

= Rudolf Hess =

Rudolf Walter Richard Heß , also spelled Hess (26 April 1894 ? 17 August 1987) , was a prominent politician in Nazi Germany . Appointed Deputy Führer to Adolf Hitler in 1933 , he served in this position until 1941 , when he flew solo to Scotland in an attempt to negotiate peace with the United Kingdom during World War II . He was taken prisoner and eventually was convicted of crimes against peace , serving a life sentence .

Hess enlisted in the 7th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment as an infantryman at the outbreak of World War I. He was wounded several times over the course of the war , and won the Iron Cross , 2nd class , in 1915 . Shortly before the war ended , Hess enrolled to train as an aviator , but he saw no action in this role . He left the armed forces in December 1918 with the rank of Leutnant der Reserve .

In 1919 , Hess enrolled in the University of Munich , where he studied geopolitics under Karl Haushofer , a proponent of the concept of Lebensraum (" living space ") , which later became one of the pillars of Nazi Party (National Socialist German Workers Party ; NSDAP) ideology . Hess joined the NSDAP on 1 July 1920 , and was at Hitler 's side on 8 November 1923 for the Beer Hall Putsch , a failed Nazi attempt to seize control of the government of Bavaria . Whilst serving time in jail for this attempted coup , Hess helped Hitler write his opus , Mein Kampf , which became a foundation of the political platform of the NSDAP .

After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 , Hess was appointed Deputy Führer of the NSDAP and received a post in Hitler 's cabinet . He was the third most powerful man in Germany , behind only Hitler and Hermann Göring . In addition to appearing on Hitler 's behalf at speaking engagements and rallies , Hess signed into law much of the legislation , including the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 , which stripped the Jews of Germany of their rights in the lead @-@ up to the Holocaust .

Hess continued to be interested in aviation , learning to fly the more advanced aircraft that were coming into development at the start of World War II . On 10 May 1941 he undertook a solo flight to Scotland , where he hoped to arrange peace talks with the Duke of Hamilton , whom he believed to be prominent in opposition to the British government . Hess was immediately arrested on his arrival and was held in British custody until the end of the war , when he was returned to Germany to stand trial in the Nuremberg Trials of major war criminals in 1946 . Throughout much of the trial , he claimed to be suffering from amnesia , but later admitted this was a ruse . Hess was convicted of crimes against peace and conspiracy with other German leaders to commit crimes and was transferred to Spandau Prison in 1947 , where he served a life sentence . Repeated attempts by family members and prominent politicians to win him early release were blocked by the Soviet Union . Still in custody in Spandau , he died by suicide in 1987 at the age of 93 . After his death the prison was demolished to prevent it from becoming a neo @-@ Nazi shrine .

= = Early life = =

Hess , the oldest of three children , was born on 26 April 1894 in Alexandria , Egypt , into the ethnic German family of Fritz Hess , a prosperous merchant from Bavaria , and Clara Hess (née Münch) . His brother , Alfred , was born in 1897 and his sister , Margarete , was born in 1908 . The family lived in a villa on the Egyptian coast near Alexandria , and visited Germany often from 1900 , staying at their summer home in Reicholdsgrün (now part of Kirchenlamitz) in the Fichtel Mountains . Hess attended a German language Protestant school in Alexandria from 1900 to 1908 , when he was sent back to Germany to study at a boarding school in Bad Godesberg . He demonstrated an aptitude for science and mathematics , but his father wished him to join the family business , Hess & Co . , so he sent him in 1911 to study at the École supérieure de commerce in Neuchâtel , Switzerland . After a year there , Hess took an apprenticeship at a trading company in Hamburg .

= = World War I = =

Within weeks of the outbreak of World War I , Hess enlisted in the 7th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment . His initial posting was against the British on the Somme ; he was present at the First Battle of Ypres . On 9 November 1914 Hess transferred to the 1st Infantry Regiment , stationed near Arras . He was awarded the Iron Cross , second class , and promoted to Gefreiter (corporal) in April 1915 . After additional training at the Munster Training Area , he was promoted to Vizefeldwebel (senior non @-@ commissioned officer) and received the Bavarian Military Merit Cross . Returning to the front lines in November , he fought in Artois , participating in the battle for the town of Neuville @-@ Saint @-@ Vaast . After two months out of action with a throat infection , Hess served in the Battle of Verdun in May , and was hit by shrapnel in the left hand and arm on 12 June 1916 in fighting near the village of Thiaumont . After a month off to recover , he was sent back to the Verdun area , where he remained until December .

