

Hitler's Last Possessions found

Frankfurt, November 22 [1945] (Dana agency) – A TATTERED field-grey tunic and torn black pants, the uniform Hitler was wearing at the moment of the July 20, 1944 attempt on his life, were among Eva Braun's private things. Several jewel-boxes, photo albums, and extracts from letters she wrote to Hitler are in the custody of the military authorities.

Major General Edwin L. Sibert of Eisenhower's staff gives the following report on the finding of these objects:

"After lengthy investigations by various military bodies we received from an SS officer the final clarification. The officer, who cannot at present be named, made a big mistake when he told a friend he knew where the uniform was, which Hitler was wearing at the instant of the bomb attempt.

"In the last days of the Nazi Reich all the evidence, including even Hitler's uniform, was supposed to have been burned. At first the SS officer did obstinately claim to have carried out the order to burn the things. But later he got tangled in contradictions. After months of inquiries in prisoner of war camps and other locations, the objects were finally found on an estate in Bavaria."

[German Federal Archives,
Brammer Collection]

The Eva Papers

From Göhler and his Mercedes the hunt for Hitler's People proceeds in a straight line to a 1973 rodeo in New Mexico.

First there is a brief entr'acte in my study in London. I am sitting behind my big square leather-topped partner's desk, contemplating without much resistance the vision in front of me, as Countess Adelheid von der Schulenburg, daughter of the anti-Hitler plotter "Fritzi" von der Schulenburg and aged perhaps thirty-five, crosses and uncrosses her legs, which are every inch as well sculptured as Greta Scacci's or, more appositely, Sharon Stone's in *Basic Instinct*.*

She is the London bureau chief of *Quick* magazine, and in a few minutes' time we'll go over the road for lunch to discuss a certain project further. Going into the kitchen, I suggest that Pilar join us; she declines, and when I affably propose that she at least drop in to the study to see my visitor, she replies tersely: "I've already seen her," and raising her voice by sufficient decibels to penetrate the several walls between us and the study, "– and her blouse too."

A few days later I am stepping off a plane into the baking De-

* Adelheid von der Schulenburg ("Neiti") is now married to Lord Gowrie – Grey Gowrie who became chairman of the Arts Council, and a Conservative arts minister.

cember sunshine of New Mexico, wishing I had left my velvet-colored city overcoat in London. Not long after that, I am sitting next to a Mr Gutierrez at my first-ever rodeo. *Quick* magazine has paid to fly me out here. For a few dollars, I buy a small silver and turquoise brooch made by local Indians to reward Adelheid when I return.

Just a week earlier (••) I had heard this name, Gutierrez, for the first time. Back on March 27, 1971, I had stayed with Johannes Göhler in Stuttgart; he had just given me those letters of his, written when he attended Hitler's conferences as Fegelein's adjutant.

He had first told me then how on the night of April 23, 1945 the Chief had sent him out of Berlin on the same plane as Christa Schroeder, a four-engined Junkers 290, with orders to destroy all Eva Braun's papers in Munich. Göhler had flown south, and found that SS Captain (*Hauptsturmführer*) Erwin Haufler, a short, stout, round-faced officer with blond hair and glasses had secured the tin footlocker [*Tropenkiste*] containing Eva's papers.

They had found it crammed with womanly knickknacks, including her monogrammed silver toilet utensils, her diaries, and bundles of handwritten letters, which she had received from the Führer. Göhler, a *Sturmbannführer*, or major, had detailed Haufler to destroy everything; Haufler had delegated the job to *Hauptsturmführer* Franz Konrad, and the latter returned later with what Göhler called a *Vernichtungsurkunde*, a certificate of destruction.

End of story? Not at all, it now seemed.

Two years later I was staying with them again in Stuttgart. His wife Ursula, you could tell, had once been a dazzling blonde, of the breed that up-and-coming SS officers were supposed to marry. Now she was in the last unpleasant stretch of cancer treatment, and the cortisone injections had not become her. She was very tearful, and I detected a worsening tension in the household each time I visited.

It was the autumn of 1973 and I was once again going over the old ground. Early that Sunday morning, November 4, as I sat writing up the results on their kitchen table, she came padding in,

wearing a housecoat loosely thrown over her night attire, and burst into tears.

"I don't know why he lied to you," she sobbed. "He didn't have to lie."

I don't know whether it was the cancer that cast her down that morning, or the oppression of bringing up, like some sour bile, all her guilt-feelings of 1945.

Johannes was still upstairs asleep, and she began to talk. After the war ended, she had struck up a friendship with a young American counterintelligence officer, she said, a Special Agent in the CIC; he was head of Special Investigations Squad, CIC Detachment 970-45), while her husband, as an SS officer, was subjected to automatic arrest.¹ ("I had to do it," was how she expressed it to me, not being too specific about what it was. "I had to get food for our children," and she began to sob again.)

