

# Former Merrill Resident Interviews Adolf Hitler

Researched by Rick Proft

Hans Von Kaltenborn was thirteen years of age when he arrived in Merrill with his family in 1891. Forty-one years had passed and at age 54 he would find himself 4,300 miles east in the Berchtesgaden Alps, within the Obersalzberg mountain range, interviewing face to face, humanity's most ruthless-evil monster, Adolf Hitler.

In retrospect it can be said that Hans' adolescence experiences growing up in Merrill prepared him for his long successful career in journalism and broadcasting. It all began with his letter writing to the Merrill News about local issues that became published in the local paper. Soon thereafter he began working for C.N. Johnson with the Merrill Advocate Newspaper. Hans enlisted June 1898 into the Merrill Volunteer Company F during the Spanish-American War and became an embedded war correspondent/soldier for the Merrill Advocate. Hans credits his friendship, support, trust along with the foundational mentorship of C.N. Johnson as being pivotal for his career success.

Upon the Kaltenborn family's arrival in Merrill, Hans father Rudolph purchased a bicycle for him. Next to reading, bicycling was perhaps his most obsessive enjoyable passion. After paying a visit to the T.B. Scott Free Library, located in the new City Hall, which was conveniently located across the street from his 711 E. First St. home, Hans came across a book written by F.A. Elwell's book titled, "Cycling in Europe". This book was the impetus for him to start planning a European trip in time for the 1900 Paris World's Fair Exposition. After attaining sufficient savings from working at George W. Langley's logging camp and with C.N Johnson's promised continued employment support, Hans was able fulfill his dream as an accredited Merrill Advocate international correspondent. He left Merrill for Europe on August 26, 1900 and didn't return until the late summer of 1902. There were numerous interesting Merrill Advocate articles chronicling his travels, adventures, employment and time spent in Europe which are covered in numerous other books and articles.

Hans was fluent in the German and English languages. Father Englebert Blume of St. Francis Church, Merrill had been helpful in preparing him for his Europe trip with some Conversational French, with the use of his "Twenty Lessons in French Conversation", produced by Chicago Records. However, he needed to become more fluent in French and while working and residing in Paris as a Stereoscope salesman, Hans took French classes and immersed himself into the French culture.

Hans had his sights set on a career with the New York Sun ever since C.N. Johnson had sent his issues up to the Langley's logging camp for him to read. After another trip to New York and an unsuccessful job interview with the New York Sun, Hans knew he needed to bolster his educational credentials, since he had dropped out of the Merrill school at age fourteen to work at his father's building materials store. With persistence, Hans was able to secure employment at the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper, however left there when he was accepted as a "Special Self Prepared Student" at Harvard, and subsequently became a regular student, graduating with the Class of 1909.

Also graduating in the same Harvard Class of 1909 is a man, who 23 years later, on Wednesday, August 17, 1932, snapped a camera's shutter to capture a photograph of Hans von Kaltenborn posing shoulder to shoulder, just to right of Adolf Hitler. This man is Ernest Franz Hanfstaengl. He was Hitler's Foreign Press Liaison Officer and was responsible for arranging this journalist meeting with Hitler at his Berchtesgaden Swiss chalet home.



Ernest Franz Hanfstaengl





Left to right: Karl Von Wiegand (Hearst News), H.V. Kaltenborn (CBS), Adolph Hitler & Louis Lochner (AP Chief, Berlin). This photo was taken Wednesday, August 7, 1932, by H.V. Kaltenborn's former Harvard classmate, Ernst "Putzi", "Hanfy" Hanfstaengl. He was Hitler's Liaison Officer, piano player and composer, had arranged this Hitler interview. At the conclusion of a forty-five minute interview, Hanfstaengl used Louis Lochner's camera for this snapshot, which was taken on the front porch of Hitler's home, at the Berchtesgaden. Since all of these men were fluent with the German language, no interrupter was needed during the visit.



Famous Eagle's Nest was built from April 1937 and completed in 1938, before Hitler's 49<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Harvard University 1909 Yearbook



### HANS VON KALTENBORN

Born July 9, 1878. Self-prepared. Home address, 308 Francis St., Madison, Wis. Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard-Yale-Princeton Triangular Debate, 1909. Illustrated, Round Table, Dramatic Club, Cosmopolitan Club, Memorial Society, Deutscher Verein, Cercle Français, Democratic Club, Debating Council, Coolidge Debating Prize. Eveleth and Bowditch Scholarships. Boylston First Prize, 1909.



### ERNST FRANZ HANFSTAENGL

Born February 11, 1887, at Munich, Germany. Prepared at Königliches Wilhelms Gymnasium, Munich. Home address, Maximilianstrasse 7, Munich, Germany. Institute of 1770, D. K. E., Sphinx, Hasty Pudding Club, Freshman Four Oar, Deutscher Verein, Cosmopolitan Club, Ibsen Club, Musical Club, Round Table.

1909 Harvard Yearbook Pictures. Note H.V. Kaltenborn's address is listed as 308 Francis St., Madison, Wisconsin, which by coincidence is located a few blocks from the Wisconsin Historical Society Library/Archives that is the custodian of the "Kaltenborn Collection of Papers." The Kaltenborn family had left Merrill for this Madison address shortly after H.V. Kaltenborn's brother Walter Kaltenborn's 1905 graduation from Merrill High School. Hans was busy traveling and working in Europe, Brooklyn Eagle and tutoring Vincent Astor just prior to his marriage with Olga.

