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MISCH, Rochus
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German
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In this interview, Rochus Misch, born in 1917, speaks about his experiences as a member of Adolf Hitler's personal escort with duties including telephone operator, courier, and bodyguard. He explains how he came to be involved with the inner circle, as well as his duties. After the war, he indicates he was a prisoner in Russia for almost nine years. He returned to Berlin shortly after Christmas 1953. He currently lives with his family in Rudow and has his own business.

Tape 1

[01:] 01:00:15 – [01:] 07:00:20

His introduces himself, stating his name as Rochus Misch, birthdate as July 1917, and hometown as **Alt-Schalkendorf (Alt-Schalkovitz)** near **Oppeln (Opole)**; says he and his brother are orphans, and that his brother died in an accident at a young age; says his parents are Rochus and Victoria, and that his father (and his grandfather) worked in construction; says that after his eight years of schooling were over, his grandfather insisted he learn a trade; explains that in 1932 his cousin Marie from **Hoyerswerda** arranged an apprenticeship for him with the firm of Schüller und Model through connections of her husband's; says in 1935, (the year before the Olympic Games in Berlin), he was chosen to complete two paintings to be given as prizes; noted that he earned almost 500 reich marks for the pair and used the money to pay for six months of study at the School for Fine Arts in Cologne.

[01:] 07:00:21– [01:] 14:07:25

He indicates that in the 1920s and 1930s he was very much alone in the world and had to work; explains his interests included work and sports; says in 1933 he did not know anything about Hitler; remembers he was present in 1936 for the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Berlin; says Hitler's entrance made a deep impression on him—Hitler stood in an open limosine, his escorts were wearing black uniforms with white belts; says this was the first time that he saw Hitler in person; says his training was over in December 1936; after a period of time as a journeyman painter in **Hoyerswerda**, he worked as a commercial artist in the Black Forest.

[01:] 14:08:00 – [01:] 25:49:01

He reiterates that he was often alone, he had to work to support himself, political events passed him by, and that if anything, he played soccer with a league; says that in 1937 he was drafted into the military and that one had no choice in the matter; indicates he was selected with 11 other men for the Bodyguard Regiment, 5th Company; says he went to Berlin-Lichterfelde in the old Prussian cadet institute for military training; says his time in the military was like a sports camp:

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running and exercises filled the days; says at this time he met his future wife Gerda who was only 18; says she was not available by telephone and he visited her family and made himself useful in the garden; explains Gerda's father was left wing politically, a member of the USPD, and his wife, Gerda's mother, joined the USPD in 1916; says Gerda's parents lived in a workers' housing development; says they were like foster parents to him.

[01:] 25:49:02 – [01:] 34:33:18

He says he was present during the annexation of Austria and that the civilians were happy to see the soldiers; says the soldiers slept in a monastery, and that the nuns threw mats out of the upper stories for them; says he does not know much about Kristallnacht because he was under curfew at the time; says he spent six weeks in the summer of 1939 in Berchtesgaden where he learned how to shoot a weapon; says it was a wonderful time; explains they were like soldiers on parade; says the war began and that he was wounded while on duty in Poland near Warsaw; says his comrades dragged him to a first-aid station, and later he went to a hospital in Lodz; says he finally ends up in a military hospital in **Bad Berka**, in the vicinity of Weimar.

Tape 2

[02:] 01:02:08 – [02:] 08:37:23

[missing beginning portion that is found in the German time-codes]

He says he was seriously wounded and that he spent about six weeks in a recuperative home in the Alps and then returned to the barracks in Lichterfelde; says he was assigned to a convalescent company; explains that Company Chief **Mohnke** was also wounded during action but not in Poland; says in the spring of 1940 he spent about a month on a farm; says the area was bombed by the English; says about two weeks after his return to the barracks in Berlin-Lichterfelde, the Reich's Chancellery was looking for a young man to serve with Hitler's personal escort; remembers that the work would involve being a telephone operator, courier, and body guard; he visited the Reich Chancellery and spoke with **von Brückner**, who was Hitler's regiment commander in World War I, but during the early 1940s was Hitler's chief of staff; explains he had a work station in the uppermost level of the adjutants' wing in Hitler's residence, but that Hitler is not in Berlin at this time; says he was fearful of meeting him.

[02:] 08:37:24 – [02:] 18:46:45

He explains the circumstances of how he, a young soldier who was neither in the Hitler Youth nor a member of the Nazi Party, was chosen for duty in the Reich Chancellery: the Company Chief recommended him, he was seriously wounded in combat at the front, he was the last son of his family; says his duties included delivering mail, being a telephone operator, and courier; says he was told to change his footgear because the heavy military boots were too much for the carpets; remembers when he met Hitler for the first time: Hitler gave him a letter to deliver to Hitler's sister, Paula, in Vienna; indicates that Hitler was neither a monster nor a superman, rather, he was an ordinary person; says he *[Misch]* delivered the letter and a package to Paula

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Wolf in Vienna and visited his own grandmother for three days, then returned to Berlin; says the telephone exchange system of the Reich chancellery was an ultramodern Siemens installation with buttons.