This CIC unit's task was to locate top Nazis including Martin Bormann, Adolf Hitler, and Eva Braun, as well as their papers and secret hoards of foreign and German currency.

What her husband did not know was that she had collaborated with this Special Agent, helping him to entrap former SS officers and war criminals, some subsequently executed; and that among these SS officers were Erwin Haufler and his stooge, Konrad – known throughout the SS as "Ghetto Konrad" because of how he had amassed his wartime wealth in the Warsaw ghetto – who was turned over to the Poles and hanged.

But what was the lie she was talking about?

It was difficult to pin this part-hysterical, sick woman down. "They weren't destroyed," she finally blurted out. "I know he *told* you they were, but they weren't. The diaries. I had them in my hands."

Her CIC officer, she said, had turned over some of the recovered objects to the US Seventh Army, but had retained the letters and diaries. (Among the postcard letters, headed DER FÜHRER, was one, said Franz Konrad, which Hitler had penned to Eva Braun after the 1944 attempt on his life. "My hand is still shaky after the at-

tempt on my life,” – Konrad still recalled the letter’s words, and its conclusion: “I am still full of hope for the coming victory.”)

“I packed them into his luggage,” said Ursula Göhler between sobs, referring to her American officer. “That was at his CIC headquarters at Schloss Backnang near Stuttgart. I had to read every item first for its Intelligence content, but then he took them all back with him to the United States. He never turned them in. He never reported them.”²

The room was slowly beginning to spin, like a heavy circus carousel. The final steam-organ music from *Strangers on a Train* percolated into my brain. I felt I was floating.

For one euphoric moment – during which I uttered phrases in an appropriate mixture of reprehension about her husband’s duplicity, concern for her medical condition, and carefully contrived nonchalance about whatever else she might care to tell me – I suspected that this magnificent cache might actually be only a few feet away from me, perhaps in the same old tin trunk, upstairs in his attic. It was the way things had happened in the past.

“What was, uh, his name?” I asked with a display of diffidence. Did she recall?

She moved across the room to an *escritoire*, with me close on her slippered heels, and fished out an airmail letter. She had written to him, on and off, for a year after he returned. The letter had no address.

“The name is most unusual,” she volunteered, helpfully. “You’d have no trouble finding him. Gutierrez. He was from New Mexico.”

The name Gutierrez is less unusual in New Mexico than in Stuttgart. It fills ten pages of the Albuquerque phone directory alone. Fortunately she recalled his first name too. Which was why I was sitting next to Robert A. Gutierrez at a rodeo not long after, at the expense of *Quick* magazine.

I had phoned Max Becker, my agent in New York, and asked him to phone that number in Albuquerque and inquire whether Gutierrez had been in army Intelligence “in Korea.”

“You drew a blank,” Max told me, phoning back just minutes later: “He was never in Korea; he was with the CIC in Germany in 1945.”

He was a small and wiry fellow wearing a cowboy hat and tooled leather boots, with skin tanned from the same leather and a cunning Indian glint about his eyes. As we left the rodeo arena, I strolled ahead and turned round and snapped a photo of him.

The evening before, December 1, 1973, I had flown in from London, stuffed my overcoat into an airport locker, and taken a cab over to the address in the book. It was a shack in Ranchero Drive, on the very edge of the desert. I just knocked on his door unannounced. If I had phoned ahead, it would have given him time to take mementoes off walls and out of picture frames, I reasoned.

It was the beginning of a thirty-year trail of disappointments, as I (and later, several others) beat a path to that same front door. I knew from Ursula that he had unquestionably had the Eva Braun / Adolf Hitler papers, the most personal documents imaginable. She had described them: the diaries were bound in white-leather and carried the distinctive EB “butterfly” monogram. How would an SS officer’s wife know about that? I knew too that they had not reached the US Government archives, while other items had.

He sat with his wife and children, Cynthia, Sid, Richard, and Robert, in a tight semi-circle around me, and I explained why I had come, while chivalrously omitting the role of Ursula (she told me he still wrote her a furious letter afterwards).³

He became very difficult to deal with. He warned me by telephone later that he had contacted the Pentagon and they had forbidden him to talk about his wartime intelligence role. I flew back to Washington, and persuaded the Pentagon to give him the all clear. In January 1974, probably under pressure from him, Frau Göhler reversed her story – she had not seen him pack any documents, only souvenirs of Eva Braun.