Hans Von Kaltenborn had described his experience meeting Hitler at Berchtesgaden in many of his books and radio interviews. Kaltenborn had followed Hitler closely and admits he misjudged the German industry and society's reaction in not opposing his rise to power. He wrote many columns predicting Hitler would not last. During a visit to Germany with his wife and both children in September of 1933, his eighteen-year son Rolf was assaulted by the German Nazi Brown Shirts for not saluting the Nazi flag as it went by during a parade. Hans filed a formal protest with the German Government about the incident and wrote about the incident in a September 11, 1933 Brooklyn Eagle column. The following pages are transcribed excerpts from publications and interviews describing in detail about H.V. Kaltenborn's interview with Hitler at the mountainside retreat, located above the market town of Berchtesgaden in Bavaria, Germany, located approximately 120 kilometers or 75 miles southeast of Munich.

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Louis P. Lochner, Ernst Hanfstaengl, and H.V. Kaltenborn at Berchtesgaden, prior to their interview with Hitler.

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Unpublished documents on Nazi from the Mass Communications History Center

Pages 283 - 290

### AN INTERVIEW WITH HITLER

August 17, 1932

By HANS V. KALTENBORN

**ADOLF HITLER** has an intense instinctive aversion to interviews. This man, whose "hunches" on what to do and whose uncanny sense of when to do it astound the world, thinks best and decides most shrewdly when he is alone. He dislikes talking to strangers because they intimidate him. He compensates for his timidity by raucous self-assertion in their presence. Instead of answering an interviewer's questions he makes excited speeches, thus seeking to create for himself the atmosphere of the public meeting in which he is at home.

From the beginning of his public career. Hitler has avoided personal contact with men who disagree with him. He is as conscious of his inability to persuade individuals as he is sure of his skill in mass appeal. Not more than a dozen foreign newspaper men have had individual access to him in as many years. Where Mussolini grants interviews to almost anyone with good credentials and uses visitors to secure mental relaxation — he delights in a verbal fencing match with a bold and ingenious opponent — Hitler resists and postpones until it becomes easier to yield to the importunities of his foreign press chief than to adhere to a refusal.

It was the persistence of Ernst Hanfstaengl — Foreign Press Chief of the Nazi Party until the enmity of [Joseph] Goebbels drove him into exile—that secured for me my first extended interview with the Führer. A few months later. President [Paul von] Hindenburg gave him the long-awaited opportunity to create the Third Reich. Mine was the last interview he gave before becoming Chancellor [on January 30, 1933]. It was also the last in which he discussed a variety of topics with comparative freedom. In no other interview I have read has he revealed as much about himself.

Ernst Hanfstaengl was one of my best friends in our Harvard College class of 1909. Together we revived the Deutscher Verein, took Professor Kuno Francke's famous course in the Faust legend, played the two leading parts in public performances of Schiller's *Der Neffe als Onkel*, and entertained the officers of German naval vessels visiting the port of Boston.

We co-operated with Professor Hugo Muensterberg and Ambassador [Johann] Bernstorff in persuading the Kaiser to send his American envoy to one of our Cambridge Cosmopolitan Club dinners, bringing the Imperial Order of the Crown (Second Class!) for President [Charles William] Eliot of Harvard. As president of the Club, I presided at the dinner and introduced first the Ambassador for the presentation and then the late President Eliot.

Harvard's venerable Proxy was so little impressed with the second-class decoration that he forgot to say "thank you." So while we were singing "Fair Harvard" and Hanfy was making desperate signals to stir me into action, I stepped behind President Eliot and whispered, "Your forgot to say 'thank you' for the decoration." "So I did," he

replied, gravely nodding his head and quite unperturbed. "Shall I call on you again?" I asked. "Please do," he replied.

A few moments later he resumed his speech where he had ended, and as though it had all been prearranged, added a most apposite word of thanks for the honor bestowed, not on him, but on the scholarly traditions of Harvard which linked it to German scholarship.

ON my annual visits to Germany, I usually managed to see Hanfstaengl. (Hanfy was his Harvard nickname; Putzi is a nickname he acquired later.) Through him I met several Nazi leaders in the early years of the movement but it took a long time before I got to Hitler himself. My European journeys usually included a good deal of territory and I couldn't afford to wait around on the chance of seeing even Hitler. Hanfy felt that any newspaper correspondent or radio commentator should be willing to waste at least a week in prayerful hope that the Führer might condescend to receive him. He loved to be mysterious about arranging an interview, yet the results of his efforts didn't always justify the mystery by which they were surrounded. The American correspondents in Berlin soon got tired of getting the run-around from Hanfy and worked out their own contacts with the big figures in the Nazi regime.

Few of them ever got to Hitler. "It's the visiting firemen who have all the luck," they remarked when I finally landed my interview. I was surprised myself when in the late summer of 1932, while staying at the famous Kaiserh of Hotel in Berlin where Hitler always stayed until he became Chancellor, I got a telegram from Hanfstaengl in Munich telling me that Hitler would see me at Berchtesgaden the next day. Louis Lochner, veteran Berlin correspondent of the Associated Press, called me up to tell me that he had received the same summons, so I knew it was to be a joint interview.

We took the night train to Munich and were met by Hanfy at the station. Here we learned to everyone's disappointment that Karl von Wiegand, veteran Hearst correspondent, would also share the meeting with Hitler. It seems that Hanfy had wrested from Hitler a reluctant consent to see the American press.

