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A Problem of Perception  
An Analysis of the Formation, Reception, and Implementation  
of National Socialist Ideology in Germany, 1919 to 1939

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of History

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in History

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by  
Derrick Angermeier

May 2013

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Keywords: Nazi Germany, Nazi Party, Nazi Ideology, Volksgemeinschaft, Volkspartei,  
Mittelstand, Adolf Hitler, Sonderweg, Burgfrieden, The Spirit of 1914

## ABSTRACT

### A Problem of Perception An Analysis of the Formation, Reception, and Implementation of National Socialist Ideology in Germany, 1919 to 1939

by

Derrick Angermeier

This thesis seeks to dispel the notion that Nazi ideology was merely an afterthought to numerous actions taken by the Nazis. The first chapter discusses how Nazism's earliest adherents internalized notions from World War I into an ideology that would motivate the early Nazi Movement to launch the Beer Hall Putsch. The second chapter focuses on the Nazi Party's electoral tactics and how those actions correlated with entrenched Nazi ideological notions of recognition and community. Finally, the third chapter will seek to demonstrate that the numerous repressive measures implemented by the Third Reich were part of a general plan to prepare a future generation of Nazi citizens for, the worldwide struggle for existence. This work exists as a counter to a considerable amount of literature in the historiography that, by maintaining Nazi ideology and Nazi actions were two separate entities, belittles the importance of Nazi ideology thereby fundamentally misunderstanding Nazism.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Steven M. Enriquez, my most cherished friend. Much of this work had been discussed in considerable detail with Steven before any writing had ever occurred well in advance of his passing. His constant questions, musings, jokes, and analysis helped inspire me along every step of my historical career. During my sabbatical, Steven kept my interest in History sparked despite life's efforts to distract me from this passion. In all actuality, I must attribute my focus on Nazi Germany to Steven, even if his urging was humorously unintentional. While visiting him in Virginia, he suggested that it would be amusing if I studied Nazi Germany as my name, Derrick Joseph Angermeier, was itself thoroughly German. He postulated that in researching Nazis, forced to purchase an abundance of books with buzzwords like "Nazi," "Hitler," "Reich," and so on, my German name would be on numerous government watch lists. Although the suggestion was in jest, upon my return I turned my attention to a few works on Nazi Germany and the rest, as Steven would pun, is History. Steven was a vitally important soundboard and reviewer for my historical work who always had remarkable insights that improved my abilities by leaps and bounds. Without his constant endorsement and interest in my passion for History it is very doubtful that I would have pursued the opportunities at East Tennessee State University. Steven Enriquez was one of the world's truly great people, completely unique from any other person that has or ever will exist. The phrase, "They don't make them like that anymore," fails to fully acknowledge just how fundamentally special Steven was to every single person he met. As such, it is an honor to have this work dedicated to my Best Friend, a person not only of considerable greatness and unbelievable talents, but somebody I was fortunate to have as a paramount part of my life, even if the span of our friendship was painfully short. Thank you for everything, old friend. You are truly missed.

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There are numerous individuals to thank not only for this work, but the graduate career that it is attached to. First, I would like to thank the Faculty of ETSU's History Department for all of their advice and guidance. I would particularly like to thank Henry Antkiewicz , Colin Baxter, William Douglass Burgess, Jr., Victoria Mayer, and Zachary Rupley for their personal involvement in my graduate career. A special thanks goes to Daryl Carter, Brian Maxson, and Stephen Fritz for not only their role on this work's committee, but their constant willingness to help me navigate these pivotal first steps of what I hope is a long and successful Historical career. The depth of my appreciation cannot be expressed within the space I am allotted, thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge my fellow graduate students who through peer reviews, conversations both historical and the many not, feedback on my work, rides, and numerous other interactions helped make the past two years some of the most cherished of my life. In particular I must thank Jacob and Eliza Bryant, Julia Dittrich, John Greenlee, Zachary Lizee, Julia Lyle, Brandi McCloud, Aaron Owens, Jason Phillips, Frederic Poag, Ashley Raines, Josh Savage, Alex Smith, Niklas Trzaskowski, and Kim Woodring.

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Brandy Winston, the faculty and staff of Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga Tennessee, and finally, The Enriquez, Poinsatte, and Ardoin Families.

Finally, I would like to thank my own family for all of their fundamentally important support of my work. In particular I would like to thank my Grandparents, Joseph and Joan Angermeier for all of their love and support. Most importantly, I must thank my little sister Taylor and my Mom, Deborah. They are by far the most fundamentally important people in my life for many reasons not least of which is the way they bend over backwards to support and encourage me as I progress through the sometimes frustrating path of professional History. Mom and Taylor deserve my deepest gratitude for every single moment we have shared, as each one has made me the person I am today.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Burgfrieden*: Notion of German Identity that Called for Germans to forget divisive elements like class, race, and religion in order to unite. A unified Germany could accomplish anything, including defeat the enemies of Germany.

DAP: German Worker's Party; Predecessor of the Nazi Party

DNVP: German National People's Party; Right Wing Nationalist Party

DVP: German People's Party; Leftist Nationalist Party

KPD: Communist Party of Germany

*Mittelstand* Thesis: Argument that Nazi voter support was primarily from the Lower Middle Class

NSDAP: The Nazi Party

SPD: Social Democratic Party

The Nazi Movement: The Nazi Organization in existence before the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923

The Nazi Party: The Political Party of the Nazi Organization in existence from 1924 to 1933

The Reich Government: The Nazi Organization in Power after 1933

*Volksgemeinschaft*: National Community

*Volkspartei*: A People's Party; Generally reference to a Party with a support base of multiple social backgrounds

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### What was Nazism?

This question exists as an exercise in mental exhaustion as numerous great minds have struggled with finding its answer. Eighty years after the 1933 rise of the Nazi Party historians still have no definitive answers about Nazism. The question is difficult because it asks many different things. “What was Nazism” begs for a definition of Nazi ideology which in and of itself is a complicated matter as Nazi ideology was buried underneath a great deal of captivating, caustic yet severely opportunistic rhetoric. Also, the prospect of defining Nazism runs into a timing difficulty as Nazi actions and intentions seemed to change as need and circumstance mandated. Nazi purpose and direction altered during the transitions from a political movement to political party to government to military-industrial machine. Depending on which time frame one chooses drastically varied answers would be produced which complicates defining Nazism.

Beyond definition, this question comes with the stark realities of the Holocaust that shadow any discussion of Nazism. Over seventy years after the beginning of the Third Reich's mass-execution programs it is still impossible to study any aspect of Nazi Germany without framing such discussions in terms of the Holocaust. Jews were not the only victims of Nazism as the Nazi movement claimed many lives in violent street fights and political assassinations. The initial purges of 1933 and 1934 witnessed the Nazis consolidate their power via a great deal of political murder. The Third Reich also waged a World War with deaths spanning the globe. Therefore, Nazism can be considered an entity responsible for a considerable amount of death, destruction, and anguish. As such any question pertaining to Nazism demands an answer with

respect to the many atrocities and acts of violence committed in its name. However, reverence to those affected by atrocity has placed a cloud over studying the logic and cohesion of Nazism. That is not to say that Nazism was in any way valid, but in treating it exclusively as madness bent on death and destruction makes objectively studying the foundations that motivated these actions impossible. Any attempt to study Nazism must balance the line between reverence for atrocity and objective analysis, a line not easily navigated.

To that end, “what was Nazism” can ask for more than a definition, but instead inquire about the impacts of Nazism. This question then becomes one of audience as Nazism exists as multiple things to multiple people. For a German, Nazism exists as a weight around their collective identity that constantly demands explanation. It has often been said that for most people German history only spans twelve years, 1933 to 1945. Every German is thus constantly reminded of these twelve years in their interactions with outsiders and one another. For the Jewish faith, Nazism is the dogmatic philosophy that eliminated perhaps six million of their community. For England, Nazism brought on a moment of national glory, but also the reality of decline, as the war finished off the British Empire. For the United States, Nazism led to a set of circumstances that established America as a superpower. Nazism thus means different things to different people and impacted multiple cultures in deeply profound manners, further complicating the task of determining an exact interpretation of Nazism.

Another difficulty in answering this question is one of scale. Is Nazism embodied within all of those who adhered to it, by the entire German citizenry, the Party members, or could Nazism be explained in the terms of one person?<sup>1</sup> Many historians of great repute have attempted to explain Nazism in the terms of its leader Adolf Hitler. Disputing that Hitler was Nazism is difficult given his personal influence throughout the many stages of the Nazi Party's history. In

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

1920, Hitler helped develop the formal platform of the German Worker's Party, the organization that would evolve into the Nazi Party. Hitler became the Party's most dynamic speaker and eventually asserted his power to become the party leader. Hitler led the failed Putsch and reformed the Party after its ban was lifted. He was critical to the electoral victories that propelled the Nazis into office and directed the implementation of Nazism throughout Germany. Oftentimes historians take sections of Hitler's opus, *Mein Kampf*, to validate aspects of Nazi ideology.<sup>2</sup> All of this evidence lends a great deal of credence to the argument that Nazism was Hitlerism, but this definition is far too strict. For example, despite Hitler's presence throughout all of the Nazis' critical actions, Nazism was more than sweeping leadership and caustic speeches. Nazism had a strong grassroots populism at its heart focused on the mass desire for an implementation of the utopian national community, known as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. To claim Nazism was solely what Hitler determined is to ignore the numerous everyday Nazis who held interpretations of Nazi ideology separate from the Führer.

One could simplify the query by answering that Nazism is simply a combination of Nationalism and Socialism, but what does that truly answer? Some would say National Socialism

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<sup>2</sup>A great deal of literature exists pertaining to Hitler and his role with Nazism. Included here are pivotal works on Adolf Hitler anyone interested in the Führer should read. R Cecil, "Review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf: An Analysis* By Maser, Werner; Hitler's *Weltanschauung: Entwurf Einer Herrschaft* by Jackel, Eberhard," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 46, no. No. 4 (October 1970): 746–747. H. W. Gatzke, "Hitler and Psychohistory," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1973): 394–401. Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship*, trans. Thomas Thorton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, ed. Gerhard Weinberg, trans. Krista Smith (New York: Enigma Books, 2003). Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999). Eberhard Jackel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. Herbert Arnold (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1972). Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998). Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000). I. Kershaw, "Hitler and the Uniqueness of Nazism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004): 239–254. Richard A. Koenigsberg, *Hitler's Ideology: A Study in Psychoanalytic Sociology* (New York: The Library of Social Science, 1975). Walter Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972). John Luckas, *The Hitler of History* (New York: Random House, 1997). Werner Maser, *Hitler: Legend, Myth & Reality*, trans. Peter Ross and Betty Ross (New York: Penguin Books, 1973). Hans Staudinger, *The Inner Nazi: A Critical Analysis of Mein Kampf* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981). R. G. L. Waite, "Adolf Hitler's Guilt Feelings: A Problem in History and Psychology," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1, no. 2 (1971): 229–249.

is a specifically German fascist ideology, but arguably the first National Socialist was 1896 failed North Dakotan farmer and French aristocrat the Marquis de Mores, who “appealed with a mixture of anti-capitalism and anti-Semitic nationalism.”<sup>3</sup> Mores's squads wore “cowboy garb and ten-gallon hats which thus predate black and brown shirts as the first fascist uniforms.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, if Nazism is National Socialism then it cannot be a specifically German historical object as even the term “national socialism” was coined by a French nationalist author.<sup>5</sup> To take this interpretation forward, by scholar of fascism Robert Paxton's definition National Socialism stands as a critical part of fascism in general. Thus, in order to explain Nazism one would have to understand fascism in its entirety as experienced in Italy, Spain, France, Russia, and even the United States. Even Paxton is careful not to give Fascism, and by extension Nazism, a firm definition claiming that “fascism in action looks much more like a network of relationships than a fixed essence.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in defining Nazism as National Socialism and therefore Fascism, the process of finding out exactly what Nazism was becomes impossible, lost in the myriad similar platforms like French nationalism, Ku Klux Klan rhetoric, and Spanish and Italian corporatism.

Perhaps Nazism cannot be explained in terms of the fascist ideologies that formed alongside it in the early twentieth century but should be looked at as a strictly German phenomenon. If so, what characteristics of Germany history and identity can be used to explain what Nazism truly was? Historians have pondered this question in numerous forms, the most notable expression of this idea being the *Sonderweg* thesis. Meaning the “Special Path,” the *Sonderweg* debate contends that Nazism can be explained as the result of Germany's failure to

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<sup>3</sup>Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 48.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 207.

follow the “normal” path of development that resulted from English, French, and American bourgeois revolutions. Historian Jurgen Kocka thus interprets this position as claiming only that Germany suffered Nazism because conditions of the economy and class struggle prevalent in other nations were, in Germany, “aggravated and reinforced by challenged, but surviving, structures and traditions of a pre-modern kind.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Sonderweg historians would claim Nazism was simply the inevitable result of stunted German development.

Sonderweg interpretations were largely held as valid until the mid 1980s when challenges to the thesis substantially undermined the line of thought. The first prominent protest against the *Sonderweg* thesis came from now established historians David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley in their work *The Peculiarities of German History*. In this work Blackbourn and Eley present multiple challenges to the Sonderweg thesis that fatally damaged the line of thought. Their strongest argument against the *Sonderweg* asked “what was it, in terms of content, that was said to mark an aberration in German history when judged by western norms?”<sup>8</sup> In simpler terms, what was exactly “normal” about western Bourgeois revolutions? Blackbourn and Eley are quick to point out that although “the bourgeoisie characteristically became the dominant class in European countries” they did not become the ruling class as the dictatorships of Napoleon Bonaparte and Oliver Cromwell can attest.<sup>9</sup> Nor, did the western bourgeoisie attain this power through “heroic means or open political action.”<sup>10</sup> The bloodletting of the French Revolution, the decapitation of King Charles I, the Civil War, American slavery, and British-French colonialism stand as examples of flawed aspects of Western development that were held by *Sonderweg*

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<sup>7</sup>J. Kocka, “German History Before Hitler: The Debate About the German Sonderweg,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 3–16.

