

**Balancing the Books**

**Darkness and Light**

By Father John S. Kennedy

"Death with Hitler" might well be the subtitle of "Inside the Third Reich" (Macmillan, \$12.50), the memoirs of Albert Speer, Hitler's chief architect and, beginning in February, 1942, his minister of armaments and munitions. Speer was a personal favorite of Hitler's insofar as there was any such, and for a number of years, was much in the Fuehrer's company. Thus, he is in a position to give us a closeup of the man.

Born in 1905, Speer had qualified as an architect and says he was strictly non-political, when the Nazis were moving toward power in the early 1930s. Without any study of Nazi doctrine, Speer joined the party. Used by it in his professional capacity, he came to Hitler's notice and in short order was in solidly with the latter. Ever more important commissions fell to him, and these involved frequent conferences with the leader, now become chancellor of Germany.

Hitler had grandiose building plans, hence Speer became an increasingly prestigious figure. This fact was not lost on people like Goering, who also employed him. Hence Speer saw much of the Nazi top echelons.

But, obtuse or impervious, he either hardly noticed or was quite unconcerned about the evils the Nazis were perpetrating. The anti-Semitic violence, for example, did not bother him at all. And when, in 1937, Hitler spoke to him of the great empire which he intended to create, it apparently did not occur to Speer that this would involve gigantic wars of conquest, with all the injustice, killing, and destruction which these would entail.

What he did see was Hitler's idiosyncracies. The Fuehrer was idle, even slothful, a good deal of the time. Days spent with him were likely to be consumed by gossip, lengthy meals, the viewing of insipid movies. He found Hitler to be amazingly ignorant of the world, an expert in nothing, but possessed of an extraordinary memory for detail and a faculty for getting right to the core of any matter to which he gave his attention.

He was suspicious, superstitious, unable to make human contacts, mean in his treatment of his mistress, Eva Braun, and more solicitous about his dog.

He was crankily concerned about his health, and took pains not to gain weight. He was an incompetent administrator, and cunning men could sway him. Especially when things went wrong (as in the war), he was the surer that he was absolutely right. And when defeat impended, he condemned the Germans as unworthy of him and fit only for extinction.

Speer discovered that subordinates often failed to carry out Hitler's orders, and sometimes did in his name things of which he was unaware. Corruption was rife in the regime, and the worst of its practitioners was Goering, an utterly bizarre character as Speer limns him. The ablest of the lieutenants appears to have been Goebbels, whose political instinct was keen.

Speer suggests that the German people did not want the war, and that when, in 1939, it loomed as a certainty, there was a noticeable drop in morale and a marked cooling of popular enthusiasm for Hitler.

As the war was coming to a close, Speer realized, rather belatedly, that for years he had been living thoughtlessly among murderers. By now, he had fallen from the favor he once enjoyed, and he reached the decision that Hitler must be eliminated. He was not averse to taking power himself.

Still, the spell which Hitler had cast upon him persisted, and as the battle of Berlin raged he made an extremely risky trip to Hitler's bunker in that city in order to see the Fuehrer for the last time.

He has the insensitivity, or the effrontery, to speak of the Allies' "notorious interrogation camp" to which he was taken after his capture. It was not exactly on the level of the concentration camps in which millions perished under the regime of which he was an integral part.

The Hitler regime, as here depicted, was inhuman and insane. But it could enlist and retain the services of a gifted, privileged man like Speer. The why of that appalling fact is not explained by Speer's book, which, in effect, is a depressing commentary on the chances of reason and decency.

**President Endorses Bible Week**

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — President Nixon has urged all Americans to participate in National Bible Week, Nov. 22-29.

"In this decade," Nixon declared, "when we are more than ever called upon to turn our hands and hearts to assisting those in our country for whom our general prosperity is still a distant dream, it is well that we refresh our spirits and fortify our resolves by reading the Holy Scripture."

The chief executive is honorary chairman for the 30th annual observance. The observance also launches the American Bible Society's annual Worldwide Bible Reading program, from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

**NEW NCORT POST**

New York — (NC)—The National Catholic Office for Radio and Television (NCORT) has named James R. Bastis to the newly-created post of NCORT, assistant director.

Charles Reilly, director of the office, said Bastis' duties will include supervision of NCORT's cable television bureau, coordination of the office's network radio and television programming responsibilities, and development of informational services for diocesan radio and television offices.

