

Hitler's Final Days
The Dictator's Last Words to the World
Adolf Hitler: "My Political Testament," April 29, 1945

Robert G Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's: 2010), 181-183.

Robert G. Moeller reprints the translation of this document in the Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* that the U.S. Government Printing Office printed in 1946. This is the publication of documents used as evidence in the first Nuremberg Trial.

Description and findings:

Adolf Hitler was the chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945, known as the Führer and the leader of the Nazi party. He is the world's most infamous dictator. On April 29, 1945, as the Allies were closing in on Berlin, Hitler knew he was close to defeat. He thereafter dictated his last political testament and will to his secretary Traudl Junge in his Berlin bunker. Hitler ordered the creation of three copies of his will and testament, at least one set of which he intended to reach its final destination. The political testament is the final piece of writing Hitler ever gave, his last words to the world. At first, there was speculation over the authenticity of the documents. After careful investigation, the United States and Britain declared these documents valid and released them to the public.

This document is currently easily accessible. Simply 'googling' the title will yield numerous results of the full document in English translation. After the defeat of the Nazis, Britain seized the first set of documents, which led to the United States discovering the two remaining ones. One document is on display at the Eisenhower library and one is at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, I could not find the location of the third copy. After conducting research, I found out that the words of the political testament might have not been entirely Hitler's; Goebbels may have influenced Hitler or chosen some words for him. Additionally, many people had believed that these documents were fake. Traudl Junge, however, has written a book claiming that it was truly Hitler who dictated the testament.

Annotated bibliography

1. Luce, Daniel and Dr. Goebbels. "Hitler's Will Expelled Two High Nazis." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 31, 1945,
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/165609031?accountid=14522>

This is a newspaper article, from the *Los Angeles Times*, which released Adolf Hitler's political testament on December 31, 1945. The article disclosed that the Allied authorities released Hitler's political testament as well as his will in textual form. Also, it says that the 3rd army released these documents after "British officials at Herford had made them public in the British Zone." The British had investigated the documents for weeks

before they released them. These documents also provided a basis for the search of fugitive Nazis in Austria, Italy and Germany. The 3rd army, however, claimed that they were unclear about what kind of search would be made. The article first discusses that Hitler expelled two high Nazi officials, Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering and Gestapo Chief Heinrich Himmler from the National Socialist party “for attempting to seize control of the state.” After the statements about the documents and the expulsion of Nazi officials, the article prints Hitler’s entire will and political testament. Additionally, it includes an English translation of Goebbels’ appendix to the testament in which he claims that the Führer ordered him to leave Berlin. Goebbels, however, did not honor Hitler’s orders and said he would stay with him until his last hours and commit suicide with his wife and children alongside the Führer. Goebbels signed this statement on April 29, 1945 at 5:30. Other than claiming to have received its information from the 3rd army, the article does not cite any further sources.

2. “The Last Will and Testament of Adolf Hitler (Personal Will, Political Statement and Marriage Certificate with Eva Braun)” (March 19, 1946)
https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/Hitler_Marriage_Will_Political_Testament.pdf

According to a letter that the Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, wrote to President Harry S. Truman, the United States’ military Intelligence personnel was able to recover Hitler’s political testament through information the British Intelligence Service provided. Patterson suggested that this document is of “great public interest” and that it should be “placed on display in the Library of Congress.”

3. Hitler’s Will: General Intelligence, “Part II – General Intelligence: The Discovery of Hitler’s Wills”
https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/Hitler_Will_General_Intelligence.pdf

This document explains the discovery of Hitler’s will. The discovery of the second and third set of copies were made possible due to the British arresting Heinz Lorenz, in the British occupation zone, for possession of false identification. To authenticate the documents, the British and American officers compared the document with past signatures as well as with the consistency of facts. They then interrogated Lorenz and asked him how he came to possess the document. Lorenz admitted that he, along with Zander and Johannmeier, were each given a set of documents to “deliver to Fieldmarshal Scherner, Admiral Loenitz and to Munich for preservation and eventual publication.” The three had left the Führerbunker on April 29, 1945. Now, the British and American intelligence set out to find Johannmeier and Zander to seize the two remaining set of documents. They first found Johannmeier who did not admit to having the documents. Zander was first thought missing, but after investigation, it came to be known that he had been living under a false name, Friedrich-Wilhelm Paustin in Tegernsee. Zander was captured and confessed his story after interrogation. Zander’s story was consistent with Lorenz’s account and now two of the set of documents were with the Allies. Johannmeier was still resisting the fact that he had the documents but intelligence teams continued questioning him and tried to find evidence. Finally, Johannmeier was given a “pause,” which led to his reasoning and thinking of what he should do. Ultimately, he gave

in and led the Allies to the third and final set of documents. The documents consisted of Hitler's personal will, his personal statement, his marriage certificate to Eva Braun, and an appendix written by Goebbels.