Hess was promoted to platoon leader of the 10th Company of the 18th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment , which was serving in Romania . He was wounded on 23 July and again on 8 August 1917 ; the first injury was a shell splinter to the left arm , which was dressed in the field , but the second was a bullet wound that entered the upper chest near the armpit and exited near his spinal column , leaving a pea @-@ sized entry wound and a cherry stone @-@ sized exit wound on his back . By 20 August he was well enough to travel , so he was sent to hospital in Hungary and eventually back to Germany , where he recovered in hospital in Meissen . In October he received promotion to Leutnant der Reserve and was recommended for , but did not receive , the Iron Cross , first class . At his father 's request , Hess was transferred to a hospital closer to home , arriving at Alexandersbad on 25 October .

While still convalescing , Hess had requested that he be allowed to enrol to train as a pilot , so after some Christmas leave with his family he reported to Munich , where he passed the required tests and underwent aeronautical training . By 14 October he had been assigned to Jagdstaffel 35b , a Bavarian fighter squadron equipped with Fokker D.VII biplanes . He saw no action with Jagdstaffel 35b , as the war ended on 11 November 1918 , before he had the opportunity .

Hess was discharged from the armed forces in December 1918 . The family fortunes had taken a serious downturn , as their business interests in Egypt had been expropriated by the British . Hess joined the Thule Society , an antisemitic right @-@ wing Völkisch group , and a Freikorps , one of many such volunteer paramilitary organisations active in Germany at the time . Bavaria witnessed frequent and often bloody conflicts between right @-@ wing groups such as the Freikorps and left @-@ wing forces as they fought for control of the state during this period . Hess was a participant in street battles in the spring of 1919 and led a group which distributed thousands of antisemitic pamphlets in Munich .

In 1919 Hess enrolled in the University of Munich , where he studied history and economics . His geopolitics professor was Karl Haushofer , a proponent of the concept of Lebensraum (" living space ") , which Haushofer cited to justify the proposal that Germany should forcefully conquer additional territory in Eastern Europe . Hess later introduced this concept to Adolf Hitler , and it became one of the pillars of Nazi Party ideology . Hess became friends with Haushofer and his son Albrecht , a social theorist and lecturer .

Ilse Pröhl , a fellow student at the university , met Hess in April 1920 when they by chance rented rooms in the same boarding house . They married on 20 December 1927 and their son Wolf Rüdiger Hess was born ten years later , in 1937 .

= = Relationship with Hitler = =

After hearing NSDAP leader Hitler , a powerful orator , speak for the first time in 1920 at a Munich rally , Hess became completely devoted to him . They held a shared belief in the stab @-@ in @-@ the @-@ back myth , the notion that Germany 's loss in World War I was caused by a conspiracy of Jews and Bolsheviks rather than a military defeat . Hess joined the NSDAP on 1 July as member number 16 . As the party continued to grow , holding rallies and meetings in ever larger beer halls in Munich , he focused his attention on fundraising and organisational activities . On 4 November 1921 he was injured while protecting Hitler when a bomb planted by a Marxist group exploded at the

Hofbräuhaus during a party event . Hess joined the Sturmabteilung (SA) by 1922 and helped organise and recruit its early membership .

Meanwhile , problems continued with the economy ; hyperinflation caused personal fortunes to be rendered worthless . When the German government failed to meet their reparations payments and French troops marched in to occupy the industrial areas along the Ruhr in January 1923 , widespread civil unrest was the result . Hitler decided the time was ripe to attempt to seize control of the government with a coup d'état modelled on Benito Mussolini 's 1922 March on Rome . Hess was with Hitler on the night of 8 November 1923 when he and the SA stormed a public meeting organised by Bavaria 's de facto ruler , Staatskommissar (state commissioner) Gustav von Kahr , in the Bürgerbräukeller , a large beer hall in Munich . Brandishing a pistol , Hitler interrupted Kahr 's speech and announced that the national revolution had begun , declaring the formation of a new government with World War I General Erich Ludendorff . The next day , Hitler and several thousand supporters attempted to march to the Ministry of War in the city centre . Gunfire broke out between the Nazis and the police ; fourteen marchers and four police officers were killed . Hitler was arrested on 11 November .

Hess and some SA men had taken a few of the dignitaries hostage on the night of the 8th , driving them to a house about 50 kilometres (31 mi) from Munich . When Hess left briefly to make a phone call the next day , the hostages convinced the driver to help them escape . Hess , stranded , called Ilse Pröhl , who brought him a bicycle so he could return to Munich . He went to stay with the Haushofers and then fled to Austria , but they convinced him to return . He was arrested and sentenced to 18 months in prison for his role in the attempted coup , which later became known as the Beer Hall Putsch . Hitler was sentenced to five years imprisonment , and the NSDAP and SA were both outlawed .

