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The Two Worlds of Albert Speer: Reflections of A Nuremberg Prosecutor

Carolyn L. Speaker

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What lessons can be learned from the personal history of Albert Speer?
To my mind, an analysis of his personality allows us to derive some very important general rules. One lesson is "Know Thyself."

*The Two Worlds of Albert Speer* is an important book about a major personality who took part in one of the most horrendous periods in world history. Albert Speer was Adolf Hitler’s architect, and later served as Hitler’s Minister of Armaments. He was sentenced to a twenty-year prison term for his part in World War II at the Nuremberg trials, at which the author served as a prosecutor. His sentence was a result of his guilty plea: guilty of crimes against humanity, guilty of slave labor. Speer was also guilty of too much ambition, and the real truths about his drive to be at the top of the Nazi party are aptly revealed in this book through the personal relationship the author had with Speer and the taped recordings of interviews the author conducted with him.

Not only did Speer serve in the high capacity of Minister of Armaments in the Nazi regime, but he was also Hitler’s close personal friend. Hitler’s shared interest in architecture drew him to Speer, and Speer was mesmerized by Hitler’s charisma and charm. It was more this charisma than the actual politics of the time that drew Speer to Hitler. The two men became close, and Speer, through King, reveals how he came to live with himself after his prison sentence, having come to terms with his role in the history of the Nazi regime, and most notably, Speer reveals the true character of Hitler.

Henry King developed a relationship with Speer during the years following the Nuremberg trials. Speer intrigued the author. He was both bothered and fascinated by the man. King watched Speer conduct himself at Nuremberg. He watched and listened to Speer’s side of the story as King helped prosecute the leaders of the Third Reich at the Nuremberg trials. He wondered exactly what Speer, an educated upper-class gentleman, knew about the inner workings of the party and its history and why

Speer aligned himself with the evils of the Nazi regime. These questions and others haunted the author until he decided to make some sense of the life of Albert Speer. The result is this book: an in-depth study of Speer’s psyche written by a man who wanted to know the whole truth.

The book draws intriguing parallels between the prosecutor and the prisoner. It asks why and how . . . how Speer could be so blind and ambitious that he did not really see the truth of what was happening in the world of Nazi Germany before it was too late. How could Speer be blinded to the evil side of Hitler in his desire to become more and more powerful within Hitler’s regime? What did Speer know of the Holocaust? If he did know something, why did he not do anything to try to stop it? How could Speer, Hitler’s close friend and confidant, not know what was happening in the death camps? Speer was in charge of the railroads during this time, and he was in charge of securing labor for the many labor camps. How could he not see that those railways were transporting Jews to their ultimate demise? Yet he denied he knew anything about the horrors happening at the time. Perhaps that was the only way he could live with the memories he most certainly carried with him.

Speer is poignantly portrayed by King as a man who lived in two worlds. The first world was a blind, nonpolitical world where Speer asked no questions and lived only with his ambition and dreams for power. “He rose right to the top.”² The second world was the world that Speer came to know after his imprisonment, after twenty years of self-education and study and reflection. This was the world of a more spiritual Speer, a concerned Speer, a Speer more in touch with the world around him, especially his beloved Germany, and his own feelings about that world and about life in general. His second world opened an interest in family that he had not experienced before, a desire to be close to his children and renew a distant relationship with his wife. His second world introduced him to his writing and reflections about his past, Nuremberg, and his imprisonment. Speer wrote three books in total, all important documentaries of the Third Reich and the times in which Speer lived.

The Two Worlds of Albert Speer contains several recorded interviews with Speer, unedited for content and flavor, that reveal the real personality of the man. It contains an interview with Speer’s daughter, Hilde Schramm, who reveals the man she knew, a stranger during the war years, and later a father who wished to discover the children he never really knew. There is an interview, too, with Hitler’s secretary, Frau Traudl Junge, that addresses questions about the personalities of Hitler and Speer and presents an insider’s impression of their close and perhaps

² Id. at 247.
unusual relationship. The book contains important photographs of Speer and others who knew him that portray a personal, sincere, genuine man behind the myths and questions.

