, befriended Adolf when the future dictator was a youth in Vienna. In addition to retailing all the familiar lies found in almost every spurious memoir of Hitler, such as that Hitler was filthy (sometimes lice-ridden), led a lurid sex life and believed in astrology, Greiner plumped out his book with colorful inventions. Like other German authors who produced spurious lives of Hitler, Greiner, writing only two years after the Fuehrer’s death, was doubtless confident that no actual facts would ever crop up to contradict his fictional remarks.

Robert Waite has skillfully ferreted out some of the major falsehoods in Greiner’s egomaniacal memoir:

Greiner describes Hitler in 1907–1908 as a “really poor devil,” so filthy and impoverished that he could not wear his underclothing because it
was tattered and full of lice. . . . In fact, during this time Hitler was living quite comfortably on his father's inheritance and his orphan's pension while, in carefully groomed clothing, he attended the opera or theater almost nightly.

Greiner says that Hitler's "favorite sister Paula" lived in Vienna at that time and that "since the fall of 1907, with only short interruptions," Adolf lived with her. He says he recalls how Adolf faked antique pictures by roasting his oil paintings in the kitchen oven at his sister's home. In point of fact, Hitler's sister Paula—whom he heartily disliked—was 11 years old at this time and living with her mother in Linz. The apocryphal story of the oven-baked oils was not invented by Greiner. Like so many of the alleged incidents in his "memoirs," he took it from someone else and added his own embellishments. . . .

In his last dramatic chapter, Greiner assures us that Hitler escaped from the Berlin bunker. "A man whom he had known well for many years" had told him in confidence that on 30 April 1945 at the Templehof airfield in Berlin "at 15 minutes past 4 o'clock," he had seen a specially equipped new Messerschmidt turbine jet, Type 332, made ready to take off and . . . "there was the Supreme War Commander himself, Adolf Hitler!" He was clearly visible in the "bright light of the setting sun." . . . One would think that even the inventiveness of a Greiner would be hard put to have the sun set in Berlin in April at four in the afternoon.

Waite goes on to detail "Greiner's stories of how the mighty of the world confided in him and sought his counsel": he was offered a "high post" in the Nazi government; Mussolini "valued his opinion on political and religious matters"; to Greiner, Heydrich confided plans for the attack on the Soviet Union and Himmler revealed the Final Solution; the German navy asked him to serve as "Special Consultant for Technological Development"; the Luftwaffe wanted him to design a compass that would "enable a plane to fly over the North Pole to Japan and thus let leading Nazis escape"; and at the very end of the war, Himmler pleaded with Greiner "to develop a special death ray that would disintegrate the enemy."

One reason historians have believed Greiner, says Waite, is that "Reinhold Hanisch mentions him in his account and vouches for him—as Greiner vouched for Hanisch. But to accept this reciprocal endorsement is not unlike accepting mutual character testimonials from Uriah Heep and Seth Pecksniff." 16

Among other books that are not actually forgeries but must be read with caution are Robert Payne's *Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (1973), which chronicles the events of the Hitler years with a dashing disregard for truth, and Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich* (1970). Speer has a flare for historic improvisation, and his conversations with Nazi
bigwigs are often more creative than his architectural designs. As Nazi Minister of Armaments and War Production, Speer provided slave labor for production facilities and dispatched tens of thousands of Jews and non-Germans to die of disease or starvation in concentration work camps. Aside from the mock humility in his memoirs, parts of which were cribbed from other writers, one must be wary of all unsubstantiated stories he relates. As a measure of Speer's morality, consider that according to his own admission he plotted to murder Hitler, a man who had trusted and loved him almost as a son. For years after this mendacious architect's release from prison, he sold to American visitors at high prices architectural drawings in pencil that he claimed were made by Hitler. Because of the apparently inexhaustible supply, I suspect that Speer whipped these out in his study while buyers from the States waited in his drawing room.

The judges at Nuremberg set an example that should serve as a guide for historians: they gave little credence to the oral testimony of Nazi defendants and depended almost entirely upon documentary evidence. In a post-trial interview, Robert Hempner, former Nuremberg attorney general, declared: "In the Nuremberg process ... we were always more interested in showing the defendants' own [contemporary] handwritten documents. This was more effective than all their tales and lies."\(^{17}\) In the same article, in his review of Jochen van Lang's \textit{The Secretary}, a biography of Martin Bormann, Geoffrey Barraclough noted that the author "has a list of forty people he interviewed. . . . The argument seems to be that forty liars are better than one, or at least that forty liars will cancel each other out."\(^{18}\)

The validity of Barraclough's sarcasm may be substantiated by a study of much of the Nazi literature now available. We have become so accustomed to reading startling tales about the Nazis that we are ready to accept almost any statements, however bizarre and far-fetched, as gospel truth. It was this uncritical attitude on the part of newsmen and historians that made possible the initial acceptance of the forged Hitler diaries.
"You can see, of course, that Konrad Kujau is an artist of remarkable talent," said the man who sat chatting with me on the morning of June 14, 1984. "He has a clever touch, this forger! Notice how he portrays Hitler as his guiding spirit. And just look at how adroitly he turns the sour-faced Fuehrer into a comic figure!"

My visitor was Kurt Groenewold, Kujau's lawyer. He struck me as even more amusing than his client's drawings. His thinning gray hair sprang out wildly in every direction, as though charged with electricity. He looked like a mad scientist, a genius forever divorced from the tyranny of brush and comb. His slender face, however, held two flashing eyes that stabbed at me as he talked.

"Do you think you have clients who would wish to buy examples of Kujau's work?" he asked. "I can supply all you need—plus copies of pages from the Hitler diaries, or fresh letters of Hitler or any of the leading Nazis. Kujau works incessantly in his prison cell. His pen and paints are never idle. Whatever you require in the way of drawings or sketches or autographs, Kujau can produce for you."

I said, "Does your client have a special reason for being so prolific?"

"Indeed he does. He has to pay my fees, which I can assure you are substantial. All his property, his entire inventory of helmets and artifacts, his collection of paintings, real and faked, his property and money, all have been seized by the court to be used in repayment of the money he received from Stern for his forgeries of the Hitler diaries. He has nothing left but his talent. And he has to work hard, also, to support his common-law wife, Edith Lieblang [who was arrested as his accomplice], and to pay her legal fees."

As Kurt Groenewold told of his client's new mode of supporting himself by forging forgeries of his forgeries, I recalled that Kujau was
not the first manuscript faker to turn his malefactions into a lucrative, honest business. Nearly two hundred years earlier the Shakespeare forger William Henry Ireland did precisely the same thing. The exposure of Ireland’s forgeries by noted scholar Edmond Malone brought disgrace to Ireland but also opened up for him a new and flourishing career. His fakes quickly became collector’s items. There were not enough of his Lear’s and Hamlet’s to meet the demand, so Ireland set about remedying the deficit. It is now quite a trick to spot the original forgeries from the forged forgeries.

The cagey A.S.W. Rosenbach, noted book and autograph dealer in the 1920s and 1930s, thought he could detect the original forgeries from the later fakes. According to Ireland’s biographer, Bernard Grebanier, the original forgeries belonged to Samuel Ireland, father of the forger. Not long after the elder Ireland died, his literary property was sold at a series of auction sales by Leigh, Sotheby & Son in April and May 1801. Apocryphal relics fared badly. Part of Charles I’s cloak was knocked down with other items in a lot for one shilling. Shakespeare’s purse brought only two shillings. But the last lot in the sale, “The Complete Collection of Shakespearian Papers,” the original forgeries of Ireland including Vortigern and other manuscripts, all elegantly bound in russia and green morocco cases, fetched the astonishing price of £130. Eventually the collection passed to W.T. Montcrieff, who in turn presented it to the Shakespeare Memorial Library in Birmingham. In 1879 it was destroyed in a fire. But no blaze, however destructive, could consume the imagination of Dr. Rosenbach, who boasts in his memoir, Books and Bidders:

Imagine my surprise when I purchased the library of Marsden J. Perry, of Providence, to discover in his world-famed collection the actual forgeries not only of Vortigern but of King Lear and Hamlet as well. Here were the original documents which had deceived some of the choicest minds in England. Looking further, I also found the first draft of Ireland’s confession. I have the actual drafts with which Richard Brinsley Sheridan was so delighted; the very pages from which Kemble studied the part of Vortigern, and before which Boswell knelt, “a tumbler of warm brandy and water” at his side.¹

No effort was ever made to stop Ireland in the proliferation of copies of his frauds. He turned out copies of copies of copies. I once had a letter, written rather late in his life, in which he assured his correspondent that he was offering for sale at only £3 some of the original forgeries, not later copies.

On behalf of Kujau’s prison efforts, the court not only donned the
blindfold that is the symbol of the law but apparently encouraged him to create more forgeries. On many of these Kujau placed his personal signature under Adolf Hitler’s paranoid scrawl. Others he did not sign. The ineptitude of Kujau’s fakes renders them fairly innocuous, hardly worth suppressing. As I didn’t wish to offer any of Kujau’s forgeries at auction, I suggested to Kurt Groenewold that Germany might be his best market.

The enormous sums invested by Kujau and Heidemann in relics of the two world wars certainly constitute a good part of the money they got from the bogus Hitler diaries. Both men were fanatics. The collectors’ virus had poisoned their blood stream. “There will come a day,” wrote Will Tremper and Jochen Kummer, “when the representatives of Gruner & Jahr, the publishing house, will be forced to sell the seized uniforms, medals, daggers, blood-stained flags at suitable collectors’ auctions to get back at least part of their money.” Their prediction was realized a year later when the distinguished Munich expert in war relics Jan K. Kube issued a colorful auction catalogue (Number 50), which offered selections from Kujau’s great collection. There were 1,433 lots. Included in the sale were dozens of rare World War I helmets, beautiful steins, regimental plates, ornamental caps, flags, medals, and uniforms. At the end of the sumptuously printed catalogue (itself priced at $6.50) was a selection of Kujau’s forgeries and artwork, with a group of Nazi uniforms, some of which were Kujau’s size and had no doubt been worn by the forger when he assumed the role of “the General” to give his nocturnal binges an official touch.

The original forged diaries and artworks were not, of course, for sale. They had been impounded as evidence and would subsequently, according to Stern’s agreement, be turned over to the Coblenz archives. But there was a choice assemblage of fakes for the discriminating collector of such relics. Among the forgeries were signed photographs of war leaders, sketches and paintings by Kujau, cartoons by Kujau, forgeries of Hitler’s paintings, and entries from the bogus diaries that shook the world. In the section heading that listed the contents of the sale, “Autographs, sketches, writings and watercolors,” the crass word forgery (Fälschung) did not intrude. The more tasteful description “in Konrad Kujau’s hand” (von der Hand Konrad Kujau’s) was used to designate the fakes. Estimates were placed after every lot for the guidance of bidders. Most were conservative, for Herr Kube had underestimated the enthusiasm of his audience for a relic or two of the most notorious forger in history.

The sale took place on Saturday, October 20, 1984, in the beautiful Altes Schloss Sugenheim (Old Sugenheim Castle), located midway be-
tween Nuremberg and Wuerzburg. Bidders exploded in their eagerness, and prices were far above estimates. Officers' elaborate helmets, crested with carved lions or eagles, were knocked down at high prices, many bringing between $500 and $2,000. There were few bargains.

The collection of materials "in Konrad Kujau's hand" proved that sometimes forgeries can be worth more than originals! A colored portrait of Kaiser Bill (Wilhelm II) in regimental uniform, signed for the kaiser by Kujau and estimated at 40 marks (about $19), fetched 130 marks, perhaps more than an original would have brought. A colored photograph of Hitler and Mussolini with forged signatures of both, estimated at 20 marks, fetched 90. A collection of twenty-nine individual page entries from the Hitler diaries, all of them very brief and copied by Kujau for the occasion, attracted great interest. Each had been estimated at 20 marks, about $9.50, and each fetched at least double the estimate; those of greatest interest brought 80 to 160 marks (Kujau had handed out similar souvenirs to all his prison visitors). A bogus caricature of Hitler's went for 350 marks, more than double the estimate.

The sale clearly heralded the birth of a new German artist. The auction crowd bid furiously on Kujau's watercolors. A self-portrait, estimated at 300 marks, was knocked down for 2,000 (about $850). I have often sold sketches by Salvador Dali and Alexander Calder for less. A small group of amusing caricatures depicting Kujau and his sidekick, Adolf Hitler, excited great interest. The most interesting, a portrait of Hitler wearing a visored cap and peering through binoculars in each lens of which is mirrored a view of Kujau, was estimated at 300 marks and sold for 1,450 (about $600).

For several years after Kujau's arrest there persisted rumors, fostered by London Sunday Times reporter Gitta Sereny, that earlier drafts of the diaries existed somewhere in the United States. If Kujau knows of these tales, he may very possibly create some "early diaries" for the American market. Meanwhile, no injunction has ever been placed on his creativity. We can therefore expect a proliferation of drawings and paintings by Kujau-Hitler, as well as pages or sections from the diaries, letters to and from Hitler, and autograph documents of the more unsavory Nazi leaders. I have already been offered three massive collections (or perhaps the same collection surfacing three times) of "original" Hitler documents, each one represented as that of an American army officer who discovered the cache of rare documents in the bunker or the Eagle's Nest or the Brown House at the end of World War II.

My amiable friend Louis A. Mushro of Detroit, Michigan, tele-
phoned me not long ago in a state of great excitement to report that an enormous "find" of original Hitler autographs had just been offered to him. The price was astronomical, but the documents involved could "alter history." There were eighteen manuscript speeches of Hitler, sixty-seven letters of the Fuehrer to Himmler, eleven watercolors, four oil paintings, forty nude sketches of Geli Raubal and Eva Braun, a Nazi insignia painted in colors and signed by Hitler, and a slew of medals, flags, and books. According to the owner, this vast archive had been purloined from the Fuehrer's own vaults. But as Hitler painted in oils only on two or three occasions, and as he abhorred nudity, it was not hard to determine even from a distance of a thousand miles that the collection was a group of Kujau's forgeries. It will no doubt be purchased eventually by some gullible collector.

Some of the Kujau material that was auctioned on October 20, 1984, with the sanction of the West German government, has been dispersed throughout the memorabilia market in America. Each item was originally identified by the seller as a Kujau fake. In its handsome 1985 catalogue of "Historical Military Relics," Mohawk Arms of Utica, New York, first to offer a large group of Kujau's fakes, devoted a six-page section to the German forger and his fabrications. Twenty-seven signed photographs, all of them framed, were offered for sale (nineteen of them illustrated) at prices ranging from $49.50 to $99.50. The fifty-dollar spread in the value represents the gap between royal respectability (a signed photograph of Crown Prince Wilhelm at $49.50) and upstart tyranny (signed photographs of Hitler and Goering at $99.50 each). The collection of forgeries, each so labeled, exhibited the wide range of Kujau's efforts and included signed photographs of Baron von Richthofen ($69.50), Count von Zeppelin ($49.50), Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel ($59.50), Baldur von Schirach ($79.50), and Bernard Montgomery and Charles de Gaulle shaking hands ($59.50).

