

The Leader

Murray Leinster



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William Fitzgerald Jenkins (AKA Murray Leinster)

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THE LEADER

By
MURRAY
LEINSTER

The trouble with being a Superman, with Super powers, and knowing it, is it's so easy to overlook the unpleasant possibility of a super-superman!

Illustrated by van Dongen

... The career of The Leader remains one of the mysteries of history. This man, illegitimate and uneducated, hysterical and superstitious, gathered about him a crowded following of those who had been discontented, but whom he turned into fanatics. Apparently by pure force of personality he seized without resistance the government of one of the world's great nations. So much is unlikely enough. But as the ruler of a civilized country he imposed upon its people the absolute despotism of a primitive sultanate. He honeycombed its society with spies. He imprisoned, tortured, and executed without trial or check. And while all this went on he received the most impassioned loyalty of his subjects! Morality was abandoned at his command with as much alacrity as common sense. He himself was subject to the grossest superstitions. He listened to astrologers and fortunetellers—and executed them when they foretold disaster. But it is not enough to be amazed at the man himself. The great mystery is that people of the Twentieth Century, trained in science and technically advanced, should join in this orgy of what seems mere madness ...

Concise History of Europe. Blaisdell.

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn, to the Herr General Johann von Steppberg, retired.

My dear General von Steppberg:

It is with reluctance that I intrude upon your retirement, but at the request of the Government I have undertaken a scientific examination of the causes which brought about The Leader's rise to power, the extraordinary popularity of his

regime, the impassioned loyalty he was able to evoke, and the astounding final developments.

If you can communicate to me any memories of The Leader which may aid in understanding this most bewildering period of our history, I assure you that it will be appreciated by myself, by the authorities who wish the investigation made, and I dare to hope by posterity.

I am, my dear general, (Et cetera.)

Letter from General Johann von Steppberg (Retired) to Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn.

Herr Professor:

The official yearbooks of the army contain the record of my military career. I have nothing to add to that information. You say the authorities wish more. I refuse it. If they threaten my pension, I will renounce it. If they propose other pressures, I will leave the country. In short, I refuse to discuss in any manner the subject of your recent communication.

I am, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn, Professor of Psychology at University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

I hope your psionic research goes better than my official project! My business goes nowhere! I have written to generals, ministers, and all kinds of persons who held high office under The Leader. Each and every one refuses to discuss The Leader or his own experiences under him. Why? Surely no one would blame them now! We have had to agree to pretend that no one did anything improper under The Leader, or else that what anyone did was proper at the time. So why should the nabobs of that incredible period refuse to discuss what they should know better than anyone else? I am almost reduced to asking the aid of the

astrologers and soothsayers The Leader listened to. Actually, I must make a note to do so in sober earnest. At least they had their own viewpoint of events.

Speaking of viewpoints, I have had some hope of clarifying The Leader's career by comparing it with that of Prime Minister Winston, in power in his country when The Leader ruled ours. His career is splendidly documented. There is astonishingly little documentation about The Leader as a person, however. That is one of the difficulties of my task. Even worse, those who should know him best lock their lips while those—

Here is an unsolicited letter from the janitor of a building in which a former Minister of Education now has his law offices. I have many letters equally preposterous....



Enclosure in letter to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Herr Professor:

I am the janitor of the building in which Herr Former Minister of Education Werfen has his offices. In cleaning there I saw a letter crumpled into a ball and thrown into a corner. I learned in the time of The Leader that angry actions often mean evil intentions, so I read the letter to see if the police should be notified. It was a letter from you in which you asked Herr Former Minister of Education Werfen for his memories of The Leader.

I remember The Leader, Herr Professor. He was the most holy man who ever lived, if indeed he was only a man. Once I passed the open door of an office in the building I then worked in. I looked in the door—it was the office of the then-struggling Party The Leader had founded—and I saw The Leader sitting in a chair, thinking. There was golden light about his head, Herr Professor. I have told this to other people and they do not believe me. There were shadowy other beings in the room. I saw, very faintly, great white wings. But the other beings were still because The Leader was thinking and did not wish to be disturbed. I assure you that this is true, Herr Professor. The Leader was the holiest of men—if he was only a man.

