

= Ernst Moritz Hess =

Ernst Moritz Hess (20 March 1890 ? 14 September 1983) was a baptized German Jew who served in the Imperial German Army during the First World War . He commanded the company of the Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment 16 in which Adolf Hitler served during the war . During the inter @-@ war period he served as a judge before being forced out of office after the passing of the Nuremberg Laws by the Nazis in 1935 , as he was classified as a " full @-@ blooded Jew " due to his mother being Jewish , even though he was baptised a Protestant .

He emigrated with his family to Bolzano in Italy to escape Nazi persecution but was eventually forced to move back to Germany , though as a former war comrade of Hitler 's he was granted protection and some privileges for a while . However , his privileges were removed in 1941 and he spent the rest of the war as a forced labourer ; his sister died in Auschwitz but his mother managed to escape to Switzerland in 1945 . Following the war he began a new career in railway management and was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his services to the Deutsche Bundesbahn .

= = Early life and war service = =

Born in Gelsenkirchen in what was then the Rhine Province of the Kingdom of Prussia , Hess lived in Düsseldorf before the First World War . His father Julius was a lawyer and his mother Elisabeth was a member of a Jewish banking family from Wetzlar . Despite his Jewish ancestry on his mother 's side , he was baptised and brought up as a Protestant Christian .

On the outbreak of war he enlisted as an officer in the 2nd Royal Bavarian Reserve Infantry and was posted to the front line in Flanders , where he suffered a serious wound in October 1914 . Hitler served as a Gefreiter in the same regiment and in the summer of 1916 , Hess briefly became Hitler 's commanding officer . He sustained another serious wound the following October and was sent to Germany to recuperate . Hess was well regarded as a soldier and was decorated several times , receiving the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class as well as the Bavarian Military Order of Merit . In 1918 he was promoted to Lieutenant and in 1934 he was awarded the Honour Cross of the World War 1914 / 1918 .

After the war Hess became a judge in Düsseldorf , where he lived with his wife Margarete and daughter Ursula . Hitler 's rise to prominence came as a surprise to Hess and many of his colleagues from the regiment . The future dictator had been something of a non @-@ entity during his time in the army , with no friends within the regiment and little interaction with others . Hess regarded Hitler as " an absolute cypher " and spoke of his surprise that Hitler had been one of his comrades : " What , Hitler ? He was in our unit ? We never even noticed him . "

= = Discrimination and exile = =

Hitler 's accession to power led to the passage of a series of antisemitic laws banning Jews from the civil service . Although Hess was a Protestant Christian , the laws defined him as a " full @-@ blooded Jew " as he had four Jewish grandparents . In April 1933 , a " Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service " was passed banning many Jews from public service . Hess survived this first purge of Jews owing to the " front @-@ line fighters ' privilege " (Frontkämpferprivileg) he was able to invoke as a consequence of his war service . The Frontkämpferprivileg was instituted after Reichspräsident Paul von Hindenburg protested to Hitler that Jewish war veterans were being dismissed from state employment . Those who could prove that they had served on the front lines of the war were allowed to invoke the Frontkämpferprivileg to stay in their jobs .

However , in the autumn of 1935 the Nuremberg Laws revoked this privilege and instituted a full ban on Jews in the civil service . Hess had to leave his job as a judge at the start of 1936 and was forced out of Düsseldorf after being beaten up by Nazi supporters outside his house in the autumn of that year . He moved with his family to Wuppertal , then in October 1937 emigrated to Bolzano in the German @-@ speaking South Tyrol region of Italy , where he could continue the education in

German of his 11 @-@ year @-@ old daughter .

Hess sought to lessen the impact of his racial classification by petitioning Hitler to make an exemption for himself and his daughter , who was classified as a " Mischling (crossbreed) 1st degree " . In a letter sent in June 1936 , Hess highlighted his Christian upbringing , patriotic outlook and military service . He wrote : " For us , it is a kind of spiritual death to now be branded as Jews and exposed to general contempt . " He was aided by Fritz Wiedemann , who had been an aide de camp in his regiment 's headquarters and later served as Hitler 's personal adjutant between 1934 ? 39 . Wiedemann was able to intercede with Hans Heinrich Lammers , Head of the Reich Chancellery , who was also a war veteran .