This and future generations will have to cope with these forgeries. They often come on the market branded with the skull-and-crossbones, but in many cases this label is forgotten. Kujau's fakes are sometimes considered genuine by ill-informed collectors or archivists. Still, as I have often observed, it is the forgeries that give piquancy and excitement to the chase. Where would the joys of the collector and historian be if their path were not beset with traps and pits?
The Battle of the Liars

If there's a Baron Munchausen Club in Germany, I'd like to nominate Konrad Kujau and Gerd Heidemann for membership. Between them, these two artful liars can in a few seconds pulverize the truth. Both lie with earnestness and plausibility, and since their stories are nearly always diametrically opposite, it would appear that one of them may be telling the truth. Usually, however, both are lying. Instead of the truth being somewhere in between, as is so often the case when two liars exchange heated words, it is sometimes never touched upon at all.

In the remand prison in Hamburg during the summer of 1983, the two men were placed on the same floor, a few cells apart, to await trial. The prison corridor was a perfect sound conductor for their conversations. A jail is not usually the place for levity, but picture this situation.

Both men are model inmates. Heidemann is reticent and sits sullenly in his cell. He grants interviews occasionally, but they are grumpy and brief. The former reporter is methodically working over a card index in which he records the history of the Hitler diaries the way he wants it written. Now and then he shifts the position of a card or adds a new note. His phlegmatic occupation amuses his fellow prisoner down the hall. In flashy contrast, Kujau is the star of the entire jail. He delights in interviews and welcomes the television cameras. The guards call him "Conny." Together they joke and laugh like old comrades in a tavern. Kujau peddles his life story to Bild Zeitung for 100,000 marks. He amuses the string of reporters who visit him almost daily. To all the men he presents a sample page from the diaries signed by Adolf Hitler. He hugs and kisses the lady reporters. For all who visit him he has a new and ever delightful supply of tales—highly imaginative tales.
Kujau and Heidemann cannot see each other, but they carry on a conversation of sorts. Generally they yell back and forth. The animosity between them, which has seethed and boiled over a few times during their three years as business associates, now comes to a head. They begin their sojourn in prison with mutual dislike and distrust and end it with hatred.

Their constant battle of lies entertains fellow prisoners, guards, and occasional visitors. Kujau is usually the aggressor. Whatever he says about the diaries is contradicted at once by Heidemann with screams: "Lie! Lie!" Clearly the smarter of the two, Kujau uses his imaginative talents to tease and taunt the ex-reporter. Heidemann gruffly roars back his rebuttals. Their techniques as liars are totally different. Kujau's lies are fanciful, elegantly embroidered fictions. Heidemann's pose as the curt, straight "facts" of the plodding reporter.

Kujau speaks with a merry twinkle in his eye and a tiny smile flickering over his lips. His elfin attitude makes him the most popular inmate in the prison. Sometimes visitors are at first meeting impressed by the fact that Kujau looks much older than his forty-five years. His balding head, sly eyes half-closed when in repose, and old-fashioned elliptical spectacles that slide down the bridge of his nose all give him an appearance of venerability. But when he begins to speak, his features instantly take on an air of animation that strips away the wrinkles. His smile is bland and engaging, and he laughs often. The lies pop out spontaneously, always in a soft, pleasant voice, as if there could be no doubt that they're true. Only the sparkling eyes betray, perhaps intentionally, the fact that their creator is a master of the art of fiction. When Kujau wishes to add excitement to his remarks, he raises his voice so that Heidemann can hear him and deliberately eggs him into screams of monosyllabic rebuttal.

Heidemann's mind is less elastic, and he has to ponder a bit before he speaks. Sometimes he stutters and flounders in the middle of a fabrication and has to retrace his remarks before he can continue. Often he sits for long periods as silent and still as a monolith. Although he has spent his life in deceiving people and writing half-truths, the neo-Nazi reporter still lacks the glib tongue and the ability to provide minute but false details that mark the expert liar. Still, there is in his stolid, sober approach a certain deceptive air of reliability. After all, even the speaker of truth often has to grope to recall his facts. In his striving to get his "facts" absolutely right, Heidemann may overlook a few of the salient details.

Gitta Sereny finds Heidemann a more convincing liar than Kujau and even suspects that he may be telling the truth. Gitta and Gerd
The Hitler Diaries

share the same occupation and possibly, without being aware of it, Gitta is more sympathetic toward a fellow investigative reporter. Her capsule descriptions provide excellent pen portraits of the two miscreants:

Heidemann greets visitors with a frozen smile. He tries to be like his meticulous old self but the tension in his face and body defeat him. He talks ceaselessly, repeating the litany he has kept up since his world fell apart; yes, he was stupid; no, he was not a crook. He is a man on the brink of a nervous collapse, or worse.

Kujau does not stand up when the visitor enters, he jumps. He ... bubbles with energy and joy. He is the prison clown, and he has prison officials in stitches, deliberately drawing them into the conversation when they sit in on interviews. His emotions can vary wildly. At the mention of his East German family, he is suddenly furious: "They have nothing to do with it," he shouts. Then, in seconds, the smile is back, the hostility is replaced by heavy charm. . . .

He proceeds to write eight lines in Hitler's handwriting, to dictation, signing the page six times. "That's how he wrote in 1905, that's 1908," and so on, he explains, as he painstakingly completes each signature.

He is well primed on other notorious forgers—"but I've outdone them all."1

The lies that volley up and down the prison corridor in Hamburg are actually a dress rehearsal for the future courtroom scenes at the trial of Kujau and Heidemann. Nothing will be changed except the surroundings. The same lies, the same recriminations, the same jests, the same hilarity among the spectators will prevail.

Kujau tells a reporter: "I swear in the name of all the saints I told Heidemann, when we were sitting in a pub in Stuttgart, the truth about the diaries before I ever started writing. Heidemann looked at me with a smile of superiority and said, 'Tell it to your old grandmother.'"2

Heidemann hears Kujau and shouts back that Kujau never once told him the truth—not in anything that was important. Heidemann insists that the blitherings in the diaries represent the real thoughts of Adolf Hitler. He contends vehemently that Kujau copied the bogus diaries from genuine diaries that still lie hidden somewhere. Heidemann has learned to utter this preposterous falsehood with such intense conviction that Gitta Sereny can later insist that "Heidemann did not know the diaries were fake."3

Kujau laughs whenever Heidemann contradicts his assertions. To
These eight signatures dashed off by Kuja presumebly cover the development of Hitler's writing from 1904 to 1934, yet all have an identical "feel" and show very little difference. In actuality, Hitler's early signatures are large, rounded, and very legible.

one reporter, he recalls a birthday party for Heidemann on December 4, 1981.

He suggested that my girlfriend and I help him to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. To commemorate the occasion, I surprised him with a fabulous gift. He dined with Edith and me. I decorated the table with ornate glasses and champagne. On the table I placed, beautifully framed, the present I'd prepared for him. Just for the fun of it, I'd appointed him Gauleiter [district leader] of Hamburg. In Hitler's handwriting I wrote: "For his services rendered in the history of the Third Reich and the National-Socialist and Holy German Empire and especially for his endeavors to bring back into the Third Reich my confidant Martin Bormann, I herewith appoint Gerd Heidemann to be Gauleiter and governor as an honored member of the city of Hamburg. AF. HITLER."
"A lie!" shouts Heidemann.

Kujau tells all his visitors that Heidemann is the world's greatest liar. According to Kujau, Heidemann boasts that he had a love affair with Goering's daughter, that he'd contacted the illegitimate son of Chou En-lai; that he knew just where the fugitive Martin Bormann was living and would fetch him out of hiding at the right moment; that he had located some buried treasure, which he would shortly dig up. On and on go the tales, to emphatic, shouted denials from the cell down the corridor.

"When I told Heidemann I was running out of copybooks for the diaries," said Kujau, "he got me some more." 5

Heidemann cries out: "That's a lie!"

His furious denials only encourage his opponent. "Right from the start," Kujau says, "Heidemann deceived me. He never told me he was selling the diaries to Stern. He said he needed them to draw attention to Martin Bormann, even though he knew that Bormann was long dead. He also fooled the editorial staff of Stern with the same bunk." 6

Heidemann shouts: "Bormann is still alive."

Kujau continues: "I only wrote the diaries to help Heidemann in his fight to save Martin Bormann from falling into oblivion." 7

Kujau's eyes glitter as he prods his enemy. He comes up with another story about what happened the day Heidemann called to pick up the seventh Hitler diary: "Heidemann had just sent me a catalogue of a military relics auction in Munich. I was supposed to jot down the items I liked and Heidemann would get them for me." The forger began to scribble on a pad: "One helmet, one ..." In his haste, and with his mind fixed on what he wanted to order, Kujau had written the words in Hitler's script. "For weeks I had been working night and day in Hitler's handwriting," he says. "I did not discover my blunder until Heidemann took my notes, looked at them, and forgot to breathe. Heidemann said: 'I guessed it all the time.'" 8

"Another lie!" screams Heidemann. "Just like all the other lies he keeps telling."

It is a sly, vicious battle. Kujau piles accusation on accusation. The more furious his opponent becomes, the more zealously the forger attacks. Kujau claims that the reporter complained constantly about having to borrow money from the bank to buy the diaries, when he was in fact pumping money from the till of Gruner & Jahr. The cashier was getting writer's cramp from signing the checks that Heidemann was converting into bundles of cash.

Heidemann repeatedly annoys Kujau by his assertion that he never knew Kujau's real name, only the name Conny Fischer. "A lie," says
Kujau. "Whenever he visited me he read the name Kujau at my entrance door in Ditzingen. In fact, on his very first visit he asked me what gave me the idea to use a pseudonym."

Just as the laurel wreath was about to be placed on Kujau's balding head, after a ferocious four-month contest over who could tell and get away with the most outrageous falsehood, the forger blundered. He told a lie that won Heidemann his temporary freedom. One of the most hilarious features about the diaries was the preposterous red wax seal on the front cover of each one serving no purpose other than to secure an equally useless cord. Kujau, of course, put the blame for these comic seals on the reporter:

Heidemann was always going through the rare items in my shop in Stuttgart. One day he took from the wall a framed document from the German army that I'd forged myself. It carried a huge seal. The seal displayed the emblem of the Third Reich: an eagle with folded wings and a swastika. Heidemann instantly assumed that it was the genuine seal of the Third Reich. Actually it was only a copy of the seal of an infantry corps of the German army.

Later I saw the same seal on television when Heidemann held up the Hitler diaries. Heidemann must have added it. None of the historians realized that such a Third Reich seal was nonexistent. As for the colored cord, I'd never be so stupid as to affix a modern cord, manufactured after the war, at such a conspicuous spot on the diaries."

The tale of the seal was not Kujau's biggest lie, but it was the most damaging. The police had already discovered in the collection of Fritz Stiefel, the noted Nazi buff and customer of Kujau, documents that bore the same seal as the Hitler diaries. These documents had never been in the hands of Heidemann—clear evidence that they had been affixed by Kujau.

Upon hearing Kujau's tale of the diary seals, the judge reassessed the evidence against Heidemann, who had spent 119 days in a prison cell, and on September 21, 1983, ordered his release. He was a free man until the trial. Heidemann had scored a major victory in the Battle of the Liars.
Now you see them, now you don’t—five million marks in crisp, fresh banknotes that disappeared into the thin air of Stuttgart and Hamburg.

Of all the clever tricks performed by Kujau and Heidemann, the legerdemain twins, this was the only one that even Houdini couldn’t have duplicated. The marks that vanished were last seen when they were handed over to Heidemann by Gruner & Jahr, publishers and pursestrings of Stern. The crack reporter was then dispatched to invest them in Hitler diaries. The publishers asked for no receipts and got none. Operation Green Vault was an undercover transaction in which financial records were deemed a liability. Like most furtive operations, it was shrouded in secrecy. Such an enterprise is always an engraved invitation to a swindle because it has secrets at both ends. Even in two years of intense, patient investigation, with scores of probes and counterprobes, nobody was able to find out where the five million marks ($2 million) wound up. Heidemann will take a bloody oath on a first edition of Mein Kampf that he didn’t get them, and Kujau will thrust out a stiff right arm and take the same oath.

Some say the money is still cached on an island in the Caribbean where Kujau and Heidemann intend to retire after the police abandon their search. Others claim it is squirreled away in paper bags in some crumbling, bomb-blasted bunker. Romantics aver that the two men blew it in debauchery, and it is true that both were profligate spenders with voracious appetites for beautiful women and vintage champagne. The police, however, hold the view that the cash is on deposit in Swiss banks. London Times reporter Gitta Sereny thought otherwise and invested months in an effort to prove that the missing marks went into the coffers of neo-Nazi organizations.
Precisely how much money was paid out to Heidemann by Gruner & Jahr is not accurately known. In his charges against his star reporter, Stern chief Henri Nannen stated that the publishing house paid a total of nine million marks in twenty-six installments to Gerd Heidemann and received from him sixty diaries. As no official records were kept and no pen was ever touched to ledger, Nannen’s own scanty records may be incorrect or his memory imperfect, or he may have some private reason for concealing the real amount. Supposing the sum to be correct, however, let us compare it with the payments that Kujau and Heidemann admit they received, plus additional income that may have involved private peculations of Stern’s money.

According to reporters, Tremper and Kummer in Bild Zeitung (October 8, 1983), Kujau reported that he received from Heidemann between February 1981 and April 1983 the sums in West German marks listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Kujau’s Receipts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the first diaries, delivered in February 1981</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the second group of diaries, delivered in April 1981</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the third group of diaries, delivered in December 1981</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For rare items from his own military collection sold to Heidemann</td>
<td>338,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,146,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heidemann admits to the income shown in Table 2 during the period when he was bilking Stern.

**TABLE 2. Heidemann’s Receipts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For obtaining and delivering the Hitler diaries, plus a bonus for punctual delivery</td>
<td>317,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For monthly wages (5,400 marks), plus special payments received for Martin Bormann photos</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special sum from Gruner &amp; Jahr for Heidemann’s discovery of Hitler diaries</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down payment on 54,000 marks owed him but not delivered</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From "industrialist" friends for furnishing map and joining search party for Hermann Goering's treasure in Stoelpchen Lake (East Germany) 1,400,000

For profit on sale of Hitler paintings (forged by Kujau) 600,000

3,999,000

With more than nine million marks to be accounted for, the Hamburg district attorney in his computations paid special attention to the champagne life-style of both men. He was especially astonished, he said, that on a monthly salary of 5,400 marks, Heidemann had maintained two apartments, one in the Elbchausse and another in the Poeseldorf, which together cost 7,580 marks per month. The district attorney compiled records of the expenditures of Kujau and Heidemann as set out in Tables 3 and 4.

