

FAMOUS FIGURES

Hitler's Keeper? The Big Eater, Theo Morell

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Our famous figures have all done something which affected and brought help to many people, often many thousands. But this one is different – he dealt with one man only. That man was Adolf Hitler, one of the most important figures of the 20th century

Theo Morell was born in Hessen on 22nd July, 1886. He studied Medicine at Heidelberg, Grenoble, graduated at Munich, and was granted his 'approbation' – the same as registration today – by the Bavarian Government in 1913. Though some have queried his registration, there is no good reason to doubt that he was not a fully trained doctor. (1) His dissertation was entitled:

'16 cases of prolonged breech presentation and its treatment at Munich.' He must have had a well-off background, as he was able to travel widely while a student.

At the outbreak of the First War, he volunteered at once for military service. At first he was a *Truppenarzt*, a 'soldiers' doctor. Later in his time at the Western front, he was promoted *Stabsarzt*, equivalent to a captain RAMC. He therefore knew about warfare at the sharp end. After the War, he set up in practice in Berlin, in 1918, but his high status is shown by the fact that he was offered, and turned down, invitations to become Court Physicians at both Persia and Rumania.

And then, in 1936, his career as Hitler's physician began when Hoffman, the Führer's personal photographer, recommended Morell to him. It was said that Hitler complained on some days 'I don't feel well today. Don't take any photographs.' Hoffman, who was close to Hitler, thought a good doctor might be able to help his Chief.

From then on the personal relationship continued. It is important to remember that it would last less than ten years. There was never any question of Hitler doing absolutely everything that Morell suggested – Hitler treated Morell as he treated most people, with reserve. Hitler was by all accounts a shy, reserved man. Morell was not the only

doctor Hitler consulted in these early years of their new association. At first, Morell was called in only for consultation otherwise he continued his Berlin practice. At this time it was said of Morell '*without question, he was a gifted doctor, representing the safe middle way of German Medicine, but going his own way to use his own treatments; that is, orthodox, but had his own views.*' (2)

As the War progressed, Hitler took Morell with him on his journeys. He also used substitutes as well – one was Wolfgang Wohlgemuth, who later was involved in the Dr Otto John case – Otto John was a spy for East Germany after the War was over. The association did harm to Morell, now retired and living in West Germany.

'Hitler's illnesses' became evident. There were two of these. The first were his stomach symptoms. It was said that it was his stomach pains which caused him to seek Morell's advice first. Hitler said his stomach troubles were always the result of emotional disturbance. They had in fact appeared first when Hitler was imprisoned for his right-wing views years earlier, when he wrote 'Mein Kampf.' The drugs used by Morell were described as mutalor and omnadin, because he thought the symptoms were caused by infection. He believed Hitler needed something as would be now described as 'a drug to increase his immunological response.' Vitamins were also prescribed. From 1939 Hitler was given Pervitin, a 'mental stimulant.' Hitler was a very teetotal man. His dietary habits were unusual – for example, although on what was described as a limited diet, he would eat enormous amounts of whipped cream. But Morell's treatment worked and the Führer improved.



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The second symptom was his tremor. This was first reported in August 1941, in connection with a crisis over leadership in the German High Command - by now the Russian campaign had begun. Again, Morell's treatment was successful - he 'kept Hitler on the go.' By later 1941, Hitler had got to the point where he must have Morell at hand, every day.

The tremor, amazingly, disappeared after the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20th 1944. It only returned three months later, in November, during a crisis on the Eastern Front. A further crisis in December provoked a rise in his blood pressure. It was recorded as being over 200 systolic. Von Below, writing after the War in 'My time as Hitler's adjutant' quoted this high blood pressure. Morell was reported as saying that the Führer had a slight stroke at this time, again considering that 'it was caused by a row with the High Command of Army Group Central in the Russian Campaign.' Hitler had his blood pressure taken by other specialists than Morell.

By now, Morell was convinced that all his complaints lay in his patient's mind. Hitler had had a whole range of haematological tests, and a full Barium examination of his gastro-intestinal tract. This diagnosis was made at the same time as Hitler's wish for homeopathic treatment appeared.

Although he must have been a devoted doctor to Hitler, it was said that Morell had his eye on certain business interests - which led to a considerable increase in his financial fortune - such as shares in the medical and chemical industries both in Germany and in the occupied countries. All this was lost to Morell at the end of the War, including the smart villa in Berlin gifted by Hitler. This substantial gift seems to contradict the notion that there was a wide distance between the two men.

Morell was in the Bunker in Berlin during the last weeks. Now Hitler's tremors re-

appeared. They had come back from April of 1945. But the stomach symptoms were no longer present. In the last days, it was discovered that the Führer had begun taking medicines he had himself ordered - pepsins, bromides, and at every meal, vitamins. Once at least he ordered hyoscine by injection, and once, on the 12th of February 1945, he was bled 230ml against Morell's advice.

Morell's career ended on 21/4/45. Nowhere is it recorded that Hitler dismissed him. It is true that Morell was advised to leave while the going was good. On the 22nd of April he flew to Munich, was then driven by car to Reichenhall, and finally to a small hospital in Bayerisch-Gemain. Here on the 21st of May he was discovered by a US woman journalist. His arrest followed on 17/7/45. He was held in five different camps until released on 26/9/47. Morell died in 1948.

This then was the remarkable story of the man Hitler had as personal doctor. Although as so often there are many contradictions in the record, and the 11,000 personal documents said to have been seized by the Americans have never been made public, this is probably a fair account of his service to the man who had led Germany into the Second Great War. The question remains - did Morell, who ate to his fill as his picture shows, in fact by his treatment lengthen Hitler's life? And if so, did this have an effect upon the progress of the War?

References

1. H. Trevor-Roper's War History.
2. Prof Dr. Med. Theo Morell, Hitler's Leibarzt. Prof. Dr. Med. W. Spann, Vorstand des Instituts für Rechtsmedizin der Universität, Fraunlob str. 7a, D-8000 München 2.

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