Despite what I can only describe as unremitting pressure, I got no further with him, either then in 1973, or thirteen years later in May 1986, when I returned with SSG. When I returned thirty years later, in 2003, he was dead.

The maddening thing was that there *was* definitely something there. I returned in 1986 because I had once yarned about this “dry hole” – to use oilman parlance – to a far more gifted prospector, Willi Korte. Korte was a German researcher and specialist on I. G. Farben, and I found him sitting next to us in the Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland.

Willi knew his stuff. He was the guy who some years later flushed the looted Quedlinburg Triptych out of its hiding place; his share of that reward must have been a tidy sum, but he deserved every penny. He had located every member of the CIC unit that looted that German church in 1945, and narrowed the hunt down to a family in Texas. Visiting their hometown, he called in at the one bank in the main street, and after listening for a few minutes, the manager said: “I believe I know why you’re here. We have it in our vault” – that’s how Willi told us the story, and that’s why I told him mine.

Researching a couple of days later at Suitland, we noticed that Willi’s seat was empty: he had flown down to Albuquerque to try his own spiel, using his own drilling techniques, and he got the gusher that I had missed – or part of it. Less principled than I (which is to have no principles at all, some critics of mine would say), he had flashed his German driving licence at Gutierrez, now in his AGE (• SEVENTIES?), and claimed to be heading a retrieval mission for the German Federal Government.

“I’ve always been expecting you,” said the wily New Mexican, believing himself cornered; or so a mutual friend later told us. He surrendered to Willi Korte the last dress of Eva Braun (he called it her wedding dress, but I knew it wasn’t that), and some silverware and other knickknacks, but not any diaries or letters. SSG and I learned this when we visited Keith Wilson, city manager of Kansas City and one of the major World War II collectors.

Displeased by all this, we flew straight to Albuquerque from Kansas City, and invited Gutierrez out to dinner downtown – he would not have us round to his home. His story had not changed much in thirteen years. I told him of course how Willi had duped him with the old driving-licence trick, to scotch that particular

friend's chances of ever pulling off a double.

After he left, I found that Gutierrez had dropped his wallet on the floor. Less inhibited than I, SSG established that it contained loose change, and a card, no doubt genuine, identifying him as a colonel currently in the CIA. Prematurely satisfied, Willi Korte had already taken his haul back to Europe, and a few months later the dress and other items turned up in the catalogue of a leading Munich auction house; of course, they realized nothing like the sum that the papers would have fetched. Gutierrez had not let them go.

Long after I last visited him, and eight years after I had applied for them, the US Army Intelligence and Security Command at Fort Meade finally released the working files of Special Agent Gutierrez.⁴ They contained a lot about Göhler, Konrad, and the hunt for the Eva Braun cache. The file proved that he *was* looking for them, but the lists contained only what he formally turned in: only Eva's photo albums and the eight-millimeter home movies, which eventually made it into the US National Archives. It omits all mention that he found the diaries and the bundles of letter Churchill (which Ursula told me she had packed into his baggage when he left Germany in February 1946.)

He was a skilled investigator, and the SS officers had been no match for him. They lied and weaseled and writhed under his questioning, they were beaten or put on bread and water for weeks, stool pigeons were put in the cells to befriend them, their relatives were hounded, and eventually they cracked. On August 24, 1945 Gutierrez and Master Sergeant Conner, his interpreter in the CIC unit at Backnang, drove down to Schladming in Austria, and they recovered from the home of Franz Konrad's brother, Fritz, the Hitler uniform shredded in the 1944 bomb blast, and "one chest full of photo albums depicting the private lives of Hitler and Eva Braun, belonging to Eva Braun, also notes made by Eva Braun from her letters to Hitler and art photos of Hitler and Eva Braun." They seized her monogrammed silverware on this occasion too.

On October 11, 1945 Gutierrez went back to Schladming and took from the same brother's home twenty-eight reels of eight-

millimetre home movies depicting Hitler, Eva Braun, and others, assorted negatives of the same character, four Gold Schaffhausen men's watches, a Gold woman's watch, set with fifty diamonds, two pairs of Gold cuff-links, a thousand dollars in American notes and ten English pound-notes. Gutierrez turned these over to Seventh Army CIC at the end of October 1945.

In a balance sheet written at the same time, analysing the conflicting evidence, Gutierrez and Conner concluded that Konrad had consistently lied. They were convinced that he had saved all the Eva – Hitler letters. "It seems very unlikely," they reasoned, "that Konrad would burn these letters which could be hidden easily, and were of such great historical value, and would attempt to preserve the films and photo albums, which are much bulkier and of less importance." Their conclusion: "Konrad undoubtedly still has these letters and very likely Hitler's diaries; also possibly correspondence between Hitler and Himmler."

