NAZI BILLIONAIRES

THE DARK HISTORY OF GERMANY'S WEALTHIEST DYNASTIES

DAVID DE JONG



Boston New York

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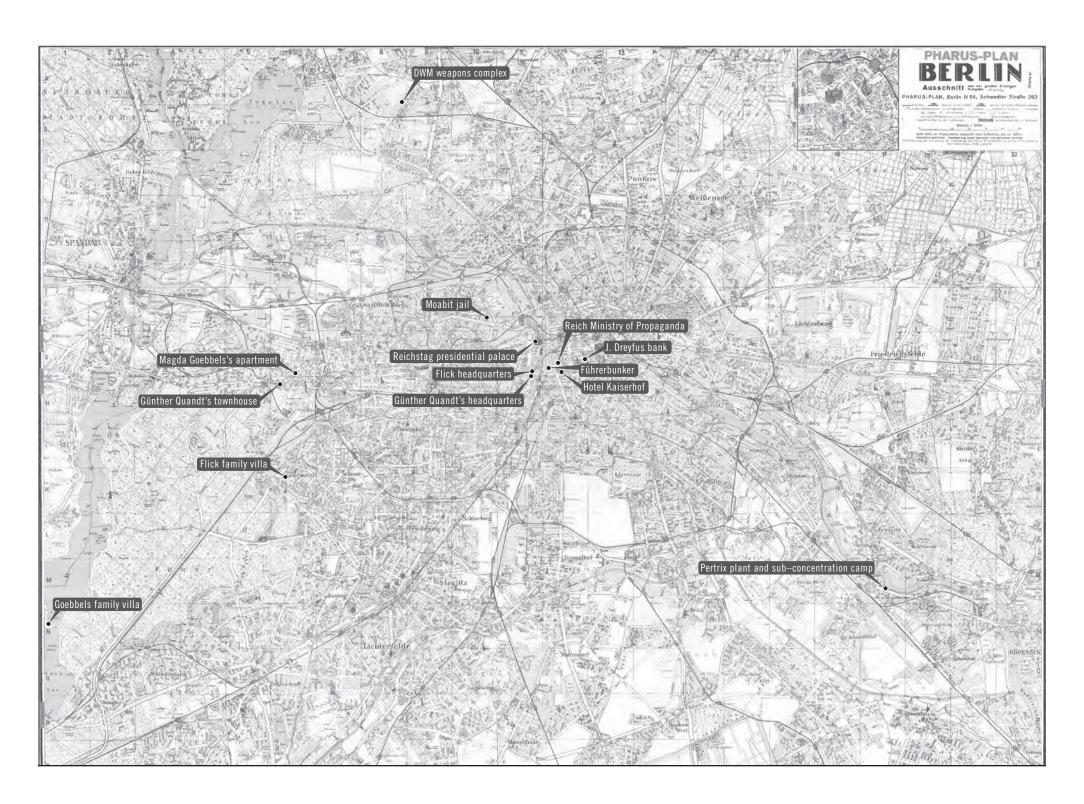
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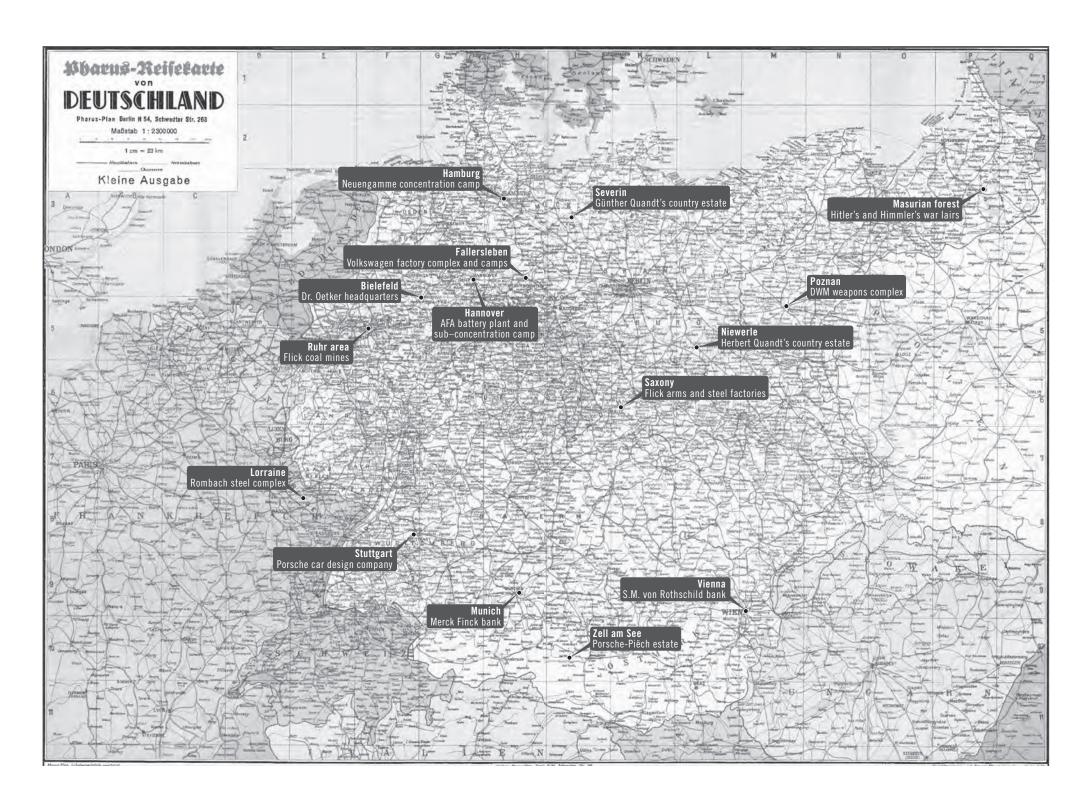
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE QUANDTS