<sup>8</sup>David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 12-13.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

adherents as normal. Additional flaws with the Sonderweg thesis will be discussed in subsequent portions of this work, but for now it is worthwhile to note that any analysis of Nazism that claims it was the direct result of flaws in German cultural or political development during the nineteenth century have numerous interpretive flaws.

It seems that identifying Nazism as the consequence of failed nineteenth century development has its weaknesses, but perhaps claiming Nazism was the result of developments in the twentieth century can be argued more persuasively. Historian George Mosse is a well-established historian of German memory and identity who has made a name for himself analyzing the numerous ways the World Wars impacted German conceptions of identity. Mosse is perhaps the most influential historian to argue that World War I had tremendous impacts on Nazism and exists as a bedrock of Nazi ideology. Mosse is not alone in this assertion as multiple historians weigh in on the First World War's presence in Nazi ideology, literature which will be explored in the first chapter of this work. For the time being, it is important to note that World War I had several impacts on the Nazis from the militarism it fostered in multiple generations of Nazis, to the perceived class unity the war fostered and the calamitous effects the war's aftermath had on Germany. If one argues that the First World War could have an effect, then the devastation that followed during the Weimar Republic could also be countenanced as impactful on Nazism. However, historians often take one side or the other, either minimizing the influence of the war and blaming the rise of Nazism on the instability of the Weimar Republic or defending the Weimar system and pointing to the war as the main culprit. The prevalence of such a conflict leads the process of defining Nazism to yet another dead end.

Ultimately this question of defining Nazism is not the sole property of the historical profession, or even other professional intellectual environments. The question of “what was

Nazism” still resides very much in the public and therefore “entertainment” history has staked a seemingly permanent claim to this issue. Entertainment history is historical study presented to enthrall an unfamiliar public audience in many cases at the expense of thorough and factual research. Nazism has been a common thread of “entertainment” history as the public remains both captivated, mystified, and disgusted by numerous aspects of Third Reich history which entertainment outlets and journalists play up to generate revenue. Perhaps one of the most professionally condemned histories of Nazi Germany, William Shirer's international best-seller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, recently marked its fiftieth anniversary with a release of a new edition.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for fifty years Shirer's interpretation has been provided to the masses many of whom internalize *Rise and Fall* as historical fact. Shirer's work is biased, unprofessional, inadequately researched, and irresponsibly glosses over pivotal aspects of Third Reich history, but these are all missteps in the world of *professional* history.<sup>12</sup> Shirer as a journalist was not bound to Historian codes and practices, but his word is just as valid in the public as Richard Evans's exhaustive three volume history of the Third Reich.<sup>13</sup> Beyond Shirer other non historically trained authors and movie makers generate their own interpretations, largely based on scandal, atrocity, and myth, which become accepted into cultural thought. Thus Nazism has a character beyond historical interpretations that must be accounted for which makes coming to an all encompassing definition of Nazism that much more difficult.

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<sup>11</sup>William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959).

<sup>12</sup>Klaus Epstein, “Shirer’s History of Nazi Germany,” *The Review of Politics* 23, no. 2 (April 1961): 230–245.

<sup>13</sup>Richard Evans wrote three copious books laying out an in-depth narrative of Nazi history from the days of Imperial Germany to the collapse of the Third Reich. His first work studies Imperial and Weimar Germany chronicling the Nazi rise to power. The second work picks up after the Nazis seized power following the purges of 1933. The final work studies the Third Reich through the entirety of the Second World War. Anybody just beginning to scratch the surface or looking for a continuous narrative on the entirety of Nazi history should look at Evans' works. Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004). Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005). Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008).



Is Nazism a top-down progression of the Party and the Reich government dictating its whims to the citizenry or is Nazism built from the bottom guiding the Nazis in a certain direction? Paxton and other supporters of Nazism as fascist ideology would contend that the Nazis dictated their own practices on the German people. This line of reasoning becomes particularly evident in literature on the collapse of the Third Reich where German citizens are portrayed as victims of Nazi manipulation and tyranny; driven to a hopeless situation by a power-hungry dictatorship.<sup>14</sup> Although validity exists for the top down theory of Nazism, a school of thought fostered by historians like Peter Fritzsche and Joe Perry argues compellingly that the German citizens were equally culpable in the fostering of Nazism throughout the Third Reich.<sup>15</sup> Fritzsche uses the phrase “forcibly volunteered” to demonstrate that “consent as well as compliance structured the practices of everyday life in Nazi Germany.”<sup>16</sup> Perry agrees with the idea that the German citizenry actively participated in Nazism as evidenced by their involvement in Nazi themed holiday festivities. The Reich Government provided the major impetus for such celebration as “state orchestration met with an active and enthusiastic popular response because participation in Nazi political rituals...offered Germans attractive material and symbolic rewards and a privileged place in an exclusionary social system.”<sup>17</sup> The role of the German citizenry as shapers versus receivers will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this work. For the purposes of the present discussion, the complexities of the German people's ties to Nazism further complicate the task of finding a catch-all definition of Nazism.

Focusing on one area of Nazi Germany with the expectation of defining Nazism will

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<sup>14</sup>Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*, trans. Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup>Joe Perry, “Nazifying Christmas: Political Culture and Popular Celebration in the Third Reich,” *Central European History* 38, no. 4 (2005): 572–605.

<sup>16</sup>Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 55.

<sup>17</sup>Perry, “Nazifying Christmas: Political Culture and Popular Celebration in the Third Reich,” 574

result in resounding failure as Nazism encompasses a wide area of intellectual discourse. As such, this is not a work that has the goal of coming to a catch-all definition of Nazism. Rather, in demonstrating the above complexity of Nazism one aspect is often kept just underneath the surface of all of these debates that receives indirect or cursory attention in most of the historiography. This aspect is the ideology of Nazism. Often referred to as National Socialism, discussions of Nazi ideology feature in most works but are almost exclusively discussed in terms of another topic. For example, George Mosse refers to Nazi ideology, but in reference to how World War I's glorification informed that ideology.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Childers and Richard Hamilton argue that Nazi ideology was twisted and many times abandoned by the Nazis to appeal to multiple electorates in order to form a Volkspartei that would usher the Nazi Party into power.<sup>19</sup> Peter Fritzsche would advocate that Nazi ideology was the expression of German disillusion with the status quo of Weimar Germany and their desire for the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>20</sup> Nazi ideology exists throughout almost every historical work on the Third Reich as historians

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<sup>18</sup>G. L. Mosse, "Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21, no. 4 (1986): 491–513. G. L. Mosse, "National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 1 (1979): 1–20. G. L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). George L. Mosse, "Friendship and Nationhood: About the Promise and Failure of German Nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 2 (1982): 351–367.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voters: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Thomas Childers, "The Social Language of Politics in Germany: The Sociology of Political Discourse in the Weimar Republic," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (April 1990): 331–358. T. Childers, "The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976): 17–42. Thomas Childers, "Who, Indeed, Did Vote for Hitler?," *Central European History* 17, no. 1 (March 1984): 45–53. Thomas Childers and Eugene Weiss, "Voters and Violence: Political Violence and the Limits of National Socialist Mass Mobilization," *German Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (October 1990): 481–498. Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted For Hitler?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Richard Hamilton, "The Rise of Nazism: A Case Study and Review of Interpretations: Kiel, 1928-1933," *German Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (February 2003): 43–62. R. F. Hamilton, "Braunschweig 1932: Further Evidence on the Support for National Socialism," *Central European History* 17, no. 01 (1984): 3–36. Rudy Koshar, "Political Gangsters and Nazism: Some Comments on Richard Hamilton's Theory of Fascism. A Review Article," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28, no. 4 (October 1986): 785–793.

<sup>20</sup>Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Peter Fritzsche, "Weimar Populism and National Socialism in Local Perspective," in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Peter Fritzsche, "Presidential Victory and Popular Festivity in Weimar Germany: Hindenburg's 1925 Election," *Central European History* 23, no. 2/3 (September 1990): 205–224.

contend that ideology justified many of the actions carried out, but seldom is ideology ever focused on as the *impetus* for Nazi action.

Few works exist that focus meaningfully on Nazi ideology as a guide to action and many of those that do are not specifically historical works. For example, psychological and sociological arguments are often presented to attempt to explain Nazi ideology. Although non-historical, the discussions that arise from these fields have valuable insights on the historical importance of Nazi ideology. For example, Emil Fackenheim explained the Nazi *weltanschauung*, or worldview, was separate from religion and metaphysics. Per Fackenheim, this worldview was “put forward not as *being* true but only capable of *being made* true” through conflict and victory over differing *weltanschauung*.<sup>21</sup> This narrative certainly rings true as Nazi ideology never admitted to its work being accomplished. Political psychologist Donald Dietrich stressed that there were four pillars of Nazi ideology. To sum these pillars up briefly, Nazi ideology centered on the idea the past was not only to be restored, but elevated, rhetoric of struggle against opposition, “affective characteristics” defined as “instinct, will, blood, etc.” were valued over rationality, and finally, the hierarchical social order was to be reestablished.<sup>22</sup> One piece in the journal *Critical Inquiry* investigated Nazi use of myth, but when it came time to analyze ideology and myth this piece stated that Nazi ideology sought to be “a total explanation” of history that is “specifically German” and “a racist ideology.”<sup>23</sup> The authors are quick to shun the *sonderweg* implications of their argument, claiming that Nazism in and of itself was a German reaction to specifically German problems, not applicable to other nations or peoples.

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<sup>21</sup>Emil Fackenheim, “Nazi ‘Ethnic,’ Nazi Weltanschauung, and the Holocaust. Morality After Auschwitz: The Radical Challenge of the Nazi Ethic,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 83, no. 1/2 (October 1992):171.

<sup>22</sup>Donald Dietrich, “National Renewal, Anti-Semitism, and Political Continuity: A Psychological Assessment,” *Political Psychology* 9, no. 3 (September 1988): 404.

<sup>23</sup>Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Brian Holmes, “The Nazi Myth,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 2 (1990): 294,295.

Even film analysts have taken the efforts to focus on Nazi ideology as Stephen Lowry in his analysis of *The Golden City* stepped beyond the parameters of this film arguing that the “ideological function of Nazi films abides less in the overt political 'contents' than in diffuse emotional effects and the symbolic transformations of socially relevant issues.”<sup>24</sup> Thus analysis of Nazi ideology, this work has found, can be ascertained and understood independent of prevalent opportunistic actions by the Nazis. As such, one of the primary goals of this work will involve tying down abstract notions of Nazi ideology to specific events to demonstrate the importance of ideology as an impetus for Nazism.

Many of the presented issues with defining Nazism and the role of ideology in the actions of the Nazi Party and Reich government are not original to this work. Rather in 1974 historian Barbara Miller Lane penned an article “Nazi Ideology: Some Unfinished Business” in which she protested the lack of a “satisfactory interpretation of Nazi ideology.”<sup>25</sup> Even more surprising to Lane was that many of her contemporaries believed “that political thought played a relatively unimportant part in the rise (and fall) of the Third Reich.”<sup>26</sup> Lane goes on to analyze Nazi ideology not in terms of Adolf Hitler, but other prominent Nazi ideologues like Dietrich Eckart, Alfred Rosenberg, Gottfried Feder, and the Strasser brothers (Otto and Gregor), but her analysis thus only focuses on pre-1933 Nazi ideology, a self-imposed barrier. Lane concludes her work calling for “a fresh look at Nazi institutions against the background of a thorough study of Nazi thought.”<sup>27</sup> As such this work strives to address Lane's concerns by centering on critical Nazi events, such as the Beer Hall Putsch, Nazi electoral activity during the Weimar Republic, and the

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<sup>24</sup>Stephen Lowry, “Ideology and Excess in Nazi Melodrama: The Golden City,” *New German Critique* 74, no. Special Issue on Nazi Cinema (Spring-Summer 1998): 148.

<sup>25</sup>Barbara Miller-Lane, “Nazi Ideology: Some Unfinished Business,” *Central European History* 7, no. 1 (March 1974): 3.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 29.

implementation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in terms of Nazi ideology. It is the expressed goal of this work to add to the historiography's efforts to define Nazism by understanding the nature of Nazi ideology, not as a concept that provided post-hoc justifications for Nazi actions, but rather as the impetus for the actions of Nazi Germany.

Similar to previously mentioned efforts to define Nazism, this effort to understand Nazi ideology needs to qualify a time period or run the risk of losing focus and clarity. As such this work will focus on three distinct time periods of Nazi history that have profound importance on understanding their ideology. Understanding this pattern before reading the following chapters will go a long way towards understanding the continuity of this narrative as it stretches across Germany from 1914 to 1938. First, this work will attempt to understand the foundation of Nazi ideology as only in understanding the beginning of Nazi ideology can we come closer to comprehending this complex institution. As such, this foundational period of Nazism will follow the Nazi Movement through the end of the First World War, the formation of the Weimar Republic and culminate in the Beer Hall Putsch. At this stage it is important to make reference to this work's terminology. The Nazis of the foundational period will be referred to multiple times as members of *the Nazi Movement*. To refer to this small Bavarian assemblage of political amateurs as the Nazi Party is woefully inadequate and misleading. Political parties enter the political arena in a socially acceptable manner and until after the disaster of the Beer Hall Putsch the Nazis were no such organization. Therefore, the Nazis of 1918 to 1923 will be referenced as part of the Nazi Movement, a loose, but rabid organization of Bavarians with the intentions of seeing the Weimar Republic toppled. Only in understanding this movement's efforts can Nazi ideological foundation truly be understood.