Ever since Dorothy Thompson had written her unflattering *I Saw Hitler!*; which led to her later expulsion from Nazidom, the Führer had been chary about receiving American correspondents. For a year he refused all requests. He consented only after the unsuccessful 1932 meeting with President Hindenburg had lowered his prestige at home and abroad, and something was needed to restore it.

When statesmen or politicians spend time on interviews they expect to get something in return. Of course it may be nothing more than entertainment. Mussolini is always ready for an interview with an attractive woman. Even Hitler once complained to Hanfstaengl that if he had to see women correspondents, the least he could ask is that they be good looking. This was just after he had received a famous American woman writer—not Dorothy Thompson—who shall be nameless.

Mussolini, as has already been indicated, relishes an encounter with a nimble-witted writer to break his daily routine. But Hitler's important interviews have been granted only when events make it advisable for him to put certain ideas into circulation.

After the conquest of Ethiopia, Mussolini wanted to reconcile Europe to the fait accompli by announcing through his favorite British correspondent that now Italy was "satisfied." After Hindenburg refused to make Hitler Chancellor, the Führer wished the world to know that he was not at all discouraged about his prospects of ultimate success.

Hitler's personal car and chauffeur carried us from Munich to Berchtesgaden. We drove straight to the little hotel on the Obersalzberg, two hundred yards from Hitler's Swiss chalet. There we had lunch on the terrace overlooking the hillside while Hanfstaengl went over to announce our arrival.

Karl von Wiegand had insisted on a separate interview for the Hearst press. Lochner and I were just as well satisfied with this arrangement. Wiegand was with the Führer for only fifteen minutes and came back to the hotel in an angry frame of mind.

"That man is hopeless," he said. "He gets worse every time I see him. I got nothing out of him. Ask him a question and he makes a speech. This whole trip has been a waste of time."

(Following the national elections of July 31, 1932, in which the National Socialists won 37 per cent of the vote. Hitler on August 13 demanded of President Hindenburg that he be appointed Reich Chancellor. The old ex-field marshal refused to acquiesce, and publicly announced that he "regretted that Herr Hitler did not see himself in a position to support a national government appointed with the confidence of the Reich President, as he had agreed to do before the Reichstag elections." William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York, 1960), 166-169.)

Von Wiegand was thoroughly disgusted. Then and there I made up my mind that whatever happened, Hitler would at least have to break his speech into several distinct parts for my benefit. Unlike Lochner, I wasn't stationed in Germany and did not need to be discreet to escape expulsion. I resolved to open the interview by launching into the most dangerous topic I could think of—Hitler's attitude to the Jews.

**MY FIRST IMPRESSION** of the man as we stepped up to the open porch at the front of the Hitler chalet was unfavorable. He came out of the front door just as we arrived. Hanfstaengl whispered to him who we were and he greeted us without a smile, in an atmosphere of latent hostility. Yet the surroundings suggested relaxation. We could hear canaries and cockatoos chirping through the open windows: the Hitler wash—his sister was keeping house for

him—fluttered in the breeze at the side of the cottage, and apart from a few uniformed Nazi guards stationed on the paths and roads leading to the house, everything suggested peace.

We faced a lovely landscape—the green-clad Bavarian mountains joining those across the Austrian frontier a few kilometers away. One felt Hitler was justified in saying that to him Berchtesgaden meant: "Weg vom Berliner Asphalt, Zurück nach Deutschland," which explains why he has always preferred it to the Chancellery in the capital.

He was dressed in solemn black, including his tie. He abjures colors in his personal dress except such as are provided by the Nazi uniform. His slick, black hair parted in the middle and his clipped black mustache add no dignity.

We sat down and without giving Hitler or Lochner a chance to open the conversation, I plumped my first question: "In your attitude of antagonism towards the Jews, do you differentiate between German Jews and the Jews who have come into Germany from other countries?"

Germans often sought to justify anti-Semitism on the ground that it was directed primarily against the Jews who poured into Germany from Poland and Galicia after the war. I knew that the Nazis made no such distinction and wanted to bring this out from Hitler himself. I succeeded. For a moment he bored into me with his clear blue eyes which are his most attractive feature. "You have a Monroe Doctrine for America," he roared at me.

"We believe in a Monroe Doctrine for Germany. You exclude any would-be immigrants you do not care to admit. You regulate their number. You demand that they come up to a certain physical standard. You insist that they bring in a certain amount of money. You examine them as to their political opinions.

"We demand the same right. We have no concern with the Jews of other lands. But we are concerned about any anti-German elements in our own country. And we demand the right to deal with them as we see fit. Jews have been the proponents of subversive anti-German movements and as such must be dealt with."

He had not answered my question. And as the interview proceeded I realized that he has no capacity for logical consecutive thought. He feels much more than he thinks. But before I had a chance to go back at him, Louis Lochner, who evidently felt that I had given the interview a bad start, cut in with a question about the von Papen Government, then in its final days.

"Did you promise President Hindenburg to tolerate the von Papen Government?" he asked.

"No," Hitler replied. "I only promised to tolerate them so long as they were bearable. A general promise of toleration would have been sheer madness. We could only tolerate them so long as their foreign and domestic policies were acceptable. The fiasco at Lausanne (Hitler refers to the Lausanne meeting at which Germany and the Allied Powers agreed on a modification of the Young Plan which practically abolished reparations) contributed to our decision to discontinue toleration. If the German delegates at Lausanne had said 'No' to the French and stood by it this would have met with our approval."

