

Hitler's order

[Narrator] In those last two months, a catastrophic event was narrowly averted. At German Supreme Headquarters, Adolf Hitler, enraged by a report of German troops protecting downed airmen, issued a climactic order.

[George Cuderly] "One of the concerns that Hitler said that German soldiers under no circumstances would use their weapons against German civilians. He also said that this was absolutely unheard of, it would not happen in the future, and any German officer who had troops under his command would be shot, and any troop who did this would be shot. He then issued an order or that Kaltenbrunner would issue an order that would explain this. He also said that the order would indicate further that all Allied air crew members that were in hand would be turned over to the [*unknown word?*] for elimination; that he was tired of contending with these people. And that was put into the minutes, or part of the proceedings of the War Crimes Tribunal.

[Narrator] At the time of this order, Germany was in such a state of final collapse that it was almost operationally impossible to carry it out. Most of the German leadership, realizing that they would shortly be prisoners themselves, did not want to carry the onus for such a deed. The fact that the airmen were mostly in transit, and their exact locations not known, was another protective factor. In the last weeks, conditions at Moosburg became exceedingly dangerous as more and more sick and exhausted prisoners continued to pour in. All sanitary and nutritional services had disappeared.