Günther Quandt: Patriarch. Industrialist. Horst Pavel: Günther's right-hand man.

Toni Quandt: Günther's fi st wife. Herbert's mother.

Magda Goebbels: Günther's second wife. Harald's mother.

Ello Quandt: Günther's sister-in-law. Magda's best friend. Harald's god-

mother.

Harald Quandt: Only child from Magda and Günther's marriage.

Gabriele Quandt: Harald's daughter.

Herbert Quandt: Günther's eldest son. BMW's savior.

Susanne Klatten: Herbert's youngest daughter. BMW heiress.

Stefan Quandt: Herbert's youngest son. BMW heir.

THE FLICKS

Friedrich Flick: Patriarch. Industrialist.

Otto Steinbrinck: Friedrich's right-hand man.

Otto-Ernst Flick: Friedrich's eldest son.

Muck, Mick, and Dagmar Flick: Otto-Ernst's children.

Friedrich Karl Flick: Friedrich's youngest son.

Eberhard von Brauchitsch: Friedrich Karl's best friend.

Ingrid Flick: Friedrich Karl's widow.

THE VON FINCKS

August von Finck Sr.: Patriarch. Private banker.

Kurt Schmitt: Allianz CEO. Reich minister of economic aff irs.

August "Gustl" von Finck Jr.: Investor.

Ernst Knut Stahl: Gustl's right-hand man.

THE PORSCHE-PIËCHS

Ferdinand Porsche: Patriarch. Creator of Volkswagen and Porsche.

Anton Piëch: Ferdinand's son-in-law. Married to Louise.

Ferry Porsche: Ferdinand's son. SS offic .

Louise Piëch: Ferdinand's daughter. Married to Anton.

THE OFTKERS

Richard Kaselowsky: Patriarch. CEO of Dr. Oetker.

Rudolf-August Oetker: Kaselowsky's stepson. Waffen-SS offic .

Rudolf von Ribbentrop: Rudolf-August's best friend. Waffen-SS

offic .

THE TOP NAZIS

Adolf Hitler: The führer.

Joseph Goebbels: Reich minister of propaganda. Magda's spouse. Harald's stepfather.

Hermann Göring: *Reichsmarschall*. Main decision maker in Nazi economic policy.

Heinrich Himmler: Reichsführer SS. Principal organizer of the Holocaust.

Hjalmar Schacht: Reichsbank president and Reich minister of economic aff irs.