("Away from Berlin's asphalt, back to Germany")  
(Franz von Papen was named Reich Chancellor by  
President Hindenburg on June 1, 1932.)

Franz von Papen was named Reich Chancellor by  
President Hindenburg on June 1, 1932.

Here was my chance to interrupt with a question concerning Hitler's personal attitude towards France.

"No understanding between France and Germany is possible," he answered. "At least not until the present French policy changes. You cannot have an understanding with a man who is choking you while you lie helpless. Nor is an understanding possible where there are French efforts to stimulate separatist movements within our borders. The existence of 65,000,000 Germans who demand the right to live is a reality with which France must learn to reckon."

Hitler would have gone on, but determined to make the most of the interview, I cut in with: "How do you feel about Russia? Italy seems able to deal with the Soviet Union."

"You can differentiate between a Government and its policies," he replied. "Italy is able to maintain good relations with the Soviet Government at the same time that she prosecutes all avowed Communists. She has few Communists. But it is impossible for any country with a large number of Communists within its own borders to have good relations with Soviet Russia." (Germany in 1932 had 6,000,000 Communist voters.)

It was Lochner's turn to interject another query about the immediate political situation.

"Herr Hitler," he said, "it is reported in the German press that in your interview with the Reich President you asked for the creation of a Nazi Government in which you would exercise a power equivalent to that of Mussolini in Italy."

"I never made any such demand in the form quoted," Hitler replied with some heat. "How could I be said to have demanded any such power when I was willing to leave the Reichswehr [the army] outside of my control? That would have provided an ample safeguard against any absolutism. Yet I have the right to complete control."

"But you don't have a majority vote?" I interjected.

Hitler continued, scarcely heeding my interruption. "Under the rules of democracy a majority of 51 per cent governs. I have 37 per cent of the total vote which means that I have 75 per cent of the power that is necessary to govern. That means I am entitled to three-fourths of the power and my opponents to one-fourth.

"I have my safe position. I can wait. I now have 13.7 million voters. Next time I will have fourteen to fifteen million and so it will go. In the run-off elections for President, I stood alone, yet there were thirteen million voters

for me. That is my hard-earned capital which no one can take from me. I slaved for it and risked my life for it. Without my party no one can govern Germany today. We bring into the business of government 75 per cent of the capital investment. Whoever furnishes the rest, whether it be the President or the parties, contributes only 25 per cent.

"And this takes no account of the plain truth that every unit of my investment is worth twice that of the others. My fifteen million voters are in reality worth thirty million. I have the bravest, the most energetic, and in every way the best German material in Germany—and the best disciplined, too. I don't have to march on Berlin as they say I propose to do. I am already there. The question is who will march out of Berlin.

"My capital represents no mean investment. It can be put to work in the business of government forthwith, without any majority votes, commissions, or committees. It can be put to work on the say-so of one man."

**HERE WAS** an opportunity to plumb Hitler's mind on the Führer-Prinzip—the leader principle, which is so dominant in the Nazi creed. It is expressed in the slogan: "Complete authority from above; absolute obedience from below." My question on it was: "Which is more important, the personality of the leader, or the policies of his party?" Something of Hitler's philosophy of dictatorship appeared in his answer:

"You cannot separate leader and party in any fundamental sense. Only after the period of organization is past, after party ideas have been translated into action and tested by experience can the leader be dispensed with or, if he transgresses, removed. No idea can be launched without a leader. "You cannot separate Fascism from the personality of Mussolini. If Bismarck had died in 1869 there would have been no German Empire. Yet ten years later he could have been dispensed with. Had Frederick the Great died prematurely, there would have been no Prussia. Only after a movement has been under way seventy or eighty years will it have developed the historic background and traditions that would enable it to carry on without a strong leader."

At this point came an interlude. A huge wolfhound came galloping across the lawn and up the steps of the porch. He approached his master expecting to be petted. But Hitler, irritated at the interruption, frowned at the dog and pointing with his finger under a nearby table, pronounced the single word "Platz!" which means "Take your place" or "Lie down."

The dog, in accord with Nazi tradition, obeyed immediately, but I could see him watch his master out of the corner of his eye. As Hitler continued talking the dog got up slowly, so as not to be observed, and while Hitler was absorbed in oratory, slunk away. I could understand that a man with Hitler's temperament, background, and experience might not care to make a friendly gesture towards an American correspondent, but it was surprising to see him observe the same stern aloofness towards his own dog.

The momentary interruption gave Lochner the chance to plant another question on immediate policy.

"When you achieve power, do you contemplate the erection of a Fascist bloc from the Baltic to the Mediterranean? There have been some reports to this effect."

"I have no formal bloc in mind," was Hitler's answer. "But you must remember that Europe is accustomed to being governed by systems which extend over many countries. Governmental systems have often crossed frontiers, acquired local color, and continued to flourish. Mussolini has said that Fascism was not an article of export. I can say the same of National Socialism.

Yet people are coming to me from every country in Europe to ask me for my recipe of government. They want my advice on how to launch movements in their own country. I tell them I have no general recipe. "Yet there are certain ideas of government which have general application, with allowances made for local differences. Europe cannot maintain itself in the uncertain currents of democracy. Europe needs some kind of authoritarian government. Formerly it was the monarch who provided this authority. Or an institution like the Catholic Church. The Holy Roman Empire is an example. The authority can assume different forms. But parliamentarism is not native to us and does not belong to our tradition. The parliamentary system has never functioned in Europe.

