

Reichsführer Himmler Pitches Washington

John H. Waller

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John H. Waller retired in 1980 after a long intelligence and foreign service career, which began with the OSS in World War II. This article is adapted—with permission of the publisher John Wiley & Sons, Inc.—from the author's book, *The Devil's Doctor*. Copyright © 2002 by John H. Waller. His book is available at bookstores, online booksellers, and from the Wiley web site at www.wiley.com or 1-800-CALLWILEY.

On 20 March 1944, Gen. William J. Donovan, director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), passed on to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt a memorandum written by Abram Hewitt, OSS officer in Stockholm under cover of the United States Commercial Company. The president had sent Hewitt, a longtime friend, to Stockholm under the aegis of the OSS to get a feel for the role and significance of Scandinavia in World War II. Hewitt's message, which summed up conversations he had had with Felix Kersten and Walter Schellenberg, emissaries of Himmler, must surely have caught the president's attention. The contents of the report were startling: It concerned a secret proposal proffered by Nazi Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, and iterated by Schellenberg and Kersten, for ousting Hitler and negotiating peace with the Western Allies as a first step in fighting a one-front, one-enemy war with the Soviet Union—with or without help from the United States and Britain.

Himmler, whose name would be associated with Nazi infamy and forever remembered as a perpetrator of the Holocaust, was driven by two conflicting motives as the war wound down: He was a fanatic Nazi who worshipped Hitler, and a treacherous opportunist terrified of his future as the curtain of defeat descended on the Third Reich. Retribution for his sins, he knew, would be meted out by the victors. Himmler was considered Hitler's trusted acolyte. Yet, because

he was convinced that Germany would lose the war and he would be among those held accountable for war crimes by the Allies, he began to entertain thoughts of high treason against his Führer as early as mid-1942—possibly earlier when Hitler's panzers failed to reach Moscow and the United States was drawn into the war. He hoped for absolution from the Western Allies by offering to seize power from Hitler and negotiate peace in exchange for their license, if not their help, in continuing the struggle against the Soviet Union.

The person whose influence on Himmler was probably greatest was his physical therapist, Felix Kersten, a talented masseur of Baltic German origins and Finnish nationality. Kersten, working in tandem with Walter Schellenberg, head of Nazi security intelligence (Sicherheitsdienst, or SD), made contact with the OSS on behalf of Himmler with the intention of conspiring to overthrow Hitler. Based on declassified files, particularly Hewitt's report, a fascinating story unfolds.¹

Hewitt in Sweden

No stranger to Sweden, Hewitt had many influential contacts there, including wealthy businessman

¹ Abram Hewitt, report titled "Contact with Himmler," attached to William Donovan's "Memorandum for the President," 20 March 1944, US National Archives and Records Administration, RG 226, Microfilm 1642, Roll 23, Frames 782-800, declassified 1978. All quotations from Hewitt in this article are taken verbatim from his report.

Jacob Wallenberg. He had met Wallenberg in 1932 while in Stockholm representing a trustee in the bankruptcy of the International Match Corporation, an American holding company. In the course of the company's reorganization, the Wallenbergs had assumed control of the Swedish Match Corporation and its far-flung international subsidiaries. More than a decade later, in August 1943, as war raged in Europe, Hewitt made contact again with his old acquaintance. Aware that Hewitt was well connected in the United States and was even a friend of President Roosevelt, Wallenberg, secretly tied in with the German Resistance, confided freely in him.² Explaining that he was "in touch with a cross section of the high ranking German financial and manufacturing interests," Wallenberg told him that Resistance "cells were forming in Germany for the purpose of overthrowing Hitler." He asked Hewitt if he "would be willing to meet with representatives of such cells."