**TABLE 3. Kujau's Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own apartment in Wolfschlugen</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garage</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own apartment in Stuttgart</td>
<td>230,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back building for militaria collection</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House in Bietigheim</td>
<td>661,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment of loan to Stuttgart bank</td>
<td>465,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,733,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4. Heidemann's Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restoration to Goering's yacht</td>
<td>500,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional investment in the yacht</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two vacation villas in Spain</td>
<td>390,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW318 Cabrio for Mrs. Heidemann</td>
<td>31,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porsche 9122SC for Mrs. Heidemann</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments to auction houses</td>
<td>80,239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diverse expenses for jewelry, carpets, furniture 90,725
Cost of Comer Lake treasure project 185,000
Money lent to colleagues 23,000
Payment to Prof. Maser for expertise 5,000
Payment to Dr. Priesack for his Hitler collection 30,000
Furniture 30,000
Four-person voyage on ship Astor 27,000
New Year's Eve flight to Waldorf-Astoria 5,438
Diverse expenses 13,000
1,688,258

The total laid out by Stern, according to Kujau and Heidemann, comes to 4,155,000 marks, or almost five million marks short of Nannen's figure. The office of the district attorney in Hamburg contended that Heidemann spent 1,700,000 marks more than his admitted income, and that Kujau had actually received 2,500,000 marks, nearly a million more than he claimed. (The amount that the two men owed in taxes is astronomical, and they may never be able to pay it off.)

There is no doubt that Heidemann plunged heavily in the Nazi souvenir market. He bought what he believed to be gilt-edged Third Reich memorabilia, which he proudly, and rather foolishly, displayed to his employers. In July 1981, while he was gathering in huge sums from Stern, Heidemann (monthly salary: 5,400 marks) invited publisher Henri Nannen to visit his opulent top-floor apartment and greeted him by waving a glass of champagne. As Nannen recalled in "the Stern Report":

The place was decorated in the very best taste. There were some superb pieces of furniture—Queen Anne, I think—and on the walls were drawings. The first thing that hit me was the original manuscript of Deutschland ueber Alles by Hoffman. He also had the autographs of Bismarck and Moltke, along with other historical documents under glass and in frames. I was astonished. "Where has he got all this from?" I thought. He gave me some convoluted story and showed me thirty or forty Hitler drawings. I'm something of an art historian. They seemed to me to be perfectly genuine.
Heidemann even showed Nannen the pistol with which Hitler shot himself and allowed him to read from his own sumptuously preserved copies of the diaries. Nannen found them boring: "I could not believe that anyone would have gone to the trouble of forging something so banal."  

The publisher was convinced that Heidemann was stealing money from Stern.

Peter Koch had a similar reaction when he visited Heidemann. Aghast at his luxurious apartment and rich life-style, Koch calculated that the cost to Heidemann must be not less than 10,000 marks a month. When Heidemann explained that he was a bit cramped and planned to buy a little place with a view of the Elbe, Koch mentally figured the price of such a residence at over a million marks. Heidemann exhibited some of his most valuable properties—among them Hitler's suicide gun, a Belgian FN, with a forged authentication by Bormann (actually the weapon with which Hitler killed himself was a heavy 7.65mm Walther). Koch recalled: "There were some old walking sticks, drawings by Rembrandt and Duerer, a memento of Napoleon. . . . There was also a ladies' pistol, which was supposed to have been Eva Braun's." Heidemann explained that the memorabilia came mostly from the Boemersdorf crash, that he'd bought them because they came with the diaries and he couldn't have acquired the diaries without taking the relics. The price? A modest 1.5 million marks, which Gruner & Jahr had laid out. Like Nannen, Koch left the luxury apartment convinced that Heidemann was a crook and was swindling his employers.

While the debate raged among newsmen and police over the possible whereabouts of the five million marks that had vanished, Gitta Sereny began probing Heidemann's political background. She was convinced that the missing money had gone into neo-Nazi coffers. She discovered that one of Heidemann's closest associates, Medard Klapper, a dealer in old weapons, was a former SS man. Klapper possessed a remarkable knowledge of the whereabouts of wanted Nazi war criminals. He was also an expert on buried treasure and appeared to know exactly the spots in East Germany where the leading Nazis had concealed their war loot.

Klapper was, so he claimed, a close friend and associate of Martin Bormann, a Nazi leader whose intimacy with Adolf Hitler had made him even more feared than the infamous Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler. A shadowy figure who moved darkly in the background of political intrigue, Bormann was born on June 17, 1900, in Halberstadt, joined the Nazi party in 1927, became chief of staff to Rudolf Hess and
then Reichsleiter (Reich leader) in 1933, and was appointed leader of the party chancellery in 1941. Two years later he became Hitler's personal secretary. Bormann's ruthless and crafty mind appealed to the Fuehrer.

The adroit decisionmaker was camera shy and seldom photographed, even though he was second only to Hitler in the power he wielded. Faithful to Hitler to the very end, he remained in the Berlin bunker until after the Fuehrer shot himself on April 30, 1945, then vanished in the same mysterious way in which he had lived. Last seen running through a freight yard dodging Russian shells, he was believed to have committed suicide. Artur Axmann, a Reich youth leader who knew him well, claimed that on May 2, 1945, he had seen Bormann's body in the moonlight under a bridge. There were no wounds on the corpse, and Axmann assumed that Bormann had swallowed a cyanide capsule. In 1946 at Nuremberg Bormann was tried as a war criminal and condemned to death in absentia. A skeleton uncovered in 1977 by his biographer Jochen von Lang, with the aid of historian David Irving, was according to report positively identified as Bormann's by dental charts.

But the low profile that Bormann had maintained as Hitler's alter ego did not survive the war. The reticent, allegedly dead Nazi hit man began suddenly to show up all over the world. He made almost annual appearances in South America. At least two dozen clones were sighted at various places, then vanished mysteriously. Some were tracked down by Jewish avengers and proved to be bogus Bormanns.

If Martin Bormann was still alive, as many thought, Klapper was the man who would know precisely where he was hiding and what he was up to. Klapper had served seventeen years in the SS and until the end of the war had been a member of the elite Fuehrerbegleitbataillon, a huge bodyguard for Adolf Hitler. After the war Klapper quickly shifted his allegiance and worked for the new German government as a spy and informer. He discovered stolen paintings that had disappeared from the Château Sanssouci in Potsdam and turned his information over to government officials. He fingered drug dealers. He seemed to know everybody in the strange underworld that sprang up after the defeat of the Nazis. In 1981 Klapper became widely known when, aided by a clever lawyer from East Berlin, one Herr Kaul, he came up with some maps that showed where Goering's porcelain treasures were hidden. The East German government thanked him profusely, and that was it—he got not a pfennig in reward money.

The news report of this discovery was written up by Gerd Heidemann, and it was Klapper who put Heidemann on the track of the reporter's prime obsessions—Nazi treasure and Martin Bormann.
Heidemann and Klapper worked out a contract to get the rights from the East German government to dig for treasure. Heidemann saw a chance to become a millionaire. It was agreed that the riches he and Klapper uncovered would be split three ways, with equal shares for Klapper and Heidemann and the informer who led them to the treasure. Inspired to start digging, Heidemann would certainly have excavated most of Berlin if Klapper hadn’t quickly distracted him with another crazy plan, one so half-baked that the staff at the Rock of Apes agreed to it.

Klapper laid before Heidemann and the journalists at Stern the top secret information that in Madrid there was a carefully concealed depot of Nazi documents, one of which proved that the first three atom bombs had been built by the Nazis and then captured by the Americans in 1945. Following a huddle of ecstatic big shots, Stern handed Klapper an option contract. Klapper was forced to take an oath that he would not change the documents in any way, that he would not add or delete even so much as a word. Money was not mentioned; it was taken for granted that the payments would be handsome. This contract for the imaginary horde of rare documents was signed by Thomas Walde, Wilfried Sorge, and Heidemann, as well as a mysterious Spanish lawyer named Equisibal—address was never revealed—who acted on behalf of the exiled Nazis in Madrid. In addition to the nonfinancial deal with Stern, Klapper came away with a special monetary contract signed by Heidemann.

Once the former SS man had hooked Heidemann and his associates, he embarked on a string of lies that even Kujau could scarcely have matched. Klapper told Heidemann that Bormann was living in South America and that he had already met the former Nazi leader in Spain. Despite Stern’s intimate involvement in research ten years earlier, in 1972, establishing conclusively that Bormann was dead, and the subsequent positive identification of his skull, Heidemann now accepted without question the glorious news that Martin was among the quick and ready to appear when the time was right. Some of the reporters at Stern ridiculed the tale to Heidemann’s face, but the reporter was undaunted. His idol was alive, at least in his mind, and his life took on new meaning and new richness. Klapper even produced a handful of Polaroid photographs that showed an elderly man who bore a resemblance to Bormann. Heidemann accepted the photographs as pictures of his hero. It can be debated whether Heidemann was crazy, simply gullied, or acting out a charade. Apparently, however, he and others really believed that Bormann was alive, and Stern embarked on “Operation Martin” to locate the missing war crimi-
nal—partly because it helped to distract attention from the magazine’s preparation for the biggest scoop in publishing history: the Hitler diaries.

Heidemann’s obsession with Martin Bormann soon approached the point of insanity. Every day he informed his colleagues what Martin was doing, what Martin said, what Martin’s travel plans were, and precisely when Martin would show up to claim his rightful place in history. As Martin hopscotched from one country to another (according to Klapper), Heidemann would announce triumphantly that Hitler’s right-hand man was in South America, or Spain, or Switzerland. So completely bamboozled was Heidemann that he lost contact with the real world and entered a realm of fantasy in which he believed himself to be the chosen agent of Martin Bormann.

Klapper convinced the reporter that Bormann was eager to meet with him, so that Heidemann could establish in Spain a Nazi Institute for Contemporary History and a museum of National Socialist relics. Now and then, to add piquancy to his lies, Klapper made appointments for Heidemann and Bormann to meet. Yet Martin remained elusive. Always, at the last moment—several times when Heidemann was on the point of boarding a plane to meet Bormann—Klapper would report: “Martin is ill,” or “It’s too dangerous just now. We think somebody has found out about our plans.”

Still, Heidemann listened eagerly when Klapper said that Bormann lived briefly next door to a synagogue in Zurich, was in charge of a German colony in South America, or even owned a house in Madrid where he was known under the alias “Martin di Calde Villa.” When the first extracts from the Hitler diaries appeared in Stern, Heidemann was so excited that he seized a telephone and yelled: “Martin, we’ve got twelve double pages!”

Since Klapper was closely connected with HIAG, the organization of former SS soldiers, the supposition of many experts was that a lot of the money embezzled by Heidemann had gone into the formation of a new Nazi movement. While Klapper was supplying Heidemann with rare Nazi documents, some of them allegedly stolen from Bormann’s desk in Madrid, Heidemann was apparently pouring out money to assist the neo-Nazis.

This theory has never struck me as very plausible. It also troubled the authorities who were trying to track down the missing marks. The police, and subsequently the trial judge, could never quite accept the idea that Heidemann really believed Bormann to be alive and Goering’s art treasures lying within the grasp of those willing to dig for them.
They pointed out that the neo-Nazi groups in Germany were too weak, both physically and intellectually, to establish and extend a new Hitler image and a fresh Nazi program throughout East and West Germany.

The provocative puzzle about the disappearance of five million marks still eludes solution.
The Conspirators on Trial: The Evidence

Right from the start of the fraud trial in August 1984, it seemed obvious that Kujau and Heidemann, the two featured actors, were going to fracture the world's record for lying under oath. Whatever the verdict, it also appeared clear that the trial was going to be a farce, a real slapstick affair that would enrage the judge and amuse the entire world.

Juergen Steinhoff, Stern's reporter, asked Kujau: "If you could write your sentence, how many years would you give yourself?"
"Oh, six months with probation."
"Not bad. What about Heidemann?"
"For his stupidity I'd give him two years."

Civil Court Number 11 in Hamburg, where the trial was scheduled, had gone soberly about the task of gathering evidence. The bill of indictment against Kujau and Heidemann covered 165 pages. District Attorney Dietrich Klein had confiscated the top secret 316-page report prepared by Stern, hoping to press some driblets of truth out of its flatulent journalese. Klein had also lined up some sixty witnesses, of whom thirty-seven would actually testify—although, as it turned out, many would prove amnesiac or mendacious, not much of an improvement on Kujau and Heidemann. Diogenes would have taken one glance at this court and gone back to Athens.

Was the trial to be, as the press and the district attorney suspected, merely a comedy of crooks starring two con men? Or was there, as Gitta Sereny believed, a sinister motive behind the whole diaries affair, a conspiracy of neo-Nazis who sought to resuscitate the Third Reich and glorify Hitler? Did Kujau act alone, or was he the front man for a gang of hoodlums that operated out of some European capital? Were the journalists and historians who acclaimed the Hitler diaries and the
handwriting experts who authenticated them witlessly trapped, or were they a knowing part of the swindle, inspired by ambition and seeking prestige or money?

In a sense the trial became a public exposure of "The Stern Report," the inflated apologia that forms the basis for Robert Harris's Selling Hitler, the document in which the famed magazine Stern investigated its role in the Hitler diaries fiasco. This report was a mass of explanations and recriminations, now and then touched with admissions of guilt that did not always ring true. In the aftermath of any monumental folly, there are always those who say: "I knew it all along, but I felt I should keep quiet." "The Stern Report" had its quota of those who were wise but did not reveal their wisdom until after the event. Yet all in all, it was a proper and necessary document for Stern to issue. Each of the culpable ones at the Rock of Apes had his say, and in the end most of the guilt was deftly shifted to the demented Heidemann. He was unanimously elected the scapegoat. On the witness stand each of the apologists raised the cup of hemlock but declined to quaff from it.

During the preliminary hearing preceding the trial, Kujau spent much of his time doodling. He was impressed by the district attorney and decided that Klein merited a promotion. So he wrote one, all in Hitler's hand and signed by the Fuehrer. This prank was a harbinger of jocularity to come.

The trial began on Tuesday, August 21, 1984. There was in the huge courtroom a vast concourse of 100 reporters, 150 photographers and television cameramen, and about 60 fortunate spectators, all focused on the bemused Kujau and the cowering Heidemann as they were led into the room. Kujau joked with the press. Heidemann, pale and unshaven, sought out a corner where he could hide from journalists and cameras. Apparently paranoid, he looked away whenever anyone spoke to him.

The trial got off to a lethargic start. After two brief sessions, Chief Judge Hans-Ulrich Schroeder adjourned the proceedings until the following Tuesday to allow a review of a defense petition that the court disqualify itself on the grounds that it had been influenced by press coverage of the case. The silver-haired magistrate of long experience could have answered this petition in one second, but the inevitable answer would look more impartial if he took a week to prepare his negative response. After all, the principal defendants—Kujau, forty-six, and Heidemann, fifty-two—were each facing possible ten-year sentences for fraud. Kujau's mistress, Edith Leiblang, admitting to age forty-three, could pull up to five years for complicity.

When court resumed, there was the evidence for all to see: sixty-two
The Conspirators on Trial: The Evidence

doleful, thin black volumes piled high on a table behind the judge. They no longer had “the sensual look” that had sent waves of ecstasy over Manfred Fischer, chief of Gruner & Jahr, when he caressed them in the belief that they were written by the Fuehrer. They now had a ragged and beggarly air about them.

“Your honor,” observed Kujau, “they look awful now. When I delivered them they looked a lot better.”