"Yet we cannot substitute brute force. No government can maintain itself for any length of time by sitting on bayonets. It must have the support of the masses. You cannot establish a dictatorship in a vacuum. A government that does not derive its strength from the people will fail in a foreign crisis. The soldier and the policeman do not constitute a state. Yet dictatorship is justified if the people declare their confidence in one man and ask him to lead."

Hitler sounded and acted as though he were bringing the interview to a close, but I decided to try another question that would carry a challenge.

"Why do you oppose big business?" I asked. (The Nazi Party platform, which has never been changed, calls for splitting up large business enterprises into small units. There is specific reference to eliminating all interest and the iniquity of the modern department store.)

"I don't oppose big business in all cases," Hitler replied. "I know that it takes organization to build an ocean liner or a locomotive. But we believe in the wide distribution of wealth. We live next to a country that has abolished private property. We do not wish to do that, but we must see to it that the average man has a chance to acquire property.

"In America everyone still carries the marshal's baton in his knapsack. But that is no longer true in Germany. Yet I cannot tell 65,000,000 Germans that they must be content with nothing, because 65,000,000 Germans have a great deal. The more millions have property, the better it will be for the whole nation, and the less temptation there

will be to follow the Russian experiment. The collectivist idea cannot mean real progress. There must be competition, but the competition must permit individual accumulation."

As we made ready to leave Lochner tried a final question.

"Do you expect to follow the paths of legality in your future steps?"

Hitler refused to be roused into an extended answer. He came nearer to smiling than he had at any point of the interview.

"Oh yes," he replied with a deprecatory gesture as though this were a matter of minor importance.

As I looked up I caught the reason why Hitler was breaking off the conversation. Captain [Ernst] Roehm, the Nazi leader who was later one of the leading victims of the 1934 purge, was approaching the house. We bade cursory farewells. The interview had lasted forty-five minutes. With some show of impatience. Hitler permitted Hanfstaengl to use Lochner's A.P. camera to take a snapshot of the three of us standing on the porch. ° Evidently Kaltenborn had forgotten that Karl von Wiegand was also included in the photograph, which is reproduced below.

**IT IS EVIDENT** from the above that Hitler reveals a somewhat sounder social and economic philosophy in private conversation than when he speaks in public. He has the orator's instinct for exaggeration and popularization, and is utterly without conscience or restraint when he is speaking for effect. He knows the mob mind, and his one concern is to win it and hold it.

What a tragedy for the German people to be led in these vital years by a warped personality, as far from normal as Germany's unhappy postwar generation. Defeat and frustration have marred the character of middleaged Germans as they marred that of the youthful Hitler.

Here is a man with countless prejudices, with a provincial outlook deriving from his own narrow experience in education, life, and thought. Man's fleshly temptations mean nothing to him. He eats no meat, drinks no wine, smokes no tobacco, loves no woman. He enjoys solitude and crowds, architectural plans and mass meetings.

He is quite unselfish and has infinite courage—I disbelieve the stories which would have it otherwise—and is quite ready to sacrifice his life for the Germany he loves. His sincerity is beyond question. He is too much of a fanatic to be insincere. A great agitator, a compelling speaker, a superb propagandist, a self-hypnotized popular leader who believes his own lies, Adolf Hitler seems created to lead the German people into a new Valley of Despair.

Germany's future depends today as in the past not on what the German people can do for and by themselves, but on what they can do in co-operation with neighbor peoples—notably Britain and Russia. No one who preaches "autarchy" can lead them to anything but ruin. German security must be collective to have any reality. Without free access to world markets and the world's raw materials, Germany cannot achieve the good life for her people. Nor is she strong enough to enforce access at the point of the sword.

Here, then, is the fundamental lesson Germany must learn. To get along with other nations by the skillful use of patience, tact, and diplomacy. Until she learns it she will not achieve that degree of world power to which she is entitled on the basis of her culture, her material strength, and the artistic and intellectual contributions of her people.

**THOUGHTS** such as these dampened my elation over having achieved a Hitler interview as we drove back to Munich. When Hanfstaengl asked whether we wished to stop for a glimpse of the lovely Koenigsee I welcomed the suggestion. And when he heard that I had never seen this gem of mountain lakes, von Wiegand's remonstrance that we should hurry back was overruled. With childish delight the former Harvard oarsman rowed Lochner and myself about, while von Wiegand waited impatiently for our return.

The late afternoon plane had gone when we arrived in Munich, and von Wiegand hurried to the railroad station while Lochner and I sat in the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel writing out and comparing our notes on the interview."

Two days later when I reached Paris I found a telegram from Lochner: "Hanfstaengl very anxious you should cable nothing to America regarding Hitler's comment on Jews."

A strange request. It must have come from Hitler himself, since Hanfstaengl, who heard everything Hitler said, failed to suggest any restriction. Was Hitler afraid of losing financial contributions to his party from certain prominent Jews in Germany who were trying to buy protection in that way?

Several years later when the Nazis were in power, I met Hitler again at the Nürnberg Party Congress. He was waiting in the lobby of his hotel for the start of the procession to the ceremonies at the City Hall. His blue eyes bored into me and he seemed to sense the absence of pro-Hitler enthusiasm in my face. He started to speak, then averted his gaze and turned abruptly away. Again I sensed that this man can handle a crowd much more effectively than he can deal with any individual who is not his subordinate. Yet some day he will be challenged by an individual whom he cannot avoid. That day will mark his downfall.