Walther Funk: Reich minister of economic aff irs and Reichsbank president.

Otto Wagener: Hitler's economic adviser.

Wilhelm Keppler: Hitler's economic adviser. Kranefuss's uncle.

Fritz Kranefuss: Organizer of Himmler's Circle of Friends. Keppler's

nephew.

THE PERSECUTED

Adolf Rosenberger: Cofounder of Porsche. Johanna and Fritz Heine: Business owners.

Hahn family: Business owners.

Heirs of Julius and Ignaz Petschek: Business owners.

Willy Dreyfus: Private banker.

Louis von Rothschild: Private banker.

THE AMERICANS

Telford Taylor: Chief prosecutor of the Nuremberg Military Tribunals.

John J. McCloy: US high commissioner for occupied Germany.

THE REIMANNS

Albert Reimann: Patriarch. CEO of Joh. A. Benckiser (JAB).

Peter Harf: Chairman of JAB. Family confi ant.

Wolfgang Reimann: Albert's eldest son.



Günther Quandt.



Magda Friedländer.



Friedrich Flick.



A young Harald Quandt, with his mother, Magda, and Joseph Goebbels, 1931.



Magda and Joseph Goebbels arm in arm at their wedding, with Harald Quandt, 1931. The best man, Hitler, is in the background.



Flick's right-hand man, Otto Steinbrinck, in his SS uniform, 1934.



Porsche's Jewish cofounder, Adolf Rosenberger.



Hitler striking the museum's foundation stone with August von Finck, in suit, standing directly behind him. Moments later, the silver hammer broke.



Kaselowsky with his Nazi Party badge.



Father and son Porsche in the 1930s.



Rudolf-August Oetker standing between his grandmother (right) and her chauffeur (left), 1933.



August von Finck and Hitler giving the Nazi salute at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst.



Laying the foundation stone at the Volkswagen factory, May 26, 1938.



Harald Quandt, in uniform, with Magda and Joseph Goebbels and his six half siblings, 1942.



Friedrich Flick and his sons, Otto-Ernst (in the back), Rudolf (in the front, at right), and Friedrich Karl (left), at their family villa in Berlin Grunewald, early 1930s.



Ferry Porsche (in suit) standing by as Hitler inspects the swimming car, with Himmler behind him, 1941.



Rudolf-August Oetker (center rear) in his Wehrmacht uniform, behind his mother, Ida, and Westphalia's Gauleiter Alfred Meyer, 1941.



Joseph Goebbels giving his "Total War" speech at Berlin's Sportpalast, February 18, 1943.



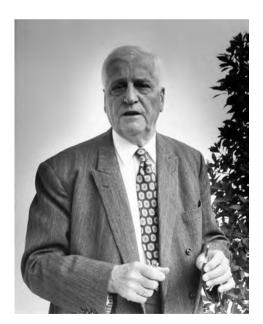
Ferdinand Porsche on top of a tank he designed, 1943.



Poster showing boxes of Dr. Oetker Pudding Powder for the Wehrmacht.



Friedrich Flick standing between court marshals at his Nuremberg trial, 1947.



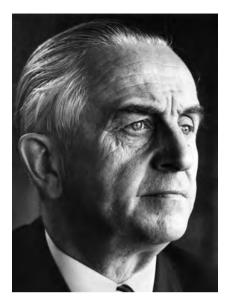
August von Finck in the 1970s.



The Flick family in 1960. Otto-Ernst at the far left, Marie and Friedrich in the center, and Friedrich Karl at the far right.



Eberhard von Brauchitsch and Friedrich Karl Flick, 1982.



Herbert Quandt on his seventieth birthday, 1980.



Ingrid Flick.



August von Finck Jr. in the 2000s.

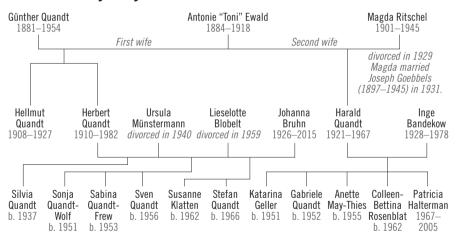


Stefan Quandt at the Jewish Museum Berlin, 2018.