[02:] 18:46:46 – [02:] 23:12:19

He indicates the surroundings of his location were comfortable and not like the barracks at all; says there were 20 comrades, and they worked in three shifts around the clock; reiterates he was a member of the escort, but had other duties: telephone operator, receptionist, courier, and so on; says he was armed with a pistol; notes the military escort was always present, and that they were Hitler's personal staff; says he worried about making a mistake; says they were not like police: if crowd control was necessary, other people took care of this; names the people he ran into daily: **Adolf Dirr, August Körber, Sepp Dietrich**, and people who wore golden party badges: these people had the pay grade of a First Lieutenant, "Obersturmbannführer," but their military status was honorary.

[02:] 23:12:20 – [02:] 30:02:12

He explains that he could hear conversations when he was on duty as telephone operator, but that his focus was on ensuring the connection was clear before he connected Hitler; describes the telephone installation at the Reich Chancellery, noting the equipment had buttons instead of cords, and some were color-coded: white, green, yellow; says one line was reserved for Hitler's use only; explains if the red light was on, this line was engaged; he mentions his first encounter with Rommel: he shows Mr. Misch photographs taken in Africa; explained he was typically allowed to go home after work, indicates that the adjutants were the most important staff members: Hitler gave orders to the adjutants, and the adjutants gave orders to the bodyguards.

Tape 3

[03:] 01:00:03 – [03:] 09:17:20

He mentions that at Christmas, he was driven around Berlin delivering presents to people like **Wilhelm Furtwängler, Lida Baarova, Olga Tschechowa**, and others; talks about meeting a lot of people because the telephone operators were in charge of inviting people to dinner with Hitler; says they had only one simple rule: do not place people from the same profession next to each other at dinner; says he focused on his work and that the working conditions were great because everyone was very friendly; responds to the interviewer's question about explaining the significance of the name "Wolf" in many of Hitler's residences, for example: "Wehrwolf," "Wolfsschanze," "Wolfsschlucht"; says it went back to the early days when Hitler ran for public office: if Hitler used his own name, none of the hotels would allow him to make a reservation, so he began to use the name "Wolf" when staying at a hotel; says he never had duty at the "Wolfsschlucht," rather, he was at the Berghof as a body guard; says the Berghof was like a comfortable hotel.

[03:] 09:17:21 – [03:] 24:05:16

He says that military people come to the Berghof daily; there were many guests: friends of Eva Braun's, Hitler's personal physician Dr. Morell, various party leaders such as Hasselbach; says he was not present for discussions, only the adjutants were present; describes Hess and his flight to England in 1941; says he only knows about this because he became friends with one of Hess's servants; says the plan developed at the Berghof after an evening meal: after dinner, someone gave a dispatch to press chief Otto Dietrich, that had to do with a meeting between the military attaché Enno Emil von Rintelen with his Swedish colleague **Count Bernadotte** in Portugal; remembers Hitler saying that he could not do anything, and Hess decided to take matters into his own hands; says Hess eventually flew to Scotland, intending to speak with Lord Hamilton but was taken prisoner instead.

[03:] 24:05:17 – [03:] 34:22:08

He responds to the interviewer asking about the Wolfsschanze in East Prussia by saying he was there in the early days; explains it was like a ministry: there were many departments, many people arrived for discussions, but not many people stayed overnight; recalls he was home in Berlin when the plan to assassinate Hitler involving Count von Stauffenberg took place in July 1944.

Tape 4

[04:] 00:55:13 – [04:] 09:28:17

Says that in 1942 he was at the Wolfsschanze; remembers that Hitler insisted Misch go to see Dr. Morrell because Misch did not look healthy and was subsequently forced to spend time at a health resort in Karlsbad; says that at the end of July he returned to Berlin and then to the Wehrwolf; recalls there were telephone operators already at the Wehrwolf; indicates he was there only as a member of the escort; describes a confrontation between Hitler and some members of the army; says he later heard loud music coming from Hitler's office, "Yours is my whole heart, ..." it was the voice of Josef Schmidt [*the interviewer comments that Josef Schmidt died in a concentration camp in 1942*]; responds to the interviewer's question of whether he knew about the concentration camps, saying that the soldiers knew that camps existed but they did not hear much about them; insists that such things were handled secretly.

