

Newsweek

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Hess Mission

A new hole was punched last week into the "best kept secret of the war": the motive for Rudolf Hess's sensational flight to Scotland in May 1941. For the first time a Nazi organ frankly admitted that Hess, far from being a renegade or madman, was sent by Hitler in an attempt to win the British over to a joint campaign against Russia. The story, published in the German-owned Dagsposten of Stockholm, blamed President Roosevelt for the failure of this "magnanimous Hitlerian gesture."

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Details of the Hess Mission

Rudolf Hess' mysterious flight to England made more sense in the light of documentary evidence presented to the Nuremberg international tribunal. A 1400-word report to Hitler by Hess' intimate adviser, Dr. Albrecht Haushofer, revealed that the flight was part and parcel of a Nazi plan to persuade "reasonable Englishmen" to halt the war. Far from being an unpremeditated, mad-cap venture, Hess' flight to reach certain people in England had been considered in the fall of 1940, more than six months before the actual trip. The destination too had been decided upon: the estate of the Duke of Hamilton, who was thought to be sympathetic to German peace proposals. In September 1940, barely a year after the war had started, Hess sent a letter to the Duke of Hamilton, utilizing a prominent Swiss official of the International Red Cross. Prosecutors did not reveal the contents of Hess' letter or the Duke's reaction. But in the spring of 1941 Rudolf Hess parachuted down on the Hamilton estate, to be discovered by a Scottish farmer. If the evidence didn't point to a war crime, it had thrown valuable light on one of the great human interest stories of the war.

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