After exploring the foundational period, this work will focus on the period of Nazi history

which begins with Hitler's imprisonment following the Beer Hall Putsch, the Party's failures and successes in Weimar politics which culminated in Hitler becoming Chancellor. The Nazis had created an ideology that strove to use activism and struggle rhetoric to topple the despised Weimar Republic. When that plan failed the Nazis, Hitler and many of his supporters changed tactics and accepted the reality that armed confrontation would not win the day, but rather political manipulation would help the Nazis realize their goals. Although initial efforts to follow the path of legality would result in electoral failures, the Nazis would eventually radicalize their message, expanding its popularity amongst the citizenry of multiple social groupings. The subsequent electoral bump would allow the Nazis to negotiate their way into the second most powerful office in Weimar Germany. This period is largely seen as an aberration in Nazi ideological continuity because the Nazis opportunistically promised the world to every population, often resulting in multiple contradictions. However, this time is fundamentally important for any study of Nazi ideology as these perceived discontinuities tied in with Nazi ideology in fundamental ways. Thus, whereas the Nazis were perceived as the master political liars, the adage that one should “be careful what you wish for” seems apt as Nazi ideology not only motivated Nazis into an electoral frenzy but matched multiple desires of a disparate group of alienated German citizenry.

The third chapter of this work begins in 1933 after the Nazis have come into power and began the transfer of the various labor, professional, and social institutions of Germany into equivalent organizations formed and based in Nazi ideology. This chapter will explore the various interpretations of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and through such analysis come to an understanding of not only the nature of the Nazi national community but the Reich government's purpose for such an institution. The establishment of a national community stands as a highly

contested historical topic as this creation would pacify the German people under the Nazis and allow the Third Reich to wage a destructive World War. This work contends that the changes witnessed between 1933 and the beginning of Hitler's expansionary wars were motivated and directed by entrenched aspects of Nazi ideology.

Any effort that attempts to come to a definitive understanding of Nazi Germany is doomed at its outset. Many of the reasons for this predetermined failure stem from arguments presented above. However, historian William Sheridan Allen best stated the ultimate difficulty in coming to an understanding on Nazi Germany when he wrote “the problem of Nazism was primarily a problem of perception.”<sup>28</sup> No truer words have ever been written as the totality of Nazism is imperceptible through only one viewpoint or one interpretation. The only way to come to a total understanding of Nazi Germany is to study the Third Reich from every possible angle and address every hole in the historiography. Therefore, this work does not intend to come to a catch-all interpretation of the entirety of Nazism but rather address the nearly forty year old request of Barbara Lane to tie Nazi ideology to the actions of not only the Nazi Movement and Party, but to the Reich Government in an effort to demonstrate that National Socialist thought had a profound impact on German history.

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<sup>28</sup>William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922 -1945* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), 281.

## CHAPTER 2

### KÄMPFEN: 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO 1923<sup>29</sup>

The adage that a picture is worth a thousand words falls short when it comes to one photo taken in August 1914. Taken by eventual chief photographer for Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Hoffmann, long before his tenure with the Third Reich, this photo depicts an enthusiastic crowd gathered at the Odeonsplatz in the heart of Munich swept up in “the Spirit of 1914,” the name generally given to the nationalistic optimism felt throughout Europe on the eve of the First World War.<sup>30</sup> The crowd itself provides a compelling visual for the elation evoked by the German people at the opportunity to prove their superiority in Europe. However, many photographs exist that demonstrate the nationalistic fervor that swept through Germany. This particular photo is noteworthy in that after having formed a professional relationship with Hitler, Hoffmann studied all of his photos from that day and after various enlargements found an elated Adolf Hitler celebrating shortly before he joined the war effort.<sup>31</sup> This photo has been discussed ad nauseum, but it exists for most historians as proof that the First World War had a profound impact on the future Führer. The contrast between the elated Hitler of 1914 and the embittered demagogue of the 1920s leaves little room to dispute the impact the Great War had on this man. Historians have taken this photo, along with its implications, and argued that the First World War, if for no other reason than its impact on the future Führer, led directly to the rise of Nazism.

Historians have conjectured that the First and Second World Wars should be considered one long and contiguous event. However, arguments of this nature are the holdovers from early arguments that claimed the seeds for the Second World War were sown in the ashes of the First.

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<sup>29</sup> German for “Struggle”

<sup>30</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3-9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 3-9.



However, both of these claims exist on a pattern of determinism where as soon as World War I ended the Nazi Party and World War II were the inevitable result. The argument in favor of World War I causing the Nazi rise can be found in numerous forms but perhaps is best illustrated within Niall Ferguson's *Pity of War*. Ferguson analyzes the First World War asking numerous questions in terms of counter-factual arguments that help “recapture the uncertainty of decision-makers in the past, to whom the future was merely a set of possibilities; and to assess whether the optimal choices were made.”<sup>32</sup> In doing so Ferguson presents many valuable arguments about the nature of the war, some of which will be explored shortly, but he also demonstrated with clarity the simple thread tying the First World War to the Nazis. Per Ferguson, “with the Kaiser triumphant, Adolf Hitler could have eked out his life as a mediocre postcard painter.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the army allowed Hitler the opportunity to join the Nazi cause cementing the idea that the loss of World War I led to an event causality that pushed Hitler to the Nazis setting the stage for later significant events.<sup>34</sup>

Arguments that the loss of the First World War caused the rise of Nazi Germany are certainly compelling and logically cohesive, however in recent years historians have made arguments demonstrating that even after Germany's defeat the Third Reich was not inevitable. William Keylor argued that those who lived during this time were disillusioned and formed the mythology of defeat that informed such arguments.<sup>35</sup> Thus, more information on the depth of German defeat and less hostility to the conventions of the peace settlement could have gone a long way towards mending the post-war fences and therein prevent the Nazis from gaining a voice. Beyond such optimism, John Morrow's in-depth analysis of World War I works to dispel

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<sup>32</sup>Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1999), XLIII.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 460

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 460

<sup>35</sup>John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 292.

the determinist aspects of World War I's conclusion on the Nazi rise. By Morrow's argument, the Nazis were able to rise to power not because of World War I and the much condemned Treaty of Versailles. Rather, Morrow contends that because the United States retreated to relative isolation and the British worked to keep its empire intact, a decimated France was left responsible for enforcing the treaty on a temporarily wounded, but angry Germany.<sup>36</sup> France could only accomplish so much and had little to no power to back up its authority, leaving German politics in disarray and ripe for some fashion of takeover. Morrow further acknowledges that the rise of the Nazi Party was multifarious as he also forcefully contends that "Adolf Hitler and the Nazi rose to power as a result of the depression in Germany."<sup>37</sup> As Morrow and many others contend, countless events took place between the end of World War I and the Third Reich which had they happened in even the slightest different manner the history of the world would be drastically different. Thus, the impact of World War I on the Nazi rise to power is a contested and complex topic.

Summarizing the arguments on the Nazi rise appear out of place in a work on Nazi ideology, but this work is determined to tie Nazi ideology to the actions of the Nazis to gain some understanding of Nazi intentionality and by extension identity. As such, tying the Nazi rise to power, an action that is largely considered opportunistic and devoid of coherence and consistency, to Nazi ideology would be inadequate without addressing the foundations of that ideology. Before that synthesis can be demonstrated it is important to note that while the First World War may not have directly caused the Third Reich, World War I and its aftermath were instrumental to the foundations of Nazi ideology. Therefore, studying the influences of World

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 319.

<sup>37</sup>Additionally, Morrow goes beyond the Nazi rise to address the "Thirty Years War" thesis of the continuity of the First World War and the Second. Although Morrow believes the Nazi rise and disorder were not direct results of the First World War, a global perspective backs the notion of a continuous period of war as "conflict continued in Eastern Europe at least until 1921, and certainly began at the latest in Asia by 1931." Ibid, 321.

War I on the early Nazi movement will be profoundly important for demonstrating that Nazi actions both of this foundational period and beyond were largely ideologically driven.

### The First World War and the Nazi Movement

Before proceeding it is important to explain that the early Nazi Party could hardly be labeled as a party. After the formal declaration of a platform in 1920 the German Worker's Party, the predecessor of the National Socialist German Workers Party, would take three years to gain 55,000 members.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in the early 1920s the idea of a dominating Nazi Party could only be entertained by the delusional as the Nazis could only call on a very limited, fairly localized support base. While the Nazi organization carried the label of a party, the Nazis that existed before 1924 should be considered more or less a movement. Before 1924 the Nazis expressed little interest in participating within the political and electoral frameworks of the Weimar Republic.<sup>39</sup> Rhetoric throughout their platform and speeches demonstrated that the Nazis of this time intended to fade once Germany was restored.<sup>40</sup> While later events indicate otherwise, the Nazis of 1933 and the Nazis of 1923 were very different creatures.

Hitler himself admitted in a 1922 memorandum that the Nazis were to become a different

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<sup>38</sup>The German Worker's Party (DAP) Platform, referenced on multiple occasions within this work remained a fundamental party document and was cited in Nazi Periodical's beyond 1933. Statistic comes from Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism: 1919-1945 A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, [New York: Schocken Books, 1983], 33.

<sup>39</sup>The idea of a primitive and disinterested Nazi movement before 1924 is not without justification in the field. Dietrich Orlow's history of the Nazi Party references Hitler's accusation that the DAP was more of a "tea party" than political organization. Orlow also argues that the Nazis briefly considered participating in elections, but ultimately Hitler "rejected electoral activity for the NSDAP." Even the appropriately condemned Shirer agrees with such a assertion as he claimed the Nazi movement "was far from being even the most important political movement in Bavaria, and outside the state it was unknown." Thus the argument of a primitive, non-electorally driven Nazi movement has long been an established aspect of Nazi history. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959),63. Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 15,40.

<sup>40</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, "The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS]," in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. IV (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946).

kind of party. Per Hitler, the DAP and all previous nationalist parties “lacked the warm breath of the nation's youthful vigor” and therefore was “no longer a movement of the people” but rather “there reappeared in the new movement the distressing characteristics of our bourgeois parties, lacking any uniform discipline or form.”<sup>41</sup> Hitler believed that previous iterations of the Nazis had failed because they became too much like political parties and thus he vowed that the Nazis would become “a new movement aimed at providing what the others did not.”<sup>42</sup> Hitler's Nazi movement would be “a racialist movement with a firm social base, a hold over the broad masses, welded together in an iron-hard organization, instilled with blind obedience and inspired by a brutal will.”<sup>43</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Hitler's new Nazi movement would be “a party of struggle and action.”<sup>44</sup> The Nazis had no intention of playing the electoral game at this stage, but intended, through action, to reach a broad mass of people and have their vision of a superior Germany restored.

Before asserting the impact of World War I upon Nazi ideology, it is necessary to demonstrate the various ways the Nazis internalized German memory of the Great War. In order to fully understand the relationship between World War I, the Nazi Party and the German citizenry the numerous ways in which the First World War affected the German citizenry must be understood in detail. Of equal importance will be demonstrations of the ways that the Nazis matched, internalized, and manipulated these aspects in their early efforts to become a force to be reckoned with during the early 1920s. Only once these relationships are understood can analysis begin on the full extent of World War I's impact on the Nazi ideology.

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<sup>41</sup> Adolf Hitler, “A Different Kind of Party, January 7, 1922,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 47.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

At the onset of war in 1914 Germans were swept up into an uproar of nationalistic fervor that few could resist. Germany was preparing itself to meet the armies of Europe in a clash that would determine which nation would become the dominant European power. The Germans had numerous reasons to be optimistic thanks to their rise to world power status during the early 20th century. Although many would look back on this time as the German people being hypnotized or caught in a “wave of drunkenness” many others looked back and admitted to being overjoyed by this Spirit of 1914.<sup>45</sup> Historian Friedrich Meinecke reflected on the optimism swirling throughout Germany in his post World War II reflections, *The German Catastrophe*, claiming that “the exaltation of spirit experienced during the August days of 1914, in spite of its ephemeral character, is one of the more precious, unforgettable memories of the highest sort.”<sup>46</sup> Even members of the upper echelon in the Imperial government were beyond optimistic, bordering on the fanciful about what they could accomplish with this war. Beyond the severe optimism of the Schlieffen Plan, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg posited that Germany could take large parcels of territory from France and Belgium, make Luxembourg a German federal state, and create an African colonial empire.<sup>47</sup> With emotions high throughout all levels of Germany significant events were afoot that would leave impressions on the German people that would last beyond the Great War.

The importance of the Spirit of 1914 is a contested topic within the historiography of the Nazi rise. Many historians do not believe that the Spirit of 1914 had a tremendous impact on German identity claiming such emotions were largely a myth fostered after the war. Ferguson

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<sup>45</sup>Kurt Tucholsky, “The Spirit of 1914, 1924,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 20.

<sup>46</sup>Friedrich Meinecke, “The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections, 1946,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=821](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=821).

<sup>47</sup>Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg, “The September Program, September 9, 1914,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002).

would certainly argue along these lines as he claimed that “crowds there may have been, but to describe their mood as simply one of 'enthusiasm' or 'euphoria' is misleading.”<sup>48</sup> Ferguson's smoking gun against the Spirit of 1914 exists in the form of a multi-thousand worker protest that in “overfilled meetings and on the street demonstrated against the war and for peace.”<sup>49</sup> The fact that this protest was on July 29<sup>th</sup>, only a few days before World War I erupted, lends itself to the idea that the Spirit of 1914 was not universal by any means. John Morrow seconds the arguments of the mythological Spirit of 1914 by claiming the enthusiasm was “primarily an urban-middle class phenomenon.”<sup>50</sup> Going further, Morrow contends that the rural populations were preoccupied with harvests.<sup>51</sup> Per Morrow, even the Nazi's home turf, Bavaria “reacted with worry and fear, anxiety and uncertainty.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the existence of a universal German enthusiasm is certainly debunked.

However, even if the Spirit of 1914 was not a universal phenomenon amongst Germans in 1914, the outbreak of war did motivate a large number of young, virile men to volunteer and fight for Germany. The enthusiasm for war experienced by these young men and their tragic sacrifices cemented themselves on the minds of Germans. After the war collapsed in German defeat the vision of the volunteers became an entrenched aspect of German identity. Historian George Mosse certainly agrees with the importance of volunteerism to German identity going back to the French Revolution and establishing itself in German youth following the collapse of World War I.<sup>53</sup> Per Mosse, the Spirit of 1914 was picked up after the war by those disillusioned with German defeat who “wanted to repeat this heady experience in the midst of the confusion

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<sup>48</sup>Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 177.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 179.

