

The Hitler Dilemma

By Claus Holm

It all started when our Führer was murdered. I realize you already know all this, but let me give you a little remedial history class.

Everybody watched The Führer fall to the ground, struck by an assassin's bullet. It was during the Nürnberg rally in nineteen thirty-eight, shortly after Germany had annexed Austria and created Greater Germany. Of course, Greater Germany would later grow in size when it swallowed up Italy, but Austria was the first step.

I wasn't there myself, but I have seen the newsreels and pictures. The Führer is standing on his podium, giving his speech in that energetic way he was famous for, when the bullet suddenly pierces his chest and throws him back towards the flag behind him. Red blood spatters on the white part of the swastika, but it looks black in the old movies. He staggers for a moment, as if he's trying to regain his footing. One hand goes to his stomach, and it comes away bloody. He holds out the bloody hand towards Himmler, but before Himmler can take it, The Führer falls to the ground, his body going limp. People in the audience still haven't quite understood what has just happened, only the SS bodyguards react as they leap forward to cover the Führer's body with theirs, lifting him up and carrying him off to safety. Of course, he was already as dead as a doornail when they got him off the stage. Himmler and Göring looks at each other in astounded confusion before the camera is turned away.

Watching the film today, it leaves the impression that the shock was too great to understand, that the people at the top of the now suddenly Führer-less Third Reich were confused and paralyzed with fear. Nothing could be further from the case, of course.

It didn't take long for the SS and the soldiers at the rally to capture the assassin. As almost every schoolboy knows today, the man who had fired the deadly shot was called Christopher Brown and was American. The history books usually focuses on his military background, dwelling only briefly on the fact that there were no records of his birth in any archives in either America or England. Archives that were examined thoroughly after the invasion had been completed and both the British Isles and the American continent had fallen under German control. Christopher Brown, a common enough name, but none of the people with that name matched the information the assassin gave. The history books today often speculate that he lied about his identity.

I know better.

Christopher Brown was quickly locked away, and a message was released to the press that he had been executed for high treason and murder the day after the Führer's death. There is no grave, no death certificate and no record of what happened to the body are available in any archives.

Except, of course, if you have the influence I have.

The Third Reich began a re-organization shortly after the rally. Everyone expected Göring to take the lead as the new Führer, but he chose to step down in favor of a man no-one had heard of until then. Supposedly, he was The Führer's personal choice for a new leading voice for Germany, according to Göring and Himmler. They both vouched for him, and said he would lead us to greatness. As we know, that was

true in many ways. He led us to victory after victory in the last sixty years of the 20th Century. Our great leader Herbert Obermeyer, at first called Führer and Chancellor, and later Emperor of the German Empire. There were a few political voices that were against him assuming the old title of Emperor, discussions about returning to the old ways before the Nazi movement had converted people to the new way of thinking. As you know, Obermeyer gave the famous “kings and pawns”-speech, where he compared the titles to the chess game and explained why we needed to rise above the board and look toward the future.

It helped his case that the most important voices against him had a habit of disappearing without a trace, and that he had the army on his side. The newly re-armed army.

It was only a few months after Obermeyer assumed the title of chancellor that the new weapons began to be introduced to the German army. New rifles with faster loading time, bigger clips and incredible accuracy. Granades with blasting force of two or three of our old ones. No one questioned it at the time, since the propaganda machine spread told us of the German scientists working night and day to win in the arms race. The new weapons sent the allied forces running for their lives, and as the bombardments began laying waste to London, the allies began losing hope. After Churchill’s death in ‘forty-two, and the destruction of most of London, England surrendered. Ireland held out a little longer, but by ‘forty-three, the swastika flew over Dublin as well. At this point, as you know, there was only Russia left on the Eastern Front, but Obermeyer refused to send troops against them. He ordered the Polish border closed, grouped his men there, and let the Russian army retreat. His political opponents were confused, but as he explained to them, a winter offensive against Moscow had defeated Napoleon. There was no reason to make the same mistake twice.

The United States surrendered in nineteen-forty-four, after the first German A-Bomb destroyed New York City. Obermeyer sent the message that he had many more to follow, if Roosevelt wouldn’t meet his terms of surrender. Officially, the German Empire had taken control of the United States, but in the daily life most of the administration was done by our Japanese allies. Canada didn’t last long after that, and soon the Nazi government had full control over the North American continent.