In commenting on Hitler, Wallenberg explained to Hewitt that "his friends" in Germany—a euphemistic reference to Resistance members he knew—were somewhat perplexed about Reichsführer Himmler's true motives. While he was supposed to be entirely loyal to Hitler, certain changes were taking place in Germany that could only raise questions in the minds of intelligence observers. Hewitt concluded that Wallenberg, though vague on this score, believed that Himmler was looking to oust Hitler

and take over Germany's government himself as a prelude to reaching a peace agreement with the Western Allies. It was Wallenberg's opinion that Himmler was convinced that Germany would lose, and had begun searching for ways to ingratiate himself with the Western Allies. According to Wallenberg, Himmler envisioned using the SS and the Nazi Party security apparatus as bargaining chips in an unrealistic scenario in which Germany, governed by him in alliance with the Western Powers, would turn their guns on the Russians and defeat the mutually hated Communist bogey.

Strangely insensitive to the revulsion felt toward him by the West for atrocities he was known to have committed, but well aware of his fate if the Russians were to capture him upon Germany's ultimate capitulation, Himmler was sending out feelers to the Americans in Sweden and other neutral countries through a variety of go-betweens. His principal point men in this treacherous enterprise were Walter Schellenberg and Felix Kersten. As Hewitt himself discovered, Schellenberg, responsible for foreign intelligence, was useful because of his professional contacts and ability to hide his special tasks for Himmler within his organization. Kersten, who traveled often to Sweden, where he was establishing a permanent home, was able to make contact with the American OSS without attracting attention.

Three months would go by before Wallenberg and Hewitt would meet again. In the meantime, Himmler had been named the interior

minister by Hitler, making him still more powerful. When Jacob Wallenberg finally re-appeared—having been in Germany or elsewhere in Europe—he reported that the Resistance situation had changed in Germany because of increased focus by the Gestapo on the military—particularly Abwehr dissidents and certain prominent civilians with whom they were allied in the *Widerstand*. According to Hewitt's report, it was Wallenberg's opinion that the only alternatives to Hitler were Himmler, backed primarily by the *Waffen SS* and the Gestapo, or the *Wehrmacht* secret opposition cells if they could survive Gestapo harassment and rally the main body of the army before Hitler became aware of what was going on and destroyed them. What Hewitt and presumably Jacob Wallenberg did not know at this time was that Hitler's deputy, Martin Bormann, and Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller had found a way to establish secret contact with the Soviets, on whom they were placing their bets for determining the fate of Europe after the War.³ Nonetheless, it had already become abundantly clear to Hewitt that the secret "organized" opposition to Hitler was a complicated matter.

The Pitch

Hewitt met Kersten in October 1943, on the urging of a Swedish friend who held a key position in Wallenberg's business organization. Although the friend was not

² Allen W. Dulles, *Germany's Underground* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 142-143.

³ John H. Waller, *The Unseen War in Europe* (New York: Random House, 1996), pp. 299, 301.

acquainted with Kersten personally, he had been told that the therapist was one of the most powerful men in Germany—an exaggeration, perhaps, but Kersten had by then acquired a remarkable influence over the Reichsführer SS. Himmler had become dependent on Kersten because of the masseur's unique ability to alleviate his chronic, sometimes unbearable, stomach pains. A distinguished British World War II intelligence officer and eminent historian has observed that Kersten was able to "manipulate the conscience as well as the stomach of that... inhuman, but naïve, mystical tyrant of the 'New Order.'"⁴

Feigning a "bad back" to provide him cover for frequent meetings with the masseur, and realizing that Kersten, too, was interested in the meetings for political reasons, Hewitt got right down to business—but always mythically insisting that he was not speaking for the US government. Dubious about any liaison with emissaries from the Devil's domain, OSS officers had brushed off earlier efforts by the Nazis to make contact. Among other reasons, the Americans were concerned lest Stalin resent and protest any apparent machination that left him out of the picture. Roosevelt, in particular, did not want to aggravate Stalin's paranoia by creating an appearance of weakening the solidarity of the Grand Alliance. Seeing a political action opportunity to sow discord among the Nazi leaders, however,

⁴ H. R. Trevor-Roper, introduction to *The Kersten Memoirs, 1940-1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 11.