<sup>50</sup>Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History*, 38.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 38.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 38.

<sup>53</sup>G. L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15.

and compromises of post-war politics.”<sup>54</sup> Wars waged in between the First and Second World War that saw German men volunteering to repeat this sweep of soldiers to the front exist as further evidence of the enduring importance of the Spirit of 1914.<sup>55</sup> Thus, stepping up to stand up for Germany was indeed a powerful motivator for Germany's youth. Perhaps the Spirit of 1914 was not universal to all Germans, but by that same token the German people were not universal supporters of the Nazis at any time.

Where the early Nazi Movement did gain appeal was with those who generally entrenched the spirit of volunteerism in their own personality. Much of the early membership encompassed former soldiers of the First World War and young enthusiasts whose age forced them to miss fighting in the First World War. The Nazis were an ardently nationalistic organization that took their cues from that nationalistic volunteerism that originated from World War I. Hitler's earliest speeches provide considerable insight into the extent that nationalistic optimism and a belief in the invincibility of the German people permeated the early message the Nazis put forward. Hitler, attempting to get a rise out of his audience, used the same optimistic nationalist rhetoric that was used in 1914 to motivate the German people. In a 1923 speech Hitler stated, “we have both the hope and the faith that the day will come on which Germany shall stretch from Konigsberg to Strassburg, and from Hamburg to Vienna.”<sup>56</sup> This speech, coming from a time when Germany was arguably at its lowest, evoked the same frenzied optimism that those enthusiasts of 1914 evoked. In another 1923 speech Hitler duplicated the belief in the invincibility of German youth claiming, “in the end the fire of German youth will conquer.”<sup>57</sup> In

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<sup>54</sup>G. L. Mosse, “Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21, no. 4 (1986), 493.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>56</sup>Adolf Hitler, “The Great German May Celebration, May 1, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 69.

<sup>57</sup>Adolf Hitler, “The Morass of Parliament or the Fight for Freedom, May 4, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*,

speaking of Germany as an invincible juggernaut the Nazis were able to tap into the optimism of 1914 and were rewarded with valuable initial attention.

Beyond even the nationalistic optimism surrounding the start of the Great War there was an aspect of the Spirit of 1914 that had a profound and lasting impact on the German people. As the armies of Europe were being mobilized, Kaiser Wilhelm II, ruler of Germany, made a speech in which he stated “I no longer recognize any parties or any confessions; today we are all German brothers and only German brothers.”<sup>58</sup> Wilhelm was announcing a sentiment known as the *Burgfrieden* which called for the dissolution of those aspects that divided the German people, such as class and religion, in a universal effort to glorify Germany. Meinecke verified this optimism resulting from the Spirit of 1914 amplified by the *Burgfrieden* stating that “all the rifts which had hitherto existed in the German people, both within the bourgeoisie and between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, were suddenly closed in the face of the common danger.”<sup>59</sup> The outbreak of the war cemented in the German psyche for multiple generations the belief that as long as class conflict and other divisive statuses were disposed of there would be nothing that could stop the German people, a belief that many would internalize to such an extent that they would actually alter their memories of the war to maintain this belief.

Throughout the war the *Burgfrieden* was exploited to encourage German citizens to remain productive for and enthusiastic of the war effort. In a 1917 Easter message Kaiser Wilhelm proclaimed that “behind the front, the settlement of differences of opinion must be postponed in the highest patriotic interest until our warriors have returned home.”<sup>60</sup> Later in the

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*April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 72.

<sup>58</sup>Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Albert, “The Kaiser Speaks from the Balcony of the Royal Palace,” August 1, 1914, German Historical Institute, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=815](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=815).

<sup>59</sup>Meinecke, “The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections, 1946.”

<sup>60</sup>Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Albert, “Wilhelm II’s Easter Message,” April 7, 1917, German Historical Institute, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=1808](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1808).



same year the German Fatherland Party issued a proclamation which demonstrated a firm belief in the *Burgfrieden* as the party tried to stir voters to not only support them but not allow the divisions at home to result in “the collapse of German strength.”<sup>61</sup> The outbreak of the war cemented in the German psyche for multiple generations the belief that as long as class conflict and other divisive statuses were sublimated nothing could stop the German people. Throughout the span of the war pleas would be made to remain united if only for the sake of the soldiers on the front sacrificing their lives for Germany.<sup>62</sup> Despite a waning optimism the desire to remain united in the name of Germany would not diminish to any significant extent until the end of the Great War and the defeat of the Imperial army.

When looking at the World War I notion of the *Burgfrieden* in terms of Nazi history, George Mosse is again of paramount importance. Mosse contends that an important aspect of German identity was the “Myth of the War Experience” that glorified the struggle and sacrifice of combat.<sup>63</sup> An important part of the Myth that ran central to the *Burgfrieden* was camaraderie. Camaraderie, by Mosse’s argument, references the relationship experienced between soldiers of the front lines that became romanticized during and after World War I.<sup>64</sup> Camaraderie was seen as an extension of manliness where soldiers entered an experience that lifted them out of the confines of normal life. The camaraderie of the soldier superseded all other relationships, even operating “outside the family structure,” constituting a glorification of German identity.<sup>65</sup> The family, government, and other relationships could not provide the sense of fulfillment felt by most soldiers experiencing the hardships and accompanying glory of warfare. Historian Andrew

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<sup>61</sup>Deutsche Vaterlandspartei, “Founding Proclamation of the German Fatherland Party, September 2nd 1917,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 44.

<sup>62</sup>Albert, “Wilhelm II’s Easter Message.”

<sup>63</sup>Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, 7-8.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 19-25.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 27.

Donson assents to Mosse's argument contending that glorification of such camaraderie led many to seek participation in future conflicts. Per Donson, war brought the promise of "schoolboys who were arch nemeses before the war [to become] great friends while on the front. War let two brothers resolve their years-long acrimony. Combat brought together friends whose petty parents had severed their close ties in childhood."<sup>66</sup> Thus, camaraderie on the front superseded every previous obligation and barrier, further enforcing the unity of the *Burgfrieden* leaving a desire in the future Nazi supporters to join together to vanquish a common evil; ends that Nazi ideology matched via the fundamental concept of the National Community, or *Volksgemeinschaft*.

After World War I, Weimar politics split into many different political factions making unity similar to the "Spirit of 1914" nearly impossible. Both Mosse and Donson contend that the political fragmentation following the Treaty of Versailles left elements of the German citizenry craving some remnant of the unity and euphoria that camaraderie promised to provide. Historian David Welch contends that the Nazis made use of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to gain support by appealing to notions of the superseding effects of camaraderie.<sup>67</sup> Welch argues that the notions of *Volksgemeinschaft* did not originate with the Nazis because for propaganda to be effective it must "preach to those who are already partially converted."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* correlated to the internalized desires by certain "partially converted" enthusiasts of the camaraderie spawning from the volunteerism of the Spirit of 1914.

Nazi ideology evoked the emotions of the *Burgfrieden* that were still internalized by many Germans, even if those emotions were somewhat quelled by the difficulties of life in the

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<sup>66</sup>Andrew Donson, "Models for Young Nationalists and Militarists: German Youth Literature in the First World War," *German Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (October 2004): 585.

<sup>67</sup>D. Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004): 213.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 214.

Weimar Republic. Again the speeches of Hitler provide insight into Nazi interpretations of the *Burgfrieden* that meant to unite like-minded Germans under the Nazi banner. In 1923, Hitler condemned the delays and inefficiencies of the divided Reichstag contending that “if today in Germany one and a half millions could be united on a single platform, all prepared if necessary, to sacrifice themselves for their fatherland, then Germany would be saved.”<sup>69</sup> Hitler would later that year state along the same lines “when the whole German people knows one will and one will only-to be free- in that hour we shall have the instrument with which to win our freedom.”<sup>70</sup> However, despite all of this appeal to *Burgfrieden* rhetoric the Nazis used their own idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the National Community, as an idyllic world where a united Germany could, as Hitler said in April 1923 “rescue Germany (and achieve) the greatest deed in the world!”<sup>71</sup> Hence, the Nazis hoped that by touting their conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in terms of the *Burgfrieden* that they could raise an army of Germans that would one day topple the ailing and despised Weimar Republic.

Young volunteers of the First World War, for the most part students, were vulnerable to the ideas and emotions of both the Spirit of 1914 and the *Burgfrieden* to such an extent that they willingly risked their lives for those beliefs. Within these soldiers existed an extension of the emotional upsurge felt throughout much of Germany. For soldiers who were laying their lives on the line there came with these notions of unity, an idea of self-sacrifice in which a wound suffered or even death was an honorable and worthwhile sacrifice in the population wide effort to bring victory, power, and superiority to Germany. The best way to observe this self-sacrifice

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<sup>69</sup> Hitler, “The Morass of Parliament or the Fight for Freedom, May 4, 1923,” 71.

<sup>70</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Munich Speech, August 1, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 76.

<sup>71</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Politics and Race: Why Are We Anti-Semites, April 20, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 60.

comes from reviewing the writings of those who were on the front lines. As early as August 23, 1914 twenty-four year old volunteer Eduard Schmieder wrote “After each battle, one thanks God that one is still alive; one values life so much. But we would all sacrifice our lives gladly for our beautiful Fatherland.”<sup>72</sup> In November Eduard would write “There is blissful joy in every victory won for the sake of this beautiful German soil.”<sup>73</sup> Another volunteer twenty-one year old student of philosophy Sophus Lange wrote, “I am rather happy. This 'rush to the flag' especially among intellectuals is not only based on the love of Germanness.”<sup>74</sup> In January 1915 Sophus still saw value in risking his life for Germany claiming, “I can't be any different-at the moment, all I want to be is a soldier.”<sup>75</sup> The early volunteers demonstrated not only a romantic notion of war and the superiority of their task but believed in that task to such an extent that they willingly and excitedly sacrificed their lives for Germany.

Sadly, Eduard and Solphus would suffer the ultimate price for their service to Germany. Eduard died on May 8, 1916, and Solphus died just four months later on September 6, 1916.<sup>76</sup> As the war progressed, what was initially a romantic ideal of self-sacrifice turned into a solemn and obligatory duty towards Germany. Eduard in 1915 wrote that he had “an insatiable longing for a life lived to the fullest which I can never achieve.”<sup>77</sup> Eduard was slowly coming to the realization that he would likely have to die for Germany. However, such pessimism making it back to the home front was rare.<sup>78</sup> Army censors prevented disturbing news of the front from reaching loved

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<sup>72</sup>Eduard Schmieder, “Soldiers Describe Combat I, 1914-1915,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=806](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=806).

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Sophus Lange, “Soldiers Describe Combat II, 1914-1915,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=807](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=807).

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Schmieder, “Soldiers Describe Combat I, 1914-1915.”Lange, “Soldiers Describe Combat II, 1914-1915.”

<sup>77</sup>Schmieder, “Soldiers Describe Combat I, 1914-1915.”

<sup>78</sup>Eduard's comments likely only made it home because they were hid amongst a glowing review of a favorite book. Ibid.

ones who held onto the romantic notions of volunteers willfully making the ultimate sacrifice for Germany. A November 1914 letter that was sent from a volunteer had the following removed by censors, “because of the cold, which in spite of three shirts and waistbands shakes our bodies, because of the forced marches, because of the bacon and bread that stands in for warm meals, because of long sentries at night, in which the ice cold wind brings tears to our eyes, we are being forced to think about ourselves and to be candid about our situation and our burdens.”<sup>79</sup> The only parts that made it back home mentioned “friendly and encouraging looks” from old reserves and an artillery barrage.<sup>80</sup> Bulletins from the front were also thoroughly optimistic, depicting sweeping German victories while the young regiments sang 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles.’<sup>81</sup> The Imperial government did not want pessimism to reach those back home and although it was impossible to hide everything from the German public, the censors managed to maintain many of the romantic notions of self-sacrifice which provided short-term benefits for the war effort, but in the long run provided the Nazis with valuable foundations for their ideology.

The effect of the deaths of the First World War on those who remained cannot be overstated. World War I claimed the lives of 1.6 million Germans who died at the time, while over another two million would die later from injuries suffered during the war.<sup>82</sup> These deaths impacted the lives of Germans in profound ways. Families lost their chief bread winners, their confidants, their tension breakers, some families lost their very souls. Bereavement on this scale could only be resolved by holding onto the belief that their loved one's death was somehow justified. A great deal of material falls into the category of justification of World War I deaths,

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<sup>79</sup>“Censorship in Practice, 1914-1916,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=937](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=937).

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>“Bulletins from the Front I, 1914.,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=804&startrow=1](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=804&startrow=1).

<sup>82</sup>Statistics gathered from Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History*.

but for now a prominent justification came from the idea that the death of a loved one was the result of a noble sacrifice for Germany and the German community.<sup>83</sup> Holding onto these notions helped many Germans cope, including many Nazi supporters. The Nazis, through use of struggle and activism rhetoric, often asserted their willingness to match these brave sacrifices as part of an effort to see Germany not only restored to its previous glory, but improved beyond what the Kaiser had failed to accomplish.