“It must be painful to you,” answered Judge Schroeder, “but since then the books have been in many hands.”

Kujau was the first to step into the dock. There was a mischievous glint in his eye as he answered the questions put to him. He bantered with the district attorney, and the spectators who packed the courtroom burst into laughter. Almost every word the forger uttered evoked at least chuckles. Finally Judge Schroeder admonished the spectators: “This is a court, not a theater.”

Kujau was precise, even meticulous, about fixing the exact sums paid him by Heidemann and the day and minute he received them. He was paid for each diary between 40,000 and 70,000 marks, the exact sum depending upon the number of pages (which explains why Kujau’s lines and words were far apart, unlike Hitler’s own compact, often cramped script. Sometimes Kujau was paid in merchandise, he said, such as helmets and officers’ caps. The jury members could not grasp the idea of relics being anything other than “Nazi trash” and continuously misinterpreted Kujau’s Saxon dialect, so that Muetzen [caps] became Muenzen [coins]. The confusion added a festive touch to the proceedings.

The forger told the court about some of his sales to Heidemann. “He bought a Hitler watercolor from me for 12,000 marks.”

Judge Schroeder: “Was that a genuine Hitler or a genuine Kujau?”

Kujau: “That was a genuine Kujau-Hitler, your honor.”

On another occasion, Kujau related, he sold a Nazi dagger to Heidemann for 13,000 marks, which he told the reporter came from a collector in Stuttgart. A few weeks later Heidemann returned it: “Why, you can buy this exact dagger in Spain for 100 marks.” Kujau took the dagger back, he claimed, and wiped the sale out of his account book. Heidemann then tried to even the score by offering to sell Kujau a dagger set with brilliants and diamonds. Kujau said: “That’s American merchandise. The Americans think all these daggers are set with diamonds. The real daggers were made without any precious gems for the SS in the Dachau concentration camp.”

Kujau testified that he was led to believe that the diaries were being prepared for Martin Bormann to use in cleansing his reputation. The
The Hitler Diaries

forger had no knowledge that they were being delivered to Stern. He cleared of all complicity both Edith Lieblang and Heidemann's wife: "Neither knew that we were occupied in forging books." Heidemann squirmed when Kujau insisted that the Stern reporter not only was aware of the forgeries but sometimes suggested what Kujau should write in them. Once, when Heidemann demanded an implausible foray into fiction, Kujau said he had admonished him: "Man, be reasonable, it must be according to the facts."

Not a word that Kujau uttered shed any light on the mystery of the five million marks. (Of course, it was clear to everybody in the courtroom that the battery of six lawyers—two apiece for the alleged criminals Konrad, Gerd, and Edith—was pulling down hefty fees that would devour at least a few million marks.) Only one person in the entire room, Gitta Sereny, the Doña Quixote of the London Sunday Times, believed that the neo-Nazis got a share of the vanished marks. Juergen Steinhoff, the Stern reporter, wrote that Gitta had rattled everybody's nerves. "She goes around explaining her theory of millions hidden with the dark men behind the scenes. Just as Heidemann pursued Martin Bormann, Gitta chases these invisible men throughout the world. But she's never found a single one." 2

After six days, Kujau stepped down from the witness box, and Gerd Heidemann took his place. The contrast between the two felons was remarkable. Kujau—witty, urbane, full of whimsy, puckish—candidly admitted his fakery. He played the lovable con artist. Heidemann—dull, plodding, monotonous—spoke in a low, at times almost inaudible voice that frustrated both reporters and spectators. He was a human data bank. Facts were his métier, and he recited them almost by rote. When he tried to be funny, like Kujau, he fetched sporadic laughter from the courtroom—not at his jokes but at himself. He recounted in boring detail the facts of his boring life: his youth as an illegitimate child, the camps he lived in, elementary school, studies as an electrician, experiences in radio, photographic courses, freelancing for Hamburg newspapers, and, at last, his assignments with Stern. He droned on interminably for seven days, a faithful helpmate to Morpheus, while spectators struggled against the desire to slumber and even Judge Schroeder appeared to nod. The elderly magistrate occasionally roused himself to utter a mild reprimand: "Please come to the point, Herr Heidemann."

And Heidemann's lawyers objected: "Herr Heidemann cannot make his points clear unless he is allowed to speak at length."

Heidemann chronicled the story of his search for the illegitimate son of Chou En-lai in Göttingen. He had found the birth certificate, but
the name on it was Ling-gui Chou. Dismayed, Heidemann consulted Stern chief Henri Nannen. Nannen replied: “Chou is Chou,” thus informing Heidemann to proceed with the story, even though it was a lie. (This accusation by Heidemann, however, was not substantiated by the birth certificate published by Stern in 1954, in which the name Chou was not mentioned.)

As Heidemann began to ramble, his tales became more and more unbelievable. He related, for instance, the story of the lance with which Jesus Christ was pierced as he hung on the cross. Martin Bormann, explained Heidemann, discovered this historic treasure in the hands of a butcher in Buenos Aires.

Heidemann was convinced that the ashes of Hitler and Eva Braun, both of whom were partially cremated in the chancellery yard as the Russians entered Berlin, were preserved in urns. He contended that Kujau had the crazy idea of exhibiting them in Heidemann’s Nazi museum on Milch Street in Hamburg. The sacred ashes would be placed behind a great bronze door. When the door was opened, a light would fall upon the urns and cause them to flood the room with radiance. Other witnesses reported that this was Heidemann’s own idea, and as usual, Kujau had a comeback: “If you’ve got the urns, Herr Heidemann, may I borrow two spoonfuls of Hitler’s ashes?”

Heidemann admitted that he and several experts on Hitler had discovered discrepancies and inconsistencies in the forged diaries. He recalled that in May 1981 “I read several pages of the diaries to my friend SS General Mohnke. The pages mentioned the Leibstandarte [Hitler’s SS bodyguard]. Mohnke said to me: ‘There was no Leibstandarte at this period.’” When Heidemann called this anachronism to the attention of Thomas Walde, chief of contemporary history at Stern, Walde observed: “I’ve found some contradictions, too.” But, Heidemann explained to the judge, “we were so utterly engrossed with Hitler and the diaries that we thought the Fuehrer’s ideas were just running ahead of events.”

Eventually, said Heidemann, in the spring of 1983 Kujau delivered by mistake a duplicate of the first diary he had forged, a diary that covered the period between January and July 1935. The white-haired jurist could not refrain from asking, “How is it you and Walde were not curious about this?” “Oh,” replied Heidemann, “we thought that by Hitler anything was possible.”

By this time the trial, six weeks old, had excited tremendous interest in Germany. Kujau had the popular support of the German people. All the world loves a rascal who can bamboozle the bigwigs of a great corporation like Gruner & Jahr, and Kujau’s quips had made him the
favorite of the press. They addressed him as “Conny” and used the familiar *du* (thou, the singular of *Sie*, you), employed by Germans in speaking to intimates.

“Hey, Conny,” said a reporter, “how’d you get started in the forgery racket?”

“I forged a recommendation for my own promotion when I was a member of the East German Young Communist League.”

The jolly, almost festive atmosphere of the trial had lifted the spirits of a nation burdened with economic and political problems. It seemed incredible that the greatest tyrant in history who virtually destroyed Europe should be the subject for laughter, yet the absurd veneration for the Third Reich relics that many reporters alluded to as “Nazi trash” appeared to delight the Germans.

Besides, at any given time, one of the two main defendants was lying or counterlying. They agreed on nothing. This gave the trial suspense and piquancy. When Stern announced the great find of the diaries and London *Sunday Times* expert Hugh Trevor-Roper proclaimed them authentic, Kujau recalled, “I thought I had been hit by a train. I knew I had been swindled.” Heidemann, of course, contended that he was the one who had been swindled, duped by Kujau into believing the diaries were authentic.

On September 27, 1984, the prosecutor gave the courtroom, suitably darkened for the occasion, a slide projection view of Heidemann’s sumptuous apartment in one of Hamburg’s ritziest neighborhoods. The defendant himself described the decorations: rare Nazi steins, military caps, shoe trees that had belonged to Hermann Goering, a swastika banner that had hung from Hitler’s opera box, and other souvenirs of the Nazi era. In a slide picturing Heidemann’s bathroom, an article of clothing was clearly visible.

“What’s that?” asked Dietrich Klein, the prosecutor.

“Those are Idi Amin’s underpants,” said Heidemann. “I hung them there just for laughs.”

As Heidemann continued his monotonous testimony, his somnolent voice began to tell on the courtroom audience. One juror fell asleep and had to be replaced by a substitute. Heidemann’s defense attorney, Reinhard Daum, had the difficult task of making his client appear plausible. When a slide of Heidemann’s bedroom showed pictures of the Fuehrer over the bed and, on the writing table, a special Hitler flag and a photograph of the Fuehrer’s loge at the opera, the prosecutor alluded to this array of “Nazi trash” as being in bad taste. Daum replied: “I think that attorney Klein is the only one in this court who
regards these things as tasteless." Actually, however, the entire court­room was appalled and disgusted by the exhibition of Hitler fetishism.

As the testimony snaked along, Juergen Steinhoff noted: "Heidemann’s tales sometimes carry psychopathic undertones." Steinhoff was perhaps alluding to a story about Medard Klapper. The informer, spy, and alleged friend of Bormann, Heidemann testified, had once called him in a state of great excitement to report that he’d made a fabulous find in the bathroom of a friend. Klapper had leafed through an unknown diary of Hitler and discovered a remarkable statement by the Fuehrer that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross but was exhumed from his grave and his wounds treated by his friends. Much later the resuscitated Jesus died a natural death. This bit of Klapper claptrap so impressed Heidemann that he had paid 210,000 marks for the diary. As he confessed on the witness stand: "Until that moment I was a faithful Catholic. Now I am utterly confused."

While Heidemann flirted with lunacy, his defense attorney, a skilled lawyer, also seemed to become paranoid. During a break in the seventh and final day of droning Heidemann testimony, Steinhoff went into the court canteen for coffee and brought back a cup for Heidemann (who was not permitted to leave the courtroom). "Defense lawyer Daum gave me a doubtful look," wrote Steinhoff. "Was he afraid I’d put knockout drops in Heidemann’s coffee?" Nor was Daum the only one. In the coffee shop, Steinhoff noted, Edith Lieblang’s lawyers, Pieter Koenig from Stuttgart and Walter Roesler from Hamburg, insisted on a table close to the back wall so that nobody could look over their shoulders.

As Heidemann’s testimony ground to its torturous close, Kujau’s lawyer Kurt Groenewold announced to the press that he would summon Rupert Murdoch to the witness stand. Groenewold had, in fact, spoken with me on June 14, 1984, about getting Murdoch to testify. "Quite impossible," I had said. "You’ll never be able to contact him, let alone get him to testify."

"I’ll subpoena him."

At this bit of bravado I laughed. "You don’t seem to understand that Murdoch is inaccessible. He’s surrounded by a defensive cordon of aides and secretaries who fend off pests of all types, including summons servers."

At Kurt’s insistence, however, I called my friends Joey and Cindy Adams, both of whom are writers for and close friends of Rupert Murdoch. Cindy explained the routine necessary to reach Murdoch. First I had to be screened in succession by two assistants, whose names
Cindy gave me. Then I would be allowed to speak to Murdoch's secretary. I proceeded as directed and within fifteen minutes was chatting with Murdoch's private secretary. "Mr. Murdoch's in Europe right now," she told me, "but I will be speaking with him tomorrow and will inform you and Mr. Groenewold of his decision in the matter of appearing as a witness."

The next day I called her direct, as she'd asked. She said: "Mr. Murdoch does not wish to discuss the Hitler diaries and told me: 'I will not comment on the diaries and under no circumstances will I appear as a witness in the trial of the forger.'" I gave this reply, verbatim, to Kurt. He appeared then to accept the fact that the famous publisher was intractable in the matter.

Groenewold also tried to get me as a witness. During the day we spent together in New York, I had urged Kurt to throw the entire onus on Stern and Gruner & Jahr who, through Heidemann, had goaded Kujau into creating forgeries never intended for publication. In this general line of defense he agreed. At the trial his strategy was to show that the forger had been a tool in a much larger fraud committed by Gruner & Jahr, and that the publishing house was aware that the diaries were fakes and published them only to create a fresh image of Adolf Hitler as a good guy. Kurt petitioned the judge to let me appear because I had stated in April 1983, to representatives of both Newsweek and Gruner & Jahr, that the diaries were forged. I was willing to testify, but the court rejected Groenewold's request.

Like his whimsical client, Kurt Groenewold delighted the press during the trial. The wild hair encircling a bald spot like a monk's tonsure and the intellectual eyes that shone like tiny flashlights reflected his unconventional approach to life. During every court recess he was surrounded by reporters who peppered him with questions, most of which he fielded with seeming abandon.

In contrast to Heidemann, who apparently blurted out everything he knew as well as plenty of things he didn't know, the next witness, Herr Doctor of Philosophy Eberhart Jaekel, was an elusive old codger who turned out to be the original absentminded professor. Groenewold bombarded him with questions. But Jaekel—professor of modern history, director of the Historical Institute at the University of Stuttgart, and author of the standard work with the all-embracing title Hitler: Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen (Hitler's Complete Notes from 1905–1924) (completed over a ten-year period with the aid of his research staff) remembered little or nothing. Understandably, Professor Jaekel made his appearance in court with great reluctance. Not only had he authenticated and published Kujau's forgeries of the youthful Hitler, but he
had sold many of them to Stern, together with early Hitler drawings also created by Kujau. Right from the start of the interrogation, Jaeckel displayed incredible memory lapses. In response to many of the questions he spread his open hands and declared, "My memory tells me nothing of this."

Groenewold: "When you first saw the diary of 1935 on September 21, 1979, at the home of Fritz Stiefel, did you ask Dr. August Priesack to read the handwritten entries of Hitler, or was it Konrad Kujau who read them to you personally?"

Jaeckel: "I can't remember." After all, he added, the diary was written in 1935, and his work covered only the years 1905 to 1924.

The judge interrupted: "A single diary rarely comes alone." To which Holgar K. Schroeder, one of Heidemann's attorneys, added: "It could have been Hitler's last diary; he might have started in 1905."

Jaeckel: "Naturally, but I can't recall anything about it."

Hadn't Jaeckel been electrified by the discovery of the diary? And wouldn't he have resigned his professorship and gone on a lecture tour around the world with the diaries? Jaeckel didn't remember his reactions. Finally he admitted: "I had doubts about the genuineness of the diaries, right from the start. I am a scientist, and I doubt everything before I am convinced to the contrary."

This statement from the man with a bad memory at once provoked another question. If the professor doubted everything, how did it happen that of the 694 notes of Hitler and 203 "authenticated" examples of handwriting offered in Jaeckel's $100-per-copy volume, at least 76 were Kujau forgeries?

"Well," said the professor, "all the documents were checked for anachronisms. I didn't find any." In fact, he continued, he found the early papers of Hitler accurate and realistic. For instance, Hitler recorded the rule exhibited on a telephone board: "Don't talk too long; others are waiting." Could anything be more historically convincing? That wasn't all. The alert soldier Hitler, as a dispatch carrier constantly exposed to enemy fire, noted that small shell holes do not give enough cover. The future battle strategist whose armies would one day overrun Europe also observed that having little defense as a dispatch rider, he would take along as a shield the cover of his cooking pot.