[04:] 09:28:18 – [04:] 11:53:08

The interviewer mentions an episode described by Traudl Junge in her book: one day when Henriette von Schirach was visiting the Berghof, she asked if Hitler knew about Jewish women being deported; says he did not know about this episode; explains that the bodyguards were not like the guests in that they did not participate in social events; mentions that the secretaries were invited to social events.

[04:] 11:53:09 – [04:] 17:13:09

He describes a conversation regarding Russia between Hitler and General Field Marshal Paulus; remembers Goebbels was present as well; says Hitler insisted that Paulus remain in Stalingrad; notes that Paulus obeys, but capitulated in 1943.

[04:] 17:13:10 – [04:] 18:50:12

Responds to the interviewer's probe as to whether Misch was aware of the war's realities such as that the English bombed Lübeck in March 1942 by stressing that he was present only as a bodyguard; only the adjutants participate in strategic planning.

[04:] 18:50:13 – [04:] 24:03:16

The interviewer asks about Hitler as a boss and statesman and whether anyone despaired about the war being necessary; Misch says he likes Hitler as a boss because he is friendly; mentions a conversation between Hitler and Keitel regarding Finland; says that no one despaired over the war.

[04:] 24:03:17 – [04:] 29:52:11

He indicates that at this time, his wife Gerda worked at the Ministry for Economic Affairs; says she studied both English and Spanish; notes that she changed jobs and became a secretary for a professor of medicine at Humboldt University in Berlin; says he and Gerda were married on New Year's Eve in 1942, and his daughter Brigitta was born in 1944; mentions that a "relative" (family friend) named Uncle Paul was incarcerated in Sachsenhausen near Oranienburg; spoke with General "Obergruppenführer" Karl Wolff, and Wolff arranged for Paul to return home.

Tape 5

[05:] 00:55:14 – [05:] 11:01:18

He explains that his wife was reachable by telephone while he was in Ukraine because he had contact with a telephone exchange in Munich; explains that the telephone operator in Munich could place calls for him; says in November 1940 he was on duty when Molotov had dinner with Hitler in Berlin, and after dinner Molotov went back to the Hotel Bellevue; says there was thought to be an allied airplane in the vicinity of Lüneburg headed in a southeast direction; explains the Hotel Adlon had a bomb shelter and the Reich Chancellery had an air-raid shelter, but it could not withstand a bombing raid; recalls there was a discussion and later the decision was made to build a bunker; says construction began in 1943 in the middle of the garden in the Reichs Chancellery; notes that the bunker never dried properly, was small, not well furnished, and only a few people could sleep there; says there is one work-room for Hitler, a living room for Hitler, a room for Eva, one room for air and water equipment, one room for the doctor, and one room for Goebbels.

[05:] 11:01:19 – [05:] 24:01:15

Misch notes that during the last days of the war, (mid-April to early May 1945) he had to remain in the bunker; says he had a lot to do because before April, the bunker was in use only during air raids; mentions that on April 22, 1945, seats are reserved for Gerda and Gitta [*reference unclear*] in the last airplane that will leave Berlin, but Gerda refused to leave; says he did not see them again for a long time; mentions Fegelein and what happened to him.

[05:] 24:01:16 – [05:] 30:16:14

He says that Hitler was very pro-English, and was like an actor—one could not tell what he was really thinking; says Mrs. Goebbels arrived with her children and took over a room in the bunker—Dr. Morrell had to give up his room; says Mrs. Goebbels and Eva Braun decided to stay with their men, and that Hanna Reitsch offered to take the children to safety but Mrs. Goebbels said no; says a magistrate arrived because Hitler decided to marry Eva Braun.

Tape 6

[06:] 00:56:08 – [06:] 10:19:25

He says that the telephone rang constantly; mentions that the number for the new Reich Chancellery was in the telephone book: 120050, and those who knew this number could pass it along; says the bunker was small and that only military people visited for situation planning: General Krebs, General Bergdorf, Bormann, Mohnke; remembers that Hitler married Eva on April 29 and there was a small reception after the ceremony; explains that Mrs. Goebbels brought all six children down from the upper bunker to his telephone room in the lower bunker; recalls that the children wore white night shirts; states that Mrs. Goebbels killed her children then came back to the telephone room and played solitaire; notes that this occurred after Hitler died; says he saw the bodies of Hitler and Eva in Hitler's workroom; says he left the bunker to relay a message to the other bunker; says at that time someone took the bodies up to the garden where they were burned; says there was a meeting in the deep bunker with the following people: "Gestapo" Müller, General Krebs, General Burgdorf, Martin Bormann, General Mohnke, Josef Goebbels.