Thanks to the censorship and propaganda efforts of the Imperial government most Germans managed to hold onto romantic notions of the First World War that endured into the early Weimar Republic. Mosse contends that a particularly troublesome remnant of this glorification permeated German consciousness in the form of the “Cult of the Fallen Soldier.” Mosse’s Cult embodies the manifestation of glorified justifications for the many deaths experienced during World War I. Per Mosse, youth was “symbolic of manhood, virility, and energy, and death as not death at all but sacrifice and resurrection.”<sup>84</sup> Inherent in the Cult of the Fallen Soldier was the belief that the death of so many youths had meaning, a difficult premise to establish in Germany following defeat. To compensate for the seemingly meaningless destruction, the fallen would be re-appropriated to symbolize many different ideals that were meant to strengthen Germans in the face of the difficulties of Weimar Germany and “regenerate a defeated nation.”<sup>85</sup>

Jay Baird argues that the Nazis incorporated a great deal of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier

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<sup>83</sup>Those interested in understanding the German justifications of their war dead, along with the idea of Self-Sacrifice experienced by many Germans during and after the First World War would be wise to read George Mosse's *Fallen Soldiers*. Mosse provides considerable insight into the numerous ways that World War I impacted notions of Germany Identity. In addition, reviewing his article “Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience” can provide additional insight. G. L. Mosse, “National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 1 (1979): 1–20. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars.*; Mosse, “Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience.”

<sup>84</sup>Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars.*, 73.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 73.

into their own rhetoric. Baird contends that the Nazis were able to make the Cult of the Fallen Soldier their own through the use of “the Blood Myth.”<sup>86</sup> Per Baird, the Nazi Blood Myth “featured the death of a noble warrior, his resurrection, and ultimately his spiritual return to the fighting columns of the Brown Shirts.”<sup>87</sup> The Nazis believed that any death, be it from World War I or from street violence in the name of Germany was a death that further strengthened the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Including members of the SA in the category of martyrdom alongside the dead of World War I entailed a large logical leap, but its success is documented in the death of Horst Wessel. Horst Wessel was a promising SA officer who died under less than dignified circumstances. Nonetheless, Nazi propaganda turned Wessel into a national hero. According to Baird, Wessel “became the source of myth and legend...a fighting Germanic troubadour who died that the nation might live.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Nazi ideology asserted that its followers belonged alongside the veterans of World War I as the masters of German identity.

Numerous examples exist that demonstrate the Nazi Movement's willingness to take on the mantle of the volunteers of 1914. However, the most provocative demonstration involved the Nazis efforts to stir activism and excitement amongst the German people just as the young volunteers had in 1914. Using phrases that correlated the difficulties of Weimar Germans with the same problems of the Imperial army, Hitler was able to sweep crowds into a fervor resembling the mass excitement resulting from the Spirit of 1914. In 1923 Hitler exclaimed, “you must learn to recognize that no one gives you freedom save only your own sword.”<sup>89</sup> Trying to stir people into a state of activism, Hitler argued the citizens of the Weimar Republic were

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<sup>86</sup>Jay W. Baird, “Goebbels, Horst Wessel, and the Myth of Resurrection and Return,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 4 (1982): 633.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid, 633.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 634.

<sup>89</sup>Adolf Hitler, “The Paradise of the Jew or the State of the German People, April 27, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler; April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 67.

coerced into giving up their engagement and desire for action. The individual was suffering from an “excess of culture” brought on by the Weimar Republic.<sup>90</sup> Using this rhetoric of struggle, Hitler intended to wake up Germans and return them to the state of supreme power they evoked in 1914.

Nothing served to better illustrate the Nazis’ desire for a renewed activism than the 1920 publishing of their political program. The DAP program is filled with very interesting and critical aspects that require in depth investigation, but at this stage the critical item of the program that demonstrates the activism and struggle aspects of Nazi ideology involves two words that feature prominently within the program. Most of the program's points begin with the phrase “we demand,” a seemingly inconsequential phrase that in all actuality was pivotal to demonstrating Nazi intentions.<sup>91</sup> The Nazis did not ask for circumstances to be restored to their prewar equivalents. They did not ask for votes to enter the political arena and slowly change the government within the realm of legality.<sup>92</sup> The Nazis *demand*ed change, insisting that Germany needed to change. This type of activism, this all or nothing forcefulness, reminded Germans of Imperial Germany that rolled the dice in 1914 completely opposite of the Weimar Republic that made compromise after compromise in the Treaty of Versailles.

In order for the Nazi Party to convince the German people to wake up and fight against the despised democracy they needed to correlate those who chose to take up the Nazi banner with the highly respected 1914 volunteer. To accomplish this tie in the Nazis went beyond struggle and activism and tapped into memories of masculinity that the triumphs and travails of

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 65.

<sup>91</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS].”

<sup>92</sup>The path of legality will be discussed extensively in the next chapter, but for the moment it is important to note that the Nazi Movement shunned legal, electoral actions. The idea of legality did not come into play for the Nazis until 1924. Kurt Ludecke, “Hitler’s Decision to Adopt the Parliamentary Tactic, 1924,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 67.



the Great War helped entrench within the German psyche. For many Germans, democracy was viewed as effeminate and lacking any distinct masculine features that made imperial Germany powerful.<sup>93</sup> Hitler once stated “man is truly man only if he defends and protects himself” a statement that called Germans to action to defend themselves in the same fashion the volunteers stepped up to defend the Second Reich.<sup>94</sup> It was a man's duty to defend Germany and by extension himself, his livelihood, and the livelihood of the community. To fully understand the ways the Nazis would internalize the masculine memories of the 1914 volunteers one needs to go no further than the early SA.

The *Sturm Abteilung* was the initial paramilitary arm of the Nazi Movement. In 1921, the SA was setup to protect various party meetings and disrupt in any way possible the meetings of opponents. However, the important aspect of the SA's formation is best summed up in the Nazi periodical the *Völkischer Beobachter*. According to the V.B., the SA was “intended to develop in the hearts of young supporters a tremendous desire for action, to drive home to them and burn into them the fact that history does not make men, but men history.”<sup>95</sup> The SA as an organization of young men volunteering to fight for Germany, through the Nazi Movement, evoked the notions of the masculine volunteers of 1914 flying to their death in the Great War with the sole hope of bringing victory to Germany. This type of activism appealed to other Germans within the range of the Nazis support base, helping the initial Movement expand to the size of a burgeoning political force. All SA members were “to give absolute military obedience to my military

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<sup>93</sup>Numerous historians have come to the conclusion that Weimar Germany was viewed as effeminate. In-depth analysis of such a claim is unnecessary for this work, but those interested should read Detlev Peukert's *The Weimar Republic* and Eric Weitz's *Weimar Germany* as both these works analyze not only the culture and life of Weimar Germany, but the numerous ways said aspects were endorsed and criticized. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Detlev J. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987).

<sup>94</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS],” 66.

<sup>95</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Forming of the SA, August 3, 1921,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).

superiors and leaders; to bear (themselves) honorably in and out of service; to always be companionable towards other comrades.”<sup>96</sup> In joining the SA a member had to take a pledge which demonstrated the Nazis' willingness to live up to the sacrifices needed. Per the pledge an SA member would need to be “always ready to stake life and limb in the struggle of the movement.”<sup>97</sup> The SA was not only to match the 1914 volunteers in activism, but they needed to be willing to lay their lives down for the cause of the movement, in other words the restoration of a powerful Germany. Thus, the SA was setup to demonstrate that the Nazis intended to pick up where Imperial Germany and the Volunteers of 1914, some of which were members, left off and through their masculine activism free Germany from the difficulties of a despicable Weimar existence.

Historians are correct in their assertions that World War I impacted Nazism in a fundamental way. The nationalism of 1914 entrenched feelings of German superiority with many Germans, future Nazis included, which permeated German consciousness allowing for a base of supporters for the early Nazi ardent nationalistic agenda. The *Burgfrieden* that arose out of the Spirit of 1914 directly correlated to the later Nazi pillar, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The *Volksgemeinschaft* allowed the Nazis to welcome new supporters into a community that intended to work hard and make sacrifices to better each and every member. Glorification of masculine activism in the name of Germany done by the Imperial Government provided the Nazi Movement with a rhetorical framework that had proven successful in mobilizing the masses. The sacrifices made by troops during the Great War left profound impressions on those whom they left behind. Thus, the idea of sacrificing everything in the name of nation and community existed as noble justifications for the losses many Germans felt. In light of the reverence given to

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<sup>96</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Stormtrooper’s Pledge, 1921,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

sacrifice, the Nazis were able to tie their struggle into this idea of noble sacrifice and gain the positive support of those still grieving for their critical losses. World War I helped the Nazis gain an initial support base, but as critical as the war was to initial membership, support, and ideology, it would be the after math of the war that had most significant impacts on Nazi ideology.

### The Treaty of Versailles and Nazism's Earliest Enemies

As impactful as World War I was to the early Nazi Party's buildup, the event that truly established the Nazi Movement's ideology was the end of the Great War. The devastating defeat, armistice, and Treaty of Versailles placed the responsibility for the war on Germany and because of this war guilt, the Allied powers demanded reparations, secession of territories, restrictions of military and naval power, and foreign occupation.<sup>98</sup> Versailles humiliated the German people previously filled with nationalistic pride. Believing they were superior to the other nations, losing the war and then suffering to such an extent called those nationalistic feelings from 1914 and beyond into question. How could a nation destined for greatness now be cast to such a low station?

The disparity between the imagined power of the German nation and its actual power following the Treaty of Versailles alienated Germans bringing on a nationwide crisis of identity. German artist George Grosz eloquently captured the identity crisis of postwar Germany within his own autobiography. According to Grosz, “there were many who could not get over the defeat. Others were unable to find their way back into the working world they had left. That world had

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<sup>98</sup>Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., “The Treaty of Versailles, June 28, 1919,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002).

disappeared or was disappearing.”<sup>99</sup> There existed a large number of Germans who could not understand how a Germany destined for domination could fail so utterly. Thus, as Grosz states, “Germany seemed to be splitting into two parts that hated each other,” one part that accepted the outcome of the war and the other that could never do the same.<sup>100</sup> This dissolution of unity and loss of a common cause refracted the German people to such an extent that there would be little unity amongst the majority of Germans tragically until 1933. This haphazard discontinuity amongst the Germans was exactly the emotional devastation that the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* would exploit to staggering success. However, the German identity crisis provided the Nazis with the building blocks to piece together a firm foundation to a dynamic ideology.

Following the end of the war those who could not accept that Germany had been defeated looked for a scapegoat to blame the loss of the war on. Very early after German defeat General Field Marshall, and future Weimar President, Paul von Hindenburg argued “the German army was stabbed in the back.”<sup>101</sup> Hindenburg argued that the Germany’s failure was not the German Army’s fault, but rather revolutionaries at home had undermined the war effort.<sup>102</sup> Thus, according to Hindenburg, “our operations necessarily miscarr(ied); the collapse was inevitable; the revolution only provided the keystone.”<sup>103</sup> A statement coming from a prestigious general in high command at the end of the war lent credibility to the revisionist-conspiracy theories that other events had led to German loss, not actual military defeat. The citizens of Germany

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<sup>99</sup>George Grosz, “Autobiography, 1946,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 69.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.69.

<sup>101</sup>Paul von Hindenburg, “The Stab in the Back, November 18, 1919,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid, 15-16.

<sup>103</sup>Germany was indeed defeated in World War I even though its enemies did not touch German soil. For those interested in the events of the First World War John Morrow wrote a copious analysis of the Great War that explains the numerous facets of that global conflict as each power experienced them. As such, his work, *The Great War: An Imperial History*, does an excellent job of explaining the circumstances that started the war and the totality of Germany’s defeat. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History*. Hindenburg, “The Stab in the Back, November 18, 1919.” 15-16.

experiencing difficulty accepting the defeat no doubt would have taken notice of and remembered the numerous leaflets and speeches made calling for an end to the war. Most notable, Communist leader Rosa Luxemburg protested the war not from a standpoint of peace versus the destruction of war. Rather, Luxemburg opposed the war because the global conflict would divide and destroy the Communist agenda. Per the Communist leader, “the socialist proletariat cannot dispense with class struggle and international solidarity, either in war or peace, without destroying itself.”<sup>104</sup> Therefore, in 1916, one of the chief Communists stated that they were not part of the *Burgfrieden* and thus had interests separate from the German people. As Ferguson asserts in *Pity of War*, Luxemburg was just one of many advocating an end to the war, thus when Hindenburg lent his notoriety to the so called “Stab in the Back Legend” the Germans who had seen these resistance and protest efforts found the justification they needed to refuse to accept the outcome of the war.<sup>105</sup>

The Stab in the Back legend would become further cemented into the minds of those who denied German defeat when the Treaty of Versailles became finalized. As previously stated, the Versailles Treaty was designed to humiliate Germany and dissuade Germans from ever again trying to become a relevant world power. Germany had to cede valuable coal mines to France and had to abandon military occupation of the Rhineland.<sup>106</sup> The treaty also mandated that Germany recognize the independence of Austria, Poland, and the Czechoslovak state and renounce all of its overseas possessions.<sup>107</sup> To add to the diminished land power, the military was severely reduced, criminal tribunals were setup, and Germany was made responsible for paying a reparations bill of more than twenty billion Gold Marks, a staggeringly impossible compensation

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<sup>104</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, “War and the Working Class, January 1916,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=1835](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1835).

<sup>105</sup>Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 174-197

<sup>106</sup>Stackelberg and Winkle, “The Treaty of Versailles, June 28, 1919,” 54.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 54-55.

mark.<sup>108</sup> Germany was not only defeated, it was ruined as the result of an international conflict that, many historians would agree, it was not solely responsible for starting. Many Germans found these terms unfair as Germany had willingly agreed to an armistice before Allied troops had ever fought in German lands. The shock at how harsh the peace turned out to be caused Germans to treat the Versailles Treaty with a general disdain if not visceral hatred.

The terms of this treaty and the subsequent hardships the German people would be forced to endure because of it fueled the fires of anger amongst those who denied Germany's defeat. This blinding hate would be directed against multiple parties both internationally and domestically. Thus, the German citizenry became filled with rage fueled by confusion, uncertainty, bitterness, and denial. This state of affairs correlated with the Nazi Movement's foundation as the Nazis themselves were filled with the same denial and identity crises as the German citizenry, but the Nazis were anything but unfocused and had a plethora of targets for their unbounded hate.