Both men were incarcerated in Landsberg Prison , where Hitler soon began work on his memoir , Mein Kampf (" My Struggle ") , which he dictated to fellow prisoners Hess and Emil Maurice . Edited by publisher Max Amann , Hess and others , the work was published in two parts in 1925 and 1926 . It was later released in a single volume , which became a best @-@ seller after 1930 . This book , with its message of violent antisemitism , became the foundation of the political platform of the NSDAP .

Hitler was released on parole on 20 December 1924 and Hess ten days later . The ban on the NSDAP and SA was lifted in February 1925 , and the party grew to 100 @,@ 000 members in 1928 and 150 @,@ 000 in 1929 . They received only 2 @.@ 6 per cent of the vote in the 1928 election , but support increased steadily up until the seizure of power in 1933 .

Hitler named Hess his private secretary in April 1925 at a salary of 500 Reichsmarks per month , and named him as personal adjutant on 20 July 1929 . Hess accompanied Hitler to speaking engagements around the country and became his friend and confidante . In December 1932 Hess was named party Political Central Commissioner .

Retaining his interest in flying after the end of his active military career , Hess obtained his private pilot 's licence on 4 April 1929 . His instructor was World War I flying ace Theodor Croneiss . In 1930 Hess became the owner of a BFW M.23b monoplane sponsored by the party newspaper , the Völkischer Beobachter . He acquired two more Messerschmitt aircraft in the early 1930s , logging many flying hours and becoming proficient in the operation of light single @-@ engine aircraft .

= = Deputy Führer = =

On 30 January 1933 Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor , his first step in gaining dictatorial control of Germany . Hess was named Deputy Führer of the NSDAP on 21 April and was appointed to the cabinet , with the post of Reich Minister without Portfolio , on 1 December . With offices in the Brown House in Munich and another in Berlin , Hess was responsible for several departments , including foreign affairs , finance , health , education and law . All legislation passed through his office for approval , except that concerning the army , the police and foreign policy , and he wrote and co @-@ signed many of Hitler 's decrees . An organiser of the annual Nuremberg Rallies , he usually gave the opening speech and introduced Hitler . Hess also spoke over the radio and at

rallies around the country , so frequently that the speeches were collected into book form in 1938 . Hess acted as Hitler 's delegate in negotiations with industrialists and members of the wealthier classes . As Hess had been born abroad , Hitler had him oversee the NSDAP groups such as the NSDAP / AO that were in charge of party members living in other countries . Hitler instructed Hess to review all court decisions that related to persons deemed enemies of the Party . He was authorised to increase the sentences of anyone he felt got off too lightly in these cases , and was also empowered to take " merciless action " if he saw fit to do so . This often entailed sending the person to a concentration camp or simply ordering the person killed . Hess was given the rank of Obergruppenführer in the Schutzstaffel (SS) in 1934 , the second @-@ highest SS rank .

The Nazi regime began to persecute Jews soon after the seizure of power . Hess 's office was partly responsible for drafting Hitler 's Nuremberg Laws of 1935 , laws that had far @-@ reaching implications for the Jews of Germany , banning marriage between non @-@ Jewish and Jewish Germans and depriving non @-@ Aryans of their German citizenship . Hess 's friend Karl Haushofer and his family were subject to these laws , as Haushofer had married a half @-@ Jewish woman , so Hess issued documents exempting them from this legislation .

Hess did not build a power base or develop a coterie of followers . He was motivated by his loyalty to Hitler and a desire to be useful to him ; he did not seek power or prestige or take advantage of his position to accumulate personal wealth . He lived in a modest house in Munich . Although Hess had less influence than other top NSDAP officials , he was popular with the masses . After the Invasion of Poland and the start of World War II in September 1939 , Hitler made Hess second in line to succeed him , after Hermann Göring . Around the same time , Hitler appointed Hess 's chief of staff , Martin Bormann , as his personal secretary , a post formerly held by Hess .

Hess was obsessed with his health to the point of hypochondria , consulting many doctors and other practitioners for what he described to his captors in Britain as a long list of ailments involving the kidneys , colon , gall bladder , bowels and heart . Like Hitler , Hess was a vegetarian , and he did not smoke or drink . He brought his own food to the Berghof , claiming it was biologically dynamic , but Hitler did not approve of this practice , so he discontinued taking meals with the Führer .