Evidently Kaltenborn had forgotten that Karl von Wiegand was also included in the photograph, which is reproduced above.

Portions of Lochner's notes are in the Lochner Papers, Mass Communications History Center, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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## It Seems Like Yesterday

By, H.V. Kaltenborn

Published, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York

Chapter 16 - Pages 63 - 66

“He is an outstanding demagogic orator who lacks the power of decisive action. His total lack of humor, tense speech, his self-centered egotism, and a certain sense of melancholy make one feel that here is a man destined by fate to fill a tragic hour of history. Hitler is a fanatical popular leader who could lead the German people into a new Valley of Despair. He suggests failure rather than success.”

That was my partially correct analysis of Hitler written right after my first interview with him in 1932, a few months before he achieved power. Ever since the days of the early twenties, when I visited Nazi headquarters in Munich, saw the might of Hitler's private army, and realized the impact of *Mein Kampf* which Hitler wrote in jail after his Beer Hall Putsch failed. I was eager to talk to this Austrian demagogue.

Hitler had an intense aversion to interviews—mine was the last he gave to any foreign correspondent before becoming chancellor. It was also the last in which he discussed a great variety of topics with complete freedom. My piano playing Harvard classmate, Ernst Hanfstaengl, better known as Putzi, who was Hitler's liaison officer for the foreign press, arranged the interview for me and Louis Lochner, the veteran Berlin correspondent of the Associated Press.

Ever since Dorothy Thompson had written her uncomplimentary *I Saw Hitler*, the Nazi leader had been chary about receiving American reporters. For a year he refused all requests. He consented only after his 1932 meeting with President Hindenburg did not get the post of Reich Chancellor. His party had just suffered an election loss of thirty-four members in the Reichstag and he was eager to restore his faltering prestige at home and abroad. When statesmen and politicians spend time on interviews they expect to get something in return. It may be nothing more than publicity or even entertainment. After being interviewed by one famous American woman reporter, who must be nameless, Hitler complained to Hanfstaengl that if he had to see women correspondents the least he could ask was that they be good-looking.

Hitler's personal car and chauffeur drove us from Munich to Berchtesgaden where we lunched at the little hotel two hundred yards from Hitler's Swiss chalet on the Obersalzberg, while Hanfstaengl went over to announce our arrival. This was before the construction of the Eagle's Nest on top of the mountain. Later, as we stepped out on the open porch at the front of Hitler's chalet, my first impression of the man was unfavorable.

He came of the front door just as we arrived. Hanfstaengl whispered to him who we were and he greeted us without a smile or a word of welcome in an atmosphere of latent hostility. He was dressed in solemn black, including his necktie. He abjured colors in his personal dress except as provided by the Nazi uniform. His slick black hair parted in the middle and his clipped black mustache added no dignity. I had made up my mind not to listen to a Hitler tirade as an interview and resolved to interrupt him if he launched into one. We sat down and without giving Hitler or Lochner a chance to open the conversation, I plumped my first question, which was about his anti-Semitism. It evoked the typical Hitler tirade which I interrupted with other questions. Hitler had little capacity for logical, consecutive thought or analysis. But his mind was quick and keen. Among other topics, the forty-five-minute interview touched upon the Von Papen cabinet, which had excluded the Nazis' Franco-German relations, and the political situation in Germany.

Hitler obviously disliked being questioned about politics and the Nazi party. He was eager to close the interview and did so when he saw Captain Ernst Roehm approaching the house. With a show of impatience, Hitler permitted Hanfstaengl to use Lochner's AP camera to take a snapshot of us standing on the porch of his house. It may be typical that the man was not even on friendly terms with huge shepherd dog who bounded on the porch during interview, apparently seeking a recognizing pat from his master. Hitler shouted gruffly, “Platz,” and the dog, his tail down, slunk under the table. A minute later, as Hitler began another oration, the dog sneaked away.

As a human being Hitler was so unimpressive that most of us who talked with him before he came into full power refused to believe that German people would ever be stupid enough to tolerate him as a leader. We underestimated him because he was an introvert, an ascetic, and narrow-minded. We failed to allow for the man's fanatical drive, his magnetic power, and his single-minded devotion to his ideas.

Decent human beings could hardly anticipate the utterly unscrupulous methods the Nazi were ready to use. The phony Reichstag fire was just one example. Although he had been made Chancellor by Hindenburg on January 30, 1933, Hitler still lacked a Reichstag majority. He needed an excuse to oust the communist members so that the Nazis could gain control. His propaganda chief, Goebbels, said, “We must do something striking.”

They did. The carefully prepared fire broke out on February 27 and provided an excuse to drive eighty-one communist members from the Reichstag. Their absence enabled him to win dictatorial power. The Nazis accused the Communists of starting the fire. At the slow trumped-up trial, the communist defendants, who got the better of

Goering when they were on the stand, were acquitted, but a poor half-witted Dutchman, Marinus der Lubbe, was convicted and beheaded for the crime the Nazis themselves committed.

Hitler's fanaticism, which ultimately resulted in the mass murders of thousands of innocent Jews and Poles, got off to its start with the Blood Purge within his own party in the summer of 1934. On the pretext that there was a plot against his life, Hitler ordered the execution of about 1,000 Nazi leaders, including Ernest Roehm, head of the Storm Troopers, and General Kurt von Schleicher who preceded Hitler as Chancellor. This Blood Purge gave Hitler complete control of the Reichswehr and made him supreme in his power as dictator.