The popular target of criticism following the end of the war was the party responsible for the negotiation of peace and the formation of the Weimar Republic, the Social Democratic Party. As the driving force behind the revolution, the Social Democratic Party, known as the SPD, existed as a prime target for those who denied German defeat. The SPD initially supported the war, but as time dragged on they began to beg for peace thus separating themselves from *Burgfrieden*, albeit less aggressively than the Communists separated. In August 1915 the SPD responded to opposition by calling for peace and criticizing the waste of life that was the Great War.<sup>109</sup> Criticism of this point would not raise the ire of too many because most Germans had

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 55-58.

<sup>109</sup>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, "The Party Leadership Responds to Opposition, August 14-16, 1915," German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=964](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=964).

lost someone they knew to the War, but what did raise concern was the SPD's call at that time for “the creation of a permanent international court of arbitration, to which all future international conflicts are to be submitted.”<sup>110</sup> Even before the war was over the SPD was willing to work with Germany’s enemies. Thus, although the results of the Treaty of Versailles were themselves shocking, the fact that the SPD had gained the most from it, in the way of international agreements and the installation of the Republic, surprised no one and allowed the Nazi Movement a prime target for their scorn.

The Nazi Movement was particularly adept at turning people against the SPD and others believed to be behind the Stab in the Back. The most common way for the Nazis to demonstrate that they shared, or exceeded, the citizens’ scorn of the responsible parties was through the use of insulting names and buzzwords meant to condemn the SPD and the Weimar government it established. The most common label placed on the SPD was that of the “November Criminals” which alluded to the November 1918 signing of the armistice that removed the German army from the war.<sup>111</sup> Seemingly, even just the mention of November was enough as “November scoundrels” and “November-republic” were also used by Hitler in his early speeches.<sup>112</sup> In addition using the word “international” usually condemned the targeted enemy as separate from Germany and subsequently an enemy likely responsible for the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>113</sup> Finally, calling the enemies “Marxists” was equally effective at identifying and marginalizing those outside of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the Marxist agenda was denounced as an adversary to and

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Some Fundamental Demands of the Party, September 18, 1922,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 107.

<sup>112</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Munich Speech, April 13, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969). Adolf Hitler, “Munich Speech, September 12, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969).

<sup>113</sup> Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “A Nazi Handbill Advertising a Hitler Speech, February 1920,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 41.

destroyer of the National Community. Thus, the Nazis used simple phrases to remind the public that the SPD was an enemy to everything they considered German, but their antagonism of the SPD did not stop at simple name calling.

As previously stated, the Nazis made extensive use of struggle rhetoric to gain the support of aspects of the German public. The Nazis glorified their struggle against the SPD in hopes of being viewed as the primary vehicle for change in Germany. The DAP platform begins with a hidden jab to this effect, “the programme of the German Workers' Party is designed to be of limited duration. The leaders have no intention, once the aims announced in it have been achieved, of establishing fresh ones, merely in order to increase, artificially, the discontent of the masses and so ensure the continued existence of the Party.”<sup>114</sup> Although the eventual hypocrisy of this statement cannot be missed considering the Nazis eventual flagrant manufacturing of enemies, this statement sets the Nazis as a dynamic, active organization with the goal of toppling the stagnating, SPD led Weimar Republic. Thus, Germans were left with choosing an organization that wanted to improve on the days of the powerful Imperial Germany or a group that the Nazis would have people believe stabbed the German army in the back, bringing on the devastation of Versailles.

The decision framed in these terms is leading enough, but the Nazis refused to halt their criticism of the SPD there. The Nazis chose instead to further cement their struggle with the SPD by tying their plight into the sacrifices made by the 1914 volunteers. Many who mourned for the volunteers questioned the value of their loved ones' sacrifice, especially given the results of the war. To answer this need, the Nazis set themselves up as the organization that would pick up the banner of German superiority that fell from the hands of these young soldiers. In an April 1923

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<sup>114</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS].”



speech Hitler proclaimed, “two millions have remained on the field of battle. They, too, have their rights and not we, the survivors, alone. There are millions of orphans, of cripples, of widows in our midst. They too have rights. For the Germany of to-day not one of them died, not one of them became a cripple, an orphan, or a widow. We owe it to these millions that we build a new Germany.”<sup>115</sup> Hitler tied the Nazi struggle with the Weimar into the sacrifice and grief endured by countless Germans. The Nazis worked hard to set themselves up as the enemies of the SPD and Weimar and in doing so managed to gain the allegiance of many disillusioned from Germany's fall from power.

Another party, partially blamed for the end of the war, was targeted by the Nazis with an unprecedented visceral rage. Following defeat and the Treaty of Versailles, many Germans turned their anger and confusion towards a group of people who Europeans often made into scapegoats, the Jews. Anti-Semitism following the collapse of the German war effort was rabid throughout Germany. People across Germany screamed “The Jews are to blame!”<sup>116</sup> In 1920, German journalist and poet Adolf Bartels wrote, “Jewish disfigurement, it elevates the puny individual to the measure of all things.”<sup>117</sup> Any argument backed by anti-Semitism contains critical flaws, but the accusations that would be leveled against the Jews would at best be labeled as convoluted conspiracy theories, at worst the delusional ravings of the truly lost. Those Germans who subscribed to such stories and accusations were prime targets for recruitment into the Nazi Movement.

The Nazi Movement was an inherently nationalist organization and as such had a clear hatred of all things not German. Thus, Nazis considered Germany's large Jewish population

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<sup>115</sup>Hitler, “Munich Speech, April 13, 1923,” 53.

<sup>116</sup>Lea Grundig, “Visions and History, 1964,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 98.

<sup>117</sup>Adolf Bartels, “The Struggle of the Age, 1920,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 124.

outsiders, as shown in the party program, despite the fact that many Jews had fought in the Great War for Germany. The Nazi Movement's hatred for the Jews stemmed from similar arguments that other anti-Semites in Germany internalized. The Nazis believed that the Jews were not bound to spatial boundaries.<sup>118</sup> The Jews were allowed to setup a state within multiple racial communities by classifying themselves, not as a race, but rather as a religion.<sup>119</sup> By presenting themselves as a religion and not a competing race the Jew was assured of religious tolerance.<sup>120</sup> Afforded time, the Jews would soften the stern militarism of the Germans via catchwords such as “Democracy, Majority, Conscience of the World, World-solidarity, World-peace, Internationality of Art” and numerous other terms that cultivated internationalism.<sup>121</sup> Jews were thus able to hide themselves in every nation claiming to be citizens of another race while secretly fostering the survival of their own race. Thus, as far as the Nazis were concerned, the Jews were the prime enemy of the German people, and the Nazis intended to use whatever means available to them to communicate that fact to the German public.

The Nazis had many ways to demonstrate that they were the group that would truly wage an all or nothing battle with the perpetrators of the supposed Jewish conspiracy against Germany. In their platform, the Nazis clearly stated, “no Jew may be a member of the nation” and that “all non-German immigration must be prevented.”<sup>122</sup> Going further, and perhaps more to the point, the platform stated that the Party “combats Jewish-materialist spirit within and without us.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, from the beginning the Nazis made it clear they were a serious enemy of the Jews. Beyond such aggression using buzzwords and catchphrases allowed the Nazis to tie any topic they

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<sup>118</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 150.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>122</sup> Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS].”

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

protested to their anti-Semitism. In condemning the free market, which, according to the Nazis, was negatively impacting the German economy and by extension the livelihood of its citizens, a Nazi handbill referred to bankers as “agents of the Jewish international stock exchange.”<sup>124</sup>

Various Nazis would become quite adept at blaming the Jews for all of Germany's ills, but no one was more of a skillful anti-Semite than Adolf Hitler. Hitler's anti-Semitism came from a place of intense emotions too copious to cover at this time. Needless to say, most of Hitler's anti-Semitic statements at the time equated Jews with division, collapse, and responsibility for the failure of the German people in 1918. In 1923, Hitler argued that the Jew “is the demon of the disintegration of peoples, he is the symbol of the unceasing destruction of their life.”<sup>125</sup>

Responding to economic concerns, Hitler blamed the Jews for the depersonalizing free market, or as he also called it “Judaized,” business.<sup>126</sup> According to Hitler, “business lost the character of work; it became an object of speculation. Master and man were torn asunder.”<sup>127</sup> Through Hitler's numerous speeches and the various other efforts of the Movement, the Nazis managed to tie all of the woes of Weimar Germany to the already despised Jews while simultaneously setting themselves in the role of the enemy of the Jews.

The emotions of World War I provided critical pathways into the German psyche that the Nazis incorporated into their ideology, but that alone could not have helped the Nazis gain much of an initial power base. What truly motivates people into action is having an enemy for everyone to rally against. In the fallout of German defeat and the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans gained a plethora of enemies to target their confusion and grief towards, but this anger

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<sup>124</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “A Nazi Handbill Advertising a Hitler Speech, February 1920., 41.

<sup>125</sup>Hitler, “The Great German May Celebration, May 1, 1923,” 68.

<sup>126</sup>Adolf Hitler, “Race and Economics: The German Workman in the National Socialist State, April 24, 1923,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 61.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid,61.

was diffuse, split as it was amongst many parties. The Nazis managed to focus this anger and mistrust towards specific enemies they deemed dangerous to the German way of life. Using ancient racism and calling on powerful emotions the Nazis assembled around themselves a small, yet significant group of supporters and readied themselves to make a move against the ailing Weimar Republic. As many historians have asserted, without the First World War and all of the emotions, anger, hatred, disillusionment, grief, sacrifices, and suffering that it brought to the German people there would never have been a Nazi Party. However, before accepting the argument presented here it is important to evaluate German identity before World War I in order to determine whether Nazi ideology could have existed independent of the Great War.

### The Second Reich and the Not-So-Sonderweg

A school of thought amongst historians argues that the German mindset before World War I, as opposed to the results of World War I, allowed the Nazis their initial voice. Known as the *Sonderweg*, or special path, this thesis claims that the German people suffered from a failed Bourgeois revolution that sent them astray from the “normal” western path of development. The bedrock of such an argument claims that anti-liberal sentiments from the days of Bismarck managed to survive beyond the First World War allowing the Nazis room to rise.<sup>128</sup> While there is a logical consistency to such a claim, the *Sonderweg* argument has numerous flaws and is largely becoming phased out of present day work on German history. The central contention against this argument is embodied by the work of David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley who argue that comparing Germany's development alongside Western developments of England, France,

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<sup>128</sup>J. Kocka, “German History Before Hitler: The Debate About the German Sonderweg,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 6.

and the United States demonstrates an unfair bias by deeming these nations' development as the standard of normality.<sup>129</sup> Normal stands as a stretch as England and France endured a revolution followed by dictatorship and the United States suffered a devastating Civil War. Following the Wars of German unification Germans were thoroughly optimistic and anxious to demonstrate their power in international competition, not tearing one another apart.<sup>130</sup> Jürgen Kocka demonstrates another flaw in the *Sonderweg* by making the simple claim that there is more to German history than 1933 and historians need to focus on more than this era when they seek to explain the entirety of German history.<sup>131</sup> However, the concerns of *Sonderweg* historians are still relevant in terms of Nazi ideology as numerous strains from before the First World War can be found in Nazi ideology. Before determining World War I was foundational to Nazi ideology, these pre-war aspects of German identity must be evaluated.

The Germans steadily built up an economy rivaling the powerhouse industrial nations of Great Britain and the United States. Germany also put a great deal of money into a sophisticated military and a navy that hoped to rival the British monopoly on the high seas. Thanks to some of Bismarck's actions the Germans enjoyed peace and one of the most sophisticated welfare systems in the world. Germany was at the precipice of becoming a world power and these victories caused the Germans to internalize an ardent nationalism that would exist beyond the days of the Second Reich. This environment of German optimism is critical to understanding the Nazi Party's eventual popularity because it is this optimism that the Nazis would evoke during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The Nazis were able to appeal to the German citizenry because they evoked a masculine

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<sup>129</sup>David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)..

<sup>130</sup>Kocka, "German History Before Hitler," 7.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

activism that hearkened back to the volunteers in the trenches. However, masculinity was a facet of German culture long before World War I. The German people worshiped the powerful men of their history believing that their masculinity, military prowess, and ability to rule helped the German people stand on a superior plain above the rest of the world. In a letter written by Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Germanic ruler praised his father and grandfather for the role their military victories played in uniting the German Reich.<sup>132</sup> Beyond worship and praise of masculine leaders, German masculinity was tied into nature and physicality. In a 1906 German magazine, an article proclaimed that Germans strove “towards a balanced physical vigor” while elevating “physical culture to the status of one of the most authentic demands.”<sup>133</sup> The idea that a man was meant to be virile and strong in the name of “individual and communal life” existed with German citizens well before World War I ever erupted. Therefore, an obstacle exists in claiming the Nazis manipulated notions of masculinity from the First World War as those notions were internalized in previous decades.

Notions of self-sacrifice in the name of the greater German community arose out of trench warfare and the harsh life on the home front during the First World War. Subsequently, the Nazi Party used these notions of self-sacrifice as part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. While most of this argument is correct, notions of self-sacrifice existed before the First World War ever broke out. In a 1901 letter directed to Kaiser Wilhelm II, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a German conservative elitist, demonstrated some extreme nationalism when he contended that God planned for the German people to advance science, philosophy, and other aspects of society.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Albert, “Kaiser Wilhelm II’s Reply, December 31, 1901.,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 18.

<sup>133</sup>Monthly Magazine of the Society for Physical Culture, “Vigor and Beauty, 1906,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=738](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=738).

<sup>134</sup>Houston Stewart Chamberlain, “Letter Ro Kaiser Wilhelm II, November 11, 1901,” in *The Nazi Germany*

However, Chamberlain goes on to state that the German people “must submerge themselves completely in the pursuance of this God-given duty.”<sup>135</sup> Chamberlain also discusses the ways in which he has made personal sacrifices in the name of bettering Germany and by extension the world.<sup>136</sup> Evidently notions of self-sacrifice and unification existed before World War I, but to argue that the opinions of one German elitist in 1901 were pervasive in the German mindset would indeed be irresponsible.

