

The Adagio of Bruckner's 7th: The beginning of the end for the Nazis

By Gilles Houle

« No enemy plane will fly over the “ Reich ” territory. » (*Hermann Göring*)

January 30 was the anniversary of the Nazi regime taking power. It was always a cause for celebration in the Nazi Party, usually with the « Führer » addressing a mass-rally of the Party faithful. The 10th anniversary, falling in 1943, should have been a particularly special event. It very nearly had been the opportunity to show that the Party was at the height of its powers, with German forces occupying virtually the whole of Europe.

But the tide of War had turned - even though it would not be clearly seen as a definite reversal for some time. The change in fortunes was almost imperceptible to most Germans at the time, the Nazi regime would only admit to temporary setbacks. Yet, the looming defeat at Stalingrad was very difficult to present as just a « temporary » setback.

On Saturday, 30 January 1943, « Reichmarshall » Hermann Göring entered the Air Ministry Building (« Reichsluftfahrtministerium ») on « Willhelm-Straße » with the intention of broadcasting an important speech from the « Ehrensaal » to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Nazi Party « seizure of power » (« Machtergreifung ») and pay tribute to its leader, Adolf Hitler.



The Air Ministry Building

Göring was to refer to the current situation in Stalingrad but without incriminating the « Führer » and his decade of rule. Entitled, « Appell an die Wehrmacht », he was to speak to selected representatives of the « Wehrmacht ». In an attempt to downplay the catastrophic situation and the great losses already suffered there, he decided to turn to mythical elements as a means of propaganda - including an example to the Nibelung battle at Attila's hall in an attempt to energize the « Wehrmacht » and the German people.

Göring was expected to give his « live » speech at 11:00 am, but it was interrupted by a surprise attack by 3 Royal Air Force (RAF) de Havilland « Mosquito » DH-98 bombers.

Crews from the 105th Squadron targeted the « Haus des Rundfunks » (House of Broadcasting) headquarters on « Masurenallee ». It was a raid specifically designed to upset any anniversary festivities.

Their strike took the « Reich » Broadcasting Corporation (« Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft », or RRG) off the air moments before Göring's broadcast was about to begin.

During the interruption, the authorities decided to play, as an interlude, Furtwängler's recording of the « Adagio » of Bruckner's 7th Symphony.

It was an hour before the « Reichmarshall » could finally return on the air. He was reportedly boiling with rage and humiliation !!



Airtistic depiction of the January 30th air raid

Hermann Göring finally addressed the « final defeat » of « Generalfeldmarschall » Friedrich Paulus's 6th Army in the Battle of Stalingrad. He followed the tradition of incorporating comparisons to the « Nibelungenlied » into his description of the current military situation. The situation for Göring was critical since his air-force had failed to supply the troops in Stalingrad with the necessary food, arms, ammunition, and other supplies, in spite of his assurances to Hitler that it could do so, and because he knew that Paulus had already capitulated in Stalingrad. Göring's main interest at this point was in promoting the belief among the German people that the German Army would achieve the « Endsieg » (final victory) , even though it had suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Soviet forces. He encourages the people of the nation to endure and sacrifice willingly on behalf of the Fatherland, as the members of the 6th Army were doing.

« Certainly the severity of the battle has grown to colossal proportions at this stage. And, at the same time, it must be considered that Germany is fighting on all fronts or is keeping watch from the North Cape to Biscay, down south to the deserts of Africa and in the far East, on the Volga Germany is fighting, bleeding but winning. And, among all of these giant battles there, stands out now an enormous, monumental structure, Stalingrad, the battle for Stalingrad. One day, it will be the greatest heroic battle which has ever taken place in our history. What our infantrymen, engineers, gunners, anti-aircraft artillerymen, and whoever else is in this city now, from a general to the last man, who is fighting against huge superior forces for every block, for every stone, for every hole, for every trench, who keeps fighting, tired, exhausted - we know a powerful, heroic song of an incomparable battle that is called “ The Battle of the Nibelungs ”. They also stood in a blazing hall of fire and quenched their thirst with their own blood but fought and fought until the end. Such a



The House of Broadcasting—Berlin

battle is raging there today and every German a thousand years from now must speak with holy awe the word Stalingrad and will remember that when all is said and done, that is where Germany placed the stamp of final victory. »

The entire speech was printed in the « Völkischer Beobachter » No. 33 (February 3) , pages 3-4.

But the air-attacks didn't stop there ...

An hour later, Göring proceeded to his second venue, a Nazi mass-rally at the famous « Berliner Sportpalast » in the Schöneberg district.



The Sports Palace—Berlin

After approaching the lectern « such was the roaring hurricane of jubilation » that he was unable to speak for several minutes.

Just as Göring was about to begin to speak, the 139th Squadron arrived and put the dampers on that other « little event » .

It was the RAF's first daylight raid on Berlin and carried out in defiance of the formidable air defenses of the German capital. Göring's promise that enemy aircraft would never fly over the « Reich » was broken, the echo of that shame would haunt him for the rest of the War.



Göring's speech in the Sports Palace—January 30, 1943