I am most respectfully, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Fraulein Lise Grauer, nurse, in the city of Bludenz, to Professor Aigen at Brunn University.

Most respected Herr Professor:

I write this at the request of the Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg, to whom you directed a letter shortly before his death. The Herr Former Police Inspector had been ill for some time. I was his nurse. I had cared for him for months and did many small services for him, such as writing letters at his direction.

When your letter came he read it and went into a black mood of deep and bitter recollection. He would not speak for hours, and I had great difficulty in getting him to take his medicines. Just before his bedtime he called me and said sardonically;

"Lise, write to this Herr Professor for me. Say to him that I was once a decent man. When The Leader took power, I received orders that I would not accept. I submitted my resignation. Then I received orders to come to The Leader. I obeyed these orders because my resignation was not yet accepted. I was received in his office. I entered it with respect and defiance—respect because he was admitted to be the ruler of our nation; defiance because I would not obey such orders as had been sent me in his name.

"The Leader spoke to me, kindly, and as he spoke all my views changed. It suddenly seemed that I had been absurd to refuse the orders sent me. They seemed right and reasonable and even more lenient than would have been justified.... I left The Leader in a state in which I could not possibly fail to do anything he wished. From that moment I obeyed his orders. I was promoted. Eventually, as you know, I was in command of the Neusatz prison camp. And you know what orders I carried out there!"

I wept, Herr Professor, because the Herr Grieg's eyes were terrible to look at. He was a gentle and kindly man, Herr Professor! I was his nurse, and he was a good patient and a good man in every way. I had heard of the things that were done at Neusatz, but I could not believe that my patient had commanded them. Now, in his eyes I saw that he remembered them and that the memory was intolerable. He said very bitterly:

"Tell the Herr Professor that I can tell him nothing more. I have no other

memories that would be of service to him. I have resolved, anyhow, to get rid even of these. I have kept them too long. Say to him that his letter has decided me."

I did not understand what he meant, Herr Professor. I helped him prepare for the night, and when he seemed to be resting quietly I retired, myself. I was wakened by a very loud noise. I went to see what was the matter. The Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg had managed to get out of his bed and across the room to a bureau. He opened a drawer and took out a revolver. He made his way back to his bed. He blew out his brains.

I called the police, and after investigation they instructed me to carry out his request, which I do.

Herr Professor, I do not myself remember the times of The Leader, but they must have been very terrible. If the Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg was actually in command of the Neusatz prison camp, and did actually order the things done there,—I cannot understand it, Herr Professor! Because he was a good and kindly man! If you write of him, I beg that you will mention that he was a most amiable man. I was only his nurse, but I assure you—(Et cetera.)



Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn.

My dear friend:

I could have predicted your failure to secure co-operation from eminent figures in The Leader's regime. So long as they keep silent, together, they can pretend to be respectable. And nobody longs so passionately to be respectable as a man who has prospered by being a swine, while he awaits an opportunity to prosper again by more swinishness. I would advise you to expect your best information from little people who suffered most and most helplessly looked on or helped while enormities were committed. Such little people will either yearn over the past like your janitor, or want most passionately to understand so that nothing of the sort can ever happen again.

Winston as a parallel to The Leader? Or as a contrast? Which? I can name one marked contrast. I doubt that anybody really and passionately wishes that

Winston had never been born.

You mention my researches. You should see some of our results! I have found a rat with undeniable psychokinetic power. I have seen him move a gram-weight of cheese nearly three centimeters to where he could reach it through the cage bars. I begin to suspect a certain female dog of abilities I would prefer not to name just yet. If you can find any excuse to come to Laibach, I promise you amazing demonstrations of psi phenomena. (Et cetera.)

Quotations from, "*Recollections of the Earl of Humber, formerly Prime Minister Winston*," by the Hon. Charles Wilberforce.

Page 231; "... This incredible event took place even while it seemed most impossible. The Prime Minister took it with his usual aplomb. I asked him what he thought of the matter a week later, at a house party in Hertfordshire. He said, 'I consider it most unfortunate. This Leader of theirs is an inherently nasty individual. Therefore he'll make nastiness the avenue to distinction so long as he's in power. The results will be tragic, because when you bottle up decency men seem to go mad. What a pity one can't bottle up nastiness! The world might become a fit place to live in!'"