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Hewitt was not reticent about responding positively to Kersten. He sensed that the therapist was a victim of circumstances beyond his control; he was not a Nazi, nor was he irrevocably bound to Himmler, witness his having begun the process of moving to Sweden. He believed Kersten was eager to establish his own relationships with the West rather than be compromised by his link to the Reichsführer when the Third Reich crumbled in defeat.

Hewitt reported that the climax of Kersten's several conversations with him was a startling overture urging Western Allies to collaborate in ousting Hitler and join forces with a Germany led by Himmler and the SS to destroy Russia. To quote Hewitt's report: "The doctor [Kersten] urged me to come to Germany to discuss Himmler's position with him, and to see whether a settlement might be possible. He indicated clearly that, on certain conditions, Himmler was prepared to overthrow Hitler and that he was the only man who had power to do so in Germany."

An aide-mémoire based on Hewitt's report, given to the British and Soviets by the Department of State in early 1944, is revealing, although it could contain an exaggeration by Kersten. According to the aide-

mémoire, Kersten had said, "Himmler . . . knows that the war is lost and is anxious to arrive at an arrangement with the Americans and British which would leave something of Germany." Kersten was quoted as adding that, "realizing it would be impossible for the Americans and the British to deal with Hitler, Himmler was now quite prepared to bring about his overthrow."⁵

Hewitt's Reaction

Sticking to his cover story for the record—however transparent—Hewitt cautiously replied to this astounding proposition: "I told him that I did not represent the American government, and that I did not even know what the current policies of the American government were, and that on this account, it would be pointless for me to talk with Himmler. The doctor then suggested that I return to Washington, familiarize myself with the position of the American government, and come back to Europe." Adding detail, Hewitt wrote: "He [Kersten] mentioned to me that Himmler was organizing his own [shadow] government within the SS and that his two chief advisors on foreign affairs were Oberfuhrer Walter Schellenberg and Dr. Braun, and that he would be glad to get one of these men to come to Stockholm to confirm what he had been saying to me."

⁵ Aide-mémoire from the US Department of State, British Public Record Office, Kew, FO 371/29085, 22 January 1944.

Despite Hewitt's cautious reaction, Kersten told him two days later that Schellenberg had just arrived in Stockholm and would like to see him. Arrangements were made. It is important to note that Hewitt's report reveals that Kersten, in an aside and speaking confidentially for himself, urged Hewitt to act quickly because the German minister to Sweden, following the debacle at Stalingrad, had brought to the SS offices in Stockholm a copy of a Russian peace proposal for Hitler's consideration. Moreover, at roughly the same time, the German ambassador to Turkey, Franz von Papen, had received from the Russians in Ankara the same proposal.⁶ According to these identical overtures, Germany was offered "about one half of the Baltic countries to the north of East Prussia; and Poland would be divided according to the 1939 lines." The Soviets were clearly demanding the lion's share: "the whole coast to the Black Sea—including the mouth of the Danube, extending as far as Constantinople and Salonika—and a port on the Adriatic Sea." Kersten added that although Ribbentrop and Goebbels had been in favor of accepting these proposals, Himmler and Hitler were against them.

Himmler's resistance to the Soviet proposals was, of course, consistent with his intense hatred of the Russians—and his intense fear of

them should he fall into their hands after a German surrender.⁷ According to Hewitt's report, Kersten stressed again Himmler's strong preference for an alliance with the Western powers against the Russians. Realizing that a coup by Himmler could spark a revolution within Germany, the masseur pointed out that it would be Himmler's policy as Hitler's replacement "to keep order in Germany under the existing [i.e., Nazi] government as long as possible." As Himmler became ever more irrational while fantasizing about this mad Machiavellian scheme, Kersten claimed that the Reichsführer had explained to him that when the time came that he believed further military resistance would be futile, he would destroy all private property rights in the occupied countries and in Germany in order to produce a mass reactive wave of communism. Kersten recalled that Himmler claimed he would then "announce himself a communist, and throw his lot in with the Russians," arguing that "with superior technical ability and organizing capacity," they [the Germans] would succeed in "dominating the greater Russian population and obtaining control of the vast Russian resources," a line of reasoning reeking of apocalyptic fantasy.