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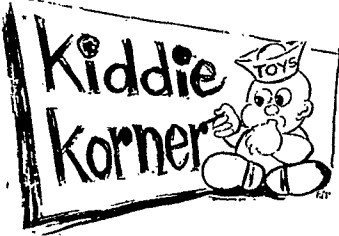
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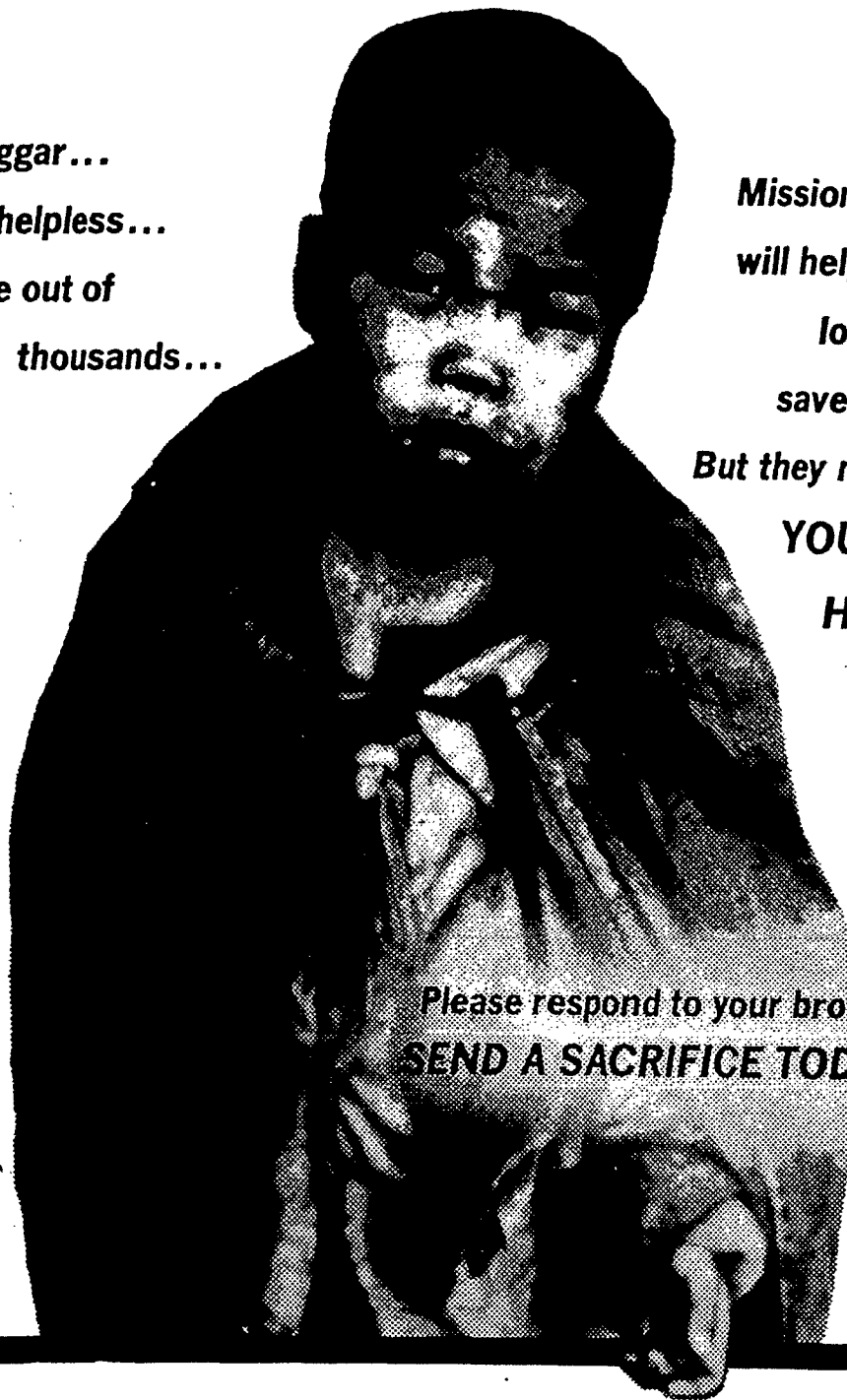
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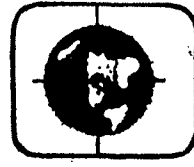
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