

counselors was that disruptive behavior at the examination was a worthwhile political goal, not only because it obstructed the smooth operation of the criminal war machine, but also because it might impress the examiners with our undesirable character traits. As we climbed into the buses, and as they rolled toward the Navy Yard, about half of the young men brought the chants to a crescendo. The rest of us sat rigid and silent, clutching X-rays and letters from our doctors at home.

Inside the Navy Yard, we were first confronted by a young sergeant from Long Beach, a former surfer boy no older than the rest of us and seemingly unaware that he had an unusual situation on his hands. He started reading out instructions for the intelligence tests when he was hooted down. He went out to collect his lieutenant, who clearly had been through a Cambridge day before. "We've got all the time in the world," he said, and let the chanting go on for two or three minutes. "When we're finished with you, you can go, and not a minute before."

From that point on the disruption became more purposeful and individual, largely confined to those whose deferment strategies were based on anti-authoritarian psychiatric traits. Twice I saw students walk up to the young orderlies—whose hands were extended to receive the required cup of urine—and throw the vial in the orderlies' faces. The orderlies looked up, initially more astonished than angry, and went

back to towel themselves off. Most of the rest of us trod quietly through the paces, waiting for the moment of confrontation when the final examiner would give his verdict. I had stepped on the scales at the very beginning of the examination. Desperate at seeing the orderly write down 122 pounds, I hopped back on and made sure that he lowered it to 120. I walked in a trance through the rest of the examination, until the final meeting with the fatherly physician who ruled on marginal cases such as mine. I stood there in socks and underwear, arms wrapped around me in the chilly building. I knew as I looked at the doctor's face that he understood exactly what I was doing.

"Have you ever contemplated suicide?" he asked after he finished looking over my chart. My eyes darted up to his. "Oh, suicide—yes, I've been feeling very unstable and unreliable recently." He looked at me, staring until I returned my eyes to the ground. He wrote "unqualified" on my folder, turned on his heel, and left. I was overcome by a wave of relief, which for the first time revealed to me how great my terror had been, and by the beginning of the sense of shame which remains with me to this day.

It was, initially, a generalized shame at having gotten away with my deception, but it came into sharper focus later in the day. Even as the last of the Cambridge contingent was throwing its urine and deliberately failing its color-blindness tests, buses from the next board began to arrive. These bore

the boys from Chelsea, thick, dark-haired young men, the white proles of Boston. Most of them were younger than us, since they had just left high school, and it had clearly never occurred to them that there might be a way around the draft. They walked through the examination lines like so many cattle off to slaughter. I tried to avoid noticing, but the results were inescapable. While perhaps four out of five of my friends from Harvard were being deferred, just the opposite was happening to the Chelsea boys.

We returned to Cambridge that afternoon, not in government buses but as free individuals, liberated and victorious. The talk was high-spirited, but there was something close to the surface that none of us wanted to mention. We knew now who would be killed.

From "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" October 1975. James Fallows is now a national correspondent for the Atlantic.

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ARTHUR LEVINE ON WOODWARD AND BERNSTEIN

In 1976, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein published The Final Days, their account of the last months of the Nixon presidency. While Woodward and Bernstein were heroes to a generation of idealistic young journalists, Washington Monthly contributing editor Arthur Levine couldn't help noticing that The Final Days was larded with flattering portrayals of cooperative sources. How, Levine wondered, might Woodward and Bernstein have approached a history of another notable administration?

This was an extraordinary mission. Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler, the Gestapo chief, settled in for the two-hour train trip to Berchtesgaden. The two sensitive and brilliant aides were leaving behind a hot, sunny Munich. It was September 15, 1943. Ahead of them lay the mountains and lakes of western Germany and Austria. The sun poured



FUTURE NOT FOUND

In the early 1980s, personal computers were making the transition from curious novelty to household mainstay, and *Washington Monthly* contributing editor Gregg Easterbrook correctly envisioned a future in which they would play an ever-more-intimate role in our lives. Unfortunately, Easterbrook also predicted that by the end of the '80s computers, equipped with sophisticated voice synthesizers and programmed for empathy, would have largely replaced human companionship. "For the lonely and the overly intellectual of this generation and others to follow," Easterbrook wrote in "The Heart of a New Machine" (March 1983), "computers could be the main agents of comfort and consolation."

While this was a fairly accurate anticipation of the 1985 John Hughes classic *Weird Science*, the closest most PC users ever got to a silicon-based soulmate was Microsoft Word's annoying cartoon paper clip. In fact, since the advent of the Internet the main social function of computers has been to connect people, not replace us.

in at a forty-seven-degree angle through the windows. For most of the travelers, the trip was an occasion for relaxation, a brief respite from the war. Yet these two public servants were not in a holiday mood.

