



By OTTO FRIEDRICH

Spandau Prison is a grim brick fortress on the western outskirts of Berlin, guarded at all times by machine-gun nests and electrified fencing. Originally designed to hold about 600 convicts, it has had only one function ever since World War II—to confine the seven major Nazi war criminals who were sentenced at the Nuremberg Trials to terms ranging from 10 years to life. One of those seven was Albert Speer, Hitler's personal architect and artistic protégé, then minister of armaments, master technocrat of the Nazi war effort and overseer of about 2,000,000 slave laborers. In the last year of the failing war Speer finally turned against Hitler and countermanded many of his most destructive orders, but at Nuremberg he accepted full responsibility for his part in the Nazis' crimes. This rich and complex book is his account of his 20-year imprisonment and of his 20-year effort to come to terms with his own guilt.

Despite Speer's confession at Nuremberg, he found the court's verdict hard to accept. Still just 41, he had been one of the most powerful men in the world, and now he could look forward only to spending years in a cell, despised and useless. When he emerged in 1966, he would be white-haired, a stranger to his own

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A Nazi's reflections on his crime and punishment

Spandau

The Secret Diaries.
By Albert Speer.
Translated by Richard and Clara Winston.
Illustrated. 463 pp. New York: Macmillan & Co. \$13.95.

children. Speer was angry that three of his 22 co-defendants had been acquitted ("So lies have paid off after all"), and he wondered about the motives for his own confession ("Of course I know in my own heart that I was guilty. But should I have bragged about it quite so much to the court?"). On the other hand, his declarations filled an odd kind of need: "Who could survive 20 years of imprisonment without accepting some form of guilt?"

The regulations at Spandau exacerbated Speer's unhappiness. The seven prisoners were not harshly treated—particularly when one bears in mind the Nazis' treatment of prisoners—but the ordinances did express a sort of official loathing. The seven were forbidden to speak to one another or to their guards. They were never addressed by name, only by number. They could not touch anyone, not even their wives during brief and heavily supervised visits. Presents from home were opened and judged; even a hand-knitted sweater could be rejected as too luxurious.

As the years passed, and the memo-

ries of Nazism faded, many of these rules were relaxed, but always capriciously. Newspapers were finally permitted, but with certain stories scissored out; smuggled letters brought Speer access to illegal funds, but nobody ever admitted it; musical recordings appeared, but not operas, because opera plots were decreed to be suggestive. These capricious decisions also varied from month to month, for throughout the worst of the cold war, Spandau remained under the rotating command of the four wartime Allies. Thus, American guards would provide the prisoners with illegal chocolates and the Russians would officiously confiscate them. The Russians wanted only vegetables in the prison garden while the Western Allies permitted flowers.

One of the most obnoxious aspects of life in Spandau was absurdly appropriate: the inherent obnoxiousness of Speer's fellow prisoners. When Jean-Paul Sartre imagined hell as three unpleasant people confined eternally on one stage set, he conceived nothing so thoroughly unpleasant as an enforced comradeship with six men such

Albert Speer, about 1943, and Spandau Prison.

as these. The demented and emaciated Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess often moaned all night that the guards had poisoned his milk; Grand Admiral Erich Raeder angrily imitated Hess's moans just to annoy him; Hess stole the other prisoners' socks. Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, who hid in a nut tree to nibble on forbidden nuts, loudly insisted that he was still the legal ruler of Germany. Economics Minister Walter Funk and Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach intrigued with the guards for favors. Someone slipped a lump of horse manure into Schirach's bed. Funk kept giggling over his smuggled brandy. Foreign Minister Constantin von Neurath tottered around in a sort of senile daze, occasionally bursting into tears. All of these former potentates quarreled interminably about the protocols of prison life and the indignity of having to mop floors.

"Boredom," Speer writes, "is the one torment of hell that Dante forgot." Haunted by the waste of his life—"a life un-lived," he calls it—Speer survived partly by persisting in a series of elaborate games, creations that he describes as "the organization of emptiness." Instead of just reading plays, he imagined each as a weekly trip to some specific theater to see Schiller or Zuckmayer. In his corner of the prison garden, which he designed himself, he conducted exper-

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iments to test whether peas could be made to grow sideways. Brooding over the buildings that he would never build, he launched into an exhaustive study of the history of windows, computing the price of light, per square yard, in terms of labor per hour.