Hess was interested in music , enjoyed reading and loved to spend time hiking and climbing in the mountains with Ilse . He and his friend Albrecht Haushofer shared an interest in astrology , and Hess also was keen on clairvoyance and the occult . Hess continued to be interested in aviation . He won an air race in 1934 , flying a BFW M.35 in a circuit around Zugspitze Mountain and returning to the airfield at Munich with a time of 29 minutes . He placed sixth of 29 participants in a similar race held the following year . With the outbreak of World War II , Hess asked Hitler to be allowed to join the Luftwaffe as a pilot , but Hitler forbade it , and ordered him to stop flying for the duration of the war . Hess convinced him to reduce the ban to one year .

= = Attempted peace mission = =

As the war progressed , Hitler 's attention became focused on foreign affairs and the conduct of the war , to the exclusion of all else . Hess , not directly engaged in either of these endeavours , though he felt qualified to do so , became increasingly sidelined from the affairs of the nation and from Hitler 's attention ; Bormann had successfully supplanted Hess in many of his duties and usurped his position at Hitler 's side . Also concerned that Germany would face a war on two fronts as plans progressed for Operation Barbarossa , the invasion of the Soviet Union scheduled to take place in spring 1941 , Hess decided to boldly attempt to bring Britain to the negotiating table by travelling there himself to seek meetings with the British government . He asked the advice of Albrecht Haushofer , who suggested several potential contacts in Britain . Hess settled on fellow aviator Douglas Douglas @-@ Hamilton , the Duke of Hamilton , whom he had never met . On Hess 's instructions , Haushofer wrote to Hamilton in September 1940 , but the letter was intercepted by MI5 and Hamilton did not see it until March 1941 . Hamilton was chosen in the mistaken belief that he was one of the leaders of an opposition party opposed to war with Germany , and because he was a friend of Haushofer .

A letter Hess wrote to his wife dated 4 November 1940 shows that in spite of not receiving a reply from Hamilton , he intended to proceed with his plan . He began training on the Messerschmitt Bf 110 , a two @-@ seater twin @-@ engine aircraft , in October 1940 under instructor Wilhelm Stör , the chief test pilot at Messerschmitt . He continued to practice , including logging many cross @-@ country flights , and found a specific aircraft that handled well ? a Bf 110E @-@ 1 / N ? which was from then on held in reserve for his personal use . He asked for a radio compass , modifications to the oxygen delivery system , and large long @-@ range fuel tanks to be installed on this plane , and these requests were granted by March 1941 .

After a final check of the weather reports for Germany and the North Sea , Hess took off at 17 : 45 on 10 May 1941 from the airfield at Augsburg @-@ Haunstetten in his specially prepared aircraft . It was the last of several attempts to depart on his mission ; previous efforts had to be called off due to mechanical problems or poor weather . Wearing a leather flying suit bearing the rank of captain , he brought along a supply of money and toiletries , a torch , a camera , maps and charts , and a collection of 28 different medicines , as well as dextrose tablets to help ward off fatigue and an assortment of homeopathic remedies .

= = = Flight to Scotland = = =

Initially setting a course towards Bonn , Hess used landmarks on the ground to orient himself and make minor course corrections . When he reached the coast near the Frisian Islands , he turned and flew in an easterly direction for some twenty minutes to stay out of range of British radar . He then took a heading of 335 degrees for the trip across the North Sea , initially at low altitude , but travelling for most of the journey at 5 @,@ 000 feet (1 @,@ 500 m) . At 20 : 58 he changed his heading to 245 degrees , intending to approach the coast of North East England near the town of Bamburgh , Northumberland . As it was not yet sunset when he initially approached the coast , Hess backtracked , zigzagging back and forth for some 40 minutes until it grew dark . Around this time his auxiliary fuel tanks were exhausted , so he released them into the sea . Also around this time , at 22 : 08 , the British Chain Home station at Ottercops Moss near Newcastle upon Tyne detected his presence and passed along this information to the Filter Room at Bentley Priory . Soon he had been detected by several other stations , and the aircraft was designated as " Raid 42 " .