Page 247; "The Prime Minister disagreed. 'There was Napoleon,' he observed. 'You might despise him, but after he talked to you you served him. He seemed to throw a spell over people. Alexander probably had the same sort of magic personality. When his personality ceased to operate, as a result of too much wine too continuously, his empire fell immediately to pieces. I've known others personally; an Afghan whom I've always thought did us a favor by getting killed by a sniper. He could have caused a great deal of trouble. I'd guess at the Khalifa. Most of the people who have this incredible persuasiveness, however, seem to set up as successful swindlers. What a pity The Leader had no taste for simple crime, and had to go in for crimes of such elaboration!'"

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

You make me curious with your talk of a rat which levitates crumbs of cheese and a she-dog who displays other psi abilities. I assume that you have found the experimental conditions which let psi powers operate without hindrance. I shall hope some day to see and conceivably to understand.

My own affairs are in hopeless confusion. At the moment I am overwhelmed with material about The Leader, the value of which I cannot estimate. Strange! I ask people who should know what I am commissioned to discover, and they refuse to answer. But it becomes known that I ask, and thousands of little people write me to volunteer impassioned details of their experiences while The Leader ruled. Some are bitter because they did what they did and felt as they felt. These seem to believe in magic or demoniac possession as the reason they behaved with such conspicuous insanity. Others gloat over their deeds, which they recount with gusto—and then express pious regret with no great convincingness. Some of these accounts nauseate me. But something utterly abnormal was in operation, somehow, to cause The Leader's ascendancy!

I wish I could select the important data with certainty. Almost anything, followed up, might reveal the key. But I do not know what to follow! I plan to go to Bozen, where the new monstrous computer has been set up, and see if there is any way in which it could categorize my data and detect a pattern of more than bewildered and resentful frenzy.

On the way back to Brunn I shall stop by to talk to you. There is so much to say! I anticipate much of value from your detached and analytic mind. I confess, also, that I am curious about your research. This she-dog with psi powers, of which you give no account ... I am intrigued.

As always, I am, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, written from The Mathematical Institute at Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

This is in haste. There is much agitation among the computer staff at the

Institute. An assistant technician has been discovered to be able to predict the answer the computer will give to problems set up at random. He is one Hans Schweeringen and it is unbelievable.

Various numerals are impressed on the feed-in tape of the computer. Sections of the tape are chosen at random by someone who is blindfolded. They are fed unread into the computer, together with instructions to multiply, subtract, extract roots, et cetera, which are similarly chosen at random and not known to anyone. Once in twenty times or so, Schweeringen predicts the result of this meaningless computation before the computer has made it. This is incredible! The odds are trillions to one against it! Since nobody knows the sums or instructions given to the computer, it cannot be mind-reading in any form. It must be pure precognition. Do you wish to talk to him?

He is uneasy at the attention he attracts, perhaps because his father was one of The Leader's secretaries and was executed, it is presumed, for knowing too much. Telegraph me if you wish me to try to bring him to you.

Your friend—



Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, Professor of Psychology at Laibach University, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, in care of The Mathematical Institute at Bozen:

Take tapes which produced answers Schweeringen predicted. Run them through computer when he knows nothing of it. Wire result.

Thurn.



Telegram. Professor Albrecht Aigen, at The Mathematical Institute in Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

How did you know? The tapes do not give the same answers when run through the computer without Schweeringen's knowledge. The only possible answer is that the computer sometimes errs to match his predictions. But this is more impossible than precognition. This is beyond the conceivable. It cannot be! What

now?

Aigen.

Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, care Mathematical Institute, Bozen.

Naturally I suspect psi. He belongs with my rat and she-dog. Try to arrange it.

Thurn.

Telegram from Professor Albrecht Aigen, Mathematical Institute, Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Schweeringen refuses further tests. Fears proof he causes malfunctioning of computer will cause unemployment here and may destroy all hope of hoped-for career in mathematics.

Aigen.

Telegram from Professor Albrecht Aigen, at Mathematical Institute, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Terrible news. Riding bus to Institute this morning, Schweeringen was killed when bus was involved in accident.