*The Two Worlds of Albert Speer* questions history's conclusions about Hitler, the Third Reich, Nuremberg, and the personalities involved in one of the darkest periods of human events. The book is history coming to life as questions are asked and answered by people who experienced all of this firsthand. This is a reflective book, one that asks questions, but one that is filled with the hope that the truth is kinder than the portrait painted by history. King wants to believe in Speer. Speer was different. He was not like the other personalities who wreaked havoc on Europe and the rest of the world. He was gentler. He was naïve. He was at the wrong place at the wrong time. He had too much ambition. He did not know the real truth, in fact, he hid from it. And, in the end, he acknowledged his guilt to God and those who judged him. He offered no excuses other than he had been duped. He tried to save Germany. He disobeyed Hitler's orders to destroy all industry in the end. He saved the factories and the industrial complex, such that was left of them, so Germany could survive the aftermath of the terrible crimes committed by Hitler and his regime.

I felt something stirring within me that was quite apart from Hitler: a sense of responsibility toward the country to save as much as possible of our industrial potential, so that the nation could survive the period after the war.³

Speer acknowledged that the judgment against him was just. And, instead of denying his guilt and wallowing in misery over the results of his actions, he took the time in prison to grow, mature, reflect, and improve himself, and he took the time to write his memoirs and inform the world of the truth so the horrors of the time would never again repeat themselves.

King draws many conclusions and makes many analogies in his book. One of the most gripping parallels was his conclusion that the Third Reich and Hitler's leadership abilities are not unlike those that could exist on a much smaller scale in the corporate world of today, especially "whenever strong leaders place extreme pressure on subordinates to break rules of society."⁴ Any CEO with the same kind of charisma and power and drive could lead industry in the same way that Hitler led his regime. The results are what is important, not the way those

⁴ KING, supra note 1, at 187.
results are achieved. The impact of this type of scenario may not be as devastating as the results of the Third Reich, but they still could have a serious effect on business and culture.

King calls for the protection of international human rights and advocates building institutions that will do that. He promotes U.S. adherence to the International Court of Justice so that there is at least some way to resolve disputes by submitting them to the World Court at the Hague.

The message of Albert Speer's personal history is to develop early on a set of personal ethics that sharply defines moral choices and avoids self-deception or self-inflicted blindness. The story of Albert Speer is the story of a man who allowed another individual to take over his soul to serve his purposes. It is the story of a man who failed to maintain a balance between his working life and his life with family and friends. Speer's life story carries a message that should never be forgotten.

The Two Worlds of Albert Speer is a book in search of truth that provides us with fascinating insight and modest understanding about a man who impacted history, a man who made a deep impression on one who sought to prosecute him. It is the accuser asking the accused to explain how and why and what happened. It is the attorney seeking understanding of the facts. It is a friend seeking to grasp the real makeup and psyche of a man, a friend, who always remained so mysterious. It is an historian seeking to make sense of a period in his life, and of a wrenching time in our history, one that asks so many questions and leaves so much unanswered. It is a professor seeking to teach all of us just exactly who Speer was and why he did what he did. It is an empathic admirer who wants the world to know the truth and understand first that Speer was honorable in spite of his role in the Third Reich, and that he was a man with great redeeming qualities, especially after he grew from the experience of paying for his crimes. King admired Speer for many reasons. But his admiration did not prevent him from asking the deepest questions and probing the real man and his vision of the world. King had a need to know the truth. And this book presents it to us in a rare and sensitive manner. One walks away after having read the book, with the resolve of never being too judgmental again, and with the determination to always seek the real truth. Because there are many men like Speer, men caught up in their own blind ambitions. One must look past the image at the real man to understand how events in history are borne out, and why leaders such as Hitler ever are allowed to practice

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5 Id. at 188.
their evil.

The tragedy of Albert Speer, who started in this world with the greatest gifts, was that naïve as he was and uncritical as he was, he never knew who he was until the fall of Hitler and the end of Hitler’s monstrous empire.⁶

Carolyn L. Speaker

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⁶ Id. at 189.

* Coordinator, Student Publications and Staff Advisor, CASE WESTERN RESERVE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW.