My first unfavorable impression of Hitler, which substantiated by my later contacts, left me with an intense dislike of the man. He was narrow bigoted, humorless. His information—and he had a lot of it—was lopsided. His most consistent trait was the utter sincerity with which he believed his own lies. He was selfless in his indifference to most things of the flesh. He cared nothing for tobacco, meat, alcohol, or exercise. Even his taste for women was erratic and intermittent.

But the man had a remarkable instinctive intelligence for leadership. He was sort of a Pied Piper who could appeal to every negative quality in the German mind and heart. He knew how to capitalize German defeat, German economic prostration, Germany's apparently hopeless situation in the world. He promised everything when nothing seemed possible. He combined propaganda with personality. In him the little man, the forgotten man saw his dreams come true. And with that complete German myopia which is unable to see the non-German aspect of any issue, the politically illiterate Germans tolerated the screwball leadership of the man whose real name was Schicklgruber.

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## **Fifty Fabulous Years**

By, H.V. Kaltenborn

Published by, G.P. Putman's Sons, New York

Chapter 20 Pages 186 & 187 Excerpts

Most people who met Adolf Hitler before he came to power in January, 1933 were apt to underestimate him. I was no exception. We underestimated the fanatical drive and magnetic power of the man. We overestimated the desire and ability of the German people to resist. Hitler could have never become Chancellor without the assistance of the German right-wing business leaders and politicians who financed his movement and negotiated the deals which made him Germany's political leader. Nor could he have come to power without the co-operation of the Moscow-directed German Communists who helped destroy and discourage the democratic elements that tried to maintain parliamentary government. Once in power Hitler was supported by millions of Germans who gladly submerged their individual desires to his all-embracing leadership and who helped that even without was Hitler might retrieve of the losses resulting from World War I.

After meeting Hitler I myself felt almost reassured. I could not see how a man of his type, a plebian Austrian of limited mentality, could ever gain the allegiance of a majority of Germans. This was in the fall of 1932. Hitler had flatly rejected the terms under which the aging President Hindenburg had proffered him the chancellorship. The Nazi party had also suffered an electoral setback which reduced their representation in the Reichstag from 230 to 196. Lois Lochner, then Associated Press correspondent in Germany, and I had both asked for an interview with der Führer. Quite unexpectedly my Harvard Classmate Ernst Hanfstaengl, then Hitler's liaison officer for the foreign press, telephoned me that the Führer would see us the next day in his Berchtesgaden home. We knew about his tendency to orate at newspapermen and we came prepared with a series of questions to which we were determined to get answers.

Hitler had no love for foreign newsmen. He greeted using a perfunctory and hostile manner. The interview took place on the porch of his charming chalet in the Bavarian Alps near the Austrian frontier. It was a lovely spot and we sat on the porch that dominated a beautiful view of the mountains. It was a warm summer morning and canary birds were chirping in merrily cages that hung all over the porch. In these surroundings Adolf began to talk with frowning face as if he were haranguing a crowd. I purposely irritated him with my first question: "Why does your ant-Semitism make no distinction between the Jews that flooded into Germany during the postwar period and the many fine Jewish families that have German for generations?"

"All Jews are foreigners," he shouted back. "Who are you to ask me how I deal with foreigners. You Americans admit no foreigner unless he has good money, good physique, and good morals. Who are you to talk about who should be allowed in Germany?" That got us off on the tone which dominated the entire interview.

His intense hostility to France came out in his response between France and Germany. "There can be no good relations between Germany and the outside world, not while France continues to act as a bully!" he shouted at the mountains behind us. "France is holding us down. We are helpless. She is choking us to death. I know how to deal with France. They will learn to reckon with us!"

On Russia he was equally vehement. “You can’t have many Communalists in your own country. We have too many Communists in Germany to make good relations with the Soviet Union possible.”

Asked if he felt that Nazism was an article of export he replied, “I don’t have to export national socialism. People are coming to me from all over the world. They see many excellent traits in our doctrine which they would like to develop in their own countries. Many points in the Nazi party program could be used by other nations. Many points in the Nazi party program could be used by other nations.

“One thing is certain,” he went on, “democracy is not for Europe. Europe must have authoritarian government. We have always had it through church, king and Kaiser. Parliamentarism is not native to us and does not belong to the German tradition.”

It was his belief that once a majority of the German people expressed confidence in him he could proceed to govern them as their Führer, without tolerating any interference. But he never pretended that he could rule without popular consent. As he put it, “I don’t expect to take power until I get the approval of the German people. I must have the support of the broad masses. A government cannot sit on bayonets. It must derive its strength from the people. Once the people give their approval to an individual it means that they want that individual to take over and govern. They don’t want to be hampered by parliamentary debates. They expect the leader in whom they have placed their confidence to be a real leader.

“A dictatorship is justified once the people declare their confidence in one man and ask him to rule. That is the basis on which I expect to establish my government in Germany.”

After this meeting with Hitler I judged him to be too much of a fanatic, too vehement in expressing his beliefs to appeal to sober judgment. Those of us who met him before 1933 could not imagine that such a person would ever be able to translate into action the plans he had sketched in *Mein Kampf*. He did not appear to have his own mental and physical processes under sufficient control to be able to harness them to the achievement of a specific goal. He suggested embittered failure more than future success. His inflexibility and apparent inability to compromise would make it difficult for him to come to power in the normal way of political procedure. Most successful political leaders of the past have been adept at adjusting to change. They were willing to bargain to achieve their ends. The substance of Hitler’s speeches and his party platform were often either self-contradictory or absurd.