Aigen.

Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, care Mathematical Institute, Bozen.

Deeply regret death Schweeringen. When you come here please try to bring all known family history. Psi ability sometimes inherited. Could be tie-in his father's execution and use of psi ability.

Thurn.

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, at Brunn University, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

I have first to thank you for your warm welcome and to express my gratitude for your attention while I was your guest. Since my return I have written many inquiries about Schweeringen's father. There are so far no replies, but I have some hope that people who will not tell of their own experiences may tell about someone else—especially someone now dead. This may be a useful device to get at least some information from people who so far have refused any. Naturally I will pass on to you anything I learn.

I try to work again upon the task assigned me—to investigate the rise and power of The Leader. I find it hard to concentrate. My mind goes back to your laboratory. I am deeply shaken by my experience there. I had thought nothing could be more bewildering than my own work. Consider: Today I received a letter in which a man tells me amazedly of the life he led in a slave-labor camp during the time of The Leader's rule. He describes the attempt of another prisoner to organize a revolt of the prisoners. While he spoke of the brutality of the guards and the intolerably hard labor and the deliberately insufficient food, they cheered him. But when he accused The Leader of having ordered these things—the prisoners fell upon him with cries of fury. They killed him. I had this information verified. It was true.

I cannot hope for a sane explanation of such things. But a sane explanation for my experience seems even less probable. I am impressed by your rat who levitates crumbs of cheese. But I am appalled; I am horrified; I am stupefied by what I did! You asked me to wait for you in a certain laboratory beyond a door. I entered. I saw a small, fat, mangy she-dog in a dog-run. She looked at me and wagged her tail. I thereupon went to the other end of the laboratory, opened a box, and took out a handful of strange objects you later told me are sweetmeats

to a dog. I gave them to the animal.

Why did I do it? How was it that I went directly to a box of which I knew nothing, opened it as a matter of course, and took out objects I did not even recognize, to give them to that unpleasant small beast? How did I know where to go? Why did I go? Why should I give those then-meaningless objects to the dog? It is as if I were enchanted!

You say that it is a psi phenomenon. The rat causes small objects to move. The dog, you say, causes persons to give it canine candy. I revolt against the conclusion, which I cannot reason away. If you are right, we are at the mercy of our domestic animals! Dog-lovers are not people who love dogs, but people who are enslaved by dogs. Cat-lovers are merely people who have been seized upon by cats to support and pet and cater to them. This is intolerable! I shall fear all pets from now on! I throw myself back into my own work to avoid thinking of it. I—



Later. I did not mail this letter because an appalling idea occurred to me. This could bear upon my investigation! Do you think The Leader—No! It could not be! It would be madness....



Extract from a letter from Dr. Karl Thurn to Professor Albrecht Aigen.

... I deplore your reaction. It has the emotional quality of a reaction to witchcraft or magic, but psi is not witchcraft. It is a natural force. No natural force is either nonexistent or irresistible. No natural force is invariably effective. Psi is not irresistible under all circumstances. It is not always effective. My rat cannot levitate cheese-crumbs weighing more than 1.7 grams. My she-dog could not make you give her dog-candy once you were on guard. When you went again into the laboratory she looked at you and wagged her tail as before. You say that you thought of the box and of opening it, but you did not. It was not even an effort of will to refrain.

A lesser will or a lower grade of personality cannot overwhelm a greater one. Not ever! Lesser beings can only urge. The astrologers used to say that the stars incline, but they do not compel. The same can be said of psi—or of magnetism

or gravitation or what you will. Schweeringen could not make the computer err when it had to err too egregiously. A greater psi ability was needed than he had. A greater psi power than was available would have been needed to make you give the dog candy, once you were warned.

I do not apply these statements to your so-called appalling idea. I carefully refrain from doing so. It is your research, not mine....



Extract from letter to Professor Albrecht Aigen from the Herr Friedrich Holm, supervisor of electrical maintenance, municipal electrical service, Untersberg.