Two Spitfires of No. 72 Squadron RAF , No. 13 Group RAF that were already in the air were sent to attempt an interception , but failed to find the intruder . A third Spitfire sent from Acklington at 22 : 20 also failed to spot the aircraft ; by then it was dark and Hess had dropped to an extremely low altitude , so low that the volunteer on duty at the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) station at Chatton was able to correctly identify it as a Bf 110 , and reported its altitude as 50 feet (15 m) . Tracked by additional ROC posts , Hess continued his flight into Scotland at high speed and low altitude , but was unable to spot his destination , Dungavel House , so he headed for the west coast to orient himself and then turned back inland . At 22 : 35 a Boulton Paul Defiant sent from No. 141 Squadron RAF based at Ayr began pursuit . Hess was nearly out of fuel , so he climbed to 6 @,@ 000 feet (1 @,@ 800 m) and parachuted out of the plane at 23 : 06 . He injured his foot , either while exiting the aircraft or when he hit the ground . The aircraft crashed at 23 : 09 , about 12 miles (19 km) west of Dungavel House . He would have been closer to his destination had he not had trouble exiting the aircraft . Hess considered this achievement to be the proudest moment of his life .

Before his departure from Germany , Hess had given his adjutant , Karlheinz Pintsch , a letter addressed to Hitler that detailed his intentions to open peace negotiations with the British . Pintsch delivered the letter to Hitler at the Berghof around noon on 11 May . Albert Speer later said Hitler described Hess 's departure as one of the worst personal blows of his life , as he considered it a personal betrayal . Hitler worried that his allies , Italy and Japan , would perceive Hess 's act as an attempt by Hitler to secretly open peace negotiations with the British . For this reason , Hitler ordered that the German press should characterise Hess as a madman who made the decision to fly to Scotland entirely on his own , without Hitler 's knowledge or authority . Some members of the government , including Göring and Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels , believed this only made matters worse , because if Hess truly were mentally ill , he should not have been holding an

important government position . Hitler stripped Hess of all of his party and state offices , and secretly ordered him shot on sight if he ever returned to Germany . He abolished the post of Deputy Führer , assigning Hess 's former duties to Bormann , with the title of Head of the Party Chancellery . Hitler initiated Aktion Hess , a flurry of hundreds of arrests of astrologers , faith healers and occultists that took place around 9 June . The campaign was part of a propaganda effort by Goebbels and others to denigrate Hess and to make scapegoats of occult practitioners .

American journalist H. R. Knickerbocker , who had met both Hitler and Hess , speculated that Hitler had sent Hess to deliver a message informing Winston Churchill of the forthcoming invasion of the Soviet Union , and offering a negotiated peace or even an anti @-@ Bolshevik partnership . Soviet leader Joseph Stalin believed that Hess 's flight had been engineered by the British . Stalin persisted in this belief as late as 1944 , when he mentioned the matter to Churchill , who insisted that they had no advance knowledge of the flight .

Peter Padfield 's Hess , Hitler and Churchill (2013) explores the mystery of Hess 's flight to Britain . Padfield suggests that Hess was carrying documents with detailed proposals from Hitler which would have meant peace between Germany and Britain , which would stand neutral in a planned German war against the Soviet Union , in return for which Germany was willing to withdraw from Western Europe .

= = = Capture = = =

Hess landed at Floors Farm , Eaglesham , south of Glasgow , where he was discovered still struggling with his parachute by local ploughman David McLean . Identifying himself as " Hauptmann Alfred Horn " , Hess said he had an important message for the Duke of Hamilton . McLean helped Hess to his nearby cottage and contacted the local Home Guard unit , who escorted the captive to their headquarters in Busby , East Renfrewshire . He was next taken to the police station at Giffnock , arriving sometime after midnight ; he was searched and his possessions confiscated . Hess repeatedly requested to meet with the Duke of Hamilton during questioning undertaken with the aid of an interpreter by Major Graham Donald , the area commandant of Royal Observer Corps . After the interview Hess was taken under guard to Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow , where his injuries were treated . By this time some of his captors suspected Hess 's true identity , though he continued to insist his name was Horn .

Hamilton had been on duty as Wing Commander at RAF Turnhouse near Edinburgh when Hess had arrived , and his station had been one of those that had tracked the progress of the flight . He arrived at Maryhill Barracks the next morning , and after examining Hess 's effects , he met alone with the prisoner . Hess immediately admitted his true identity and outlined the reason for his flight . Hamilton told Hess that he hoped to continue the conversation with the aid of an interpreter ; Hess could speak English well , but was having trouble understanding Hamilton . After the meeting , Hamilton examined the remains of the Messerschmitt in the company of an intelligence officer , then returned to Turnhouse , where he made arrangements through the Foreign Office to meet Prime Minister Winston Churchill , who was at Ditchley for the weekend . They had some preliminary talks that night , and Hamilton accompanied Churchill back to London the next day , where they both met with members of the War Cabinet . Churchill sent Hamilton with foreign affairs expert Ivone Kirkpatrick , who had met Hess previously , to positively identify the prisoner , who had been moved to Buchanan Castle overnight . Hess , who had prepared extensive notes to use during this meeting , spoke to them at length about Hitler 's expansionary plans and the need for Britain to let the Nazis have free rein in Europe , in exchange for being allowed to keep its overseas possessions . Kirkpatrick held two more meetings with Hess over the course of the next few days , while Hamilton returned to his duties . Hess , in addition to being disappointed at the apparent failure of his mission , began claiming that his medical treatment was inadequate and that there was a plot afoot to poison him .