Soon after – if Ursula was telling the truth – Gutierrez got his hands on them. They have not turned up in public to this day. Like pirate Gold, they may still be hidden somewhere for a future prospector, more ruthless than Willi Korte or I, to stumble on.

There is of course a residual mystery. Why would Gutierrez sit on the rest? He continued to live in the most modest circumstances. According to collector-folklore, one New York writer flew down to him with an attaché case containing two million dollars in hundred-dollar bills. Gutierrez would not budge.

I taped my conversations and phone calls with him from London, as the years rolled past, and listened patiently to each word, pause, and nuance as I replayed the tapes. Once, in February 1974, when he was about to give me Conner's address, he checked himself and said, "I don't want him *implicated* in this." That was the word he used. Another time he explained that if "all those letters" became public, "Wouldn't they make him look, well, kind of more human now?"

For us Old Europeans, there was something of the infuriatingly uncomplicated, homespun, born-again Christian about Robert A.

Gutierrez.

He had told people his family would reveal more after he died, but as that time neared, another factor probably weighed heavily on him. His son Sidney had become an astronaut. It would not prosper his career at NASA if his father had sat on stolen Nazi papers for all those years – and not just any papers either.

I never gave up. I went back to Albuquerque in 2003, and looked for his home, exactly thirty years after my hunt began. It had vanished, and his family had moved a few hundred yards away to richer surroundings. I gently chatted with them, listening all the time. Social Security records reveal that Robert had died a year before, on Christmas Eve 2002.

And the papers? I rather fear that, turning a deaf ear to the sigh of history, he had eventually destroyed the lot.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Special Agent Robert A. Gutierrez, and Master Sergeant William J. Conner formed a two man CIC team (970-45) of the 307th Counter Intelligence Corps attached to Seventh Army, based on Schloss Backnang near Stuttgart. They went to Zell am See with this mission: "Previous investigation of *Oberführer* Wilhelm Spacil, head of *Amt* II, RSHA, had revealed that between 1 Apr 45 and the German capitulation on 8 May 45, [Franz] Konrad and Haufler had been given charge of a number of the effects of Hitler, of Eva Braun, and of the family of *Gruppenführer* Fegelein. These effects included the diaries of Hitler, correspondence between Hitler and Eva Braun, and the suit supposed to have been worn by Hitler at the time of his death."
- 2 On Nov 8, 1945 Gutierrez again questioned SS *Hauptsturmführer* Erwin Haufler at Dachau. Haufler repeated that the letters from Hitler to Eva Braun and her replies were in a tin chest, the type widely used as an officer's trunk on maneuvers. "This chest was three-quarters full of letters and cards. There were at least 250 letters, and I believe many more than that. I only looked through these things for perhaps ten minutes. I looked at letters from 1944 and 1945." There was also a loose leaf file bound in blue leather: "This book was a diary of Eva Braun's in which she had sketched all the letters she had written. There was also a book by Mussolini there. . . I also saw some letters on cards." Later he added: "Oh, it just occurs to me that there were also many sketches in the tin chest, sketches by Hitler. They were personal sketches,

made in pencil, depicting floor plans and the like. I saw one which seemed to represent a church.” He also described the 25–30 photo albums in a laundry basket (albums which Gutierrez and Conner had already recovered and submitted.) Of one thing Special Agent Gutierrez was convinced, and on Nov 22, 1945 he repeated this conviction to Seventh Army: “Konrad did not burn the exchange of letters between Hitler and Eva Braun, as he has maintained. The letters are either in Schladming, Austria, or in the neighbourhood of Fischhorn.” On Sep 26, 1946 Special Agent Ben J.M. Gorby, commanding the USFET CIC, Region V, Regensburg, stated: “[Frank Konrad] revealed that he had been arrested by C.I.C. once before, namely on 21 August 1945 at Zell am See. ... he handed over to the C.I.C. in Zell am See part of the correspondence between Hitler and Eva Braun as well as one of Hitler’s suits.”

- 3 On Dec 5, 1976 I interviewed Frau Ursula Göhler again. She said that Gutierrez had written complaining that she had “dropped him in it.” She now denied saying she saw him packing Eva Braun materials into his case, there was never any talk of Hitler’s letters to Eva, only of her diaries and albums. “She now maintains that all these objects were ‘gone’ long before Gutierrez returned to the States.”
- 4 Principally the IRR file on Franz Konrad. I have summarised the content at <http://www.fpp.co.uk/Hitler/Gutierrez>. See especially my diary Jun 8, 11, 1983 (*ibid.*, /Gutierrez/diary_extracts.html), and my summary of Items from the Fort Meade file on Konrad.