Judge Schroeder could not refrain from asking: "Is that sort of thing all that's necessary to prove the authenticity of a work?"

Jaeckel: "Nothing else will be demanded from a careful scientist before publication."

On page 1235 of Jaeckel's historical masterpiece, Hitler, alias Kujau, described the famous Beer Hall Putsch in Munich: "I had finished
dressing in my frock coat [Gehrock] and had the Iron Cross around my neck." As Fritz Stiefel, the noted collector of artifacts of the Third Reich, owned a Hitler frock coat, the judge asked Jaeckel: "Have you seen the frock coat in Stiefel's collection?"

Jaeckel: "Yes, I saw the collection, but I was interested in two-dimensional objects only, and my recollection is that I was not interested in three-dimensional objects, and besides that, a frock coat has no scientific value."

Groenewold: "Did you drive Herr Kujau back to Stuttgart after that visit to Stiefel's house?"

Jaeckel: "I can't remember. But if it says so in the paper, I think that's correct."

Groenewold: "Do you remember the subject of the conversation between you and Kujau during the drive back to Stuttgart?"

Jaeckel: "Unfortunately not." And the professor added in a solemn, mournful tone: "The human memory is a very weak mechanism."

Judge Schroeder murmured loud enough for the back row of spectators to hear: "It depends upon whose memory." Kujau's memory was fortunately still sharp and clear. He stated that Professor Jaeckel talked only about the diaries during the car ride.

As the testimony continued, it turned out that Jaeckel had supplemented his income by selling the prepublication rights to some poems by Kujau-Hitler only a few days before his opus appeared in October 1980. In its issue No. 44 (1980), Stern had published "Der Kamerad," a poem allegedly by Hitler but subsequently regarded as very suspect.

Groenewold: "Did you warn Stern magazine that the authenticity had been questioned?"

Jaeckel: "No."

Groenewold: "Did you refund any part of the 3,000 marks that Stern paid you after the Federal Department of Criminology informed you that the poem was a forgery?"

Jaeckel: "No. I paid Kujau 2,000 marks, and the rest went to cover the cost of my phone calls with Stern magazine."

Perhaps the most unpleasant disclosure came when Jaeckel was questioned about his television appearance on April 27, 1983, three days after Maser and I had publicly condemned the diaries as forgeries and two days after Trevor-Roper had retracted his authentication. By this time almost the entire world had recognized that the diaries were a fraud. Jaeckel had said during the television interview: "Probably the diaries are forged." The fact is that Jaeckel knew where the fabricator, in hiding from the police, could be found.

Groenewold: "Why did you remain silent?"
Jaeckel: “Because I had given my word to Fritz Stiefel and Konrad Kujau not to talk.”

The general impression in the court was that Jaeckel did not want the police to find Kujau. After all, the title picture on his strictly scientific work was a reproduction of Hitler’s handwritten acceptance of his membership in the German Worker’s Party on October 19, 1919, a dramatic document indited in Kujau’s finest Gothic script.

As Professor Jaeckel was about to step down from the witness box, he said: “I swear I have told nothing but the truth.” What he should have said was: “I swear I have told nothing.”

The next witness to enter the dock was Thomas Walde, who had been Heidemann’s immediate boss. Walde it was who had negotiated with Stern’s directors for the purchase of the diaries without the knowledge of Gruner & Jahr’s management. Walde’s instant impression on the court and the spectators was that he was a sly slicker. An unidentified reporter from the Sueddeutsche newspaper, quoted in Stern, wrote: “No forger in the world could hope to have more magnificent partners for his dark business than Walde and Heidemann, who fell from heaven for the forger Kujau.” Walde was never incarcerated, despite the strong suspicion that he had known the diaries were forged. Yet Heidemann, on the basis of no greater suspicion, sat in a cell for almost four months.

Walde testified that he had learned from the Federal Court of Criminology at the very start that one page of the diaries was regarded as highly suspect. The court of criminology had asked for permission to examine the page by chemical analysis. Walde at first refused but later permitted the examination of two pages. When asked why the discovery of the diaries had been kept secret from the higher-ups at Gruner & Jahr, Walde answered: “The diaries were coming from East Germany, and the danger of loss of life had to be minimized.”

Walde was unable to remember whether Heidemann had brought the first diaries back with him from Stuttgart after he had flown there to meet “Konrad Fischer,” with 200,000 marks in his briefcase. In fact, Walde had so many memory lapses that Judge Schroeder observed with asperity: “There is regrettably little you can remember.”

Walde did confess that he had obtained Kujau’s secret telephone number but failed to provide it to Stern officials when the suspicion that the diaries were fake got hotter and hotter. The court also accused Walde and Heidemann of providing handwriting experts with documents that were forged to compare with other forged documents, rather than originals written by Hitler. To this serious accusation,
Walde offered a curt answer: "Well, we had a disposition toward authenticity."

The appearance of Gerd Schulte-Hillen, chairman and managing director of the publishing giant Gruner & Jahr, drew the wrath of Judge Schroeder as he began his testimony. When Schulte-Hillen casually mentioned the manner in which Stern planned to make a financial killing on the diaries, the judge exploded in a verbal blast that jolted the soporific courtroom from its afternoon lethargy: "Stolen goods! Plunderers! You pull the diaries out of a plane wreck and then you fence them!"

This amazing outburst from the quietly sarcastic jurist accidentally encapsulated the whole nature of the trial. It was, in a sense, a trial that involved bizarre events that never happened (the diaries had not, of course, come from a crashed plane) and powerful people who moved mysteriously behind the scenes in roles never made clear.

The judge's anger also marked a turn of events in favor of the courtroom jester, Konrad Kujau, already a favorite with the spectators and the press. Even Fritz Stiefel, who had bought scores of fakes from Kujau, looked without anger on the man who had swindled him. Testifying earlier in the trial he had bought "kilos of bogus Hitler writings" from Kujau, he had added, "I am not at all angry with him, since I now have one of the biggest collections of forgeries, and they are worth something."

Most important, Judge Schroeder's flare-up marked a tactical victory for Kurt Groenewold, as it shifted a good part of the blame for the fraud to the firm of Gruner & Jahr and to Stern. The testimony of Schulte-Hillen established clearly that Gruner & Jahr had been remiss in failing to examine the diaries more carefully. And the firm was at fault, certainly, in blindfolding its eyes to the question of securing a firm copyright before selling reprint rights.

Schulte-Hillen stated in court that Heidemann had convinced him that the diaries were genuine. The chairman of the board had accepted Heidemann's oath: "I swear on the lives of my children that the diaries are authentic." Said Schulte-Hillen: "I have children myself and this oath made an impression on me."

Under fierce, almost irate, probing by the judge, Schulte-Hillen became, or pretended to become, very confused over the business arrangements with Heidemann. Apparently, the private contracts with the crack reporter were so involved that nobody quite understood them. The only copyrights that the publishing house had acquired for the diaries were an agreement with Werner Maser (as administrator of Hitler's will) and a devious arrangement between Heidemann and the
West German Federal Archive, neither of which specifically mentioned the Hitler diaries. Schulte-Hillen testified: "We knew we were on thin ice, but we thought we could skate on it." He also noted that neither Rupert Murdoch nor Newsweek magazine had bothered to look into the copyright situation: "All the problems were over money."

Judge Schroeder's silver eyebrows arched when he discussed questions of authenticity with the exalted chief of Gruner & Jahr. The venerable magistrate simply could not believe that Schulte-Hillen had accepted without question Heidemann's assertion that he owned the pistol with which Hitler shot himself.

When the judge heard that Stern accepted as genuine a Heidemann-owned telegram of congratulations purportedly written by Hitler to Mussolini he could not keep the sarcasm out of his voice as he asked: "Do you really think that the Fuehrer had time in the Reich chancellery to sit down and write out a good-luck telegram with his own hand?"

In the sixth month of the trial one of the villains of the piece, the man who had boasted so arrogantly about making the scoop of the century, took the stand: Peter Koch, forty-six, former chief editor of Stern, bullnecked and bullheaded, with a massive face sans expression save for an occasional sneer. Now, however, he appeared contrite. The man who had dubbed dissenting historians "Ayatollahs of the Archives" and had hurled curses at his associates during television discussions now cast away his Teutonic infallibility and became a mortal in the dock. He was like those cornered Nazis at Nuremberg, meek and humble.

From the first, Koch admitted, he had been duped by the crazy Heidemann. They had been very close, he said. Yes, he should have asked Heidemann about the source of the diaries. He was at fault. He would take all the blame for the gigantic fiasco. He had joined the others in their secret plans. His flight to New York had brought him an awareness that he faced the total ruin of his life as a journalist.

Again, the judge embarked on a peroration on Gruner & Jahr's impropriety in selling the rights of diaries stolen from a crashed plane to other publishing houses. "How can you sell rights that you don't own but that belong to Adolf Hitler and his family?" Variations of this theme became a leitmotiv that the old jurist continued to play. Koch denied that he had taken any part in selling the foreign rights. This was the job of the business executives of the magazine. No mention was made of the fact that Koch had received a bribe ("severance pay") of over $1 million to keep his mouth shut about the true events that took place in the editorial department of Stern.

As the Erich von Stroheim look-alike finished eating his dish of
crow, Dietrich Klein congratulated him on his "attitude of honesty," a new twist in this trial. He had given the court the appearance of courage, since he did not try to scrub away his guilt. Yet to me this man epitomized the remark so often made about the oldtime Junkers: "They're either at your throat or at your feet."

One by one the Rock of Apes had paraded its denizens in the courtroom. Almost the last to appear, late in February 1985, was the elderly publisher of Stern. The huge courtroom was bursting with spectators and cameramen as Henri Nannen, seventy-one, entered to testify against his former employee, the pixilated Gerd Heidemann. Nannen, who had charged Heidemann with fraud, was aware of his importance in the courtroom. He knew that hundreds of eyes were upon him, and he planned to give the performance of his life.

Judge Schroeder was deferential to the noted publisher: "May we be allowed to call you a professional journalist?"

Nannen: "Better put me down as a social security recipient."

Nannen explained to the bench the function of the publisher of a big magazine: "You know, your honor, a publisher is like the gentleman in a black suit who goes from table to table in a restaurant, asking his guests if they enjoyed their dinner. He must salute each of his customers." Later in his testimony Nannen again compared himself to a restaurateur: "In my job as official greeter, I neglected my duty to look into the kitchen also, to make sure everything was clean."

Under oath, the publisher of the most popular and widely read periodical in Germany said:

I was furious when I learned that the chief editors went behind my back to buy the diaries. Walde and Heidemann and Dr. Manfred Fischer created a conspiracy of silence. I can only laugh about the whole business—just another case of checkbook journalism. Don't Adenauer and Kissinger try to make money with their memoirs? And they don't have to pay a cent for their stories. I never cared about the diaries. I never had a single volume in my hands. I didn't want to dominate my editors and sit on their necks. My editors told me that the authenticity was certified by some experts. As I wasn't quite sure about the literary quality, I used the "Nannen secretary test." I gave the chapters to a forty-two-year-old woman to read. She found them interesting but wasn't aware that they were chapters from the Hitler diaries.

Nannen stated that he had asked Walde for the source of the Hitler diaries and Walde had pretended to search for the name he already knew. "As a chief editor," said Nannen, "I never allowed anything to go into print if I didn't know the source. Something else bothered me.
Walde furiously resisted submitting the diaries to a reputable historian for authentication. Not a historian who had read everything, but someone who knew the whole history by heart and had it in his bones.” Even authentic writings and notes, he said, needed to be organized and put in their historic perspective.

Gesie Froemming, assistant to Kurt Groenewold and a bright, attractive attorney, asked why Nannen had accused Heidemann of fraud. Nannen’s reply, like many of his remarks, paraphrased an old adage: “When the house is on fire and someone knows where it started and does not say where, and remains silent, then he should also be regarded as a criminal.”

Froemming: “Should one apply this remark to Dr. Walde?”
Nannen: “Yes.”

Shorty after the Stern disaster became public, Nannen had written: “Whoever strikes must be strong enough to receive strikes.” In the witness chair, he struck back. Other witnesses had testified and taken blows until they were knocked out. Not Nannen. He overflowed with bitterness and castigated his enemies at random. “If the FAZ [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung] makes an incorrect statement, then everybody says it’s a printing error. But when Stern slips up, then everybody says: ‘Typical magazine trick.’”

When Judge Schroeder tried to curb the feisty witness, Nannen made fun of him. Kurt Groenewold asked, “What kind of a researcher was Heidemann?” Nannen answered, “The opposite of Judge Schroeder, who tries so hard to calm me down. Heidemann is a generous, open-minded investigator, a thorough researcher who compulsively gathers everything.”

Groenewold: “Do you think Heidemann is a Nazi, considering that he has a vast archive of Third Reich material?”

Groenewold: “What would you have said if you had heard Heidemann telling Martin Bormann on the telephone, ‘Martin, we’ve got twelve double pages.’”
Nannen: “I’d have jumped on the table.”

“And if you’d heard that Heidemann was being accepted by the distinguished inner circle of Bormann?”
Nannen: “I’d have crawled under the table.”
The Conspirators on Trial: The Verdict

"Everytime I come into this courtroom," observed Pieter Koenig, the jovial lawyer for Edith Lieblang, "I look at Kujau and Heidemann and think that five million marks are unaccounted for. We still don’t know which one of them has the money."

By this time the lawyers had harangued the judge and jury for ten months. The jury had listened patiently, and thirty-seven witnesses had sat in the witness box and testified, most of them deftly skirting the truth. As the marathon neared its hundredth day with no hint yet as to who absconded with the missing millions, the judge banged his gavel for an important pronouncement: he had a stomachache and would adjourn the court for a brief holiday.

When court resumed, district attorney Dietrich Klein and his assistant asked that tough sentences be handed out to Kujau and Heidemann—six years to the forger, seven years to the reporter. In a calm, dispassionate tone, Klein said: "This is not a trial of Stern magazine. It’s a trial of Kujau and Heidemann, both of whom have cruelly injured Stern. The belief that Stern should have uncovered the fraud quickly is not true. Everybody was fooled: famous experts, skilled scientists, and, we must admit it, even authorities in the state archives." If such competent people had failed to recognize the Hitler diaries as fakes, how could one reproach the journalists or the chiefs of the publishing house?

On the other hand, continued Klein, Gerd Heidemann got many warning signals that should have tipped him off that the diaries were bogus. For instance, Heidemann’s friend and witness at his marriage, General Wilhelm Mohnke, an SS officer in the Leibstandarte, had noted that the diaries alluded to the “Fuehrer’s guard” before it existed. Otto Guensche, Hitler’s former adjutant, had said it was out of the question
that Hitler had written a diary. And on March 28, 1983—four weeks before the first publication of diary pages in Stern—Louis Ferdinand Werner, the scientific director of the federal department of criminology had told Heidemann that optical light spaces in the paper revealed that it was manufactured after the war. Not one of these adverse reports was passed on to the Gruner & Jahr executives or to Stern. Instead, said the district attorney, Heidemann kept silent and calmly cashed another diary payment check for 600,000 marks.