Hess 's flight , but not his destination or fate , was first announced by Munich Radio in Germany on the evening of 12 May . On 13 May Hitler sent Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop to give the news in person to Mussolini , and the British press was permitted to release full information about

events that same day . On 14 May Ilse Hess finally learned that her husband had survived the trip when news of his fate was broadcast on German radio .

The wreckage of the aircraft was salvaged by 63 Maintenance Unit between 11 and 16 May 1941 and was taken to Oxford to be stored . The aeroplane was armed with four machine guns in the nose but carried no ammunition . Several pieces of the plane are still extant , including the two engines , one of which is at the Royal Air Force Museum London . The other engine and a piece of the fuselage are at the Imperial War Museum in London .

= = Trial and imprisonment = =

= = = Prisoner of war = = =

From Buchanan Castle , Hess was transferred briefly to the Tower of London and then to Mytchett Place in Surrey , a fortified mansion , designated " Camp Z " , where he stayed for the next thirteen months . Churchill issued orders that Hess was to be treated well , though he was not allowed to read newspapers or listen to the radio . Three intelligence officers were stationed onsite and 150 soldiers were placed on guard . By early June , Hess was allowed to write to his family . He also prepared a letter to the Duke of Hamilton , but it was never delivered , and his repeated requests for further meetings were turned down . Major Frank Foley , the leading German expert in MI6 and former British Passport Control Officer in Berlin , took charge of a year @-@ long abortive debriefing of Hess , according to Foreign Office files released to the National Archives . Dr Henry V. Dicks and Dr John Rawlings Rees , psychiatrists who treated Hess during this period , note that while he was not insane , he was mentally unstable , with tendencies toward hypochondria and paranoia . Hess repeated his peace proposal to John Simon , 1st Viscount Simon , then serving as Lord Chancellor , in an interview on 9 June . Lord Simon noted that the prisoner 's mental state was not good ; Hess claimed he was being poisoned and was being prevented from sleeping . He would insist on swapping his dinner with that of one of his guards , and attempted to get them to send samples of the food out for analysis .

In the early morning hours of 16 June , Hess rushed his guards and attempted suicide by jumping over the railing of the staircase at Mytchett Place . He fell onto the stone floor below , fracturing the femur of his left leg . The injury required that the leg be kept in traction for twelve weeks , with a further six weeks bed rest before he was permitted to walk with crutches . Captain Munro Johnson of the Royal Army Medical Corps , who assessed Hess , noted that another suicide attempt was likely to occur in the near future . Hess began around this time to complain of amnesia . This symptom and some of his increasingly erratic behaviour may have in part been a ruse , because if he were declared mentally ill , he could be repatriated under the terms of the Geneva Conventions .

Hess was moved to Maindiff Court Hospital on 26 June 1942 , where he would remain for the next three years . The facility was chosen for its added security and the need for fewer guards . Hess was allowed walks on the grounds and car trips into the surrounding countryside . He had access to newspapers and other reading materials ; he wrote letters and journals . His mental health remained under the care of Dr Rees . Hess continued to complain on and off of memory loss and made a second suicide attempt on 4 February 1945 , when he stabbed himself with a bread knife . The wound was not serious , requiring two stitches . Despondent that Germany was losing the war , he took no food for the next week , only resuming eating when he was threatened with being force @-@ fed .

Germany surrendered unconditionally on 8 May 1945 . Hess , facing charges as a war criminal , was ordered to appear before the International Military Tribunal and was transported to Nuremberg on 10 October 1945 .

= = = Nuremberg Trials = = =

The Allies of World War II held a series of military tribunals and trials , beginning with a trial of the

major war criminals from November 1945 to October 1946 . Hess was tried with this first group of twenty @-@ three defendants , all of whom were charged with four counts ? conspiracy to commit crimes , crimes against peace , war crimes and crimes against humanity , in violation of international laws governing warfare .