Goering and Himmler had heard rumors that the Führer was anti-Semitic. It was all hearsay, innuendo, but still, the two men were troubled. They had reached an inescapable conclusion: they must go to Berchtesgaden, confront the Führer with these allegations, and ask him to put all doubts to rest.

As the train moved through western Germany, the amiable, flamboyant Goering mused about his own attitudes toward the Jewish people. He tapped his engraved swastika ring on the armrest as he recalled his lifelong admiration for the Jews. A plump, avuncular man with a fondness for expensive paintings, Goering had many Jewish friends from his days as a World War I air force hero. He kept up his contacts after he joined the National Socialist German Worker's Party ("Nazis") in the 1920s. The Jews, Goering thought, were bright, hard-working, patriotic.

Goering was well equipped to judge the finer qualities of man. As president of the Reichstag, then as air minister and founder of the Gestapo, Goering had impressed associates with his willingness to work long hours and his insider's knowledge of the bureaucracy. He was tough, shrewd, and loyal. Goering was an aesthete and an elegant dresser. With his lacquered fingernails and green velvet capes, he cut an impressive figure at the Reichschancellery.

As the pastoral scene outside sped by their windows, Himmler and Goering were in a reflective mood. "You know, Heinrich," Goering said, twirling his three-foot gold baton, "lately I sure miss having my close Jewish friends around to talk to. There used to be so many of them, and now I can't seem to get them on the phone anymore. Where have they gone?"

"Beats me, Hermann," Himmler answered. He tugged absentmindedly on his lapels with their provocative death's-head insignia. A fly hovered two

inches above the windowsill. Goering moved over to crush it, but Himmler reached out instinctively to grab his hand. "Don't do that, Herman!" Himmler exclaimed. "All life is sacred, down to the lowliest animal in God's creation." The two men lapsed into silence for seventy-two seconds. Finally, Goering asked, "Have you heard anything about these so-called concentration camps?"

Not really, Himmler said. Rumors here and there, but nothing solid, no firm evidence. They must ask the Führer about them.

Yes, Goering said, that was a good idea.

When they arrived at Hitler's chalet, the two men were led through a living room that was sixty feet long and fifty feet wide, with Italian paintings and Gobelin tapestries hanging on the walls. The soft-spoken Martin Bormann, often called the conscience of the Reichschancellery, greeted them in the anteroom outside Hitler's office. He was reading a travel guide to Argentina when they came in.

"I'm so glad you could come here," Bormann said, adjusting his argyle socks. The Führer, Bormann said, had been withdrawn and uncommunicative, making decisions in isolation. He had been in this mood for at least five years, maybe more.

Bormann felt he didn't really know the Führer. His decisions were unpredictable: one day, silence; the next day, they invaded Russia. It was eerie.

Goering and Himmler were finally led into Hitler's office. The Führer was seated at his desk, drinking a Löwenbräu. He looked pale and exhausted. He had not been sleeping well. He had been troubled by the defeat at Stalingrad, the Allied landing in Italy, the fall of Africa. Events were closing in on him.

"The Jews, mein Führer, what's happened to all the Jews?" Goering asked. "There used to be so many of them."

"I'm dying to find out," Hitler said, winking broadly. "Get it?" He collapsed with laughter, then composed himself.

Himmler was disturbed. The Führer was not being very cooperative in

dispelling any lingering doubts. Finally, he asked point-blank: "Mein Führer, what are your true feelings about the Jewish people?"

Hitler exploded. "I don't give a shit how you do it, just get rid of them. That's the plan." The two men greeted these remarks with a disappointed silence. There was not much room for maneuvering here. It could be a problem.

They kept their concerns to themselves, however. They did not wish to add to the Führer's burdens. Standing up to leave, Himmler said, "Thanks for giving us fresh insights into your views on the Jewish people." The three men shook hands, and Himmler and Goering simultaneously realized how little they really knew the Führer, even after all these years.

From "The Final Days of the Third Reich, As Told to Woodward and Bernstein," September 1976. Arthur Levine is now a freelance writer, and blogs for In These Times and Huffington Post.

TIMOTHY NOAH ON THE BABY BOOMERS

The year 1983 saw the release of *The Big Chill*, a film that capitalized on the early waves of baby boomer nostalgia with the story of a group of thirtysomething friends looking back upon their '60s youth. Wash-