Herr Professor:

You have written to ask if I knew a certain Herr Schweeringen, attached to The Leader's personal staff during his regime. I did know such a person. I was then in charge of electrical maintenance in The Leader's various residences. Herr Schweeringen was officially one of The Leader's secretaries, but his actual task was to make predictions for The Leader, like a soothsayer or a medium. He had a very remarkable gift. There were times when it was especially needful that there be no electrical failures—when The Leader was to be in residence, for example. On such occasions it was my custom to ask Herr Schweeringen if there was apt to be any failure of apparatus under my care. At least three times he told me yes. In one case it was an elevator, in another refrigeration, in a third a fuse would blow during a State dinner.

I overhauled the elevator, but it failed nevertheless. I replaced the refrigeration motor, and the new motor failed. In the third case I changed the fuse to a new and tested one, and then placed a new, fused line around the fuse Herr Schweeringen had said would blow, and placed a workman beside it. When the fuse did blow as predicted, my workman instantly closed the extra-line switch, so that the lights of the State dinner barely flickered. But I shudder when I think of the result if Herr Schweeringen had not warned me.

He was executed a few days before the period of confusion began, which ended as everyone knows. I do not know the reason for his execution. It was said, however, that The Leader executed him personally. This, Herr Professor, is all that I know of the matter.

Very respectfully, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Herr Theophrastus Paracelsus Bosche, astrologer, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

Most respected Herr Professor:

I am amused that a so-eminent scientist like yourself should ask information from a so-despised former astrologer to The Leader. It is even more amusing that you ask about a mere soothsayer—a man who displayed an occult gift of prophecy—whom you should consider merely one of the charlatans like myself whom The Leader consulted, and who are unworthy of consideration by a scientific historian. We have no effect upon history, most respected Herr Professor! None at all. Oh, none! I am much diverted.

You ask about the Herr Schweeringen. He was a predictor, using his occult gift of second sight to foreknow events and tell The Leader about them. You will remember that The Leader considered himself to have occult powers of leadership and decision, and that all occult powers should contribute to his greatness. At times of great stress, such as when The Leader demanded ever-increasing concessions from other nations on threat of war, he was especially concerned that occult predictions promise him success.

At a certain time the international tension was greater than ever before. If The Leader could doubt the rightness of any of his actions, he doubted it then. There was great danger of war. Prime Minister Winston had said flatly that The Leader must withdraw his demands or fight. The Leader was greatly agitated. He demanded my prediction. I considered the stars and predicted discreetly that war would be prevented by some magnificent achievement by The Leader. Truly, if he got out of his then situation it would be a magnificent achievement. But astrology, of course, could only indicate it but not describe what it would be.

The Leader was confident that he could achieve anything he could imagine, because he had convinced even himself that only treason or disloyalty could cause him to fail in any matter. He demanded of his generals what achievement would prevent the war. They were not encouraging. He demanded of his civilian political advisers. They dared not advise him to retreat. They offered nothing. He demanded of his occult advisers.

The Herr Schweeringen demanded of me that I tell him my exact prediction. His nerves were bad, then, and he twitched with the strain. Someone had to describe the great achievement The Leader would make. It would be dangerous not to do so. I told him the prediction, I found his predicament diverting. He left me, still twitching and desperately sunk in thought.

I now tell you exact, objective facts, Herr Professor, with no interpretation of my own upon them. The Herr Schweeringen was closeted with The Leader. I am told that his face was shining with confidence when he went to speak to The Leader. It was believed among us charlatans that he considered that he foreknew what The Leader would do to prevent war at this time.

Two hours later there were shots in The Leader's private quarters. The Leader came out, his eyes glaring, and ordered Herr Schweeringen's body removed. He ordered the execution of the four senior generals of the General Staff, of the Minister of Police, and several other persons. He then went into seclusion, from which he emerged only briefly to give orders making the unthinkable retreat that Prime Minister Winston had demanded. No one spoke to him for a week. Confusion began. These are objective facts. I now add one small boast.

My discreet prediction had come true, and it is extremely diverting to think about it. The Leader had achieved magnificently. The war was prevented not only for the moment but for later times, too. The Leader's achievement was the destruction of his regime by destroying the brains that had made it operate!