On his arrival in Nuremberg , Hess was reluctant to give up some of his possessions , including samples of food he claimed had been poisoned by the British ; he proposed to use these for his defence during the trial . The commandant of the facility , Colonel Burton C. Andrus of the United States Army , advised him that he would be allowed no special treatment ; the samples were sealed and confiscated . Hess 's diaries indicate that he did not acknowledge the validity of the court and felt the outcome was a foregone conclusion . He was thin when he arrived , weighing 65 kilograms (143 lb) , and had a poor appetite , but was deemed to be in good health . As one defendant , Robert Ley , had managed to hang himself in his cell on 24 October , the remaining prisoners were monitored around the clock . Because of his previous suicide attempts , Hess was handcuffed to a guard whenever he was out of his cell .

Almost immediately after his arrival , Hess began exhibiting amnesia , which may have been feigned in the hope of avoiding the death sentence . Medical personnel who examined Hess reported he was not insane and was fit to stand trial . At least two examiners , the British doctor and the Soviet one , noted their belief that Hess 's amnesia might be fake . Efforts were made to trigger his memory , including bringing in his former secretaries and showing old newsreels , but he persisted in showing no response to these stimuli . When Hess was allowed to make a statement to the tribunal on 30 November , he admitted that he had faked memory loss as a tactic . He spoke to the tribunal again on 31 August 1946 , the last day of closing statements .

The prosecution 's case against Hess was presented by Mervyn Griffith @-@ Jones beginning on 7 February 1946 . By quoting from Hess 's speeches , he attempted to demonstrate that Hess had been aware of and agreed with Hitler 's plans to conduct a war of aggression in violation of international law . He declared that as Hess had signed important governmental decrees , including the decree requiring mandatory military service , the Nuremberg racial laws , and a decree incorporating the conquered Polish territories into the Reich , he must share responsibility for the acts of the regime . He pointed out that the timing of Hess 's trip to Scotland , only six weeks before the German invasion of the Soviet Union , could only be viewed as an attempt by Hess to keep the British out of the war . Hess resumed showing symptoms of amnesia at the end of February , partway through the prosecution 's case .

The case for Hess 's defence was presented from 22 ? 26 March by his lawyer , Dr Alfred Seidl . He noted that while Hess accepted responsibility for the many decrees he had signed , he said these matters were part of the internal workings of a sovereign state and thus outside the purview of a war crimes trial . He called to the stand Ernst Wilhelm Bohle , the man who had been head of the NSDAP / AO , to testify on Hess 's behalf . When presented by Griffith @-@ Jones with questions about the organisation 's spying in several countries , Bohle testified that any warlike activities such as espionage had been done without his permission or knowledge . Seidl called two other witnesses , former mayor of Stuttgart Karl Strölin and Hess 's brother Alfred , both of whom refuted the allegations that the NSDAP / AO had been spying and fomenting war . Seidl presented a summation of the defence 's case on 25 July , in which he attempted to refute the charge of conspiracy by pointing out that Hitler alone had made all the important decisions . He noted that Hess could not be held responsible for any events that took place after he left Germany in May 1941 . Meanwhile , Hess mentally detached himself from what was happening , declining visits from his family and refusing to read the newspapers .

The court deliberated for nearly two months before passing judgement on 30 September , with the defendants being individually sentenced on 1 October . Hess was found guilty on two counts : crimes against peace (planning and preparing a war of aggression) , and conspiracy with other German leaders to commit crimes . He was found not guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity . He was given a life sentence , one of seven Nazis to receive prison sentences at the trial . These seven were transported by aircraft to the Allied military prison at Spandau in Berlin on 18 July 1947 . The Soviet member of the tribunal , Major @-@ General Iona Nikitchenko , filed a

document recording his dissent of Hess 's sentence ; he felt the death sentence was warranted .

= = = Spandau Prison = = =

Spandau was placed under the control of the Allied Control Council , the governing body in charge of the military occupation of Germany . It consisted of representatives from four member states : Britain , France , the United States and the Soviet Union . Each country supplied guards for the prison for a month at a time on a rotating basis . After the inmates were given medical examinations ? Hess refused his body search , and had to be held down ? they were provided with prison garb and assigned the numbers by which they would be addressed throughout their stay . Hess was Number 7 . The prison had a small library , and inmates were allowed to file special requests for additional reading material . Writing materials were limited ; each inmate would be allowed four pieces of paper per month for letters . The prisoners were not allowed to speak to one another without permission and were expected to work in the facility , helping with cleaning and gardening chores . The inmates were taken for outdoor walks around the prison grounds for an hour each day , separated about 10 yards (9 m) apart . Some of the rules became more relaxed as time went on .