Although Hitler turned down Hess 's petition , a number of concessions were nonetheless made ; Hess was allowed to continue receiving his pension , although at a reduced rate , he was exempted from the obligation to adopt the middle name " Israel " identifying himself as a Jew , and he was able to acquire a new passport that was not stamped with a red " J " , enabling him to travel abroad ? a privilege that Jews no longer possessed by this time .

= = Return to Germany = =

In October 1939 , Hitler and Mussolini concluded the South Tyrol Option Agreement under which the German @-@ speaking population of South Tyrol was given the choice of complete Italianisation ? abandoning their German language and even their personal names ? or emigrating to Nazi Germany . As a result , Hess and his family were forced to return to Germany . Attempts to emigrate to Switzerland or Brazil failed , so they moved briefly back to Düsseldorf before resettling in Unterwössen , a small village in the district of Traunstein in the far south @-@ east of Bavaria , where his daughter attended the Landschulheim Marquartstein , a local gymnasium and boarding school .

Wiedemann and Lammers had provided assurances that Hess would not be harmed . In August 1940 , Heinrich Himmler , the Reichsführer of the SS , issued a letter to the Düsseldorf Gestapo ordering that Hess should not be " inopportuned in any way whatsoever " . Noting that Hess had been " both in the same company as the Führer and briefly the Führer 's company commander " , Himmler instructed that Hess should be granted " relief and protection as per the Führer 's wishes " and asked that he be informed if Hess should leave Düsseldorf . A follow @-@ up letter was sent by Lammers in November 1940 , informing Hess that " it is , however , the Führer 's wish that you should not be subject to any further restrictions because of your ancestry beyond those required by law . " Lammers expressly informed Hess that he was to use the letter for his protection : " I give you this letter , if necessary , to make use [for your protection] " .

It is unclear what role Hitler himself played in granting protection to Hess . A case is known of a Jew who enjoyed Hitler 's personal protection ? his former family doctor , Eduard Bloch , whom Hitler called an Edeljude (" noble Jew ") . Hitler is known to have felt very close to the other veterans of his regiment . Thomas Weber , the author of Hitler 's First War : Adolf Hitler , the Men of the List Regiment , and the First World War , has said that it is conceivable that Hitler knew Hess personally because the two men had been wounded in the Battle of the Somme only a day apart , and may have been initially treated in the same place before being transported together to the same hospital in Germany . However , Weber cautions that the letters of protection may have been organised without Hitler 's knowledge by Wiedemann , " because he did the same in other cases involving Jewish soldiers . " The letter from Himmler was not found until 2012 , when it was discovered in surviving Gestapo files on Jewish lawyers and judges in Germany . It was publicised in the July 2012 issue of the quarterly publication Jewish Voice From Germany and was corroborated by Hess 's daughter Ursula .

= = Loss of protection and enslavement = =

The protection that Hess enjoyed turned out to be only temporary respite from persecution . Hess 's friend Wiedemann was dismissed from his position by Hitler and sent into de facto exile as Consul

General to San Francisco . In May 1941 , Hess was informed that the protection order had been revoked and that he was now regarded as being " a Jew like any other " . Petitions to Berlin were unsuccessful , and in June 1941 he was summoned to the " Aryanization Office " in Munich . Lammers ' letter of protection was taken from him and he was sent to Milbertshofen concentration camp near Munich , where he was put to work as a labourer . He was subsequently assigned to the Munich firm of L. Ehrengut and later to a plumber 's , Georg Grau , where he served as a forced labourer until 20 April 1945 . His wife Margarete remained in Unterwössen , where she lived with her parents , but his teenage daughter Ursula was forced to work in an electrical firm in Munich .

Hess 's Jewish mother Elisabeth and sister Berta believed that the protection that he had received also extended to them . As a result , they did not comply with the restrictions imposed on Jews . However , when their case was reviewed in 1942 , Adolf Eichmann of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office) personally ordered their deportation to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia . Berta was subsequently killed at Auschwitz , while Elisabeth managed to escape to Switzerland in February 1945 . She later emigrated to Brazil with her son Paul . Hess himself only survived because of his " privileged miscegenated marriage " with Margarete .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

After the fall of the Third Reich , Hess was nominated to serve again as a judge in Düsseldorf but declined , as he did not wish to work alongside former colleagues who had been part of the Nazi judicial system . He started a new career in the railways in 1946 , and from 1949 ? 55 served as President of the German Federal Railways Authority in Frankfurt am Main . He was awarded a Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany and was given a plaque of honour by the city of Frankfurt in 1970 . He died there on 14 September 1983 .