Notions of self-sacrifice seem to have existed, endured, and expanded beyond what Chamberlain argued on the eve of the First World War. In 1912, the head of the Pan-German League, a nationalist organization that existed before World War I, Heinrich Class wrote a pamphlet *If I Were Kaiser* in which he argued that the key to mastering the success Germany was experiencing in the early 20th Century resided in the ability of the German people to forget their differences and unite in “the struggle for the soul of the people.”<sup>137</sup> Class called for people to enter “such honorable service” to “smooth out the divisions of that through ill will have escalated into implacable enmity.”<sup>138</sup> Hence, by 1912 notions of putting aside one's individual problems and helping the German nation existed in ample form. Therefore, the *Burgfrieden* and by extension the *Volksgemeinschaft* cannot said to be entirely unique to the First World War and certainly not to Nazi ideology.

Anti-Semitism has existed for time immemorial, long before even the Kaiser came to power. Proof of its presence within Germany is not hard to find whatsoever. In 1850, famous German composer Richard Wagner demonstrated a belief in a Jewish conspiracy stating that the

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*Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 17.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid, 18.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid, 17.

<sup>137</sup>Heinrich Class, “If I Were Kaiser, 1912,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 25.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid, 25.

Jew “rules and will rule as long as money remains the power as a result of which all our activities and doings lose their force.”<sup>139</sup> Returning to Heinrich Class, the notions that Jewish money interfered with the masculine culture predated the First World War as the head of the Pan-German League accused the Jews of being “the carriers and teachers of the materialism that today is dominant.”<sup>140</sup> Class, as if he was taking a page from Adolf Hitler's future manuscripts stated that the Jews' “German-born supporters are dupes seduced and alienated from their inborn instincts.”<sup>141</sup> Before the Great War, anti-Semitism was used to place the failures of modern society squarely on the shoulders of the Jewish people. Thus, as some would argue, the Nazis' anti-Semitic messages already met a sympathetic and receptive audience independent of the First World War.

What is to be made then of World War I's influence on Nazi ideology if so many of its foundations were actually notions internalized by German's before the war ever began? Even though notions of masculinity, self-sacrifice, community, and anti-Semitism existed before the war, the Great War amplified the notions to an immeasurable scale. Sure, masculinity was very important to the German mindset before the Great War, but to that same token “atom” vacuum cleaners and trips to the cinema were highly valued before the war.<sup>142</sup> Self-sacrifice and community may have existed, but factory owners still exploited workers at every opportunity that was presented to them.<sup>143</sup> Even anti-Semitism remained a very conservative reaction to the

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<sup>139</sup>Richard Wagner, “Judaism in Music, 1850,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

<sup>140</sup>Class, “If I Were Kaiser, 1912,” 21.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>142</sup>L.F. Nissen, “The ‘Atom’ Vacuum Cleaner: Advertisement by the Firm L.F. Nissen, 1906,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=643](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=643). Ulrich Rauscher, *The Cinema, 1913*, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=702](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=702).

<sup>143</sup>Paul Göhre, “Working-Class Life, 1891,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=652](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=652).



woes of the world, and was not anywhere near as combative as it was following the war. Thus, such aspects that would go on to form foundations of Nazi ideology were tepid and isolated at best before World War I brought these aspects to the surface.

Perhaps most troubling to the *Sonderweg* idea that aspects of German identity were unique to Germany is the fact that many of these notions were *not* unique to Germany.<sup>144</sup> To demonstrate how obvious the lack of uniqueness of aspects of Germany's pre-war identity were one needs go no further than one of the United States most recognizable figures, Theodore Roosevelt. President at the start of the twentieth century, Teddy Roosevelt has been held by numerous historians as the embodiment of turn of the century American identity. Even if such a bold claim is not to be accepted, Roosevelt's views are remarkably indicative of the previously mentioned German notions of identity. In his inaugural speech of March 1904 Teddy Roosevelt stated, "we [Americans] are the heirs of the ages...yet our life has called for the vigor and effort without which the manlier and hardier virtues wither away."<sup>145</sup> Thus, TR demonstrated the presence of a masculine nationalism in the United States before the World War. Continuing in this speech, TR was effusive in his call for a sense of community and sacrifice amongst Americans stating, "it is our own fault if we failed...the success which we confidently believe the future will bring should cause...a deep and abiding realization of all which life has offered us."<sup>146</sup> Therefore, it becomes increasingly difficult for *Sonderweg* historians to undermine the value of the First World War via pre-war interpretations of identity as those aspects were far from unique to Germany.

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<sup>144</sup>Many *Sonderweg* adherents claim that anti-Semitism existed as an entrenched aspect of pre-war German identity. However, anti-Semitism was fairly mute in late nineteenth century Germany. In another demonstration of the selective-memory of *Sonderweg* adherents, France was caught up in an anti-Semitic storm from the Dreyfus Affair. Therefore, Anti-Semitism was most certainly not unique to Germany.

<sup>145</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address of Theodore Roosevelt," March 4, 1905, The Avalon Project, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/troos.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/troos.asp).

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

World War I intensified all aspects of German identity that the citizenry had internalized for generations. With the outbreak of war, physical, virile masculinity was required by both those on the front lines and those at home. Everyone needed to make sacrifices to help the greater community and when all of this failed, when Germany at its peak could not bring victory, unjustified and intensified hate was directed towards all enemies of Germany. Even though many aspects of Nazi ideology existed before the World War, the importance that the Great War placed on these notions endured beyond the failure of the war allowing the Nazis to form an amplified emotional foundation to their belief system

### Ideology's Influence on the Beer Hall Putsch

Taking a brief moment to recap, the First World War amplified previously held notions of German identity and when those notions failed to achieve victory, the German people suffered an identity crisis. Those who would support and join the early Nazi Movement perhaps suffered disproportionately from the disconnect between identity and reality in comparison with other Germans. Nazi supporters and thinkers took on these notions of German identity and focused them into a political agenda of overthrow that appealed to a very select support base during the early inter-war years. This support base would continue to be limited as long as Nazism remained on the political periphery of Bavaria. These circumstances being the case, historians are correct in their assertions that the Nazis needed much more than notions of World War I to become a political force. Thus, as this work argues for Nazi ideology as a driving force of Nazi action more than amplified senses of identity are needed to justify how the Nazis began their path to power. If, as this work suggests, the identity crisis that occurred following the loss of

World War I was the pivotal foundation to Nazi ideology as opposed to a convenient context, then it has to be demonstrated that the crisis-motivated ideology of the Nazi Movement led to a watershed moment that without said moment the Nazi Party could never have risen to dominance. That watershed moment would come in November 1923 when the Nazis decided to act upon their overthrow ideology.

In November 1923, the Nazi Movement growing in popularity would be afforded a chance to accomplish exactly what they set out for, a grand action that would seize broad, national attention. By November 1923 the Nazi Movement feeling very confident with their hard earned support base and the weaknesses within Munich and the surrounding area, launched a coup known famously as the Beer Hall Putsch. The Hitler-led Putsch was the pinnacle of the early Nazi Movement's achievement. Hitler and the Nazis had called for an end to the ineffectual Weimar Republic, an event that would only occur in the wake of unity of action. In attempting to overthrow the republic the Nazis were living up to everything they stood for. Brave, virile SA men united despite their individual differences and rose up against the enemies of a potentially restored Germany. However, the Putsch was a failure. Many of those responsible, Hitler included, were arrested and put on trial for high treason. The Nazis, at that time a largely regional organization 55,000 strong, would be outlawed albeit temporarily. With the leaders of the movement facing possible execution, many members scattered by the outcome of the Putsch, and the remainder not allowed to unify under the Nazi banner, the Putsch, a moment that the Nazis had previously exclaimed as Germany's liberation, seemingly extinguished the torch of the Nazi Movement. However, news of the failed Putsch spread like wildfire across Weimar Germany receiving condemnation and compliments as all of Germany began to pay attention to the Nazi Movement. Hitler's trial itself was highly publicized offering him the unique opportunity of

having a nationwide audience to sermonize; an event the future Führer knew how to take full advantage of.

In a speech Hitler made at the trial in his defense he spread critical aspects of the Nazi ideology to the masses. Hitler began his defense by exclaiming “I have resolved to be the destroyer of Marxism.”<sup>147</sup> Hitler would go on to claim that despite the differing political backgrounds and goals of those involved in the Putsch, they put aside their differences because “the fate of Germany does not lie in the choice between a republic or a Monarchy, but in the content.”<sup>148</sup> Hitler then asserted that “We wanted to create in Germany the precondition which alone will make it possible for the iron grip of our enemies to be removed”<sup>149</sup> Hitler took the opportunity to insult the “international stock exchange slavery,” “trusts,” and “the politicizing of unions.”<sup>150</sup> During a trial where he could face execution, Hitler spread Nazi ideology's fostering of activism, disdain, self-sacrifice, unity, and labeling the enemies of Germany. The trial allowed Hitler his first national audience and he used that opportunity to attempt to sway people across Germany to the Nazi way of thinking, just as he had been doing since the formation of the Nazi Movement. Although the Nazis would be disbanded, Hitler's speech left a significant impression on the minds of many more Germans than the 55,000 who followed the Movement in revolt.

Hitler had one last matter to discuss at his trial. As powerful as his words could be, Hitler knew that with the Movement disbanded it could very well dissolve forever. Therefore, Hitler took advantage of having a national audience to mythologize the remaining shadow organization of the Nazi Movement. Per Hitler, “the army which we have formed grows from day to day; it

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<sup>147</sup> Albrecht Tyrell, “Führer Befehl,” in *Nazism: 1919-1945 A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 34.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

grows more rapidly from hour to hour.”<sup>151</sup> Hitler awaited the time “when these untrained bands (would) grow to battalions, the battalions to regiments and the regiments to divisions.”<sup>152</sup> Hitler passed on to the German public the image of a Nazi Movement waiting in the shadows all the while biding its time as it would grow to unthinkable size. That idea would help keep the Nazi Movement in existence until its re-founding in February 1925.

Hitler ended his speech with a diatribe that shook many Germans right to their nationalistic core. Hitler, calling into question the validity of the court trying him stated “For gentlemen it is not you who pronounce judgment upon us.”<sup>153</sup> He then claimed that “the Court of History” would judge the leaders of the Putsch “as Germans who wanted the best for their people and their fatherland, who wished to fight and to die. You may pronounce us guilty a thousand times, but the Goddess who presides over the Eternal Court of History...she acquits us.”<sup>154</sup> Hitler in closing his speech cemented one aspect of Nazi ideology permanently in the minds of supporters and enemies alike; the Nazis intended to carry on the torch of the 1914 volunteers by fighting and if necessary dying in the name of a nationalist Germany. There would be no sacrifice too high, no maneuver too risky. The Nazis intended to return to prominence and would try again to destroy the Weimar Republic. The only difference between the Putsch and the future strike of the Nazi Movement would be the fact that now many more than 55,000 people knew to what extent the Nazis were willing to go to see their vision of the future realized.

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<sup>151</sup>Ibid, 35.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid, 35.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid, 35.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid, 35.

## Closing Thoughts

Hitler would receive a light sentence and spend very little time in jail, most of which was spent compiling his political testament *Mein Kampf*. When Hitler emerged he returned to a fairly stable operation and began to turn a rabid Nazi Movement, enduring in his absence, into an actual Nazi Party with the goal of winning elections and destroying the Weimar Republic within the framework of legality. As previously stated, if World War I is to be considered an ideological foundation for the Third Reich as opposed to simply the initial context, then it has to be demonstrated that the amplified sense of identity from World War I led to a watershed moment for the Nazi Movement that without said moment the Nazi Party could never have risen to dominance. That watershed moment for the Nazis on which everything that would subsequently follow was Hitler's speech in his defense.

Historians always attempt to find moments that they can point to as critical to everything else that follows afterwards because those moments are truly rare and are incredibly informative. Hitler's defense speech contained ideas of masculinity, a willingness to make sacrifices and unify in the name of the community, clearly identified enemies of Germany, and most importantly demonstrated the willingness of the Nazi Movement to sacrifice themselves to achieve victory. All of these goals are indiscernible from the goals of the young volunteers setting out for the trenches filled with the Spirit of 1914 and the *Burgfrieden*. In tying the struggle of the Nazi Movement to the emotional memories of the First World War, Hitler established the Nazi ideals within the psyche of the German people. Presumably, Hitler's speech allowed for the Nazi Movement to endure during his absence and provided a national stage for the Nazis upon Hitler's return. This work contends that this speech should be the critical moment of evaluation for the

entirety of the Nazi rise afterward because although much remained to be determined, none of the political and electoral intrigue over the next eight years would have happened without the notoriety and significance of this speech and its assertion of the Putsch as an ideologically driven action.

## CHAPTER 3

### ERKENNUNG: 1924 TO 1933<sup>155</sup>

A 1930 letter to the Oldenburg Ministry of Churches and Schools complained about the violence meted out towards children by National Socialist students. According to the letter, “the son of a Republican was beaten up during the break...so badly that he had to stay home for over a week.”<sup>156</sup> The letter goes on to state that the National Socialist students had formed a “Pupils’ Association” and quickly took a majority within the school.<sup>157</sup> It did not take long for “their satchels [to be] smeared with swastikas” or for them to “join together and sing National Socialist combat songs.”<sup>158</sup> Children who did not join the Pupils’ Association became distraught from the situation, which negatively impacted their studies.<sup>159</sup> Such a decline resulted in punishments from teachers despite their knowledge of the underlying situation.<sup>160</sup> According to the letter, “some headmasters have already declared that they are not in a position to deal with these incidents.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, the students who refused to join the Pupils' Association were left with the choice of fending for themselves, a thoroughly risky option, or joining the National Socialist agenda.

This letter is remarkably indicative of the generally accepted interpretation of the Nazi

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<sup>155</sup> German for Recognition

<sup>156</sup>“Republican” refers to a supporter of the Weimar Republic, naturally the enemy of the National Socialist Movement. Jeremy Noakes, ed., “Nazi Activity in the Schools, 21 November 1930,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 109.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 110.