Klein concluded his indictment of Heidemann with a recital of the reporter's fiscal peculations. From January 1981 until his arrest in May 1983, Heidemann had blown in riotous living and extravagant purchases four million marks, for 2.4 million of which he could not satisfactorily explain the source. Heidemann claimed that he earned this additional money by selling his "Hitler trash." Why then should the taxpayers have to lay out the expenses for this mammoth trial? Heidemann and Kujau should mortgage all their property—which Klein called "the immobilia of the rich defendants"—to pay the court costs.

Heidemann's lawyers asked for acquittal on the grounds that Heidemann believed the diaries to be genuine. As a reporter, he knew nothing of money matters. He handed over the 9.34 million marks to Kujau, except for 20,000 paid to Werner Maser, the administrator of Hitler's estate. Heidemann was a victim of Kujau and forced into lying by Gruner & Jahr to protect the identity of the seller. As for the money that Heidemann spent on houses in Spain, sumptuous apartments, and so on, it had come from the private sale of Hitler paintings for 600,000 marks and from a mysterious sponsor who had put up 1.4 million marks as a down payment on Heidemann's mapped-out plan to search for hidden Nazi treasures.

At this point defense lawyer Holger K. Schroeder started to expatiate on the hidden treasures of the world, including those of the Titanic. The jurors' eyes glazed, and they tried to keep from grinning as the entire courtroom succumbed to chuckles and laughter. Looking straight into the faces of the bemused spectators, Schroeder declared: "Anyone who would suspect Heidemann of telling a lie just to defend himself certainly lacks 'intellectual mobility.'"

Richard Daum continued his associate's ludicrous appeal on behalf of Heidemann. Daum described his hirsute and bespectacled client as "a scapegoat trapped in the elements of a show trial." So carried away was the lawyer that he even asked that Stern's "scapegoat" be awarded financial compensation for the time he spent behind bars. Little smiles of skepticism flickered over the faces of the courtroom spectators. After
all, even the slowest wit in the enormous chamber had to wonder how Heidemann had carved himself so luxurious a way of life, including two sumptuous apartments in Hamburg and two villas in Spain, all from his modest Stern salary of $35,000 a year. Heidemann had further injured his cause by introducing into evidence a series of telephone and coat-pocket tape recordings of his conversations with Kujau in which, whenever the conversation so much as veered in the direction of money, the recorder had been shut off.

The judge must have striven mightily to suppress his laughter during the comic defense of Heidemann, ironically one of the richest men in the great chamber, one who had gathered his wealth at the expense of many of the witnesses. Admittedly, Heidemann was demented. A Nazi to the very pit of his sternum, he apparently had no more scruples than his fellow Third Reichers who four decades earlier had ravished Europe. His grim political connections gave a morbid undercurrent to what was otherwise a festive "Trial by Jury" in which liars and counterliars took turns assaulting the truth, a jesting forger provided comic interludes even in the witness box, and a monumental thief played the injured innocent and asked the state to reimburse him for the time spent in prison.

The cagey Kurt Groenewold, scion of a wealthy Hamburg family who over the years had produced lawyers noted for defending unpopular causes, had the sympathy of the judge as he prefaced his summation in defense of Kujau with a jocular account of how justice was administered in ancient Japan. In Japanese courts, Groenewold said, it was once the custom that all the exceptionally stupid victims of those on trial be flogged by the judge before the verdict. Were this the case here, suggested Groenewold, Judge Hans-Ulrich Schroeder would have a lot of work to do. Not only the editors and executives at Gruner & Jahr and Stern magazine but many professors, doctors, and experts in history and handwriting would have to be drubbed soundly for their stupidity.

Groenewold began his defense by observing that the responsibility for the entire fraud must fall upon the owners of Stern. Gruner & Jahr was a firm hungry for money; the publishers wanted to build up their magazine's circulation and reap a harvest of marks from the sale of republication rights to the diaries. Even worse, they wanted to present a sympathetic portrait of Hitler to the world. To Stern, the question of whether or not the diaries were genuine was immaterial. Groenewold turned to the prosecuting attorney as he spoke: "Do you really believe, Herr Klein, that Kujau would have written those diaries and that Kujau would have been offered so much money and been pressured so much
if Gruner & Jahr had been a wine company or a publisher of scientific works? The truth is that the diaries would never have materialized if Gruner & Jahr hadn’t wanted to publish sensational articles no matter what the price.”

The defense lawyer then described a meeting on January 27, 1981, between Heidemann, Manfred Fischer, and three other executives as the start of a plot to work out a strategy for obtaining bogus copyrights for the diaries and to make sure that Stern’s management would not discover that they were forgeries. Groenewold did not contend that Fischer and the other senior officials were aware that the diaries were fake. He simply declared that whether they were or not was immaterial to them.

Groenewold’s apologia for Kujau was startlingly similar to that used by Vrain Lucas’s attorney, who contended that Lucas had enriched history by his forgeries and also supplied the wants of his client. Groenewold argued speciously that Kujau was merely a dealer in the dubious world of Nazi memorabilia where customers were often satisfied with fakes or replicas. “Money,” declared Groenewold, as he descended deeper into sophistry, “was not the primary motivation, but rather the delight Kujau took in his art, the pleasure of transforming oneself into someone else, and the joy in showing this off.”

The jury, as expected, reached a quick verdict on all three defendants: guilty as charged. The judge was ready on July 8, 1985, to announce his sentences. He had heard, with incredible patience and only occasional outbursts, the testimony of thirty-seven witnesses during ninety-four sessions.

As the jammed courtroom awaited a decision, Judge Hans-Ulrich Schroeder prefaced his sentencing with an oral flogging of Stern. He made no reference to the law or statutes governing fraud and conspiracy. None was necessary. Instead, the silver-haired magistrate directed most of his acerbic remarks at those who were legally innocent but whose moral culpability was obvious to everyone in the room. Without openly concurring with the defense lawyer’s thesis that Gruner & Jahr were guilty of a massive fraud in which Kujau was merely an accessory, and that the management of Stern did not care about the diaries’ authenticity but sought only a circulation boost at any price, the judge appeared to extend his sympathy to the two main defendants. Obviously frustrated that the law did not permit the prosecution of many who were guilty, Judge Schroeder declared: “Stern acted with such naïveté and negligence that it was virtually an accomplice in the fraud. They stood naked [sic] in acting as though the diaries were actually
real. Their top management failed to stop the countdown to publication even after they were told by government experts that more tests were needed to verify the authenticity of the single page Stern had provided for their tests.”

The judge then read an entry from one of the diaries in which Kujau-Hitler wrote that he had promoted seventy officers, all of them listed by name, to the rank of marshal. “Not only were the facts wrong,” said his honor, “but who would ever write down the names of seventy generals in his diary?” Such an error should have alerted the editors at Stern to the swindle. Yet “an unshakeable belief arose,” continued the judge, describing the petrified mentalities of the managers and editors who were involved in Operation Green Vault, “and this blocked further thinking. The countdown was never interrupted. It went on.”

Judge Schroeder condemned the “bunker mentality” at Stern that prevented the editors from making even a routine check of the diaries. “Stern eagerly grasped at Herr Kujau’s forgeries. Kujau himself did not run into any obstacles. He did not need to waste criminal energy. The negligence of Stern has persuaded me to soften the sentences against the two main co-conspirators.”

The judge then alluded to what he called the two big problems in the case. “The biggest mystery is what happened to the millions that vanished into thin air. We can only guess. And did Herr Heidemann know that Kujau was forging the diaries, and if so, did he help him?”

Looking at the sanctimonious Heidemann, the judge said: “I cannot accept Herr Heidemann’s claim that the 700,000 [marks] for which he cannot account represents funds advanced to him by wealthy collectors of Nazi material. I am convinced that Herr Heidemann made off with these funds, plus the 800,000 he was paid—1,500,000 marks in all—and I regret that his guilt was not established beyond question. Herr Heidemann can be punished only for what was definitely proved.” Of Kujau, the magistrate merely observed: “Herr Kujau pocketed 900,000.”

As the judge paused before handing down the sentences, a great crush of reporters and photographers welled up against the bench. Kujau appealed for order: “Come on, boys! I want to hear my sentence.”

Without any reference to the provisions of the law that had guided him in his decision, the judge proceeded to the sentences: For Heidemann, four years and eight months in prison; for Kujau, four years and six months; for Edith Lieblang, eight months of probation. Judge
Schroeder also ruled that the convicted men be set free pending appeals of the judgment, which could require another year.

Kujau said he had expected a guilty verdict: "I wrote the things, didn't I?" Then he smiled and observed to reporters: "Now I'm going to write a book on Hitler's relationship with women."
“Hitler is the one creature all respectable people can hate without qualms of conscience,” wrote Russell Baker in his column “Sunday Observer.”

If you are servicing the masses, Hitler means big money, and the prospect of that gaudy profit makes wise men abandon sense and taste. The Hitler diary hoax, which saw worldly, cynical editors easily gulled by the crudest forgery, illustrates the point. There are bitter ironies here for those who fought so hard to destroy him. While his betters make a new generation yawn, Hitler, as a rare and invaluable hate object, threatens to become the enduring symbol of the century.1

If Hitler is, as Baker suggests, the symbol of the century, then perhaps this explains why the media succumbed to a contagious madness the moment the discovery of the Hitler diaries was announced. Within a few hours, a childish fake exploded into a great renaissance in Hitlerism. An obscure 1971 taped drama called The Death of Adolf Hitler was exhumed from the files by the owner, Michael Gould, who merely with a few telephone calls cleared a total of twenty-six markets, all eager to cash in on the new interest in Hitler stirred up by the supposed discovery of the long-lost diaries. Variety announced: “Among the buyers of the Hitler drama, which Gould will make available for airing next week, are the seven Metromedia stations, the four Post-Newsweek stations, the five Outlet stations, the six Gannett stations, three Hearst stations and KPLR-TV, St. Louis.”2

Tom Paxton, composer of topical folk songs, instantly whipped out a Hitler diary song. The publisher William Morrow, which had on the griddle a fictional work by Richard Hugo, called The Hitler Diaries,
quickly served it up. The book wasn’t as exciting as the fakes, despite the fact that the characters in the novel were scheming right and left to get their hands on the fictional diaries. According to New York Times reviewer Peter Andrews, the novel’s diaries “read more like lost pages from the Kama Sutra, contradicting, without a word of explanation, everything we know about Hitler. Then, although men are prepared to murder for the diaries, no one, including the publisher who is coughing up the $10 million [for the manuscript], has time to read them.”

Less than a week after the Kujau diaries burst upon an amazed world, almost every unimaginative author in America had cooked up a book proposal for a lurid novel or play or television scenario about some shocking phase of Hitler’s life or Nazi bestiality. Beautiful Jewesses found themselves in the evil clutches of predatory SS men; Hitler’s plans to drop the first atomic bomb were foiled; Bormann was back from his retreat in the Swiss Alps or his farm in Argentina with new plans for death camps. The television studios were entombed under mountains of scripts. Literary agents were bombarded with enough material for the next thousand years.

One of the first publishers to realize the checkbook potential of Stern’s discovery was newspaper mogul Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch’s ambition, according to his enemy Judith Densen-Gerber, founder of Odyssey House, is to be a kingmaker: “Murdoch wants to put a man, his man, in the White House,” she told me.

Murdoch is described by his biographer, Michael Leapman, erstwhile American-based journalist for the London Times, as “a ruthless, single-minded negotiator, firm and even self-righteous in going after the best possible deal and not too squeamish to bend the facts a bit to attain it; yet flexible enough to settle quickly for less when he sees he is not going to get all he wants.” At the very end of his biography of the flamboyant publisher, Leapman writes; “Despite his attempts to soften his image, Rupert Murdoch will remain unpopular with the gurus of the media, who believe he has undermined the standards of their profession, as well as with those unlucky enough to cross swords with him in business. He will continue to live dangerously, bidding for almost anything that is going and buying some of it; hiring, firing, cajoling, telephoning, browbeating employees and politicians alike.”

Murdoch had examined the bogus Hitler diaries himself before buying rights to them, but when they were exposed as frauds, he cast about for a scapegoat. His eye fell upon Frank Giles, editor of the London Sunday Times. Murdoch retired Giles as editor and appointed him editor emeritus. A tale current at the time reports that when Giles asked the publisher what the title meant, Murdoch answered: “It’s
Latin, Frank; the e means you’re out and the meritus means you deserved it.”

The dramatic rise and fall of a tyrant’s diaries may be traced in the headlines of Murdoch’s New York Post:

Friday, April 22, 1983. HITLER’S DIARIES FOUND: 60 Hand-Written Volumes by the Madman of World War II.
Saturday, April 23. World-Shattering Documents from the Mind of a Madman. HITLER’S DIARY SECRETS BARED. Claims Stunning Ignorance of the Holocaust.
Monday, April 25. Historian: Show Me Man Who First Found Them. HITLER’S DIARIES: UPROAR GROWS.
Tuesday, April 26. FUROR OVER THE FUHRER! New Experts to Probe Hitler Diaries. Fists Fly as Historian Is Dragged Screaming from Briefing Crying “Fake!”
Wednesday, April 27. Hess’ Son in New Hitler Bombshell: LET MY FATHER SEE DIARIES.
Thursday, April 28. SOVIETS SET TO QUASH SON’S VISIT TO HESS.
Friday, April 29. Post Editor Gets FIRST LOOK AT HITLER DIARIES. MEMOIRS OF A MADMAN STUN THE WORLD. Fuhrer’s “Legacy” Fails to Mention Death Camps. HESS PEACE FLIGHT SAVED BRITAIN FROM GERMAN INVASION. FORGERY EXPERT RIPS HITLER DIARY CRITICS.
Saturday, April 30. The Post Scoops the Nation on Another of Today’s Top Stories. “I SEE HITLER DIARIES.”
Monday, May 2. “HITLER DIARIES GENUINE.” British Historian’s Dramatic About-Face.

In sharp contrast, the New York Daily News ran the story of the discovery of the diaries on page four of the Saturday edition and alluded to the Nazi dictator as Adolf Hitler, not as a madman.

Even the unexpected official disclosure that the diaries were fake did not faze Murdoch. When his tabloid the Star (in German, Der Stern) was caught with a huge run of its special Hitler edition already on the press, the Australian simply ran a series of television spot commercials in which he blatantly justified the publication of “facts” about Hitler that the entire world by then knew to be falsehoods. The May 17, 1983, issue of the Star is a comic masterpiece. The front page, showing a color photograph of a grumpy Fuehrer in the top right corner, announced in enormous headlines: “Starts This Week / Read Every Word of It / Exclusive: Hitler’s Secret Diaries / Revealed: The Plot That Could Have Changed History.” Perhaps Murdoch could have gotten away with this
front page had he not compounded his misdemeanor by printing a picture of Ian Rae, editor of the *Star*, sitting with Peter Koch and discussing the diaries. The picture was captioned: “The Star publishes one of the century’s most important documents.” The accompanying text, signed by Rae as editor and publisher, is very amusing:

This week the *STAR* begins publication of potentially the most important—certainly most controversial—documents of the century. . . . People of intelligence will make their own judgment on the writings of Adolf Hitler. They will quickly perceive any effort by the dictator to whitewash himself in the eyes of history.

