Hitler's Table Talk

Compiled by Martin Bormann

Ostara Publications
Introduction

The History of the Manuscript

Hitler's Table Talk is a recording of the informal conversations in which the German leader participated around the lunch and dinner tables with his intimate staff and senior party or ideological colleagues.

They were recorded upon the instruction of the head of the Party Chancellery and private secretary to Hitler, Martin Bormann—with Hitler's express permission. The first notes were taken by the lawyer and party under secretary Heinrich Himmler, who started on July 5, 1941 and ended in mid-March 1942.

Henry Picker, a senior executive and legal staff member in the Führer Headquarters, took over and prepared notes from March 21, 1942 until August 2, 1942.

After that date, Himmler and Martin Bormann continued appending material at increasingly irregular dates until November 1944, when the records end.

The documents survived in two versions: the combined Himmler and Picker notes, and a more "complete" version kept by Bormann. This latter version was sent piecemeal to Bormann's wife, Gerda, in Munich. Gerda fled to Italy at the end of the war, but was arrested and died of natural causes while in detention in 1946. An Italian official acquired the manuscript, and sold it to a Swiss national and NSDAP sympathizer, François Genoud.

Manuscript Dispersed

It seems that Gerda lost at least one copy of the manuscript while still in Munich, as a fragment of a third copy, which consists of forty-two typed pages is in the Adolf Hitler Collection at the U.S. Library of Congress. This fragment has a handwritten note at the top of the first page, which reads: "Found by Mr. Jos. Shraberger, Munich, Herzog Wilhelm Strasse 4." This fragment appears to be a portion of a copy of the manuscript which ended up in Monsieur Genoud's hands. Picker and Himmler together published the first version, in the original German, of the notes in 1951, under the title "Hitler's Table Talk".

Genoud published a French translation in 1952, and an English edition was published with an introduction by Hugh Trevor Roper in 1953.

Finally, the original German content of the Bormann manuscript was published in 1980 by Werner Joehmich, although that edition does not contain the 100 entries made by Picker between March 12 and September 1, 1942.

Topics and Main Themes

The topics under discussion varied greatly, as the reader will discover. Hitler's remarkable general knowledge serves as a testament to his self-education, and his ability to talk with authority on almost any topic was remarked upon by many observers.

The main recurring themes of the manuscript, can however be pinpointed:

1. Caustic comments on his prime enemies, the Russians; Americans, the English and of course, Jews;
2. His plans for Germany and the occupied territories after a German victory in the conflict;
3. A pronounced dislike of Christianity and that religion's influence in Germany and elsewhere.

It is the first and third main themes which have aroused the most controversy and which has led to claims that the manuscript has either been forged or altered to misrepresent his true views on the matter.

Hitler's Attitude towards Russians

The very first entry in the manuscript is highly derogative of Russians, and in the first part of the book, repeated reference is made to alleged Russian mental and racial inferiority. These references have led to the book being formally banned in 2008 Russia under that country's "anti-extremism laws."

At first reading, there can be no doubt that initially Hitler viewed Russians as racially inferior. However, as the war progressed, the derogatory remarks become fewer and fewer, and in one of the last entries, Hitler even praises Stalin as a "giant" and "successor of the Tsars."

It is clear that his earlier derogatory remarks, made the flush of early victories and rampant German nationalism, did not represent Hitler's ultimate position on Russia or Russians.

This was evidenced in Hitler's later actions as well, when, for example, hundreds of thousands of Russians were allowed to take up German arms and uniforms to join in the crusade against Communism in the "Russian National Liberation Army" under former Soviet General Vlassov.

The anti-Russian remarks should also be contextualized in the light of his equally vehement attacks on the nature of Americans and American culture. In one section, Hitler claims, for example, that the closure of an opera house in New York was evidence of the cultural degeneracy of Americans.

There are also derogatory remarks about the English, the French, the Czechs, the Romanians, the Spaniards,
the Hungarians and even the Finns. The latter four were, at the time the remarks were made, allies of Germany. The insults which Hitler so liberally dished out were therefore, not limited to Russians, and by the end of the war, there can be little doubt that the German leader had acquired enough cause to revise his opinions on all of them.

**Hitler and Christianity**

The other section of the manuscript which has been the source of much controversy are the biting attacks upon Christianity. The reason for the uproar lies in the fact that the comments attributed to Hitler about that religion in this book are far more vehement than anything he has to say about Jews and are directly contradictory to his public position on the matter and even what he wrote in *Mein Kampf*.

The controversy stems from differences in translation between the Genoud (French) version, its English translation, and the Heim and Picker version. The French, English and German versions do contain subtle differences which might very well be interpreted differently, but which can most likely be attributed to figurative translations of difficult German phrases.

A good example is the use of the word “disease” to describe Christianity in the English and French versions of the entry for 27 February 1942.

That particular word does not appear in the published German version, and is clearly a figurative translation linked to the next sentence which calls for the “cleaning” of all life.

It has been claimed that Genoud has inserted words in the manuscript, an allegation which he denied, pointing out that the original manuscript was typewritten and is uniform, with the only insertions being handwritten notes by Bormann in the margin.

The quibbling over figurative and literal translations has therefore provided ammunition to those who object to the anti-Christian comments in the manuscript. No-one, however disputes the essential content and anti-Christian posturing contained in Hitler’s private conversation.

This edition has followed the original Genoud version, but for the sake of historical relevancy, it is important for readers to be aware that there are translations which differ slightly in detail, but not in meaning or direction.

**Hitler and Jews**

As to be expected, the topic of Jews and Jewish influence features heavily in this manuscript. The most interesting part of the conversations deal with the treatment of Jews during the war, and specifically how they would be “rooted out” of Europe and “dumped in Russia.”

Significantly, Hitler dismisses allegations of mass extermination, remarking that it was “good that popular rumor” attributes such an action to the Germans, because, he says, “terror is a salutary thing.”

In another part of the manuscript, he warned that even if the Jews were “rooted out” from Europe, they would return in a few “hundred years” once again. These comments do not fit comfortably with post-war histories of World War II.

**“Monologue”: A Misconception about the Manuscript**

The text is also often presented as Hitler’s “monologues” as if he subjected his staff and guests to an endless solo haranguing on various topics. In fact, as many observers (such as the Belgian Leon Degrelle) said, Hitler was a very polite dinner table host and was always an attentive listener.

The nature of the manuscript was however to capture Hitler’s thoughts only, and this has created the impression that it was only he who spoke at these mealtimes. The vast number of topics discussed, and the occasional inserted remarks by guests, indicate however that the conversations were the product of an animated discussion rather than a solo discourse.