

ANTHONY ROBBINS

Hitler in Japan

On the 12th of April, 1945,
under a waning moon, the U. S. Magic
Diplomatic Summary reported intercepting
a message from the Japanese military
attaché in Germany asking Tokyo—one
does not mean the city of Tokyo, of course,
cities can't listen, and Tokyo was, at the time,
a smoldering, charred shambles—
Foreign Minister Togo was probably in Kyoto,
the Imperial City, which Lemay,
out of reverence for religion, in general,
had decided to spare—asking
Tokyo for permission for a “very long range”
aircraft to fly from Norway to Japanese
territory (from Barfuss, in northern Norway, to
Paramushiro: 4785 miles, over the North Pole).
On board were to be German
Assistant Air Attaché Wild and “one
other passenger.” One has not,
even yet, stopped wondering what
Hitler could have been thinking. After all,
it was he who, in at least two collateral
ways, had helped Japan put itself in
the position it was in: First, the U. S. policy
of unconditional surrender, so unpalatable

to the Japanese army (though Togo himself was coming around) was a result of the Treaty of Versailles, which failed to neuter the German gestalt and lubricated a sheath into which Hitler had inserted himself, and the U. S. would have no more of that. Secondly, for the entire war there had been a remarkable lack of communication between the German senior command and the remarkably miniscule number—seven, or, if you include the Emperor, eight—men who ruled Japan. The Japanese probably couldn't intuit German disincentive to communicate as a result of German notions of inherent racial superiority. Why wouldn't Hitler want to liaison with the emissary of god? The disconnect resulted in errors of omission, e.g., had they continued to press farther into SW Asia, farther into India, the Allies, the British in particular, would have been dreadfully pressed to respond, making resistance more difficult in Europe and Africa. Nevertheless, a hotel was cleared out in Kyoto. How does one prepare for such a guest? Of what color sheets, what blood types we have no record, but of talking points the Magic Summary gleaned these: that the Japanese seemed not particularly interested in the German method of handling enthralled populations. The Japanese had their own special needs, ways, and means. But small things: how, in the last defense of the homeland, had civilians been gathered and ordered for battle? Had individual suicide attacks on tanks, say, with bombs at the ends of sticks, been attempted? With what success? And what to do about Russia, that was foremost. The current thinking in Japan was that they should propitiate Russia,

recapitulate all conquered territories, and try
to negotiate a peace with the Allies
via Russia. They could see
Churchill and Roosevelt going out of their way
to make the slaughter of 200 million
Russians compatible with Anglo-American ideals.
What were these ideals, did he think?
And would the U. S. keep fighting?
And can the Emperor keep his mirror, his carved jewel, and his sword?
When Hitler has had time to relax
let us go to him so we may know exactly
what went wrong. But the leader
never came, though the Soviets
did, through Manchuria, and from the sky,
well, we know what arrived.

ANTHONY ROBBINS's two poetry collections are *The Very Thought of You* (U of GA Press, 1999) and *On the Tropic of Time* (Lynx House Press, 1995; Reprinted, E. Washington Press, 2006). A former Fulbright Scholar and a NEA grantee, he has worked as a civilian contractor aboard 18 U. S. Navy vessels. He lives now in Carrboro, North Carolina, and works as a freelance editor in many disciplines.