

GOVERNING CIRCLE NARROWS IN REICH

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LONDON, July 15—As Allied pressure on the German war fronts increases, the burden of government weighs more heavily on the shoulders of the Nazi leaders. The principle of leadership according to which Germany is supposed to be governed loses a great deal of attraction when most of the vital decisions involve possible loss of prestige, and when it is so easy to fix the responsibility and put the blame on the leaders.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why the practical procedure of the Nazi Government is becoming more nebulous as the war moves toward disaster for Germany, and why it is increasingly more difficult to determine who are, with Hitler, the current leaders of the Nazi State, and their various degrees of importance and responsibility.

Scramble for Power

Traditional methods of government, a semblance of which Hitler was most anxious to maintain until the outbreak of the war, are no longer employed. National policy, and even military strategy, are determined in a constant clash of personalities whose objective is to gain Hitler's ear and his eventual consent to a particular policy. The main decisions, we know, are always taken after a series of conferences between departmental chiefs or military leaders and Hitler, with whom they meet individually.

Superficially it would seem that a peace-size Cabinet runs the Reich, but the post of every Cabinet member is duplicated by a party functionary.

That is why the world knows the names of party leaders and rarely

Burden Is Heavier on Nazi Leaders as Allies Press In

hears, for instance, of the holders of such apparently important functions as the present Minister of Food and Agriculture, Herbert Backe. Party directors (Reichleiters) controlling for instance, education, agriculture, finance and foreign policy are more prominent in Germany than the Cabinet Ministers who are supposed to administer these same offices.

In addition, the composition of the Reich Cabinet in which Hitler is Fuehrer (leader), Chancellor and War Minister, has undergone several changes since the war. Rudolf Hess, deputy Fuehrer (as Fuehrer of the party), literally dropped out—and onto Britain. Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, Minister and President of the Reichsbank; Baron Constantin von Neurath, president of the secret Cabinet Council, and R. Walther Darré, Minister of Agriculture and Food, were sacked.

Of the nine members of the original so-called "secret Cabinet Council," the German war cabinet which Hitler created in February, 1938, when he stripped his administration to be ready for the risks of conquest, four are no longer in office. They are Baron von Neurath, Hess, Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch and Grand Admiral Raeder. Though the latter two have been replaced as Commanders in Chief of the Army (by Hitler himself) and the Navy (by Grand Admiral Doenitz) their disappearance apparently marked the end of the council.

There is no evidence that the others were replaced or that the council still operates or even exists. For years no meeting has been announced. Nor has there been any indication of the full Reich Cabinet of twenty-four members having been in session.

The Source of Power

But power does not flow from any of these bodies—never did. For the source of power in Germany we must look into that intimate circle which gathers around Hitler when his day's work is done.

Within this inner circle we now find as his constant companion a man who is described as the "dark horse of Germany." He is Martin Bormann, a 43-year-old, squat, tough atheist and Church hater, who marched by Hitler's side during the beer-hall putsch in Munich in 1923. Once director of Rudolf Hess' staff, he is now successor to Hess in all of his party and administrative functions. The German people hardly know Bormann, and not a single authentic story can be told to describe his personality.

But unobtrusively, month after month since his appointment, he has acquired new functions and greater powers. Although the title of deputy fuehrer was abolished after the Hess "incident," and therefore could not be conferred upon his successor, Bormann is probably the most powerful man on the German home front.

Col. Gen. Wilhelm Jodl, chief of Hitler's Wehrmacht staff, shares the Fuehrer's presence with Bormann and Dr. Otto Dietrich, Hitler's personal press chief. In mili-

tary matters Jodl's views and words carry greater weight with Hitler than the memoranda or representations which he may receive from others. And since the military aspect dominates Hitler's mind, his military adviser can successfully interfere in all affairs with which Hitler is concerned. As an old staff man, Jodl may well be the General Staff's watchdog in Hitler's camp. He is more likely to be remembered in history as Hitler's "intuition."

Noticeably absent from this inner circle is Heinrich Himmler, who rarely turns up at Hitler's headquarters. True, Himmler still controls the SS guards, which had come to be regarded as the most formidable instrument of power in Germany. But the contingencies of war, the Wehrmacht's manpower shortage, the declining quality of the regular army's decimated crack units, and perhaps the cunning policy of the generals, have resulted in virtual absorption of the armed party formations into the Wehrmacht. They have passed under military command, and Himmler has lost his praetorian guard. Few of them are now left.

Among the Missing

Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, is another high-ranking party man who is rarely found among Hitler's current confidants. And another who is absent these critical days is Marshal Hermann Goering, who has kept in the background for more than a year. Though Goering is nominal commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, he was not present last April when his counterparts of the army and navy, Field Marshal Keitel and Grand Admiral Doenitz, presented birthday congratulations to Hitler.

Officially Goering has more functions than any other man in Germany, but actually he does not seem to carry them out. He often signs decrees in his capacity as chief of the four-year plan (a sort of Minister of Economics) but actual control over war industry is in the hands of Albert Speer, Hitler's architect friend.

Goering's position is more ambiguous than that of any other leading Nazi. He pretends to be a friend of the generals, a protector of heavy industry, a guardian of the Church—and still a good party man. Yet, in spite of his occasional violent outbursts, none of the Nazi "old guard" today regards him as a radical, just as the generals and industrialists do not believe that he is really on their side. Were the Allies' refusal to deal with a member of the Nazi gang not so determined, one could cite instances which suggest that Goering is grooming himself—or is being groomed—to become a German Badoglio.

Grasping Companions

All these men—within and without the inner circle of the Fuehrer's constant companions—are engaged in a struggle for power for themselves, their cliques, groups and vested interests. It is no oversimplification to define their ultimate aims as "Hitler's succession" for themselves or the ideas and interests which are in their heart.

German military leaders fit into this picture as much as military leaders fit into the political set-up of any country at war. Some, like Rommel, have tied themselves to

the regime and can hardly ever dissociate themselves from Hitler. Others, like Blaskowitz and Mannstein, have tried to retain a semblance of independence.

Many of them still look to Franz Halder, last real chief of the German General Staff, and are still loyal to von Brauchitsch, the Army's last real commander in chief. These men represent a solid clique and a definite power in German affairs. Hitler would not dare to interfere with them or try to break their power while they are fighting battles of desperation. Yet desperation may lead them to break his power rather than be broken themselves.

There are industrial diplomats and diplomatic industrialists who are in exactly the same position. Their special qualifications, their connections inside and outside Germany, often make them almost independent of Hitler and the Nazi regime. Among the industrialists are Professor Junkers and Professor Heinckel—to mention only two who have more to lose than even the nouveau-riche Nazis. And if their interests no longer coincide with those of Hitler, if there is a way out for them which Hitler could not take, they can rely on powerful allies—perhaps in Halder, perhaps in Goering or Schacht, perhaps in other, rather unexpected, quarters.

Diplomats as Opportunists

The diplomats, unless they have committed themselves to nazism, which many have not done, can plead their status as civil servants. They are opportunists, but they are powerful.

Both diplomats and industrialists may already have decided to put political guns in action, which are more formidable than the Big Berthas produced in German factories. They have never lacked support. Their instinct of survival may induce them to look for reinforcements abroad, if they decide to fight Hitler instead of the Allies. If they find that support they may prove to be the strongest faction inside Germany.