

## A NAZI AIRMAN FINDS GOD

This is the story of a letter that has stirred Nazi Germany as the repercussions of a great volcanic eruption disturb the earth many thousands of miles away, fleeting by gently, but unmistakably. The letter was written by a killer, a ruthless murderer who thought that Adolph Hitler was "God" and that the first commandment was "Thou shalt destroy."

It is the story of a killer who realized, not before it was too late, that he was born for something better; the story of a tough Nazi who, with the shadow of death already upon him, sat down and wrote of Faith and Truth and Beauty.

His letter went back to Germany. It passed from hand to hand. Thousands of copies were printed on secret, underground presses. It grew like a snowball, rolling from village to village, from city to city, through Germany and back to the soldiers in the front line. And wherever the letter was read the thoughts of the people turned to God. The man who wrote it is dead. He can no longer preach the truth that came to him in the cramped cockpit of his Messerschmitt. But the message he left lives on.

Even as you read this, Germans are reading that letter; fearfully, behind locked doors and drawn blinds—Werner Moelders' last letter, the letter on which the Gestapo have put a price of £10,000.

Werner Moelders, Colonel in the Luftwaffe, ace of all Goering's air aces, holder of the highest decoration Germany bestows on her fighters—the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Diamonds—was a typical Nazi.

In the air he was a wizard. He is said to have shot down 115 aircraft in his long career as fighter pilot, which began in Spain in 1936, and took him to France, over Britain, to the Balkans, and finally, to Russia. Through the summer months they swept forward irresistibly as ever, pursuing the retreating Russkys over their blackened, desolated countryside.

The tally of Moelders' victims lengthened. Daily his arrogance increased. A sense of power gripped him when he sat at the control of his Messerschmitt and felt his finger rest upon the gun button.

In the summer skies he was still unconquerable . . .

But when the winter came, the dreadful numbing Russian winter that locked the land in ice and froze the skies, Moelders began to dread his daily patrols.

Up there the cold was something beyond imagination. It deadened his sense, his fingers almost froze to the controls; and his plane, once so swift and responsive, no longer obeyed his command.

Ice formed on the wings, bearing him down. The controls froze into frightening rigidity.

Then came the day when Soviet Stormoviks got on his tail. Werner Moelders, closer to fear than ever before, turned and ran for it. With his throttle wide open he screamed over the empty, snow-covered wastes with the Russian fighters in hot pursuit.

He climbed until the intense cold forced him down. He dived, vainly trying to shake them off. But still the rattle of cannon and machine gun fire followed him.

And for the first time in his life, Werner Moelders knew what it meant to be afraid.

If he had died then his secret would have died with him. His comrades would have presumed he met his end fearlessly, glorifying in his sacrifice for his beloved Fuehrer.

But, by a miracle, Moelders escaped. By one of those million-to-one chances he cheated death and struggled back to his base.

When he climbed from his riddled plane he was hardly recognizable. His glassy eyes had lost their arrogant stare. His frozen hands trembled. His body still shook with emotion.

Werner Moelders had looked in Death's face, and he had not seen glory or greatness in the Nazi tradition mirrored there. In those terrible moments when his life hung on a gossamer thread Moelders, almost unknown to himself, had whispered a few words:

"God, God Almighty in Heaven—help me out of this. YOU alone can save me!"

His words echoed in the cockpit of the plane. They rushed back at his ears over the mighty din of the engine. "Only God can help . . ."

Back in his own quarters, Moelders shut himself up. He wanted to be alone.

Fear had taught him faith—not faith in Hitler and the Nazi creed, but a greater, stronger faith.

In his billet Moelders sat down to think and to write. His thoughts wandered back to his childhood home in the German town of Stettin. The kind face of the local parson, who visited his parents, came back to his mind, from which he had banned all thoughts of God and religion for many years. The story of the Cross, and of the redeeming love of God in Christ, who died for sinners such as he now realized himself to be, came flooding back to his awakened heart and conscience.

Was it true that faith in Hitler and Nazism could sustain him? Could he have survived the dreadful danger out there in the Russian sky if he had not found faith in God?

To Moelders, the tough Nazi, came realization that through his new-found faith in the everlasting God had he been saved. He wrote down his thoughts in a letter to the Stettin parson. He felt happy, relieved from an inexplicable strain, now that the nightmare of Nazism had disappeared from his mind. He had come to learn that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear," and that peace comes through a living faith in the Prince of Peace.

It was not easy to talk to his friends about God. Moelders knew what to expect from them—the cynical laughter of youths who believed in the Luftwaffe, who regarded themselves as the supreme creatures in this world of war.

Gently, carefully, Moelders turned the conversation in the mess to the dangerous subject. He was prepared to meet the sneers, to face ridicule and contempt.

Yet he had hardly admitted what moved his heart, when a strange silence fell over the crowded room. One after another of the men turned their faces, hid their emotion. They looked at each other from under their lids, frantically trying to discover what was on the other fellow's mind, yet almost afraid of it.

Moelders knew them. He saw that every one of them had experienced his own fear in the air, and that every one of them had been taught faith by his grimmest experience.

One after another, many of them admitted to him that they had been praying silently, secretly, that only their faith in God had given them strength, and how that—often when

they were alone and in mortal danger—they had cursed Hitler and his Nazis who had robbed them of their Faith.

They told him the stories of other men, of German soldiers in frontline pockets, surrounded by the Russian armies, besieged for weeks without food or ammunition, to whom they had ferried supplies by plane and giant gliders, and whom they had found kneeling and praying, praying to God to save them.

The soldiers could not find encouragement and consolation from their Nazi officers whom fear of frost and starvation held in deadly grip. Instead, they crowded around the few who, in the face of death, braved the Gestapo in their midst and talked of faith in God.

Moelders lived just long enough to dispatch his written confession to his local parson, the boyhood friend of his family. He never took a Nazi fighter into the air again. Never again did he press the button of his machine gun to shoot down an enemy of Hitler. But he talked of his faith and he talked of God.

That did not suit his Nazi masters. Faith in anything but Hitler and Nazism must not be allowed to interfere with the German war.

Moelders had not been dead long before thousands of copies of his letter began to circulate in Germany. They reached the homes of German men and women who had known Moelders as the idol of the Luftwaffe. Now they learned to know him as a faithful Christian. The most revolutionary experience in the world—knowing personally the Saviour, who died because He loved us, had become his.

Soon the Moelders' letters reached the front line. Young Nazi soldiers who had tried to model themselves on the example of Moelders read them and pondered. They are reading them still, although Nazi officers have been ordered to threaten them with heavy punishment. But many of these Nazi soldiers have experienced fear in this war and have lost faith in Hitler.

Hitler knows now that it was not enough to kill Moelders because he believed in God. He has called in the Gestapo to fight Moelders' testimony. The wave of faith which is sweeping the Nazi front line must be halted. Those thousands of German civilians who crowd into churches after every R. A. F. raid on a German town must be stopped.

The Gestapo has gone into action against the faithful friends of Moelders who copy and distribute his letters. With bribes and threats they are trying to discover the heroic men and women who have taken the clue from Moelders and preach the Word of God in Nazi Germany.

A reward of £10,000 is offered to anyone who is prepared to denounce a friend who believes what Moelders believed and passes on his letter.

So fear is teaching them faith, faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, faith in the imperishable things of the Spirit, and above all, faith in Him, who, on Calvary's cross, "gave His life, a ransom for many."—Gospel Banner.

John Wesley said: "When Christian Perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God, and little life in the members. Speak, and spare not. Let not regard for any man induce you to betray the truth of God. Till you press believers to expect full salvation now, you must not look for any revival."