As to their authenticity, as the arguments continue to rage, evidence mounts that they were, indeed, the writings of Adolf Hitler. . . . Peter Koch, the editor-in-chief of Stern, told me: “They are absolutely genuine. I am 100 percent convinced that Hitler wrote every single word in those books.”

Peter Koch, who we already know deliberately led Trevor-Roper into a trap when he told the British historian that he had met the officer who was selling the diaries, certainly made another dramatic departure from the truth when he went on to tell Ian Rae that *Stern* had been investigating the diaries for three years and “putting them to every possible test.”

No doubt Koch and his associates told the same story to the *Sunday Times* of London, at that time still regarded as a shining light of journalism. True, the newspaper had goofed about fifteen years earlier when it was beguiled into paying £100,000 to a Polish weapons dealer, a middleman for the sale of the four alleged diaries of Benito Mussolini (see Chapter 15). It had even paid £3,500 to Vittorio Mussolini, Il Duce’s son, so he could buy himself a fancy automobile. Having been stung and embarrassed by that forgery, you might have thought the *Sunday Times* would look for booby traps before purchasing another dictator’s diaries. In fact, an old-time member of the staff who recalled the Mussolini blunder, senior reporter Philip Knightley, suspected the Hitler diaries and wrote a memorandum to the editors in which he urged prudence:

1. You cannot rely on expert authentication. Thomson [the former editor who had negotiated for the Mussolini diaries] engaged five experts. . . . *Not one expert said they were fake.*
2. You cannot rely on people close to the subject. Vittorio Mussolini . . . said that the diaries were definitely his father’s.
3. You cannot rely on legal protection. Slaughter and May [a legal firm]
did the negotiations for Thomson. They did not succeed in recover­
ing a single penny when the diaries turned out to be fakes.

4. Beware of secrecy and being pressed to make a quick decision. The
Mussolini con men . . . [pressed] Thomson to make a quick deal.
Absolute secrecy was essential, they said, to prevent the Italian
government from stepping in. Both manoeuvres prevented proper
examination of the background of the salesmen and the provenance
of the diaries.

Knightley wanted to know what German academic and non-academic
British experts had seen all the Hitler diaries. He wanted to know
“where the diaries had been all these years and why they have surfaced
now: the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler’s accession to power. . . . We
should insist on doing our own checks and not accept the checks of any
other publishing organization.” 6

Knightley’s warning didn’t get far—not in the face of the news story
of the century and Trevor-Roper’s reply to his memorandum:

The one thing that impressed me most was the volume of the material. I
asked myself whether it all could have been constructed out of the
imagination and incidental sources. I decided it could not.
I know Hitler’s handwriting. I know his signature. I know the changes in
it between 1908 and his death. It seemed to me that an operation of
forgery on that scale was heroic and unnecessary. . . . The directors of
Stern, one must assume, do not engage in forgery.7

When Trevor-Roper’s story appeared on the front page of the *Sunday
Times*, it was a triumph of yellow journalism. It outdid anything that
Hearst had ever dreamed of. Headlines proclaimed “WORLD EXCLU-
SIVE” and “HITLER’S SECRET DIARIES” with a photograph of Hitler and of
his coconspirator Gerd Heidemann proudly holding up the bogus
evidence. When the first proofs reached the newsroom, the deputy
editor, Brian MacArthur, exclaimed: “You will never see another front
page like that as long as you live! It is sensational!” 8 Then, like their
predecessors at *Stern*, the senior members of the staff gathered for a
little party to congratulate one another and gleefully plan future edi-
tions.

Even as Trevor-Roper’s *ex cathedra* stamp of approval hit the news-
stands, there were voices that condemned the diaries as bogus, and the
*Times* quickly became the butt of ridicule from its Fleet Street rivals. The
*Standard* announced that it had acquired the exclusive rights to the
diaries of Genghis Khan. The *Daily Mirror* published the secret news
that the secret diaries of Hitler’s secret lover, Eva Braun, had turned up
in a secret compartment of her secret handbag. The *Sunday Telegram* ran an entry from the secret diaries of Eva Braun recounting that in April 1945 Joseph Goebbels tried to cheer Hitler up with a faked newspaper headline, "Churchill Ready to Surrender." The *Observer* printed a story about the discovery of the memoirs of a Royal Army Pay Corps accountant, memoirs discovered in the loft of a suburban house in south London and inspected in a south London pub. Even the *New York Times*, not often given to sarcasm, could not resist an editorial on the possibility of a book by Hughes forger Clifford Irving, *Not the Hitler Diaries*.

Two days after the official exposure of the diaries, the London *Sunday Times* published a front-page apology. It appeared as an inset in an interview by Gitta Sereny with Gina Heidemann, wife of Gerd Heidemann and read, in part:

Serious journalism is a high-risk enterprise. Not for the first time, The *Sunday Times* took a high risk by its involvement with the so-called Hitler Diaries. . . . [It] proved to be a mistake. We owe our readers a sincere apology. . . .

Our mistake was to rely on other people's evidence and to be governed by their demands for urgency. Stern magazine, a West German publication previously enjoying a reputable standing in world journalism, insisted it had established the diaries' authenticity. This was confirmed by Hugh Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre), a distinguished historian with proper credentials in the period—and also, as it happened, a director of Times Newspapers. . . .

In a sense we are relieved that the matter has been so conclusively settled. A not-proven verdict on the question of authenticity would have raised difficult problems about publication. We are unreservedly delighted that the proof was made before we had published any portion of the serialisation.9

In the United States the major journalistic blunder was committed by *Newsweek*. The famed weekly magazine not only acted in an irresponsible manner in its reporting but used questionable ethics in its dealing with the forged diaries. As previously discussed, *Newsweek* had submitted examples of three pages from the Hess volume to experts, but its television promotion for the "Hitler issue" gave no hint that the authenticity of the diaries was in doubt. The cover of the issue also intimated that the diaries were genuine. This approach was not what one would expect from a reputable news publication.

Far more reprehensible, however, was *Newsweek*'s extensive use of excerpts from the diaries. The editors broke their word not to reveal
any of the information supplied to them by Stern. They even leaked the most valuable excerpts from the diaries, which allegedly revealed Hitler's attitude toward the Jews. They actually ran more passages from the diaries than did the first diary issue of Stern, a total of seventeen individual quotations, all obtained during their negotiations for publishing rights. It was a piracy job seldom equaled in the history of publishing.

Peter Koch, not the epitome of honesty, was genuinely shocked at the massive theft. He called it "a nice dirty trick." Newsweek would be mighty sorry, he said—and he was right, for once. Newsweek did regret its action. From the very moment the diary issue appeared, the magazine was under fire. In an article in the New York Times, Richard Bernstein cited some of the reasons for criticism:

"These controversial papers could rewrite the history of the Third Reich from Hitler's rise to power to his suicide in the ruins of Berlin," the advertisement says.

"They shed new light on his character, his plans for war, Munich, the miracle of Dunkirk, the flight of Rudolf Hess, his military campaigns, his relations to his lover, Eva Braun."

"Are they real? Are they a whitewash?" the advertisement asks. . . .

Asked why Newsweek had published a cover article on the Hitler diaries without final authentication, a spokesman for the magazine, Gary Gerard, said: "We felt, very frankly, that the find in itself was a major event.

"We make it clear that there are some doubts" about the documents' authenticity, he added.10

In an outburst of public indignation, the concluding paragraph of Newsweek's treatment of the story was singled out:

Germans will have to wonder anew about their collective, inherited guilt. Jews will have to face their fears again. All of us will have to ask once more whether Hitler's evil was unique, or whether it lurks somewhere in everyone. Those speculations have been trivialized for years in gaudy paperback thrillers and made-for-television movies. Now the appearance of Hitler's diaries—genuine or not, it almost doesn't matter in the end—reminds us of the horrible reality on which our doubts about ourselves, and each other, are based.11

A widely quoted New York Times editorial headed "Heil Hitler" ripped the assertion that it "almost doesn't matter" whether the diaries are genuine: "Almost doesn't matter what really drove the century's most diabolic tyranny? Almost doesn't matter whether Hitler is reincar-
nated, perhaps redefined, by fact or forgery? Journalism should take no solace from the customary excuse that it must deal with history in a hurry."¹²

Within a day after the publication of the controversial issue of *Newsweek*, the national media were covering the Hitler diaries story with such wild abandon that "the whole affair," to quote at least a thousand editors and reporters, "was becoming a circus." And a mighty entertaining circus it was! A few of the stuffiest editors proposed a panel of experts to examine the diaries, but they failed to understand the American system. In our democracy there is no monopoly on knowledge or opinion. The investigation of the Hitler diaries was the sole prerogative of *Stern* and *Newsweek* only so long as they kept their research under wraps. The moment they announced the discovery and printed the excerpts, all historians, columnists, editors, newsmen, experts and non-experts of every kind could have a go at them—and most did.

William Broyles, the young editor-in-chief of *Newsweek*, is said to have commented on his handling of the Hitler diaries: "We feel very, very good about it." He is probably the only man who ever faced so much public ridicule with such good cheer. On January 4, 1984, he handed in his resignation. Katharine Graham, chairman of *Newsweek*, Inc., who had questioned the morality of selling Hitler, was glad to see him go. Of his departure, Broyles said: "It was hard for me to finally admit that a job which is so prestigious and so important was not one that I wanted."¹³ Maynard Parker, the editor expected to succeed Broyles, was passed up. His role in handling the Hitler diaries had undone him.

No disgrace in the history of journalism has ever equaled that of *Stern*. The magazine expected to drop a blockbuster on the world. Instead, it got hit by one. Following the disclosure that the Hitler diaries were preposterous fakes, its editors were inundated with phone calls saluting them with "Heil Hitler!" Other journalists throughout the world sneered and jeered at the "Hitler sheet." The giant of German journalism was cut down to size by its rivals, viciously lampooned in the German press, as the *New York Times* reported:

"Many may say that anybody should be allowed to ruin his reputation," the Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung said. "But in this case it is not a question of just any magazine that got hold of just any forgery. This case involves the deeds of the greatest criminal in German history."

The Hamburger Morgenpost denounced the "megalomania" of those who said that the Nazi era would have to be rewritten, "as if this history had not already been written by the 60 million victims of World War II."
The inspirers of "the greatest forgery of the postwar period," the newspaper continued, did not want "the millions they pocketed from Stern. They wanted to prove that the Fuehrer in fact never wanted all that. The next step would have been to describe the millions who died in concentration camps, bombing raids and foxholes as the unfortunate victims of a regime that wasn't so bad after all."

The anti-Communist daily Die Welt, a Springer publication, offered a similar view: "As far as we can see, the idea was to give Germans the documentation for a harmless, a more human, a more humane Hitler. Who could have an interest in doing this? Who would be in the position to afford the enormous expense that would be necessary to forge 60 handwritten diaries?"14

The cost to Stern? Some seven million marks just for the two editors who had so egregiously blundered. For his lies, and likely the threat of more lies, Peter Koch was paid more than $1 million. Schmidt got the same sum. In return, the duo pledged not to reveal any information about the machinations at Stern. Nannen retired at the end of 1983 with the specious comment that he'd planned to get out anyway. One by one the key figures resigned under pressure. By the end of 1984 more than forty staff names that had appeared on the masthead of the May 1983 issue were missing. Stern fought for its existence as circulation fell 8.3 percent, a drop of almost 137,000 paying readers from the previous year. Circulation continued to slide in 1984. In the week in which the discovery of the diaries was announced, the paid circulation had risen to 2.1 million, but upon the discovery that the diaries were fakes, it fell to 1.5 million. The loss in advertising revenue was also huge. And not even counting the loss in sales and advertising income, the entire affair of the diaries cost Stern about nineteen million marks.

Stern has, throughout the debacle, continued to maintain that the scandal did not seriously injure its position. Advertising Age reported: "'They will of course deny it, but I think it is clear that the magazine has suffered lasting harm,' from the diaries scandal, says a former Gruner & Jahr executive. 'It has lost credibility with readers and internally, the credibility of management has been deeply affected.'"15

Even as the diaries were under attack and had not yet been exposed as frauds by forensic evidence, a reporter from Der Spiegel, a bitter rival of Stern, said to me: "We believe as you do, Mr. Hamilton, that the diaries are fakes. This is our chance to deal Stern a terrible blow. . . . If we can hit Stern hard now, and the diaries are definitely established as forgeries, we will have crippled forever our greatest rival."
Stern has managed to stay afloat. Nude beauties flirt with readers from every issue, but there is a far more conservative attitude in the magazine’s view of politics. It is strongly anti-Hitler, antiwar, anti-atomic bombs. This approach has cost the magazine some of its big chemical advertisers, but it survives.
Kujau’s forgeries are still with us. In fact, they are likely to be with us for the next century. They turn up for sale here and there, in dealer’s catalogs and at auction. They seldom wear tags that identify them as impostors of history. Often they are peddled as precious originals—manuscript letters, speeches, sketches, and watercolors still tingling from the Fuehrer’s touch.

For three years I pursued an elusive wholesale vendor of Kujau’s fakes in the hope of blocking further sales. Slowly but inexorably I worked to pin down his address. First I learned that the seller was “somewhere in the South.” Then I found out he was in Florida and finally that he lived in Punta Gorda. With the name of the city came the name of the seller. I now had the information I needed to turn the case over to the United States postal authorities. For an alert and aggressive postal inspector in New York City, I composed a letter purporting to be from a collector eager to buy a handwritten note of Hitler’s. The inspector copied my letter, signed it with a spurious name, and dispatched it to the suspect. By return mail the inspector received a huge bundle of Kujau-Hitler items which, if authentic, would be worth at least a million dollars. With the package came a crudely typed letter:

I just received your letter, reguarding the Hitler Items. My wife was from germany. And her Father Was High ranking in the german military. When we were marrid he gave a lot of Hitler Items to his daughter. I have sold several pieces while she was alive, she passed away March the 7Th, this year. As I dont speak the language, I now want to dispose of the remander of the Items. I am sending you One Oil painting by Hitler One Water color painting along with 33 Other Items. You look them over and make me a Reasonible Offer for the
entire lot. Ill either accept or Decline. My name is Jim. Winslow.
[Address and phone number are given.]
Please let me hear from you as soon as possible
Yours Truly.
Jim. Winslow

The inspector Ellis turned the forgeries over to me for examination and asked that I provide him with a descriptive list. Since many of these forgeries, or virtually identical forgeries, are still on the market and are being offered to collectors, librarians, and historians, I include the list here:

1. 32-page handwritten speech signed "Af. Hitler"
2. handwritten document dated 1933 signed "Af. Hitler"
3. 15-page handwritten document signed "Af. Hitler"
4. 38-page handwritten speech signed "Af. Hitler"
5. lengthy handwritten document, 1931
6. 8-page handwritten document, 1923, signed
7. 1-page document allegedly by Hitler
8. long handwritten document signed "Af. Hitler"
9. 1-page handwritten document, signed, 1922
10. 41-page handwritten document, signed
11. lengthy document, signed, 1927
12. similar document, 1930
13. 1-page document, signed
14. 2 documents signed by Hitler
15. 1-page document, signed
16. multipage document, signed, 1933
17. group of documents, 3 handwritten and 1 typed, all signed by Hitler, 1931–32
18. hand-drawn sketch signed by Hitler
19. sketch with handwriting, signed, 1917
20. drawing signed by Hitler
21. drawing by Hitler dated 1930
22. handwritten document signed "Af. Hitler," dated 1930
23. drawing allegedly by Hitler, 1916
24. various unnumbered items, including a handwritten document with a photo of Hitler attached and documents dated 1932 and 1925

The inspector dallied in replying, whereupon Winslow threatened to notify postal authorities if the "collector" did not at once pay for or return his merchandise. By way of response, the inspector asked a Florida post office associate to visit Winslow. The Florida inspector found him living in a trailer, a mild, rather innocuous elderly man who claimed he was unaware that the Hitler items were not genuine. He
Two pages of forged Hitler notes by Herr Ohne Namen display an excellent imitation of Hitler's precipitous script. Its defects: the writing is too large and not angular enough; the h's have lower loops instead of being mere slashes.

promised to take them off the market. As a result of his apparent cooperation, the post office took no further action. I concurred with this decision at the time, but Winslow has since reneged on his promise and is now peppering the nation with bogus Hitlers. No doubt many of them are treasured by collectors and institutions throughout the United States.