APPENDIX: FAMILY TREES

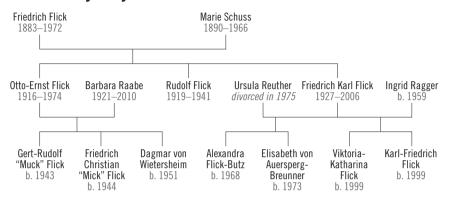
These are not complete family trees, as they omit certain spouses and members of older and younger generations. They include only those family members who are relevant to this book.

The Quandt Dynasty



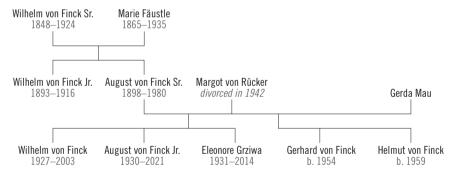
Note: All known years are given.

The Flick Dynasty



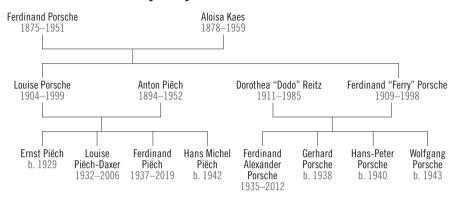
Note: All known years are given.

The von Finck Dynasty

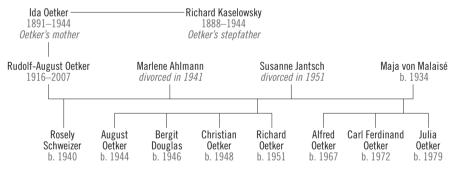


Note: All known years are given.

The Porsche-Piëch Dynasty



The Oetker Dynasty



Note: All known years are given.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Members of almost all the German business dynasties detailed in this book declined to comment or be interviewed; others didn't respond to requests for interviews or questions sent to their spokesperson or family offic representatives. But there was one notable exception.

Jörg Appelhans, the longtime spokesman for the two Quandt siblings who control BMW, declined my request for an interview with Stefan Quandt on the grounds that the academic study the family commissioned to examine their patriarchs' activities during the Third Reich was "ground-breaking and comprehensive. Hence, we didn't get further or new insights above the study's fi dings which are common knowledge since it was published in 2011." When I asked him where, and for whom, he considered the fi dings to be "common knowledge," Appelhans responded: "Common knowledge in the sense that they have been published and thus are accessible to everyone."

Accessible to everyone who can read German, that is. The Quandt study, and many similar ones commissioned by other dynasties, have never been translated into other languages, even though most of the victims of their patriarchs' activities during the Nazi era weren't German, and the dynasties' business interests, then and now, are global. Nonetheless, Appelhans wrote, "the Quandt Family is convinced that the goals of openness and transparency were achieved ... We don't believe that renaming streets, places or institutions is a responsible way to deal with historic figu es because such 'damnatio memoriae' ... prevents a conscious exposure to their role in history and instead fosters its neglect." But so does commemorating historical figu es with no mention whatsoever of their Nazi history.

In response to questions I sent to the BMW Group, including why the Munich carmaker is keeping its savior's name on its charitable foundation, which promotes "responsible leadership," even after his activities in the Third Reich were revealed, a representative of the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt wrote, in a statement to me, that "[the foundation] draws on the entrepreneurial deeds of BMW and Herbert Quandt, which is why it made a conscious decision: The long-term and forward-looking actions with which Herbert Quandt acted from 1959 to his death in 1982 . . . should be represented in the name of the foundation."

I requested interviews with Gabriele Quandt and Colleen-Bettina Rosenblat, daughters of Harald Quandt, but they "decided against doing an interview," their family offic spokesman, Ulrich von Rotenhan, wrote to me.

The documents detailing Günther Quandt's denazifi ation trial and appeals, including many documents on the Aryanizations that Günther, Herbert, and their executives conducted in Nazi-occupied nations during World War II, can be found on microfi he copies of folders 1362 and 1363 at the Bavarian State Archives in Munich. The documents from the Quandt family archive that Joachim Scholtyseck cited in the commissioned study, and that the Quandts considered relevant enough to be made available to researchers, are accessible at the Hessian Business Archives in Darmstadt.