What we underestimated was the appeal of the irrational and the impact of cleverly manipulated and constantly hammered propaganda on the minds and emotions of the German people. Hitler once told me that there are three rules for successful propaganda: “Make it simple—say it often—make it burn!” Hitler knew better than most outsiders the strength of his own party. He told me, “I have the biggest single party in Germany. Moreover, any unit in my following is worth two of the units in anybody else’s following. Within the ranks of the Nazi party I have the bravest, the best, the most energetic human material in Germany. What is even more important our ranks are disciplined. My men obey.”

When I asked him before he came to power whether he would use his disciplined forces for a march on Berlin he said, “I do not have to march on Berlin, I am already in Berlin. My fifteen million voters in and out of Berlin are already worth thirty million. “These fifteen million can put to work on the word of one man—and I am that man!”

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## **The Reminiscences of H.V. Kaltenborn by Frank Ernest Hill, October-November 1953**

**Oral History Research Office – Radio Unit**

Manuscript- Page 152 and 153 Excerpts (later published into a book, which is now considered rare)

I met Adolf Hitler repeatedly. I followed his career in Germany almost from its beginning with both interest and aversion. Like most people I did not believe that he could ever come to power there. He was not the type of man you would think the sober Germans would ever accept as their leader. He was fanatic and a megalomaniac, a man of great personal magnetism, single-mindedness. He was so sincere and so emotional that he even hypnotized himself into believing his own lies, which is quite an achievement. He was introvert rather than an extrovert like Mussolini. He had little knowledge of anything outside his own country, and was able to misinterpret history better than any man I’ve ever talked with. He could always quote the right examples to the wrong purpose. He was not interested in foreign languages, or in foreign affairs except as they concerned Germany. He was always convinced that he alone was right, and that he could never be wrong. This profound belief in himself made others to believe in him and helped make him master of Europe. He was not easy to interview, and had an instinctive sense that all foreign correspondents disliked him – which was true. I never got along with Hitler on a man-to-man give and take basis. He began to orate at me, and I at once began to interrupt with challenging questions. Others had told me that his was the only way one could transform a monologue that had little news value into a newsworthy interview, so I followed his ranting with close attention and jabbed in a question on a fresh subject at frequent intervals.

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## Mary Margaret McBride - Radio Show Interview

(H.V.K.) "I was on the air practically all the time, night and day, they would wake me up, a bulletin would come in, and I would go on the air, half asleep, and analyze it." (MMM) "It was going on all day long, interrupting every program, I heard that" (H.V.K.) "Yes, constantly, because the interest in the United States reached a high point then, that it has never reached, except during very brief periods, during the second world war, ah, for example, when we were expecting, thee ah, peace with Japan, peace with Germany. Those highlight moments, of course, there was equal listener interest, but outside of that, I think the Munich Crisis was really a top listening period for American radio." (MMM) "I was reading last night, thee accounts, that we, that you got from London, at that time, of when he came back, when Chamberlain came back for the second time, how he was met by cheering crowds and everybody thought peace in our time, and there was talk of a knighthood for him, you remember all that?" (H.V.K.) "Oh yes, a he was the great hero for the moment, because he had returned, and the British people who knew they were not prepared for war, were gratified beyond all else, but for the moment, at least, war had been avoided." (MMM) "In France, the same thing was happening." (H.V.K.) "And remembered I had went on the air, and I said, "today they ring the bells, tomorrow they may ring their hands", and that turned out to be very true, because I knew enough about Hitler and dictators in general, to realize, that every concession you make to them, merely creates another demand, and that by the way is the lesson of history that we must bear in mind today, that there is a dictator government that is powerful, and which is expanding, and which is imperialist, and which is aggressive as our state department has said, and such a government must be met with firmness, not with concessions, with directness, not with appeasement." (MMM) "What thing did any man ever say to you that stands out right now in letters of red in your mind, would it be Willkie, would it be Roosevelt, would it be Hitler, would it be Mussolini, all those you interviewed, or would it be some other one person?" (H.V.K.) "Well, as you mention those names, a phrase flashed into my mind from ah, Hitler's angry, when I defended the Jews of Germany, "You are wrong!, he just roared at me, and it made quite an impression, because I knew that I was right, and that he was wrong, and I said to myself at the time, well I can't answer you now, but the world will answer you, and it did."



Mary Margaret McBride

The former Cleveland Press columnist and "Hollywood Walk of Fame Honoree" began her radio broadcast career with WOR, in New York City, in 1934. Her very popular radio shows spanned decades, over some forty years. She worked at all three radio networks, starting with CBS, then NBC and ABC. Later her New York Herald Tribune's syndicated radio broadcasts garnered her a wider audience, being heard on more stations.

The University of Maryland Archives contains her correspondence with H.V.K. throughout many years, (Series 2.1, Box 5, Folder 16). Hans and Olga Kaltenborn, both were frequent guests on her radio programs.

Above is a radio show transcript of an interview with H.V.Kaltenborn, show air, date unknown, but believed to be in the 1950's, shortly after the release of H.V.K.'s book, "50 Fabulous Years". In the interview transcribed below, he recalled a moment during his 1932 interview with Adolf Hitler.