It is quite possible that you will consider this information a lie. That will be quite droll. However, I am, most respected Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)



Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

My dear friend:

Your information about the elder Schweeringen received. The information about his prediction is interesting. I could wish that it were complete, but that would seem to be hopeless. Your question, asked in a manner suggesting great disturbance, is another matter. I will answer it as well as I can, my friend, but please remember that you asked. I volunteer nothing. The question of the rise

and power of The Leader is your research, not mine.

Here is my answer. Years back an American researcher named Rhine obtained seemingly conclusive proof that telepathy took place. Tonight he would have a "sender," here, attempt to transmit some item telepathically to a "receiver," there. Tomorrow morning he would compare the record of what the "sender" had attempted to transmit, with the record of what the "receiver" considered he had received. The correspondence was far greater than chance. He considered that telepathy was proven.

But then Rhine made tests for precognition. He secured proof that some persons could predict with greater-than-probability frequency that some particular event, to be determined by chance, would take place tomorrow. He secured excellent evidence for precognition.

Then it was realized that if one could foresee what dice would read tomorrow—dice not yet thrown—one should be able to read what a report would read tomorrow—a report not yet written. In short, if one can foreknow what a comparison will reveal, telepathy before the comparison is unproven. In proving precognition, he had destroyed his evidence for telepathy.

It appears that something similar has happened, which our correspondence has brought out. Young Schweeringen predicted what a computer would report from unknown numerals and instructions. In order for the computer to match his predictions, it had to err. It did. Therefore one reasons that he did not predict what the computer would produce. The computer produced what he predicted. In effect, what appeared to be foreknowledge was psychokinesis—the same phenomenon as the movement of crumbs of cheese by my rat. One may strongly suspect that when young Herr Schweeringen knew in advance what the computer would say, he actually knew in advance what he could make it say. It is possible that one can consciously know in advance only what one can unconsciously bring about. If one can bring about only minor happenings, one can never predict great ones.

This is my answer to your question. I would like very much to know what the elder Schweeringen predicted that The Leader would accomplish!

My she-dog has died. We had a new attendant in the laboratory. He fed her to excess. She died of it. (Et cetera.)



Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Thurn.

My dear Karl:

I have resolved to dismiss psionic ability from my investigation into The Leader's rise to power. This much I will concede: The Leader could enslave—englamour—enchant anyone who met him personally. He did. To a lesser degree, this irresistible persuasiveness is a characteristic of many successful swindlers. But he could not have englamoured the whole nation. He did not meet enough persons personally to make his regime possible, unless he could cause other persons to apply their own magnetism to further his ambitions, and they others and others and so on—like an endless series of magnets magnetized originally from one. This is not possible. I restrict myself to normal, plausible hypotheses—of which so far I have no faintest trace.

You agree with me, do you not—that it was impossible for The Leader to weave a web of enchantment over the whole nation by his own psi energies controlling the psi energies of others? I would welcome your assurance that it could not be.



Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

My dear Karl:

Did you receive my last letter? I am anxious to have your assurance that it was impossible that The Leader could englamour the whole nation by his psionic gifts.



Telegram, Dr. Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

Karl, as you are my friend, answer me!



Letter, Dr. Karl Thurn to Professor Albrecht Aigen.

... But what have you discovered, my friend, that you are afraid to face?



Letter. Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

My dear Karl:

I appeal to you because I have discovered how nearly our nation and the whole world escaped horrors beside which those of The Leader's actual regime would seem trivial. Give me reasons, arguments, proofs beyond question, which I can put into my report on his career! I must demonstrate beyond question that psi ability did not cause his ascendancy! Help me to contrive a lie which will keep anyone, ever, from dreaming that psi ability can be used to seize a government and a nation. It could seize the world more terribly....

I cannot express the urgency of this need! There are others who possess The Leader's powers in a lesser degree. They must remain only swindlers and such, without ambitions to rule, or they might study The Leader's career as Napoleon studied Alexander's. There must be no hint, anywhere, of the secret I have discovered. There must be nothing to lead to the least thought of it! The Leader could have multiplied his power ten-thousand-fold! Another like him must never learn how it could be done!

I beg your help, Karl! I am shaken. I am terrified. I wish that I had not undertaken this research. I wish it almost as desperately as I wish that The Leader had never been born!