Antiquarian booksellers in Germany proved to be a gold mine of primary sources. They sold me Günther's bundled letters from 1938, his postwar memoir, Quandt company books from the 1930s, and much more. It felt particularly satisfying to buy Herbert's 1980 private biography that he commissioned, given the length that Herbert's handlers went to keep the book out of the hands of journalists, a scenario that is vividly described in archival correspondence. Joseph Goebbels's diaries, spanning 1923 through 1945 and edited by Elke Fröhlich, are available online at De Gruyter publishing company for an annual licensing fee.

Rüdiger Jungbluth's 2002 and 2015 biographies about the Quandt dynasty were equally indispensable sources, as was Joachim Scholtyseck's 2011 study.

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Family offic representatives for Ingrid Flick and her twins in Vienna declined to comment on a list of questions I sent about Ingrid's direct philanthropic giving and the philanthropy she conducts in the name of her fatherin-law, the convicted Nazi war criminal Friedrich Flick. After reaching out to Frankfurt's Goethe University with questions about how it reconciles the Flick foundation's annual fi ancial contributions to the academic institution with its namesake's problematic place in history, a university spokesman sent me this statement: "Goethe University has been working with the Friedrich Flick Foundation for six years and has come to know it as a fair, reliable and generous partner. Thanks to the foundation's exemplary commitment, it has been possible to fi ance projects in research and teaching as well as scholarships for which no other funds would otherwise have been available. The cooperation represents an important building block in the context of the diverse commitment of sponsors to the university." Friedrich Karl Flick's eldest daughters, Alexandra Flick-Butz and Elisabeth von Auersperg-Breunner, did not respond to an interview request or to questions sent to their respective family office epresentatives in Munich.

Out of all the German business dynasties detailed in this book, the only family member to respond to my questions was Gert-Rudolf Flick, also known as "Muck." He did so with candor. Friedrich Flick's eldest grandson, and Otto-Ernst's eldest son, is almost eighty years old and has been living in London for decades, where he writes and teaches about Old Master paintings. Muck was born in France in 1943, during his father's disastrous reign at the expropriated Rombach steelworks in Nazi-occupied Lorraine. He was close to his grandfather Friedrich up until the patriarch's death, in 1972, when Muck was almost thirty years old. Friedrich Flick had hoped that Muck and his younger brother, Mick, both of them mentored by the patriarch, would one day take the reins at the family conglomerate. But it didn't turn out as planned.

I received permission from Muck to cite part of our email correspondence: "During his lifetime we did not discuss the war; my brother and I obviously admired and venerated my grandfather who was a genius in more ways than one," Muck wrote. "Now more ugly things have come out. One could take a harsher view, but I remember him as a very gifted human

being, and I cannot change my feelings retroactively. I am deeply grateful to have known him and not only for the wealth he bestowed on us." Muck's siblings, Mick Flick and Dagmar von Wietersheim, did not respond to interview requests sent to Mick's foundations in Potsdam and Zurich and Dagmar's family office in unich.

The 1947 Nuremberg trial proceedings against Friedrich Flick and his associates, including many documents, are available online. As secondary sources, I relied heavily on Kim Christian Priemel's PhD study from 2007, about the Flick conglomerate, and the studies that Dagmar and Mick, respectively, commissioned from two separate groups of German historians: the 2009 study about the Flick conglomerate in the twentieth century, conducted by Norbert Frei, Ralf Ahrens, Jörg Osterloh, and Tim Schanetzky; and the 2008 study about the Flick conglomerate during the Third Reich, conducted by Johannes Bähr, Alex Drecoll, Bernhard Gotto, Harald Wixforth, and again, Kim Christian Priemel. Günther Ogger's 1971 biography of Friedrich Flick has also withstood the test of time remarkably well. The Berlin-Brandenburg Business Archive has an entire Flick research archive, which contains original and copied documents used in the academic study that Dagmar commissioned. In a bizarre coincidence, the Flick archive is housed in what used to be a part of Günther Quandt's sprawling DWM arms complex in Berlin's Wittenau neighborhood. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I wasn't able to visit the archive.