⁷ "Hewitt Report," 20 December 1943. During his sessions of "back therapy" with Kersten, Hewitt reported picking up some interesting observations concerning Himmler's racism. The Reichsführer was fanatically anti-Russian and apparently feared the consequences of the high Russian birth rate. Disliking what he considered to be a threatening mixture of Slav blood with German blood, Himmler was determined to do almost anything rather than see Stalin win the war.

Kersten, in his postwar memoirs, states that he had written Himmler from Stockholm in late October 1943 recounting his conversations with Hewitt, the centerpiece of which was an informally agreed-upon seven-point proposal, offering "the possibility of an honorable peace."⁸ It should be noted that in Hewitt's report to Donovan following his conversations with Kersten and Schellenberg, he did not itemize such an agreement. Hewitt assured Donovan that he had made no promises to Kersten or Schellenberg beyond stating that he "would try to get back to Washington and see that the matter was brought to the attention of the President."

In his report, Hewitt expressed what he considered to be positive arguments in favor of meeting Himmler: "While it is obvious that conferences with Himmler are loaded with potential dynamite, nevertheless, I believe that there are enormous possible advantages in such a trip." He listed these:

A great deal could be learned about the German frame of mind, and the relations of the important Germans with each other. The weak links in their armor in a material, psychological and personal sense could be better explored in this way than in any other.

The possibilities of provoking a "putsch" or civil war in Germany could be explored at first hand. It is possible that this, if successful, might save hundreds of

⁸ Felix Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs, 1940-1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 191.

⁶ For a reference to Von Papen's espionage activities in the United States during World War I, see elsewhere in this publication, Michael Warner, "Defending the Homeland the First Time Around: The Kaiser Sows Destruction," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 46, No. 1.

thousands of lives in connection with the coming invasion [of western Europe by the Allies].

In concluding his report, Hewitt admitted: "The disadvantage of such a trip would be the capital which the Germans could make out of it in their own press and radio. However, they are in a position to do that anyway if they choose to lie about it. An untruth is a consideration which has never yet weighed with them." Hewitt closed his report to Donovan and the president with a plea for action: "I hope that full consideration will be given to the possibilities of such a trip. I am, of course, ready to discuss the matter and amplify this report in any way that is desired."

Hewitt, subsequently, was called home. Schellenberg was distressed and interpreted his departure as a breakdown of the US relationship. Clearly, dealing with Himmler had not been easy for him. "I was lucky not to be arrested," he later wrote. "Nothing can break the spell which Hitler still exercised upon those around him."⁹ Schellenberg was also disappointed because he had naively believed that the Americans were willing to reach an agreement with a successor government in Germany and end the war without the participation, much less the agreement, of the Russians. In the minds of several German political scientists—and Schellenberg considered himself one—there was logic in attacking Soviet Bolshevism and denying the USSR

⁹ Walter Schellenberg, *The Labyrinth Memoirs of Walter Schellenberg* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 371

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postwar hegemony over much of Europe. Throughout the war, Stalin had taken several actions that seemed to foreshadow postwar power grabs, strengthening the German's conviction. Now, however, Schellenberg concluded that the Americans had abandoned his and Kersten's initiatives for peace. He could see the irony of the American's rejecting Himmler's advances based on Roosevelt's refusal to break his pledge to Stalin, while the Soviet dictator showed no qualms about exploring with German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop the Germans' willingness to surrender without reference to his American and British partners in the Grand Alliance.