Antarctica is the frozen continent. It is the only continent without native human inhabitants or states, and the only continent whose mineral and hydrocarbon resources remain essentially unexplored and untapped.¹

While the Antarctic is a vast, frozen, and often unaccessible region of the world, Joyner and Theis’ review of foreign policy focusing on the Antarctic illustrates the importance of this region not only to the United States but also to other world actors. Originally intending to examine the interests of the United States in the Antarctic, Joyner and Theis note that the study evolved into a more thorough history, which “intended to lend depth and perspective to American foreign policy in the region.”² The product of the study, Eagle Over the Ice, accomplishes just that: the book presents a comprehensive discussion of U.S. foreign policy in Antarctica, tracing the decision-making process and U.S. interest in the Antarctic from the nineteenth century forward.

Joyner and Theis provide a thorough physical description of the Antarctic region prior to embarking on an examination of Antarctic policy-making which captures the reader’s attention and discusses potential benefits to be reaped from further Antarctic exploration. Antarctica is a vast region, covering approximately 5.4 million square miles.³ Composed primarily of ice, surrounded by water, and maintaining sub-zero temperatures many months of the year, the natural environment of the region prevents extensive travel to the region, and when travel is possible, requires nations to expend significant resources to travel safely to the area. Despite the often treacherous conditions encountered when traveling to the region, the authors explain that the United States, among other nations, has expressed pronounced interest in the region.

Using the vivid descriptions of early expeditions to the Antarctic as a backdrop, the authors proceed to explain the decision-making process utilized in the United States regarding Antarctic policy-making, and highlight the primary areas of interest for the United States: the environment, scientific research, mineral exploration, and geostationary interests. Through the discussion regarding the U.S. decision-making process, the

² Id.
³ Id. at 11.
authors explain that the Antarctic Treaty, to which the United States is a party, is one of the primary instruments governing the Antarctic and guiding U.S. policy-making. However, the authors note that while the Antarctic Treaty has furthered the interests of the United States "by preventing use of the Antarctic that would be detrimental to American scientific, environmental, security, and economic interests of the region," the treaty is only one factor in U.S. policy-making.

In addition to the guidelines set forth in the treaty, various government and non-government agencies, as well as Congress and the Executive Branch have been influential in promoting policy regarding the Antarctic. For example, the authors explain that the National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Foundation, were among the early groups to explore the Antarctic region; today, the National Science Foundation, funded in part by Congress, continues to explore scientific development in Antarctica. The authors further illustrate how each group partakes in the decision-making process. While the above-mentioned groups focus on scientific exploration of the region, the authors note that preservation of the environment also has been a consistent part of the U.S. national policy since the late 1950s. They support their assertion by illustrating the role of government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and the Marine Mammal Commission (MMC) to name a few. These agencies, along with Congressional action by enacting laws such as the Antarctic Marine Living Resources Convention Act of 1984, illustrate the U.S. commitment to environmental concerns in the Antarctic.

As the authors illustrate, Antarctic policy-making has played a continued role in U.S. politics even prior to the Antarctic Treaty, through the development of the Antarctic Treaty, and beyond. The U.S. interest in Antarctica for scientific, environmental, mineral, or other concerns is met with interests from other nations throughout the world. The authors have successfully traced the progression of the U.S. interests, and illustrated how the decision-making process functions in the United States, and why the United States should continue to focus on Antarctic policy-making. Joyner and Theis succeed in presenting a thoroughly researched, well-documented and interesting assessment of U.S. action in the Antarctic region. The authors have presented a framework in which to analyze U.S. policy-making; however, after the thorough examination of past policy making and suggestions for future efforts in the region, the authors con-

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4 *Id.* at 44.
5 *Id.* at 110. The Antarctic Treaty does not govern preservation of the environment, thus illustrating where the United States, on its own initiative has been active in Antarctic policy-making.
clude. While the book is a complete work as is, the reader is left wanting to know more specific proposals for future action and what they think the United States should do in the future. Joyner and Theis' *Eagle Over the Ice* is an enjoyable and informative book; it provides extensive documentation from a wide variety of source material — both recent and older items — and clearly illustrates what action the United States has taken in Antarctica. The framework for U.S. policy-making could likely be applied to other areas as well, and this reader recommends the book for any researcher wanting to learn more about the Antarctic region.

*Jennifer M. Myers*