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Hitler's Mad Dream of Conquest Ended 11 Years Ago in Suicide

New Motion Picture From Austria Tells of Last Days Before Nazi Dictator Perished in Ruins of Chancellery as Russian Armies Advanced in Berlin—A Scramble by "Faithful" to Save Themselves.

BY JOHN LOWRY.

NEW YORK--In the underground bunker, 30 feet beneath the flaming remains of the once-magnificent Reichs chancellery in Berlin, the silence was almost unbearable.

The black-shirted S. S. guards had vanished from their posts at the exits. Corridors that only a few days ago had echoed to the busy sounds of a military headquarters now lay deserted. Only the rumble of Russian artillery shells crashing into the burning holocaust above penetrated dully through the thick walls of the subterranean shelter.

In the ante-room of the bunker's small but luxuriously appointed Fuehrer's apartment, a small group of men and women waited tensely. No one said a word. It was just before 4 o'clock in the afternoon of April 30, 1945, and the curtain was about to come down on one of the strangest dramas of our time. In another minute, a shot would ring out and Adolf Hitler would be dead by his own hand; the nightmare of the Nazi Reich would come to an abrupt end, the river of tears and blood on which Hitler and his henchmen rode to their glory would stop flowing.

The story of the final week in the bunker, when Hitler, trapped alternated between deep despair and a madman's wild dreams for relief, is told vividly and realistically in a new Austrian movie, "The Last Ten Days," which opened here in New York April 11. Albin Skoda plays Hitler and easily could pass for his double. Erich Maria Remarque wrote the script based on the book of the same title by M. A. Musmanno, an American officer who, after the war undertook an exhaustive investigation of how the German dictator came to his inglorious end.

Ruthless Egotist.

The last 10 days of Hitler in a measure reflected his entire erratic career, marked by his intuitive but shrewd acts, his absolute ruthlessness and his fantastic sense of ego. The killing went on almost to the last moment, and always Hitler was obeyed, even when his aides knew fully well that the war was lost.

Above, Berlin went through death agony. But below, Hitler's fatal magnetism held almost to the last moment. On April 20 there was a gala party in the bunker. It was Hitler's 56th birthday and they broke out the champagne bottles. Brightly uniformed officers came to the underground headquarters to offer their felicitations. Himmler was there, the Gestapo chief; Goebbels, Hitler's loyal propaganda minister; fat Hermann Goering, whose Luftwaffe was practically nonexistent; von Ribbentrop, complete with monocle; the generals—Jodl, Keitel, Krebs, Burgdorf and Admiral Doenitz; Evan Braun, Hitler's mistress, and others.

They spoke of victory. Later in the evening, Goebbels went on the air to exhort the German people to give their all to the Fatherland.

"The Fuehrer is at the head of his troops," he exclaimed. "He will lead us to the inevitable, glorious victory."

Hitler's eyes lit up. He strode into the map room and delivered to his awed audience a raspy lecture on how the German 9th army corps would come to break the Soviet's iron ring around the capital.

If the birthday party had buoyed Hitler's spirits, events in subsequent days served to dampen them considerably. Even his own officers, conditioned never to contradict the Fuehrer, were telling him that the battle was lost, that he

should leave Berlin and transfer his headquarters to safer Bavaria. Hitler raved and ranted. He denounced the army, he called the Luftwaffe traitors

with his doctor and a death pact with Eva Braun. But the woman he had lived with since 1935 had one condition—marriage. She was willing to die, but only as



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and, for the first time, he talked of dying in Berlin.

The Last Meeting.

On April 24 his general staff officers arrived at the bunker for the last time. Russian artillery was laying down a steady barrage. Communication with the headquarters was becoming difficult. Hitler was depressed. He said he had been let down by his people.

By that time, the dictator was no longer the image that had once sternly looked down on the Germans from millions of swastika-adorned posters. Hitler had become prematurely gray. He was limping heavily and his left eyelid was twitching violently. His hands, too, had an uncontrollable tremor. His mind, drugged by injections from his quack doctor, Theo Morrell, was lucid only part of the time. He suffered from stomach cramps and insomnia.

Apart from the military situation, two personal blows hit Hitler almost simultaneously and caused him to shout "treason" over and over again. Both Himmler and Goering left the bunker after the birthday party on the 20th. They were never to see Hitler again. Goering flew to Bavaria and sent Hitler an ultimatum: Since (on April 22) Hitler had made it plain he would stay in Berlin, he (Goering) should immediately be made Fuehrer and take over the government. Hitler responded by ordering Goering's arrest and stripping him of all ranks.

Soon after, the radio brought more bad news. Himmler—his "faithful Heinrich," under whose orders the Nazis engaged in their orgy of killing—had made peace overtures through Sweden. Hitler called in Hermann Fegelein, his brother-in-law and liaison for Himmler. After denouncing him violently, he had him marched out into the courtyard and shot.

Hitler now knew that the game was lost. He discussed suicide quite openly with his aides. The personnel in the bunker sensed that the end was at hand. There was a general relaxation of discipline. In the S. S. quarters, orgies took place.

"We knew what he was going to do, and we were just anxious for him to get it over with and to get out of that bunker," recalled one survivor.

Discusses Suicide.

But Hitler still took his time. On the 28th he again discussed a surefire method of suicide

his legal wife. Hitler consented.

Red army soldiers were advancing through Berlin's subway tunnels where thousands of homeless Berliners and wounded Wehrmacht soldiers had taken refuge. From the bunker, an officer would use underground telephone cables to ring subscribers and determine how far the Russian tanks had penetrated. When it became clear that the Soviets could advance speedily underground, Hitler issued a brutal order: Flood the tubes. S. S. teams with dynamite went out. When their work was done, the river Spree poured into the subway tunnels, drowning all those hiding there.

An April 29, Hitler called in his valet, Heinz Linge, and gave him his final instructions. He and Eva would kill themselves. The bodies were to be burned. All of his personal possessions were to be destroyed, except the picture of Frederick the Great that hung in Hitler's study. At midnight on the 29th, the marriage ceremony took place by the light of a flickering candle. Russian artillery provided the wedding music above. At 2:30 that morning, Hitler and Eva bade farewell to the inhabitants of the bunker.

An hour before that, Hitler had dictated his personal and political wills, in which he again denounced the army and its leaders, appointed Doenitz as the new Fuehrer and denounced international Jewry as one of the primary forces causing his defeat. Adolf Schickelgruber, once thwarted by a Jew in his ambitions to become an artist, was still seeking his revenge.

At ten minutes to four in the afternoon of the 30th, Hitler and Eva emerged once again from their apartment. There was another round of silent handshakes. The Russians were now only a few thousand feet distant. Then the door closed behind the doomed couple. When the shot rang out, Linge and Arthur Axmen, the Nazi youth leader, walked into the room.

Hitler was half sitting on a sofa, his head slumped over a little table and blood trickling from his temple. He had shot himself through the mouth. Eva had bitten on a vial of poison. The bodies were carried upstairs into the yard and doused with gasoline. The Russian shellings started again. Someone threw a lighted torch and the flames hissed into the darkening sky.

ON THE RECORD.