Himmler had too much to worry about to lament Hewitt's departure. He was walking an ever-slackening tightrope. The Gestapo, using intercepted Allied messages, had compiled a damning file on Himmler's friend and lawyer, Carl Langbehn, whose seditious discussions with the American Allen Dulles in Bern, undertaken at the Reichsführer's request, had been exposed. Following the massive Gestapo crackdown on all dissidents in the wake of Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg's abortive attempt to bomb Hitler on 20 July 1944, Langbehn was indicted and faced a drumhead trial. Himmler, fearing

that his own involvement with Langbehn would come out, did everything he could to distance himself from his old friend and speed his execution, letting Langbehn take the rap for his [Himmler's] own treasonous actions. Kersten and Schellenberg escaped disaster by a small margin, but remained uneasy that Himmler might one day throw them to the wolves as he had done with Langbehn. As Hewitt had recognized earlier, internal opposition to Hitler involved a treacherous maze of relationships.

The State Department Weighs In

Because of the highly sensitive political nature of Wallenberg's initial offer to introduce Hewitt to German resistance cells and then Himmler's feelers to Washington, the OSS operative kept the American minister in Stockholm, Herschel V. Johnson, fully informed. Johnson, who telegraphed the information to the State Department, was one of a number of voices expressing strong disapproval of any US response to Himmler's overture. Indicative of his attitude in general, it will be remembered that Johnson had warned Bruce Hopper, the first representative in Sweden for the US Office of Coordinator of Information (COI)—soon to become the OSS—that any clandestine operations attempted by him would result in his removal from Stockholm.

The Hewitt report that reached the president did not go into detail on the damage that such an operation

posed for American and British relations with Stalin. The United States had an important stake in keeping Stalin friendly—certainly until the Japanese as well as the Germans were soundly defeated. Hitler's last-ditch strategy as the Third Reich slid toward defeat would be an effort to break up the Grand Alliance that the West had with the Russians. Hewitt was, of course, oblivious to the several penetrations at top levels of the Western Allies by spies, such as British Secret Intelligence Service officer Kim Philby, who were keeping Stalin informed of efforts by Western intelligence to establish contact with the various factions of the secret German opposition.¹⁰ In fact, the US Department of State, faithful to the spirit of the Grand Alliance with the USSR, and doubtless fearing Stalin's reaction if the OSS was caught dealing behind his back with Himmler, kept the Russians as well as the British generally informed of Hewitt's talks with Kersten and Schellenberg.¹¹

In a memorandum sent from Stockholm to the Department of State on 10 January 1944, Johnson described the position and role of Kersten as he understood it from Hewitt.¹² Then, on 19 January, the department received from Minister Johnson a memorandum incorporating parts of Hewitt's

¹⁰H R Trevor-Roper, *The Philby Affair* (London: William Kimber, 1968), pp 78-79

¹¹Aide-mémoire from the US Department of State, 24 January 1944, US National Archives and Records Administration, RG 84, Stockholm Legation, Box 1, Folder 6, 1943, "Hewitt Report," 20 December 1943

¹²*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944*, Vol 1 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965), p 490

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memorandum to Donovan and Roosevelt and voicing his displeasure.¹³ Obviously distressed by Hewitt's acts, Johnson termed Hewitt's contacts with Kersten and Schellenberg "extremely dangerous," and ended his memorandum with a recommendation that minced no words: "He [Hewitt] should be got out of Sweden as soon as possible." So urgent were Johnson's concerns that he suggested that the British be requested to provide Hewitt with a special high priority to fly on a British transport aircraft, which was solidly booked for two weeks in advance. On 2 February 1944, Hewitt left for Washington via London.

Johnson's strong reaction was in part stimulated by a Moscow *Pravda* dispatch from Cairo, dated 18 January 1944, concerning alleged British overtures to Nazi foreign minister Ribbentrop regarding a separate peace agreement behind Stalin's back.¹⁴ In his 19 January message to the State Department, Johnson declared that whatever the final explanation of the Soviet article in *Pravda* may be, it "emphasizes in my opinion the danger of activities of government agents similar to those of Mr. Hewitt."