To sum up what is, essentially, common knowledge today, only Australia and South Africa managed to stand against the German Empire. China decided to become our allies instead of a lengthy war, and the rest of Asia quickly followed them, getting the official renaming to East Germany.

Russia held out the longest, striking at us with scattered attacks throughout the late forties and early fifties. But when nineteen-fifty-five rolled around, Moscow finally gave in. Russia was no more.

You know all of this, of course. This is ancient history, you say. Why would you even care?

Because all of this – everything after nineteen-thirty-eight – only happened because of someone changing history. Not just one someone, either. Two someones.

If you’re still paying attention, I hope that means I have peaked your interest, and you don’t think I am just a foolish old man who has lost his mind looking through ancient archives and newsreels. I hope you will listen to what I have to say.

They tell us history can never be changed, but they are wrong. History *has* been changed, and will most likely be so again. My research has made me conclude, that history has been changed at least twice. The first time when Christopher Brown shot the Führer, and the second time when Obermeyer took the place of power. If what I have found out is correct, then both of those men came from the future, albeit most likely two *different* futures.

When I was asked by the SS to become the head administrator of the secret archives, it didn't come undeserved. Even though I was born after the conquest had finished – the year after, in fact – I had served the Empire with distinction. I had an exemplary military record, had proven myself in several top secret missions and received the Reichsorder for special services to the Empire. I had proven I could be trusted, and it was only due to the injury I sustained in the second battle of New Zealand that I was ordered to retire from active duty. I still wanted to do my part for the Empire, and so I was transferred to the secret archives. Their location is so secret that I can't even tell you where it's located, but suffice to say, it's in the place you would least expect it to be. I love my job, and since I have no family and very few friends outside of the office, the archive is my life. There is a special kind of pleasure in knowing every little secret of the Empire, of being able to leaf through secret reports that most likely no one else will ever read.

It was in one such report, hidden away amongst others in a black metal box that I came across the transcripts of the interviews with Christopher Brown. The time stamp on the documents was October twelfth, nineteen-thirty-nine – which meant that Brown had been alive a lot longer than what the official story claimed. The interviews all concerned technology and history.

Future history.

It was obvious that Brown at this point, even though he still seemed proud of what he had done, was a broken man. I don't blame him. The SS had already back then developed torture into an art form. There was nothing they could not make you tell, and Brown told it all. How the world had been plunged into war when the Führer invaded Poland, how the allies had fought back, and how Germany eventually had been defeated. He had stopped this from happening by killing the Führer with his bullet. History had been changed, and Germany wouldn't win the war. His mission had been successful. Even as broken as he was, it was clear that he had felt an enormous satisfaction in this knowledge.

When the officer conducting the questioning mentioned Obermeyer, however, Brown became very agitated. The officer had noted that he had several times yelled that it "wasn't supposed to be like this!" I found that interesting, because to a man claiming to be a time traveller, and who has just changed the course of his own history and effectively caused a time paradox, those are some interesting words to use.

If you've ever read about time travel in books or seen one of the popular *Die Zeitreisenden* movies Fritz Schneider did in the 'eighties, you're probably familiar with the idea of the so-called "grandfather paradox". If you travel back in time and kill your grandfather, you will never be born, since your grandfather can't sire your father who would go on to sire you. However, if you are never born, you can't travel back in time in the first place. This is what is known as a temporal paradox, and obviously something that *should* be impossible. By going back in time and changing the history of the world in his own past, Brown had created such a paradox – it might not be his own grandfather he had killed, but many things would obviously be altered as a result of his actions. The world he came from would be changed in innumerable ways, and he

would never be able to go back to his own time again – assuming, of course that his time machine had allowed for a return trip in the first place. None of the records indicated it had ever been found.

His reaction to Obermeyer intrigued me. If Obermeyer wasn't supposed to be the leader he was, where did he come from? Could it be possible that someone else had changed history again, after Brown?

I began researching Obermeyer in my files. I pulled in favors from a few old friends and got access to files so confidential that they weren't even in *my* archive.

Obermeyer hadn't been a party member very long when Göring made him the new head of the Reich. I couldn't find anything about him in the reports and membership lists until a few months before the rally. He had not worked his way up, hadn't been related to anyone famous and hadn't been part of any inner circle, but seemed to have appeared out of thin air. Which, I suppose, is exactly what a time traveller would appear to do.