Even with his work still circulating, however, the rogue's throne
occupied by Kujau as Germany’s greatest forger is already being challenged by an adroit new fabricator of Hitler, some of whose forgeries almost defy detection. The first time I looked at one of the unsigned Hitler speeches in pencil by this Herr Ohne Namen (Mr. Anonymous), I thought it was genuine. Only a closer scrutiny convinced me that it was the work of a super forger. Later, when I was permitted to examine some signed letters in ink by the same forger, I could easily detect the imposition. Still, Herr Ohne Namen had captured with astonishing skill the easy, effortless stabbing movement, with its occasional precipitous dip at the end of the line, that is so characteristic of Hitler’s Gothic script. All of the forged pages bore the stamped initials of a prior owner, “HBH” in a circle about one-half inch in diameter. The collection I looked at, if genuine, would certainly be valued at well over a million, and one would not have to seek a buyer. A single handwritten note of Hitler attracts an eager crowd of would-be purchasers.

To the German who consulted me about their authenticity, a most reputable man and an expert himself, I sent the following analysis:

I certify that I have examined the collection of letters and documents allegedly written or signed by Adolf Hitler herewith attached. These papers comprise 15 pages of letters and souvenir items signed and nine pages of notes for speeches. The first group of 15 pages contains items all of which bear the easily identifiable marks of forgery, including very crude imitations of Hitler’s signature. On many of them the ink has feathered (or spread by capillary attraction), a phenomenon which occurs when fresh ink goes on old paper, a sort of blotter effect. This is one of the most obvious effects of forgery. Other items in this group are souvenir pages of stamps, a type of item that Hitler never signed. . . . Most of the Hitler signatures on these souvenir items are abnormally large and incorrectly formed. An early signature of 1923 is virtually identical with a signature of 1944, at which time Hitler’s signature was small and cramped, and he had long before ceased to sign his full name and wrote only Af Hitler. Another item, a letter dated 1911, has the same script as a letter of 1943, ignoring the fact that Hitler’s script had changed drastically during this period.

The unsigned fragments in pencil are very cleverly done and the writing is swift and easy, with the right pressure . . . and also the right distance between words and lines. Despite the lack of angular sharpness in the letters, it comprises by far the best imitation of Hitler’s handwriting I have ever seen, infinitely superior to Konrad Kujau’s. . . . However, an extremely careful examination under magnification reveals that some of the letters are incorrectly written, and the script has a definite consanguinity with the crude forgeries in this collection that bear an extremely poor imitation of Hitler’s signature.
A souvenir page of stamps with a forged, signed note. Hitler never signed souvenir items of this type. The failure of the unidentified German forger to size the paper with a light coating of shellac resulted in the feathering of the ink, especially noticeable in the signature.
The penciled documents must pay the penalty for their bad company and be branded as forgeries.

My opinion is that no forger who can produce such superb work will desist until he is behind bars. The temptation to turn a handsome profit for a few hours' work is too great. Thus I think we may safely assume that during the final decade of the twentieth century, Germany and the United States will be infested with these brilliant forgeries. It is well for archivists to remember that Hitler almost never signed souvenir autographs of any kind except for large postcard photos bearing Heinrich Hoffmann's stamped name on the blank verso. Especially, I caution possible purchasers against any speeches or notes of Hitler's in pencil. Those I saw in this collection are diabolically deceptive and almost perfectly mimic Hitler's rapid, effortless script. The person who sent these forgeries to me for examination also sent me the name of a newsman at the New York Times who, if they proved genuine, was eager to do a story on them. In view of the extraordinary historical contents of the penciled notes, this collection might well have launched another session of madness like the Hitler diaries had I pronounced them authentic.

The amiable little con man who threw the world into a turmoil, Konrad "Conny" Kujau, was detained longer than expected in prison. He is now free and is doing what he loves most to do—forging—but this time on the right side of the law. He owns a "Gallery of Fakes" in Stuttgart where he offers "renditions" of paintings by his favorite artists: Renoir, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Chagall, Picasso, Cézanne, Dali, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Miró. On all of Kujau's paintings appear forged signatures of the masters, but Conny makes it clear that these are not exact copies of works by the great artists. They are, he says, merely his artistic improvisations of the artists' motifs done with identical brush strokes.

Kujau also takes special orders from his customers. "You tell me the subject and name the artist," he tells them, "and I'll paint just like him."

Handwriting is not ignored in Conny's gallery. He offers for sale parchment-paper imitations of letters by Voltaire, Louis XIV, Karl Marx, and an old favorite, Paul von Hindenburg. All of his products bear a label with his oxymoronic certification: "Guaranteed Fake."

"I'm quite exasperating for the police," admits Conny.

On the one hand they wish I'd stop painting my forged artworks, but on the other hand they welcome my advice about spotting forgeries.
Comparison of Mussolini and Hitler forgeries by Kujau (above) and the unidentified German forger, Herr Ohne Namen (left). The latter is much superior to Kujau in all respects except one—he is unable to imitate Hitler's signature.
After my release from jail in June 1988, the police turned to me when their experts couldn't decide whether a check for $1.1 million had a forged signature.

The woman whose name appeared on the huge check denied signing it. I discovered her husband had been killed in a car accident. She'd gone into a deep depression that showed in her handwriting, which became less sharp and bold—but it didn't show in the check's signature.

I told police the check was forged—and when confronted, a third person confessed.

Now the police have asked me to help them discover forgeries, both in the art world and in signatures on documents. I also give lectures to policemen explaining the basic tricks of every forgery.¹

There is only one thing of which the notorious forger is inordinately proud. To every gallery visitor he makes the boast: “I can still write Hitler's signature faster than my own.”
CHAPTER 1. The Legend of Adolf Hitler

1. John F. Kennedy’s unpublished journal (May-August, 1945). Through the influence of his father, Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, John was sent to England in May 1945 by the Hearst Syndicate to report on the British general election. After a month in England, where he met Churchill (defeated in the election), the youthful Kennedy was squired on a two-weeks’ tour of battle-scarred Germany by Navy Secretary James Forrestal.

In 1978 I was asked by Kennedy’s friend LeMoyne “Lem” Billings to examine and evaluate nearly two hundred letters Kennedy had written to him during the three decades of their friendship. Subsequently, Billings recommended me to Rose Kennedy, who entrusted to me (for appraisal) an enormous packet of letters that Jack had written to her and Ambassador Kennedy during his World War II tour in the Pacific. My Kennedy connections led to the further request that I examine and report on John Kennedy’s journal, not yet released to historians. My request to quote verbatim Kennedy’s dramatic account of his visit to Hitler’s Eagle’s Nest was refused; however, I was permitted to paraphrase the entry that dealt with the visit to Hitler’s mountain retreat and Kennedy’s opinion on Hitler’s position in history.

CHAPTER 2. Birth of a Forger

1. “Spiegel Gespraech.” All translations from German sources are mine unless otherwise identified.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. “Spiegel Gespraech.”
6. HIAG is an acronym for Hilefe Incorporation Alter Genossen (Help incorporation for old comrades).
7. “Spiegel Gespraech.” The Kommissar Befehl was an order for the immediate execution upon capture of Russian political leaders.
8. Ibid.
9. The magazine *Stern* printed a selection of the verses in 1980, titled "Lyrical Rhymes of Corporal H.,” with the comment that the author was "an instinctive criminal with literary ambitions, but a very limited educational background." Of this analysis a writer for *Die Zeit* later remarked: “A very good observation, though not describing Hitler but rather his imitator Kujau” (Janssen, "Gruene Gewoelbe").
10. “Spiegel Gespraech.”

CHAPTER 3. The Remaking of Adolf Hitler

1. “Spiegel Gespraech.”
3. Ibid., art. 6, Oct. 2, 1983.
4. “Spiegel Gespraech.”
5. Ibid.
7. “Spiegel Gespraech.”
9. Quoted in Harris, *Selling Hitler*, p. 120.
10. Ibid., pp. 120-21.

CHAPTER 4. The Quest for Kujau

2. Ibid.
5. “Spiegel Gespraech.”

CHAPTER 5. Operation Green Vault

2. Ibid., art. 3, Sept. 28, 1983. Heidemann alleges that he offered Kujau 150,000 marks at this time—only one point in the dispute about sums paid or received (see Chapter 19).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Janssen, “Gruene Gewoelbe.” The Alster river is the main water artery of Hamburg, and the offices of *Stern* are located near its bank.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
CHAPTER 6. Evil Portents on the Rock of Apes

1. This warranty is quoted in Harris, *Selling Hitler*, which does not comment on its brazen touch of humor.
2. The Hess volume was accompanied by another unnumbered manuscript record of the July 20, 1944, bomb attempt on Hitler's life. These two volumes, not figured in the chronology of the others, brought to sixty-two the total number of books. Thus historians have an option of alluding to sixty or sixty-two diaries.
4. Quoted in Harris, *Selling Hitler*, p. 236.
6. Quoted in Harris, *Selling Hitler*, p. 222.
8. Ibid.
10. For a description of these letters and the historical blunders they reveal, see Hamilton, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, pp. 20–21.

CHAPTER 7. The Selling of Adolf Hitler

1. The information on Hitler's aides and secretaries in this chapter is based on Hamilton's *Leaders and Personalities of the Third Reich*, pp. 131-85.
5. Quoted from "The Stern Report" in Harris, *Selling Hitler*, p. 159.
7. See Harris, *Selling Hitler*.

CHAPTER 8. Adolf the Amiable

2. "Spiegel Gesprach."

CHAPTER 9. Hitler's Diaries in the Headlines

7. "Ex-Aide Doubts 'Diaries,'" p. 34.
8. "Historian Waffles."
10. Ibid., p. 55.
11. Ibid.

CHAPTER 10. The Furor over the Fuehrer

1. Browning, "Historian Waffles on Hitler 'Diaries.'"
3. Quoted in Browning, "Historian Waffles on Hitler 'Diaries.'"
5. Quoted in ibid.

CHAPTER 11. The Forger's Motive

2. Quoted in ibid., p. 7.
4. Quoted from Radio Moscow in Harris, Selling Hitler, p. 377.

CHAPTER 12. Secrets of Hitler's Handwriting

4. Bernard, "Storm over Hitler Diaries."
5. Quoted from "The Stern Report" in Harris, Selling Hitler.

CHAPTER 13. The Official Verdict: Forgery

1. Magnuson, "Hitler's Forged Diaries."
CHAPTER 14. Panic on the Rock of Apes

5. Quoted in Markham, “German Publisher Suing,” p. 1.
7. Quoted in “I’m Not a Cheater,” p. 28.
8. Quoted in ibid., p. 28.
9. Quoted in Markham, “Reporter Denies Hitler Hoax Role,” p. 3.
10. Quoted in “Supplier of Hitler Forgeries Gives Up,” p. 3.
11. Quoted in ibid.

CHAPTER 15. The “Reincarnated” Forger

2. Buckley, “Hitler: Fact and/or Fiction.”
5. The children or descendants of noted persons are seldom handwriting experts and their opinions must always be viewed with caution. I once had a forgery of a Lincoln letter authenticated by the president’s son, Robert Todd Lincoln.
7. Quoted in ibid., p. 42.
8. Much of the following information about Vrain Lucas was compiled from Bordier and Mabille, Une fabrique de faux autographes. For examples of his work in English translation, see Gratz, A Book about Autographs.

CHAPTER 16. Fake Biographies of Hitler

5. Ibid., pp. 271-72.
7. Ibid., p. 48.
8. “Dr. Kurt Krueger” was the pseudonym of fiction writer David Plotkin, also author of My Sister and I by Friedrich Nietzsche, another spurious work.
11. Eva Braun’s authentic diary (Feb. 11–May 25, 1935) was published in full in an appendix to Payne, The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler, pp. 584-88.
13. Ibid., p. 78.
15. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
17. Quoted in Barraclough, "Nazi Boom."
18. Ibid.

**CHAPTER 17. Kujau's Amazing New Career**

2. Tremper and Kummer, "Die Sternschnuppe."

**CHAPTER 18. The Battle of the Liars**

5. Ibid., art. 6, Oct. 2, 1983.
6. Ibid., art. 8, Oct. 4, 1983.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., art. 9, Oct. 5, 1983.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., art. 6, Oct. 2, 1983.

**CHAPTER 19. The Five Million Marks That Vanished**

2. Ibid., p. 254.
3. The information on Klapper in this chapter was obtained from Sereny, "Hitler Diaries: Super-Hoax," pt. 2.
4. Lang, *The Secretary*, p. 343.
5. Steinhoff, reports in *Stern*.

**CHAPTER 20. The Conspirators on Trial: The Evidence**

1. Conversations and events at the trial of Kujau and Heidemann are mainly taken from reports printed in *Stern, Frankfurt Muenchen*, and the *New York Times*; court reporters are not used in German courts to set down the precise record. Juergen Steinhoff was the reporter from *Stern* during the entire trial; his detailed articles, which form the basis for this chapter and the next, appeared in the issues of Sept. 6 and 20, Oct. 4, Nov. 8 and 25, 1984; and Jan. 10 and 24, Feb. 28, June 13 and 27, July 11, 1985.
4. Ibid.
CHAPTER 21. The Conspirators on Trial: The Verdict

1. "Bunker mentality" is a reference to the final weeks in the Berlin bunker when Hitler was rejecting as untrue all bad news on the war's progress.

CHAPTER 22. Machinations of the Media

2. "Death of Hitler."
5. Rae, "Hitler Diaries," p. 5.
7. Quoted in ibid., p. 302.
8. Quoted in ibid., p. 314.

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