¹³*Ibid.*, p 489-493, 496

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p 495

OSS Remains Cautious

The OSS's reaction to Hewitt's information was less dogmatic than the State Department's position but nonetheless remained "policy correct." Calvin Hoover, director of Scandinavian operations at the OSS's Washington headquarters, did not approve of Hewitt's plan at the time for policy reasons. In his memoirs after the war, he admitted that the Stockholm OSS officers were, in fact, actors in a charade: "We [the OSS] did not for an instant really intend to deal with the Himmler government as the successor to Hitler and certainly the US government would not have done so."¹⁵

Subsequently, it was OSS director Donovan himself who recommended to Roosevelt that Hewitt not pursue the Schellenberg-Himmler overture. In a brief introduction to the OSS officer's report, Donovan wrote: "Here is a statement made by Abram Hewitt, whom I think you know. He was in Sweden for some time and these notes represent a meeting with Dr. Kersten, attending physical therapist of Himmler, and the efforts of Felix Kersten to induce Hewitt to go to Germany [for talks with the Reichsführer himself]." Donovan assured President Roosevelt that he had told Hewitt "not to do this as I assumed you would not care to have Americans in Germany on such a basis." It is curious that Donovan's introductory note features Kersten and makes scant

¹⁵Calvin Hoover, *Memoirs of Capitalism, Communism and Nazism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965), p 217

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reference to Schellenberg, who had delved more deeply into arranging the meeting and devising the means by which Hewitt could be brought into Germany clandestinely. Perhaps Donovan sensed that the masseur had the greater influence on the Reichsführer.

FDR's Decision

The president received Hewitt's report proposing exploration of a deal with Himmler at a time of intense discussion among the Allies of the nature of "unconditional surrender," which they had pledged collectively to demand of Germany. In a very balanced memorandum to the secretary of state on 17 January 1944, President Roosevelt gave his views on the importance of ending the war without special conditions or deals:

Frankly, I do not like the idea of conversation to define the term unconditional surrender. Russia, Britain, and the United States have agreed not to make any peace without consultation with each other. I think each case should stand on its own merits in that way. The German people can have dimmed into their ears what I said in my Christmas Eve speech—in effect, that we have no thought of destroying the German people and that we want them to live through the generations like other European peoples on condition, of course, that they get rid of their present philosophy of conquest...

Secondly, the German people and Russia should also be told the best definition of what "unconditional surrender" really means. The story of Lee's surrender to Grant is the best illustration. Lee wanted to talk about all kinds of conditions. Grant said that Lee must put his confidence in his [Grant's] fairness. Then Lee surrendered. Immediately Lee brought up the question of the Confederate officers' horses, which belonged to them personally in most cases, and Grant settled that item by telling Lee that they should take their horses home as they would be needed in the Spring plowing.

Roosevelt concluded: "Whatever words we might agree on would probably have to be modified or changed the first time some nation wanted to surrender."¹⁶

The president's philosophy contains infinitely more wisdom than Minister Johnson's adamant opposition to political action or clandestine maneuvering of any kind based in Sweden. The Italian surrender under Marshal Pietro Badoglio had been welcomed by the Western Allies, who most likely gave assistance and encouragement behind the scenes. A British intelligence officer, John Lockhart,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 494

head of C branch of the British military in Italy, provided safe shelter for Badoglio at a critical time during the coup.¹⁷ Later, Allen Dulles's successful 1945 secret negotiations with SS Gen. Karl Wolff led to the surrender of all German forces in Italy to the Western Allies and resulted in the saving of many lives, Allied and Axis, even though it infuriated Stalin, who suspected Allied trickery and saw his plan for postwar expansion threatened. Nonetheless, it was approved by Great Britain as well as the United States despite rabid complaints and implied threats by Stalin. Sometimes criticized by certain war historians for provoking Russia to pursue a policy of postwar aggression, this confrontation with Stalin in fact gained a valuable dividend for the Western Allies to the extent that it illuminated with frightening clarity the Soviet dictator's attitude and telegraphed his already well-advanced plans for postwar domination over much of Eastern and Middle Europe, which would become known as the Cold War.