Letter from Colonel Sigmund Knoeller, retired, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

Herr Professor:

In response to your authorized request for information about certain events; I have the honor to inform you that at the time you mention I was Major in command of the Second Battalion of the 161st Infantry Regiment, assigned to guard duty about the residence of The Leader. Actual guard duty was performed

by the secret police. My battalion merely provided sentries around the perimeter of the residence, and at certain places within.

On August 19th I received a command to march three companies of my men into the residence, to receive orders from The Leader in person. This command was issued by the Herr General Breyer, attached to The Leader as a military aide.

I led my men inside according to the orders, guided by the orderly who had brought them. I entered an inner courtyard. There was disturbance. People moved about in a disorderly fashion and chattered agitatedly. This was astonishing in The Leader's residence. I marched up to General Breyer, who stood outside a group biting his nails. I saluted and said: "Major Knoeller reporting for orders, Herr General."

There was then confusion in the nearby squabbling group. A man burst out of it and waved his arms at me. He looked like The Leader. He cried shrilly:

"Arrest these men! All of them! Then shoot them!"

I looked at the Herr General Breyer. He bit his nails. The man who looked so much like The Leader foamed at the mouth. But he was not The Leader. That is, in every respect he resembled The Leader to whom I owed loyalty as did everyone. But no one who was ever in The Leader's presence failed to know it. There was a feeling. One knew to the inmost part of one's soul that he was The Leader who must be revered and obeyed. But one did not feel that way about this man, though he resembled The Leader so strongly.

"Arrest them!" shrilled the man ferociously. "I command it! I am The Leader! Shoot them!"

When I still waited for General Breyer to give me orders, the man shrieked at the troopers. He commanded them to kill General Breyer and all the rest, including me. And if he had been The Leader they would have obeyed. But he was not. So my men stood stiffly at attention, waiting for my orders or General Breyer's.

There was now complete silence in the courtyard. The formerly squabbling men watched as if astonished. As if they did not believe their eyes. But I waited for General Breyer to give his commands.

The man screamed in a terrible, frustrated rage. He waved his arms wildly. He foamed at the mouth and shrieked at me. I waited for orders from General Breyer. After a long time he ceased to bite his nails and said in a strange voice:

"You had better have this man placed in confinement, Major Knoeller. See that he is not injured. Double all guards and mount machine guns in case of rioting outside. Dismiss!"

I obeyed my commands. My men took the struggling, still-shrieking man and put him in a cell in the guardhouse. There was a drunken private there, awaiting court-martial. He was roused and annoyed when his new companion shrieked and screamed and shook the bars of the door. He kicked the man who looked so much like The Leader. I then had the civilian placed in a separate cell, but he continued to rave incoherently until I had the regimental surgeon give him an injection to quiet him. He sank into drugged sleep with foam about his lips.

He looked remarkably like The Leader. I have never seen such a resemblance! But he was not The Leader or we would have known him.

There was no disturbance outside the residence. The doubled guards and the mounted machine guns were not needed.

I am, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter, with enclosure, from Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

Because of past sharing in my research, you will realize what the enclosed means. It is part of the report of the physicians who examined The Leader three days after his confinement in a military prison. He had recovered much of his self-control. He spoke with precision. He appeared even calm, though he was confused in some matters. The doctors addressed him as "My Leader" because he refused to reply otherwise.

(Enclosure)

Dr. Kundmann: But, My Leader, we do not understand what has happened! You were terribly disturbed. You were even ... even confused in your behavior! Can you tell us what took place?

The Leader: I suffered a great danger and a temporary damage. That villain

Schweeringen—I shot him. It was a mistake. I should have had him worked over—at length!

Dr. Messner: My Leader, will you be so good as to tell us the nature of the danger and the damage?

The Leader: Schweeringen probably told someone what he would propose to me. It was his conviction that because of my special gifts I could cause anyone, not only to obey me, but to pour out to me, directly, his inmost thoughts and memories. Of course this is true. The danger was that of the contact of my mind with an inferior one. But I allowed Schweeringen to persuade me that I should risk even this for the service of my people. Therefore I contacted the mind of Prime Minister Winston, so I could know every scheme and every plan he might have or know to exist to injure my people. I intended, however, to cause him to become loyal to me—though I would later have had him shot. Schweeringen had betrayed me, though. When I made contact with Winston's mind, it was not only inferior, but diseased! There was a contagion which temporarily affected the delicate balance of my intuition. For a short time I could not know, as ordinarily, what was best for my people.