In June 2021, Annemarie Thoene, the longtime secretary at August "Gustl" von Finck Jr.'s private offic in Munich, informed me over the phone that their "communication policy" remained unchanged—von Finck Jr. still didn't give interviews, and there was no designated email address by which to request an interview. Previously, I have been referred to a fax number when seeking a comment from Gustl. But for this book, I was told to write a letter. Gustl did not respond to the interview request and other questions I sent by courier letter to his private offic over summer and early fall 2021. Gustl died in London in late November 2021. His half brothers, Helmut and Gerhard, also did not respond to interview requests. Nor did the PR guru of Goal AG, Alexander Segert. David Bendels also did not respond to

an interview request to discuss the alleged connections between the AfD and the mysterious Association for the Preservation of the Rule of Law and Citizen Freedoms. The AfD's spokesman, Peter Rohling, declined to make a member of the party's leadership available for an interview on the subject.

August von Finck Sr.'s original denazifi ation trial documents are located in folder 409 at the Bavarian State Archives in Munich. Many of the documents detailing the Aryanization transactions of the Dreyfus and Rothschild banks by Merck Finck can be found at the National Archives and Record Administration in College Park, Maryland, or through its online partner, Fold3, which has digitized millions of records. Ingo Köhler's 2005 PhD study about the Aryanization of Jewish-owned private banks in Germany was a vital source, as was a 2001 study about Allianz during the Third Reich by Gerald Feldman. For the chapter about the connections between the AfD, the association, Goal, and August von Finck Jr.'s orbit, I relied on the groundbreaking reporting of the journalists Melanie Amann, Sven Becker, Ann-Katrin Müller, and Sven Röbel at Der Spiegel; Anna Jikhareva, Jan Jirat, and Kaspar Surber at Wochenzeitung; Friederike Haupt at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Christian Fuchs and Paul Middelhoff at Die Zeit; and Roman Deininger, Andreas Glas, and Klaus Ott at Süddeutsche Zeitung.

The Porsche company in Stuttgart declined to make Wolfgang Porsche, a son of Ferry Porsche and the speaker for the Porsche side of the Porsche-Piëch clan, available for an interview. In written responses to my questions, Sebastian Rudolph, the Porsche company's head of communications, characterized Ferry's anti-Semitic and discriminatory statements in his 1976 autobiography, *We at Porsche*, as testifying to "a lack of empathy on the part of Ferry Porsche towards the fate of Adolf Rosenberger and other Jewish families who had to leave Germany . . . Ferry Porsche believed that Adolf Rosenberger had at least been treated and compensated correctly by the company. This is the only way to interpret his annoyance at the renewed disputes after the Second World War."

A 1996 study about the Volkswagen factory complex during the Third Reich by Hans Mommsen and Manfred Grieger was an invaluable resource, as was Bernhard Rieger's 2013 study about the history of the Volkswagen Beetle. I also relied on various biographies about the Porsche-Piëch clan by the German and Austrian journalists Stefan Aust, Thomas Ammann, Georg Meck, Wolfgang Fürweger, and the documentaries about Porsche's Jewish cofounder Adolf Rosenberger by Eberhard Reuß.

The original German version of the 2017 study by Wolfram Pyta and his two colleagues about the Porsche fi m's origins can be considered a credible source, despite its signifi ant shortcomings. It's thoroughly researched, which makes Pyta's failure to inspect the private papers of Adolf Rosenberger even more confusing and troubling. While Pyta also failed to properly characterize the 1935 buyout of Adolf Rosenberger from the Porsche fi m by Ferdinand Porsche and Anton Piëch as an Aryanization, the historian admitted to me in a Zoom interview that the transaction constituted an "Aryanization profit."

In the last days of fact-checking the book, the Porsche fi m's spokesman suddenly sent me an access code to a digital-only English translation of Pyta's study. After four years of research, I was very surprised to learn that this version even existed. I had never come across it because there's almost no mention of it online. As it turns out, access to the English translation of Pyta's study is available only after one requests it from the Porsche fi m or when the company chooses to provide it. That is one reason why the English translation of Pyta's study can't be considered a credible source. The second and more important reason is that words were added to at least one crucial paragraph in the English version, which give the impression that Ferry Porsche lied about his application to the SS only during the immediate postwar era. In truth, he lied about his voluntary membership in the SS for the rest of his life. Himmler, Ferry maintained, forced him to accept an honorary rank. The fabrication appears in both of Ferry's autobiographies and in a 1952 affidavit from Ferry to the United States consulate in Stuttgart, which the Porsche company provided to me.