Despite Roosevelt's support for some pragmatism in handling end-of-war decisions, the president declined, as Donovan foresaw, to approve any further exploration of a deal with Himmler, as relayed in Hewitt's report.

With Benefit of Hindsight

A number of the key actors later re-examined Washington's rejection of

¹⁷ British House of Lords Record Office, No. 313, File 60 (1945), Diaries of Robert Bruce Lockhart, entry for 19 January 1945

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Himmler's overture Hoover, the head of OSS operations in Scandinavia who had disagreed with Hewitt, somewhat wistfully noted in his memoirs. "I felt sure that if Himmler tried to arrest Hitler, he would fail; the effect on the morale of the Nazi Party and the German Army would be shattering." Hoover claimed to have serious regrets that the United States had not pursued further the Himmler connection. If a split between Hitler and Himmler could have been achieved, he wrote, "the resulting disorganization might have resulted in the collapse of Germany before it did, in fact, occur. The lives of at least a million people would have been saved." As for the sensibilities of Stalin, Hoover wrote, "the exclusive occupation of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe by the Soviet armies would have been averted [and] the division of Germany might have been avoided."¹⁸

Looking back, Hewitt himself continued to believe that an important opportunity had been lost. "In spite of my assurances, American government circles could see in Kersten only an agent of Himmler. They did not believe in the humanitarian reasons for his actions that so many proofs have since confirmed. I remain convinced that much suffering and loss of life could have been avoided if they had taken into account the very

laudable efforts of Kersten."¹⁹ It is interesting to note that in the spring of 1944, the OSS Morale Operations unit, working out of Stockholm, littered German-occupied Europe with propaganda leaflets whose purpose was "to hold out hope to German businessmen that if they acted to throw out the Nazis, Allied business interests would cooperate with them in building a bulwark against Bolshevism"—obviously a line at odds with US and British overt policy toward its wartime ally, Russia.²⁰

Hewitt's efforts to exploit Himmler's flirtation with high treason and encourage his self-seeking efforts to get rid of Hitler and surrender to the West without conditions were fraught with complications, but possibly the OSS officer's initiatives were cut short

by Donovan too soon. Himmler was in trouble, veering perilously close to being found out by his own police and intelligence services, his rivals Bormann and Ribbentrop, and, soon, Hitler himself. Himmler's irresolution and vacillation was also his enemy. If he had been encouraged to support Kersten's and Schellenberg's efforts and thus enticed further into the swamp of treachery and deceit by Hewitt, the Nazi monolith might well have cracked before it did. Contestants for postwar leadership were already struggling senselessly among themselves for power that could never be theirs. The rats leaving the sinking Nazi ship of state scurried in different directions in their efforts to rescue themselves from drowning. Hewitt, working with Kersten and Schellenberg, would have had a fertile field for intrigues calculated to hasten the death of the Third Reich. It can be argued that by recalling Hewitt and breaking contact with Schellenberg and Kersten, an opportunity was missed to exploit Himmler's vulnerabilities and create chaos within the Third Reich. But it is perhaps just as persuasive to argue that such covert operations could have broken up the Grand Alliance—exactly what Hitler wanted to achieve as his last hope to avoid total defeat.

¹⁹Achim Besgen, *Der Stille Befehl Medtznalrat Kersten. Himmler und das Dritte Reich* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1960), pp. 33-34

²⁰Anthony Cave Brown, ed., *The Secret War Report of the OSS* (New York: Berkley, 1976), p. 309

¹⁸Hoover, p. 217