

a) Albert Speer was born on the 19th of March 1905 in Mannheim Germany. His rise to prominence derived its beginnings from a haute-bourgeois childhood, which according to van der Vat, "trained him for indifference in every sense". Speer was emblematic of youth during the Weimar period, "tired and disillusioned" (Speer). The political polarisation and socio-economic fragmentation led him, like many of youth in the era to search for change under the aegis of nationalism; compounded by the nationalist teachings of Heinrich Tessenow. As a result, Speer's exposure to Adolf Hitler and his patriotic and jingoistic regime in 1931 would

lead to his membership in the Nazi party in 1931, and a "homosexual" (van der Vat) relationship with Hitler. This relationship, and his ruthless technocratic ambition would provide the fundamental catalysts in his rise to prominence.

Following vacation with the NSKK in 1932, Speer met Karl Hanke, "a crucial early contact" (van der Vat), commissioning him with Goebbels' propaganda building and the new Gau headquarters at Voss Strasse. His decorations for the 1933 Tempelhof Rally and the annual

Nuremberg assembly demonstrated Speer's "insight into mass psychology" (Fest). His refurbishments of the Chancellery, assisting the neo-classical architect Troost would lead to his orbit around Hitler, one which he would manipulate.

Upon Troost's death in 1934 his estate as Hitler's personal architect was cemented, which was followed by his redesign of the propagandist Nuremberg Rally stage and appointment as a segment leader of the DfA. His building of the Olympic stadium in 1936

was surpassed by Hitler entrusting him with the redesign of Berlin.

Indeed Speer's appointment as a professor in 1936 was surpassed by his new post of GBI (General Bau-Inspector) in 1937. Here his actions were indicative of the radicalisation of the political machine, further demonstrated at the Paris World Fair. Undoubtedly his ability to organise was one of the secrets of his rise to power, and this would become lucid again upon his commission to build a new Reich

Chancellery for Hitler in 1938, to be completed in a year. Completed on time, his "unfailing organization and punctuality" (Sereny) delighted Hitler, awarding him the Nazi's Gold Badge of Honour.

In 1939 his actions as GBI would prove "a step from the supposedly apolitical sphere of architecture into the executive sphere" (van der Vat); evicting thousands of Jews from their abodes. As the war began Speer participated in the reconstruction of air raid shelters and repairing roads and facilities.

The final step of ascension would occur upon Fritz Todt's death in 1942, appointed by Hitler as Minister for Armaments and War Production.

During the war Speer found his way through administrative chaos; though this would come at the cost of slave labour. Shortly following his championing of 'total war' Hitler's egocentricity led to the 'Scorched Earth' program, which Speer would work openly against. Following the war he was indicted at the Nuremberg trials and would thence

serve twenty years in Spandau prison for crimes against humanity. He died in 1981 after publishing his memoirs. Evidently it was Speer's ruthless ambition coupled with a euphoria for Hitler that provided the fundamental catalysts in his rise to prominence.

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b) It has been said by many that Albert Speer was 'enigmatic' within the Third Reich. Certainly his ~~bourgeois~~ bourgeois escapism contrast to the "ruthless opportunism" (Fest) characteristic of his later years. As a result, the nature and workings have created a historical dichotomy underlying his claims of ignorance and 'collective responsibility' during the disastrous Nazi epoch. This dichotomy draws its impetus from the "apolitical technocrat" (King), or conversely, the "egocentric opportunist" (van der Nat), one of criminality. Such a dichotomy confirms that

there is a relative balance to the paradigmatic interpretation of Albert Speer.

In considering his criminality, we should consider the typical Nazi, who was certainly one of "nihilistic dynamism" (Kershaw).

Speer was far from this 'programmatist', instead, according to Sereny, having a "preoccupation with morality". His decision of joining the NSDAP in 1931 was thus not under the aegis of careerism but rather under the magnetism of Hitler.

However equally, his relationship

with a man of immorality can be seen as a flaw against his technocratic facade. Additionally, Van der Vort notes, his manipulation of Hitler was palpable, presenting him with 'fait accomplis' and 'bombing' him with experts, showing his ambition would come at any cost.

Speer's radicalisation of Hitler's Nuremberg and Berlin plans can be seen as a careerist scheme.

Furthermore Hitler's institutionalised Darwinism was exploited by Speer, exemplified by his ruinous

of Mayor Lippert and wrangling with Geisler. However, we should note the balance in Haffner's argument, commenting; "he was the epitome of the managerial revolution" rather than a criminal and careerist, which is confirmed by his breadth of vision and completion of the Reich Chancellery.

A relative balance can also be noted in the area of Jewish persecution and Anti-Semitism. His political naivety was evident with the mendacious compartmentalisation of 'Kristallnacht', but more

criminal when regarding the issue of the 'Jew flats'. Van der Naat notes "Speer was not so much obeying orders as issuing them on his own initiative" when evicting thousands of Jews from their abodes; the primary source, the 'Wolter Chronicle' reinforcing this argument. Though Fest believes Speer "did not participate directly", but a balance is recognised in a "blind belief in the ethics of efficiency".

During the war Speer found his way through administrative chaos; privatising, corporatising

and rationalising, which King points out as the epitome of the 'apolitical technocrat'. However his ~~act~~^{use} of forced labour would suggest otherwise, and Schmidt points out ~~to~~ his visits to camps such as Dora; "ignored under the aegis of efficiency."

A further balance in argument is observable in Speer's circumvention of the 'Scorched Earth Policy'. Pinson notes "it was Speer's brave act... that saved the majority of German industry". Though Fest notes that this may

have been an attempt to save face, and "The suggestion of a post-war reconstruction agency... administered by him, can be seen as both selfish and ambitious."

Speer would certainly provide contrast to the other Nazis in the Nuremberg docks. His 'mea culpa' of 'collective responsibility' in the criminal workings of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' was seen by some as just, a youthful 'apolitical technocrat' turned penitent. Though his acts of criminality provide grounds for the reverse argument,

"neither 'apolitical' nor 'technocrat';
nor 'amoral' but 'immoral'"
(Van der Vort).

Evidently there is a relative balance in the arguments to the nature and characteristics of Speer's contribution to history. His efficiency and supreme intellect denote features of an 'apolitical technocrat'. Though his mass eviction of Jews, utilisation of slave labour and prolonging of an aggressive war suggest a criminal 'egocentric opportunist'. Albert Speer is a paradigm of moral disintegration

under any model; "his
Battle with Truth" (Sereny)
certainly is an apt
leitmotiv of his life.