Jörg Schillinger, the longtime spokesperson for the Dr. Oetker conglomerate in Bielefeld, declined to make any member of the Oetker family available to me for an interview. Christoph Walther, a spokesperson for the

three youngest children of Rudolf-August Oetker, wrote to me, "They have no intention to go on record on this topic beyond what has already been published."

The 2013 study of the Dr. Oetker fi m and the Oetker/Kaselowsky family during the Third Reich, by Jürgen Finger, Sven Keller, and Andreas Wirsching, was an indispensable source, as was Rüdiger Jungbluth's 2004 history of the Oetker dynasty and conglomerate. The Dr. Oetker archive in Bielefeld is generally open to researchers but has been closed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, I wasn't able to visit it.

The longtime spokeswoman for the Reimann family declined to make a member of the Vienna-based clan available for an interview. She did set up an interview for me in Berlin with Peter Harf and two other executives from the Alfred Landecker Foundation. Unsurprisingly, Harf failed to show up. He did agree to answer most of my questions in writing, but my quest to one day interview the elusive billionaire in person continues. The Reimann-commissioned study about the family and its fi m during the Third Reich is expected to be published in 2023. It will be paired with the publication of a biography of Alfred Landecker. The Bahlsen study is expected to be completed in the summer of 2023, according to a company spokesman, though he does not know yet when it will be published. In an interview with the Süddeutsche Zeitung in September 2021, Verena Bahlsen seemed to have come around. She told the newspaper: "We have failed for decades to create transparency about our Nazi history. I believe this will continue if we don't take advantage of this opportunity now. And I have to push my family to talk about it."

This book is a work of narrative nonfi tion. It's comprehensively sourced with endnotes and has been independently fact-checked. In instances where the various sources cited provide differing accounts of the same event, I have chosen the most plausible version. Any errors that remain are my own.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

ARD: Germany's main public broadcaster

HWA: Hessian Business Archives

NARA: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington

NDR: North German Broadcasting NMT: Nuremberg Military Tribunals

NND: Designation for declassifi d documents

OMGUS: United States Office f Military Government for Germany

OSS: Office f Strategic Services STAM: State Archives Munich

SWR: Germany's Southwest Broadcasting

TG: The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels (Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels)

USACA: United States Allied Commission for Austria

USHMM: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington

Prologue: The Meeting

page

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- settle the struggle: NMT, Vol. VII, 557-60.
- "Private enterprise": NMT, Vol. VII, 558.
- "We must first gain": NMT, Vol. VII,560.
- 3 "the last election": NMT, Vol. VII, 561.
 - "for having given us": NMT, Vol. VII, 562.
 - "that with political pacification": NMT, Vol. VII, 561-62.
- 4 Göring's conclusion: NMT, Vol. VII, 562.
 - election campaign fund: Stegmann, "Verhältnis," 480.
 - "And now, gentlemen": Cited in Louis Lochner, Tycoons and Tyrant (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954), 146–47.
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Introduction

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Part I: "Perfectly average"

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- 16 "happy years": Herbert Quandt and Harald Quandt (eds.), Günther Quandt Erzählt sein Leben (Munich: Mensch & Arbeit, 1961), 27.

- barred from marrying her: Scholtyseck, Aufstieg, 36; Quandt and Quandt, Günther, 41-42.
- 17 "This is where I will": Quandt and Quandt, Günther, 70–72. "something irretrievable": Quandt and Quandt, Günther, 111.
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 "I had invited in": Quandt and Quandt, Günther, 114.
 On just their third date: Hans-Otto Meissner, Magda Goebbels: The First Lady of the Third Reich (New York: Dial Press, 1980, trans.), 28–30.
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 Günther had been looking: Quandt and Quandt, Günther, 152–63.
 "See, dear, how wrong": Cited in Meissner, First Lady, 47.
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Part V: "Nine Zeros"

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