(End of Enclosure)

You will see, my dear Karl, what took place. To you and to me this explains everything. In the background of my research and your information it is clear. Fortunately, The Leader's mind was unstable. The strain and shock of so unparalleled experience as complete knowledge of another brain's contents destroyed his rationality. He became insane. Insane, he no longer had the psi gifts by which he had seized and degraded our nation. He ceased to be The Leader.

But you will see that this must be hidden! Another monster like The Leader, or Napoleon—perhaps even lesser monsters—could attempt the same feat. But they might be less unstable! They might be able to invade the mind of any human being, anywhere, and drain it of any secret or impress upon it any desire or command, however revolting. You see, Karl, why this must never become known! It must be hidden forever.



Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen,

Brunn University.

My dear friend:

I am relieved! I feared for your judgment. I thought that perhaps overwork and frustration had set up an anxiety-block to make you cease your work. But you are quite right. Your analysis is brilliant. And now that you have pointed it out, unquestionably a man with The Leader's psi powers could force another man's brain to transmit all its contents to him.

But consider the consequences! Consider the conditions of such an event. One's brain is designed to work within one's own skull, dealing with sensory messages and the like. Very occasionally it acts outside, shifting crumbs of cheese and confusing computers—and securing candy. But even when one's will controls outside actions, it does not fuse with the outside brain or thing. It molds or moves the recipient mind, but there is never a sharing of memory. You have explained why.

Consider what must happen if a brain of limited power and essentially emotional operation is linked to another and more powerful one. Assume for a moment that my she-dog had linked her brain to yours, even momentarily. Do you realize that she would not have gotten your memories, much less your power to reason? She would not even have acquired your knowledge of the meaning of words! When a bright light shines in your eyes, you see nothing else. When thunder rolls in your ears, you do not hear the ticking of a clock. When you suffer pain, you do not notice a feather's tickle. If my she-dog had linked her mind to yours, she would have experienced something which is knowledge more firmly fixed and more continuously known than anything else in your conscious life. This overwhelmingly strong conviction would have been so powerful and so positive that it would be imprinted—branded—burned into every cell of her brain. She could never get it out.

But in receiving this overwhelming experience she would not get your memories or power to reason or even your personality. She would have experienced only your identity. She would have received only the conviction that she was yourself! She would have been like those poor lunatics who believe that they are Napoleon, though they have nothing of Napoleon in them but the conviction of identity. They do not know when he was born or have more than the vaguest notion of what he did, but they try to act as who he was—according to their own ideas of how Napoleon would act in their situation. This is how my she-dog

would have behaved.

I am relieved. You have explained everything. Your letter gave me the suspicion. I secured a transcript of the Herr Doctor's report for myself. My suspicion became a certainty. You will find the clue in the report. Consider: The Leader had had the experience I imagined for my she-dog. He had linked his mind with a stronger one and a greater personality—if it must be said, a greater man. For a moment The Leader knew what that man knew most certainly, with most profound conviction, with most positive knowledge. It was burned into his brain. He could never get it out. He did not secure that other man's memories or knowledge or ability. He was blinded, deafened, dazed by the overwhelming conviction that, the other man had of his own identity. It would not be possible for him to get anything else from a stronger mind and a greater person. Nor could anyone else succeed where he failed, my friend! There is no danger of any man seizing the world by seizing the minds of all his fellows! One who tries will meet the fate of The Leader.

You realize what that fate was, of course. He suddenly ceased to be the monster who could cast a spell of blind adoration for himself. He ceased to be The Leader! So the doctors gave him truth-serum so he would not try to conceal anything from them. The result is in the transcript on the third page beyond the place you quoted to me. There the doctors asked The Leader who he was. Read his answer, my friend! It proves everything! He said:

"I am Prime Minister Winston."

THE END

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William Fitzgerald Jenkins (AKA Murray Leinster)

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