Göring had made him a liaison to one of the weapons development institutes before naming him as the new Führer, and I soon understood why. In the files I received from Berlin it was clear that the weapons of the Reich had taken a gigantic leap forward very suddenly. The designs for the new weapons had all come from one place – the very same institute Obermeyer had been attached to as a liaison. Within months, new rifles and grenades had gone out to the army – not to mention the A-bomb a few years later. Yes, Heisenberg had been working on it for a while, even given promises to the government that he could produce nuclear powered ships...but the bomb had been constructed so perfectly, so easily that they had not even needed to make a test detonation. The Americans had not had a clue of its existence before it blasted New York City to rubble.

Could all this weaponry – and Obermeyer himself – come from the future? I'm convinced that they did.

My theory is this: Let's assume that there was an original timeline, which we will call Time A. We don't know if Germany won or lost the war in Time A, because Brown never explicitly stated this, but we know that there were incredible losses on both sides, both in human lives and materials. Brown went back in time to try to make things better. He shot the Führer, changing the timeline into a new one – which we'll call Time B. Are you with me so far? Good. Now, when Time B came into existence, Germany lost the war. In the newly created future of Time B, Obermeyer decides to go back himself and help the Third Reich win – and he chooses to do it by introducing technology and knowledge from the future to the past. This creates the timeline we're living in today, which we'll call Time C. Time C is the everyday you and I know, where Germany won the war and rules most of the world. It's what you see when you look out the window right now.

Of course, as you very well know, Obermeyer has been dead many years, and Brown was – as far as I can determine by the files I've been pouring over the last few years – executed sometime around nineteen-forty-four. When the victory seemed inevitable, I would guess. He and Obermeyer never seem to have met face to face, but Brown seems to have been very keen to learn more about Obermeyer. Of course, not a lot of information was shared with him, but he managed to get bits and pieces from the guards. Before he died, he told one of them that he didn't know how the changes in the timeline would affect the natural flow of time. He claimed that Obermeyer had caused paradoxes by introducing technology to a world that wasn't ready for it.

Time C isn't a bad world. In fact, it's a world I love very much. I've dedicated my own life to helping the Empire prosper, and I've done my bit for Emperor and country. Still, I wonder what originally made Brown travel back in time. What was it he was trying to change? The bombings? The concentration camps? Perhaps the superiority of the Aryan race, which, as we know from ancient writings, is the true and natural master race of the world? Brown himself was blond and had blue eyes – a perfect Aryan if I ever saw one, He would have been a natural leader in a world where Germany had won.

My research has begun to keep me awake at night. I didn't know if I should tell anyone about it, or even if it would do me any good if I did. My oath of secrecy would be broken, and I could look forward to spending the remainder of my life in the Nevada salt mines. If I hadn't come across the old book with the plans in it, I probably would have stayed silent.

This is why I'm telling you this. I'm sorry it took so long to get to the point, but pay attention.

I think Brown might have been right. I believe that perhaps, Time A – no matter what Brown wanted to change about it – is preferable to a world where two opposing forces have been changing it to their own devices. I think, that if it was possible to go back to the rally and kill Brown before he fired his shot at the Führer, we would *reset the world*, as it were, and return to Time A. If Brown was unsuccessful in his mission, Obermeyer would not choose to go back and take control of the Reich, because it would never have been an option in the first place. If we can avoid creating a paradox by removing the paradox itself, it might be possible.

But to go back to the Rally, we need a time machine. I've got one. No, don't ask questions about where I found the plans for it – I couldn't tell you anyway. I can tell you, however, that I'm fully convinced it's the plans for the very machine that allowed Brown and Obermeyer to come back from their respective futures and create the various new timelines. I've built it, and tested it. It works.

I'm too old to use it myself, and besides, with my wound I can't shoot that well anymore. I wouldn't be able to take out Brown as fast as efficient as will be needed.

You could, though. No, don't say a word. I know you. *You could do it.*

You would need to be very fast, very precise and you would need to have a plan to get away afterwards. Just like Brown and Obermeyer, you would not be able to return to your own time again. Time C would be no more. You would be living in the original timeline, Time A.

The only thing remaining is to look into yourself and ask yourself the question:

If you went back in time with a rifle and the knowledge you now have...could you save Hitler?