4. "Last Will and Testament of Adolf Hitler" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_will_and_testament_of_Adolf_Hitler

According to Wikipedia, one set of documents is on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C for several years. Wikipedia, however, does not specify when.

5. Trevor Roper, Hugh. *The Last Days of Hitler*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Hugh Trevor Roper wrote a detailed account of Hitler's final days as well as his last days in the führerbunker. In his book, he has the original German document of Hitler's political testament. The document is signed on April 29, 1945 at four o'clock in the morning. Hitler and four witnesses signed the testament: Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Martin Bormann, Wilhelm Burgdorf, and Hans Krebs (Roper, 180). Trevor Roper further examined the details of the night the Hitler dictated the documents and the orders he gave Zander, Lorenz and Johannmeier. Trevor Roper mainly focused on Hitler's last days and analyzed what the document said. He also said that the men carrying the documents left at about noon on April 29. "They were ill-assorted, ill-equipped party, and their mission showed every sign of hasty improvisation. Neither food nor money nor papers were issued to them; each took what he could find as his *viaticum*." (189) He made it sound as though it was a last-minute mission, unplanned and doomed to fail.

After Hitler's death and the Nazi defeat, Zander, Lorenz and Johannmeier were able to escape. Zander made it to Bavaria and hid his documents in a trunk in the village of Tegernsee and decided to put the past behind him. He changed his identity. Johannmeier went to his home in Iserlohn, Westphalia and buried his documents in a bottle in the garden of his home. Trevor Roper assumed that if it hadn't been for Lorenz, these documents would have never been found, "had the fate of the papers depended upon these two men, they would never have been found by the Allies." (220)

6. Fernsworth, Larry. "Adolf Hitler's Last Will be Moved to Ike Library in Abilene, Kansas." *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 10, 1962.
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1144&dat=19620710&id=R0IqAAAIAIAJ&sjid=vk4EAAAIAIAJ&pg=6755,2734649&hl=en> (accessed March 7, 2016)

At the request of President Eisenhower, the will was sent to Abilene, Kansas for "the dedication there of the Eisenhower Library, where it remains under National Archives control." Now, one set of the documents is stored in the Eisenhower library.

7. O'Donnell, James. P. *The Bunker: The History of the Reich Chancellery Group*. United States of America: De Capo Press, 2001.

The author focused on the final ten days of Hitler's life in the Berlin bunker. He also analyzed and investigated Hitler's final political testament. O'Donnell claimed that Goebbels

had drafted several notes for Hitler's last testament. Goebbels greatly admired Hitler and wanted his "idol" to "have a voice in history from beyond the grave." (O'Donnell, 253) Although it was known that Hitler and Junge were alone when Hitler dictated his last testament, Junge had said that Hitler was dictating the testament by "speaking from notes." (O'Donnell, 254) O'Donnell makes the assumption that it was Goebbels who wrote these notes. Further evidence that O'Donnell uses to back his claim is that it was known that Hitler's right hand was unsteady and he could not write legibly at the time. O'Donnell also analyzed the literary styles of both Hitler and Goebbels and asserted that the writing of the political testament was more similar to Goebbels' writings. The political testament also contained Latin words, such as *Automata*, that Goebbels was familiar with, something unfamiliar to Hitler.

8. Junge, Traudl. *Hitler's Last Secretary: A Firsthand Account of Life with Hitler*. Edited. Müller, Melissa. Delaware: Arcade Publishing, 2011.

Traudl Junge was Hitler's secretary for two and a half years before his death. On his last night, Hitler dictated his personal will and testament to Junge. "There is something urgent in his voice, and I realize, to my surprise, that this last, most important, most crucial document written by Hitler is to go out into the world without any corrections or thorough revisions." (184) Hitler told her he had intended to marry Eva Braun "before they united in death." (183) And so, after dictating the documents, he went to his wedding party. Junge goes on to "type out the last page in the history of the Third Reich." (184) Junge described how the Führer was impatient going back and forth checking up on what she was typing. Junge claimed that he spoke his heart out to her. Junge overheard Goebbels and Hitler's last conversation in which Goebbels told him he will not obey his orders. She then wrote Goebbels' appendix, which was added to Hitler's testament. After having finished typing the documents and witnesses had signed them, Junge felt that "Hitler's life is really over." (185) She explained how Hitler was just waiting for the confirmation that at least one of the documents reached its final destination (she does not detail this information any further). On April 30, Junge shared her last lunch with Hitler before he said goodbye. According to Traudl, she couldn't "take in his last words." (186) The Führer then went into his room and Traudl heard a "sound of a shot, so loud, so close that we all fall silent. It echoes on through all the rooms... The Führer is dead now." (187)