Visits to Spandau of half an hour per month were allowed , but Hess forbade his family to visit until December 1969 , when he was a patient at the British Military Hospital in West Berlin for a perforated ulcer . By this time Wolf Rüdiger Hess was 32 years old and Ilse 69 ; they had not seen Hess since his departure from Germany in 1941 . After this illness , he allowed his family to visit regularly . His daughter @-@ in @-@ law Andrea , who often brought photos and films of his grandchildren , became a particularly welcome visitor . Hess 's health problems , both mental and physical , were ongoing during his captivity . He cried out in the night , claiming he had stomach pains . He continued to suspect that his food was being poisoned and complained of amnesia . A psychiatrist who examined him in 1957 deemed he was not ill enough to be transferred to a mental hospital . Another unsuccessful suicide attempt took place in 1977 .

Other than his stays in hospital , Hess spent the rest of his life in Spandau Prison . His fellow inmates Konstantin von Neurath , Walther Funk and Erich Raeder were released because of poor health in the 1950s ; Karl Dönitz , Baldur von Schirach and Albert Speer served their time and were released , Dönitz in 1956 , Schirach and Speer in 1966 . The 600 @-@ cell prison continued to be maintained for its lone prisoner from Speer and Schirach 's release until Hess 's death in 1987 , at an estimated cost of DM 800 @,@ 000 . Conditions were far more pleasant in the 1980s than in the early years ; Hess was allowed to move more freely around the cell block , setting his own routine and choosing his own activities , which included television , films , reading and gardening . A lift was installed so he could more readily access the garden , and he was provided with a medical orderly from 1982 onward .

Numerous appeals for Hess 's release were launched by his lawyer , Dr Seidl , beginning as early as 1947 . These were denied , mainly because the Soviets repeatedly vetoed the proposal . Spandau was located in West Berlin , and its existence gave the Soviets a foothold in that sector of the city . Additionally , Soviet officials believed Hess must have known in 1941 that an attack on their country was imminent . In 1967 Wolf Rüdiger Hess began a campaign to win his father 's release , garnering support from notable politicians such as Geoffrey Lawrence , 1st Baron Oaksey in Britain and Willy Brandt in Germany , but to no avail , in spite of the prisoner 's advanced age and deteriorating health .

= = Death and aftermath = =

Hess died on 17 August 1987 at the age of 93 in a summer house that had been set up in the prison garden as a reading room . He took an extension cord from one of the lamps , strung it over a window latch , and hanged himself . Death occurred by asphyxiation . A short note to his family , thanking them for all they had done , was found in his pocket . The Four Powers released a statement on 17 September ruling the death a suicide . Initially buried at a secret location to avoid media attention or demonstrations by Nazi sympathisers , Hess was re @-@ interred in a family plot

at Wunsiedel on 17 March 1988 , and his wife was buried beside him when she died in 1995 . Spandau Prison was demolished to prevent it from becoming a neo @-@ Nazi shrine .

His lawyer , Dr Seidl , felt Hess was too old and frail to have managed to kill himself . Wolf Rüdiger Hess repeatedly claimed that his father had been murdered by the British Secret Intelligence Service to prevent him from revealing information about British misconduct during the war . Abdallah Melaouhi , who served as Hess 's medical orderly from 1982 to 1987 , was dismissed from his position at his local district parliament 's Immigration and Integration Advisory Council after he wrote a self @-@ published book on a similar theme . According to an investigation by the British government in 1989 , the available evidence did not back up the claim that Hess was murdered , and Solicitor General Sir Nicholas Lyell saw no grounds for further investigation . Moreover , the autopsy results support the conclusion that Hess had killed himself . A report released in 2012 again raised the question of whether Hess was murdered . Historian Peter Padfield claims the suicide note found on the body appears to have been written when Hess was hospitalised in 1969 .

After the town of Wunsiedel became the scene of pilgrimages and neo @-@ Nazi demonstrations every August on the date of Hess 's death , the parish council decided not to allow an extension on the grave site 's lease when it expired in 2011 . With the consent of his family , Hess 's grave was re @-@ opened on 20 July 2011 and his remains were exhumed , and then cremated . His ashes were scattered at sea by family members ; the gravestone , which bore the epitaph " Ich hab 's gewagt " (" I have dared ") , was destroyed .