Indeed, he computed endlessly—the number of minutes of recorded music by various composers in the prison library (Beethoven 290, Mozart 190 . . .); the dishes most frequently served per month by the Russians (cabbage salad, 10 times); and myriad variations on his own sentence ("If I equate [my 20-year term] with the twenty-four hours of one day, 11.1 seconds pass every day. It is now only eight seconds beyond 7:58 P.M."). He even converted his walks around the prison yard into a walk around the world, studying guidebooks and charting on a map his progress across Afghanistan, up the coast of China. One day, while promenading with the half-mad Hess, Speer startled his companion by suddenly announcing that they were only an hour from the Bering Strait. When Hess couldn't understand, Speer explained his fantasy, adding that in the past eight years he had walked 78,514 kilometers. Hess shook his head and wondered, "Doesn't all this worry you? You know, it really is a kind of mania."

Speer's true mania, however, was his effort to lay the ghost that haunted everyone in Spandau, the ghost of Adolf Hitler. In the thousands of pages that Speer kept smuggling out (he had the sophistication to suspect that these furtive writings were not wholly a secret from the prison commandants), he produced not only his journal of Spandau life but a draft of his memoirs of Hitler, which were published in 1970 as "Inside the Third Reich." These newly published prison journals—which Speer admits have been somewhat doctored with and had some entries "moved around"—do not provide nearly so full a portrait of the Führer as the earlier book, but there are nonetheless extraordinary glimpses of a man quite different from the raving orator we all saw in the newsreels.

Here, for example, is Hitler calling on Nietzsche's sister, handing her a bouquet so large that she cannot hold it and starting to address her with the utmost servility: "Most gracious and respected madam, what a pleasure to have the privilege of finding you in the best of health in your esteemed home. . . ." Here is the Hitler who began expounding, at 4 A.M. one morning during the war, a theory that the occupiers of Russia must build medieval German villages all across the steppes so that future German settlers in the East would feel contented and secure. Here is the Hitler who was deeply impressed by Mussolini during

the Italian dictator's first visit to Berlin, until Goebbels sneered that the visitor "was after all, just an Italian among Germans." Hitler thereupon "began imitating a few of Mussolini's poses that had struck him as *outré*: the outstretched chin, the right hand braced against the hip. . . . He flung out a number of Italian or Italian-sounding words like *patria*, *Victoria*, *macaroni*, *bel canto*, *telegrafico*, and *hasta*."

Speer complacently quotes someone's remark "that I was Hitler's unrequited love," but the love, if that is what it was, seems not to have been entirely unrequited. In his early days in prison, he writes that Hitler was "sustained by the idealism and devotion of people like myself." Even toward the end, after nearly 20 years of reflecting on his guilt, after writing that Hitler "was cruel, unjust, unapproachable, cold, capricious, self-pitying and vulgar," he cannot resist adding that his former master "was also the exact opposite of almost all those things . . . a generous superior, amiable, self-controlled, proud and capable of enthusiasm for beauty and greatness." He asks himself the ultimate question: "Would I be prepared to pay the price all over again?" and then provides the penultimate answer: "I cannot answer. . . ."

It is hard to determine exactly what Speer finally wants from himself, or from us. Exculpation, perhaps. He quotes Plato to the effect that "for a man who has committed a wrong there is only one salvation: punishment." Speer has certainly been punished by his years of incarceration, but punishment did not bring salvation. Throughout his imprisonment, his yearning for a reprieve prevented him from achieving any sense of resignation. And the nearer he came to fulfilling his sentence, the more he felt, in contrast to his original view, a sense of injustice. Shortly before his release, he exploded in a rage at the "cruelty" of the Allies, all of whom had waged war and shed innocent blood during the years they had held him prisoner. And in those 20 years, he declares, "they have physically and mentally destroyed me."

He is right—imprisonment is indeed a destructive fate, and prison memoirs generally seduce us into sympathizing with even the most culpable prisoner, into sharing his belief that the punishment is greater than the crime. But it is not true. Speer's punishment was not greater than his crime. If Speer really believes that all those deaths caused by "the devotion of people like myself" have somehow been expiated by the mere passage of time—or even by confession and contrition—then he is wrong. There can be no atonement for men like Albert Speer. ■