9. Weber, Bruce. "Arnold Weiss Dies at 86; Helped to Find Hitler's Will." *New York Times*, January 02, 2011. 22, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 2, 2016). <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=f5c53986-0821-4d87-a059-a5983be192d9%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4106&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=56684654&db=a9h>

This is Arnold Weiss' obituary. It claims that Weiss fled Germany to the United States at the age of thirteen and fought alongside the United States in World War II. It also states that Weiss was one of the investigators searching for Hitler's last will and testament. According to Wikipedia, Weiss helped Hugh Trevor Roper locate Zander who had one of the copies of the last testament at hand.

10. O'Reilly, Bill. *Hitler's Last Days: The Death of the Nazi Regime and the World's Most Notorious Dictator*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015

This book looks at the final days and the death of Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler's will, testament and marriage certificate are mentioned in the book. The author only mentions that one of the copies was found in an "envelope stored at the bottom of a dry well outside Munich, Germany." (O'Reilly, 288) Wilhelm Zander led a Jewish American intelligence agent to the location of the documents after an interview. O'Reilly, however, does not specify how he got this information.

11. Bradsher, Greg. "Hitler's Final Words: His Political Testament, Personal Will and Marriage Certificate: From the Bunker in Berlin to the National Archives" *Prologue*, April 30, 2015. <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2015/spring/hitler-will.pdf>

Greg Bradsher conducted detailed research on how Hitler's political testament came to be featured in the National Archives Exhibit Hall in April of 1946.¹ To obtain this information, Bradsher used and cited the interrogation reports that the U.S. and British intelligence produced. Additionally, Bradsher cites Traudl Junge's own account from *Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary* (Bradsher, 25).

Late in the evening on April 28, 1945, around midnight, Adolf Hitler began dictating his last political testament to his secretary, Traudl Junge. Hitler instructed Junge to type up his testament as fast as possible because time was now too valuable and not much of it was left. Junge completed the testament and handed it to Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Propaganda around five in the morning of April 29, 1945. Hitler signed the testament and so did witnesses Joseph Goebbels, Wilhelm Burgdorf, Martin Bormann and Hans Krebs. Hitler had ordered two copies of the original documents to be made, and sent to Admiral Doenitz and Field Marshal Ferdinand Schoerner, commander of the Army Group Center in Bohemia. Three people left the bunker, each carrying one copy of Hitler's final documents. These three men were Willy Johannmeier, Bormann's adjutant, SS Colonel Wilhelm Zander, and Heinz Lorenz, an official of the Propaganda Ministry representing Goebbels. Hitler sent Johannmeier to Schoerner, Zander and possibly Lorenz to Doenitz (Bradsher, 17-19).

Hitler did not want to end his life until he knew that these documents safely reached their destinations. The Russians, however, were getting closer to the bunker and so that afternoon, Hitler and his wife committed suicide on April 30, 1945. News of Hitler's death spread and the three men carrying Hitler's final documents decided to abandon their mission because they believed it no longer necessary. Lorenz and Zander both attempted to start new lives under different aliases and tried to hide Hitler's documents (Bradsher, 19-20).

The Americans first found Zander in the U.S. occupation zone and after Hugh Trevor Roper conducted an interrogation, the Americans got hold of the second copy. The Americans then captured Johannmeier who at first tried to claim that he did not have the documents. Fortunately, Roper was able to get a confession out of Johannmeier, who said

¹ Hitler's Political Testament, Personal Will and Marriage Certificate, National Archives Exhibit

that he had buried the documents in the garden of his house and led Roper to them. The Allies now had all three copies (Bradsher, 20).

General Dwight Eisenhower then sent the documents to the FBI to authenticate them and the FBI conducted several tests to find that the documents were valid. The documents then went on exhibit at the National Archives on April 26, 1946, almost a year after the time that Hitler had dictated them to his secretary (Bradsher, 23-24).

Unfortunately, Bradsher does not use citations until the end of his paper where he has a “note on sources” section in which he lists all the sources he used to write his paper. These sources are all from the National Archives and include interrogation reports, declassified documents from World War II, intelligence documents, and personal documents of Adolf Hitler as well as the United States Army.

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