[06:] 10:20:00 – [06:] 18:28:19

Misch says that General Krebs ordered him to call the Russians; notes that Krebs spoke Russian fluently; mentions there were groups of people leaving the Reich Chancellery; says Artur Axman invited him to join a group but refused to leave without permission; says Goebbels gave him permission to leave; remembers disconnecting the cables from the telephone installation; says he and Hentschel exchanged letters to their wives; describes how he exited the Reich Chancellery early on May 2, 1945, trying to join a breakout group headed for General Rauch north of Berlin.

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[06:] 18:28:20 – [06:] 26:07:01

He indicates he reached the Kaiserhof underground station and went downstairs; says the station was full of people and the atmosphere was surreal: two young men were playing cheerful Hawaiian music; says he ran into Linge, Hitler's valet; remembers he and Linge followed the tunnels to the Stettiner train station, but they realized the Russians were there; says they threw away their watches; says Linge was feeling suicidal; remembers striking the pistol out of Linge's hand; says his captivity began at this time; describes a conversation with Hentschel after he returned from Russia, discussing what happened in the bunker after Misch left: a few minutes after Misch left, Josef Goebbels died, and someone attempted to burn Goebbels's body, but there was not enough oxygen in the bunker; says Hentschel thought Magda Goebbels died above ground, and Goebbels died in the bunker; says Magda's body was much more consumed by fire; says that the Russian soldiers laid the bodies of the children in the grass and forced passersby to spit on the corpses.

[06:] 26:07:02 – [06:] 29:32:05

He says that the prisoners marched in the direction of Berlin-Buch and spent the night outside; says in Wartenberg they boarded a train, reaching Landsberg on the Warthe; remembers there were thousands of soldiers, all prisoners of war; mentions that he met Baur, Hitler's personal pilot in Posen (Poznan) in a transit camp and agreed to become Baur's escort; says they were taken to Moscow, not to a military hospital, but rather to the Butyrka Prison and to interrogation at the Lubyanka where they were tortured for information about Hitler *[whether he was really dead or not]*.

Tape 7

[07:] 00:50:04 – [07:] 06:28:17

He mentions that he is brought back to Berlin at the end of April 1946; says he was to testify along with Baur, Linge, and Günsche at the Nuremberg Trials; says he remained in Berlin for seven weeks without being able to see his family; says Linge was taken to the bunker; says he was returned to Moscow and after three years he was taken in a livestock train to a camp near Dscheskasgan (Schesqasghan) and spent two months in a transit camp; says he then went to Kazakhstan Prison Camp 7099/1 in Spassk, the main installation of the Karaganda Gulag and later in Borovitschi, Tuschino, Sverdlowsk and then Stalingrad; says that after almost nine years, he was returned to Berlin at the end of December 1953.

[07:] 06:28:18 – [07:] 13:14:04

He mentions that his wife became a teacher and then a school principal, and is politically active; says he looked for a job but there were no opportunities, but Gerda did not want to leave Berlin; says the Princess von Isenburg helped him to get a loan in order to buy a home-improvement business.

[07:] 13:14:05 – [07:] 21:33:12

Misch responds to the interviewer asking if he was ever able to learn more about the war; says he learned about the war only after he returned from Russia, not while he was in Russia—not a single word about concentration camps; says Hitler never spoke about the concentration camps; remembers that one time when he was in Borowitschi, he worked with a female doctor who was Jewish and said she was being deported to the Amur because Stalin wanted all Jews to be sent there; responds to the interviewer's inquiry about if he has read any books about the bunker, mentioning the following books: *Die Katakombe*, by James O'Donnell, *Bis Zur letzten Stunde* by Traudl Junge, by saying he could correct various books if anyone were to ask him about the details; says he has no interest in politics; mentions that the bunker still exists; indicates there is a plaque to mark its location.

[07:] 21:33:13 – [07:] 25:27:14

He says his daughter is an architect and he has two grandsons: Rochus III and Alexander; says he has no contact with his daughter; says that the politicians think too much about the past.

Photos:

[1.]: Misch alone, in front of the barracks at the Wolfsschanze, July 1944.
His military rank at this time is Sergeant First Class.

[2.]: Misch, in front of Hitler's HQ, at the Wolfsschanze 1944.

[3.]: In front of the train "Amerika": Otto Günther, the little chef at the Wolfsschanze (his nickname is "Krümel"), formerly of the Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin, with Willy Arndt [far left] and Misch [far right; they are on their way from Berlin to East Prussia, 1942.

[4.]: Misch, on the train "Amerika," around 1941.

[5.]: Three soldiers in the courier plane from the Wolfsschanze to the Wehrwolf in the Ukraine, 1942, one of the soldiers is named Michael **Graff**.

[6., 7.]: People from the Wehrwolf trade for food with civilians in the Ukraine, July 1944

[8.]: Misch spends four weeks at a chic spa in Karlsbad, ordered there by Hitler's personal physician, Theodor Morrell; the name "Adolf Hitler" is embroidered on his sleeve.