

'I served the Fuhrer ... with cakes and cream'

A retired Italian mayor has broken a long silence on his highly unusual war service, reports **Richard Owen**

THE former mayor of a mountain village has revealed after more than 50 years that he was once "Hitler's Italian waiter".

Salvatore Paolini, 79, says that he was the only Italian member of staff at Hitler's mountain lair, the "Eagle's Nest", at Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps. There he served Hitler and his senior officers and discovered that the dictator rarely drank but liked to indulge his fondness for puddings and cream cakes.

After 20 years as mayor of Villa Santa Maria in the hills of Abruzzo, Signor Paolini

retired four years ago, but few were aware that as a teenager he had waited at Hitler's table — until he was tracked down by the newspaper *Il Giornale*.

Signor Paolini, who started work at an hotel in his village at 14, left to "learn languages and earn more money" and found a job on the Italian Mediterranean Riviera at a hotel popular with German officers.

"They helped me to get a job at a German spa town where the director of the Platterhof, the big hotel at Obersalzberg, often came," he said. "When he saw I was tall and handsome, young and strong and



High-flyer: a young Salvatore Paolini during the war, during which he waited on Hitler in the Bavarian Alps retreat

had learnt to speak German quite well, he offered me a job at the Eagle's Nest. I served Hitler many times, but it never seemed like an historic event.

"I only realised something important was going on when I noticed security agents arriv-

ing before meals and tasting everything that went to the table. Suddenly, the Führer would arrive. I couldn't work out where he materialised from. I didn't realise that there was a secret passageway."

He supports the contention

that Hitler was virtually teetotal and vegetarian. "He did like sausages and ham, but on whole he never ate meat, preferring potatoes and green vegetables. They were always very highly spiced because he had lost his sense of taste after

a mustard gas attack in the First World War."

What Hitler "really adored were puddings, all kinds of desserts, especially huge cakes covered in whipped cream". Hitler was "not much of a drinker", Signor Paolini said.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DA LORENZETTO / IL GIORNALE, IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM AND PA



Hitler in civilian clothes with an Eagle's Nest guest

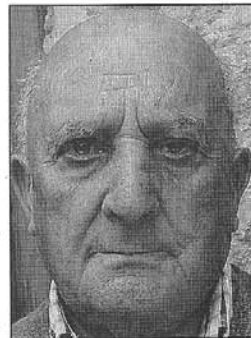


Uniform is the order of the day for lunch in the field

"The wine waiter opened the bottles, always vintage wine, but he scarcely drank anything. We always had to make sure there were plenty of water jugs on the table."

Other Nazi leaders were less abstemious. Hitler once spotted Hermann Goering, the head of the Luftwaffe, helping himself to a huge piece of roast ham served with peas. "I heard Hitler say in a low voice: 'I didn't know that pigs ate their own flesh.'"

"We all realised then that Goering had fallen from favour." Eventually Goering retired from the Nazi inner circle after a series of disastrous lapses in Luftwaffe defences. He survived the war to face trial.



Signor Paolini at 79

us as he left." Later Signor Paolini later served in Hitler's private dining room at Nuremberg. He took two souvenirs

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