Party rise during the Weimar Republic. Similar to the school environment, Weimar Germany should have been a safe environment that cultivated individual expression and personal liberty. However, like the school, the Republic became a living hell where those trying to make it to the next day were under the constant harassment of National Socialist violence. In the same manner that the students were left to fend for themselves, those in charge of the Weimar Republic seemed powerless to stop the Nazi terror machine. Thus, by this interpretation, the citizenry, left with the choice between continued suffering or submission to National Socialism, chose to submit and gain some peace. These types of arguments have entrenched the image of the Nazis as fanatical bullies whose war of terror allowed them to coerce support from the unwilling masses; an identity cemented by their actions during the Second World War.

The idea of the violent Nazi opportunists is not necessarily incorrect as Nazi SA members often committed violent acts for no other reason than they could. However, to argue that such violent opportunism explained their rise to political dominance is a severe mistake. Thomas Childers has argued that by 1932 the Nazis actually lost support from the SA's "embrace of political terrorism."<sup>162</sup> Violence did have a beneficial impact on Nazi success but not in a sense of intimidating the unwilling public into support. Rather, violence stood as a pillar of the Nazi ideological command for activism and struggle against the enemies of Germany. Per historian Eric Weitz, Nazi violence "demonstrate[d] vividly the Nazis' commitment and determination, and that, of course was the point."<sup>163</sup> Such activism afforded Nazis support from various social groups looking for action in a time of helplessness and impotence. Therefore, violent, opportunistic activity existed, but violence of this petty nature did not result in significant support. Violence that matched Nazi ideology instilled a sense of activism in various

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<sup>162</sup>Thomas Childers and Eugene Weiss, "Voters and Violence: Political Violence and the Limits of National Socialist Mass Mobilization," *German Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (October 1990): 482.

<sup>163</sup>Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 346.

citizens, thus gaining support in that fashion.

Another flaw with the Nazi oppression and opportunism argument is that under this interpretation the Nazis would have to have been universally accepted as the majority party of the Weimar Republic. However, as historians know, the highest percentage of votes the Nazi Party attained in fair Reichstag elections was 37.8 percent.<sup>164</sup> Such an argument of Nazi universality was popularized by journalist William Shirer who stated “to all the millions of discontented Hitler in a whirlwind campaign offered...some measure of hope.”<sup>165</sup> Earlier Shirer also lent credence to the *Sonderweg* thesis by claiming that “acceptance of autocracy, of blind obedience to the petty tyrant who ruled as princes, became ingrained in the German mind.”<sup>166</sup> Thus, Shirer and to a certain extent *Sonderweg* historians, set into the public mindset the idea of a universally popular Nazi Party which was far from the case. After Shirer, historians rejected the idea of a universal Nazi appeal and began postulating the *Mittelstand* Thesis in which the Nazis gained their support almost exclusively from the lower middle class.<sup>167</sup> However, beginning in the late 1970s various historians began to criticize this thesis arguing in favor of the notion of the Nazis as a *Volkspartei*, a party spanning various social groupings. The *Volkspartei* thesis will be explored throughout this chapter as it encompasses the work of numerous historians most notably Thomas Childers, Richard Hamilton, and William Sheridan Allen.<sup>168</sup> For the time being

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<sup>164</sup>Faud Aleskerov, Manfred J. Holler, and Rita Kamalova, “Power Distribution in the Weimar Reichstag in 1919-1933,” in *Politics & Economics* (University of Hamburg, 2011), 21.

<sup>165</sup>William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 137.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid*, 92.

<sup>167</sup>The originator of the *Mittelstand* Thesis was Seymour Martin Lipset in his work *Political Man*. In the early 1970's though, Michael Kater picked up the torch for the *Mittelstand* Thesis, although he eventually would change his belief in this thesis substantially. For his initial and thorough support of the *Mittelstand* Thesis review his work *The Nazi Party*. Seymour Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960). Michael Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>168</sup>The *Volkspartei* Thesis and critique of the *Mittelstand* Thesis often go hand in hand. However, one can disagree

it is important to note that Nazi appeal was in no way universal to all of Germany, but did attract a disparate following across Germany.

Most historians offer multiple explanations for why the Nazis were able to attain a diverse constituency, but these explanations almost always boil down to one of two points. Either the mass-support for Nazism came as a result of the multiple failures of the Weimar Republic or they were the result of the Nazi Party's shameless pandering from 1928 to 1933. John Morrow certainly advocates the former claiming "Adolf Hitler and the Nazis rose to power as a result of the depression in Germany."<sup>169</sup> Despite the copious credit he gives to the Nazi Party, historian Detlev Peukert argues the centrality of the economic strife but is careful to note that "rejection of Weimar clearly antedated the surge of support for Hitler."<sup>170</sup> Peukert contends that a considerable amount of voter disaffection was already rampant across Germany and these voters eventually voted for the Nazis as a means of protest. J.W. Falter and R. Zintl's analysis of Weimar crisis voting agrees with Peukert making the claim that their research indicated "the NSDAP became simply another protest outlet for SPD voters after 1928."<sup>171</sup> Falter and Zintl also conclude the

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with the idea of the Nazis being solely a lower middle class organization, but believe that the Nazis did not extend across almost every population. The following works not directly referenced in this work would go a long way towards demonstrating the validity of the *Volkspartei* thesis even though some of them do not advocate such an argument. William Allen, "Farewell to Class Analysis in the Rise of Nazism: Comment," *Central European History* 17, no. 01 (1984): 54–62. William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922 -1945* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984). Roger Chickering, "Political Mobilization and Associational Life: Some Thoughts on the National Socialist German Workers' Club," in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Jürgen Falter, "The Social Bases of Political Cleavages in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933," in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Jürgen Falter and Michael Kater, "Wähler Und Mitglieder Der NSDAP: Neue Forschungsergebnisse Zur Soziographie Des Nationalsozialismus 1925 Bis 1933," *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 19, no. 2 (1993): 155–177. O. Heilbrunner, "Catholic Plight in a Rural Area of Germany and the Rise of the Nazi Party," *Social History* 20, no. 2 (1995): 219–234. L.E. Jones, "Generational Conflict and the Problem of Political Mobilization in the Weimar Republic," in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>169</sup>John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 321.

<sup>170</sup>Detlev J. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 231.

<sup>171</sup>Jürgen W. Falter and Reinhard Zintl, "The Economic Crisis of the 1930s and the Nazi Vote," *The Journal of*

dissolution of previous middle class protest parties, the German People's Party and German National People's Party, led to substantial increases in Nazi support, an assertion seconded by Larry Jones who argues that single-interest middle class parties also dissolved and supported the Nazis.<sup>172</sup>

These arguments making Weimar protest and defections critical to the rise of the Nazi Party put forward a passive argument in which the Nazis just happened to be in the right place at the wrong time. Peter Fritzsche warns against such a passive argument postulating that even if the economic struggles of the Weimar Republic had not occurred Germany may not have “been spared the pugilism of radical nationalists or the pitiless uncertainty of political terrorism and civil strife.”<sup>173</sup> Thus, the Weimar environment argument for mass appeal is inadequate as these arguments ignore critical aspects of the Nazi rise. By this line of thought any party could possibly have seized political control of the disaffected German citizenry, which, as this work will demonstrate, was far from true.

Could any other party have really taken control of Germany in the same fashion as the Nazis? Per Fritzsche, protest support existed before the Nazis dominance as evidenced by the disparate voter populations that elected staunchly conservative Paul von Hindenburg Republic President in 1925 despite SPD domination of the Reichstag.<sup>174</sup> If mass-disaffection existed, which this work asserts, then the remaining question asks how did members of this group know or deem the Nazi Party as the appropriate vehicle for their disgruntled support? Many historians have chosen to argue that the Nazis opportunistically presented themselves as the end all be all to

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*Interdisciplinary History* 19, no. 1 (1988): 82.

<sup>172</sup>L. E. Jones, “Inflation, Revaluation, and the Crisis of Middle-Class Politics: A Study in the Dissolution of the German Party System, 1923-28,” *Central European History* 12, no. 02 (1979): 143–168.

<sup>173</sup>Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>174</sup>Peter Fritzsche, “Presidential Victory and Popular Festivity in Weimar Germany: Hindenburg’s 1925 Election,” *Central European History* 23, no. 2/3 (September 1990): 205–224.

every part of the electorate, which certainly is valid, to a point. Jill Stephenson acknowledges such assertions stating that “the Nazis were relentless in utilizing [reaction against modernism's] facilities for their own heinous and often bizarre purposes.”<sup>175</sup> However, if the only reason the Nazis came to power was opportunistic pandering, why could no other party duplicate such pandering to take or maintain control of the volatile Weimar Republic?

The other Weimar political parties had numerous marks against them that hindered their goal of political dominance. The most powerful party of the time, the Social Democratic Party, was tied to the Weimar Republic and as such could not distance itself from the problems thought to have been brought onto Germany by that same democratic system.<sup>176</sup> Another prominent political party, the Communist Party of Germany, preached the Communist message of downfall to the capitalist, democratic system and, due to their belief that Capitalism was in its dying throes, were uninterested in seizing control of the Weimar Republic.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, if these political powerhouses, perfectly capable of pandering and making their own empty promises, could not maintain their dominance, the question becomes why were the Nazis ultimately able to rise to power? What made the Nazis unique from other political organizations in Weimar Germany that

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<sup>175</sup>Jill Stephenson, “Modernization, Emancipation, Mobilization: Nazi Society Reconsidered,” in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 225.

<sup>176</sup>Those interested in the SPD's unique situation as the political party in control and summarily responsible for the failures of the Weimar Republic should read E.J. Feuchtwanger's *From Weimar to Hitler*. Feuchtwanger provides an in-depth analysis of the SPD's “no win situation” that portrays the Social Democratic Party as being caught between the rock the Weimar Republic and the hard place of Nazi radicalism. Although some of Feuchtwanger's suggestions for the SPD are optimistically infeasible, he is one of the few historians to hold one of the Nazi Party rivals responsible for the Nazi Party rise. E.J. Feuchtwanger, *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany 1918 -33* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 235.

<sup>177</sup>The argument can certainly be made that had the SPD or KPD run more compelling political campaigns they could have kept the Nazi Party at bay. As will be demonstrated within this chapter, the Nazis targeted specific electoral populations of these parties and succeeded in siphoning small, but critical voter populations from these parties. The SPD, KPD, and the DNVP (mentioned later) failures to maintain their electoral populations stands as a seldom discussed aspect of the Nazi rise, but would mandate its own work to fully explore. For the time being, it is important to note that inherent flaws within these majority parties allowed the Nazis the opportunity needed to gain the 37.8 percent to become politically relevant, but it took very specific and surprising actions by the Nazis to take advantage of those opportunities.

allowed them to take a path that ultimately led to the Third Reich?

Fritzche, while not asserting Nazi opportunism, certainly agrees that campaigning helped them secure the support necessary to come to power. Per Fritzche, the Nazis, as opposed to being the passive inheritors of the dissolving bourgeois political environment, “were successful insofar as they adhered strictly to the changing requirements of bourgeois politics.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, the Nazis used the tools of an evolving German populism to reach the masses and demonstrate that they existed as a true protest group. Slowly, Fritzche contends, “burghers recognized in the Nazis what they believed to be the strategic advantages of the socialists, namely organization, determination, and fanaticism, without having to purchase proletarian economics.”<sup>179</sup> Thus, the Nazis attained popular support by setting themselves up as a viable alternative to the stymied Weimar parties.

The overarching argument of this work seeks to tie Nazi ideology to Nazi action. The previous chapter analyzed how the First World War informed Nazi ideology and motivated the Nazis to take up the banner of the 1914 volunteers and to topple the Weimar Republic. However, with the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch, the Nazis were pushed into near irrelevance. The turnaround from obscurity in 1925 to dominance in 1933 is remarkable and the subject of investigation for countless historians. A 1992 Symposium held on “Weimar, the Working Classes, and the Rise of National Socialism” that featured prominent historians such Jürgen Falter, Detlef Mühlberger, and Jill Stephenson discussing the rise of National Socialism via Weimar elections. After numerous presentations, a critique was made by many in attendance to the effect that “the speakers came under fire from some quarters for neglecting fundamental questions of

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<sup>178</sup>Peter Fritzche, “Weimar Populism and National Socialism in Local Perspective,” in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 303.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.* 303.

ideology.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, the critical topic this work must now address centers on the often neglected role of ideology in the Nazi rise.

As previously discussed, historical work on the Nazi rise generally follows a progression that claims the actions, or inactions, of the Republic alienated a mass group of voters leading them to become a block of protest voters. The Nazis then pandered to these voters in an effort to get their support which allowed them the slim electoral presence to get Hitler to the Chancellery. This work does not challenge the basic logic of this progression but seeks to build onto this narrative the understanding that the bridge between Nazi pandering and German acceptance of the Nazi agenda was not simply a passive protest outlet. Rather, Nazi actions to make themselves more appealing to the masses ensured the citizenry knew the Nazis were the appropriate outlet. While this work acknowledges that opportunism and contradictory promises certainly existed, the Nazis efforts to get their message out to the German public were genuinely forwarded by Nazi ideological considerations centering on the all driving mission of the activist masculine and nationalist struggle to topple the Weimar Republic and replace the failing institution with a dynamic and all-encompassing *Volksgemeinschaft*.

#### Non-Nazi Aversion to the Weimar Republic

Arguing the primacy of Nazi ideologically motivated action in the Nazi Party's rise to power does not discount the Weimar Republic's tremendous impact on such events. The claim that without the disaster that was Weimar Germany the Nazi Party would never have risen to prominence is certainly a valid argument. Weimar Germany generated stress amongst the German people and alienated various groups creating significant civil unrest. Arguing that the

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<sup>180</sup>Matthew Jeffries, “Weimar, the Working Classes, and the Rise of National Socialism,” 1992, 74.

Weimar Republic was the primary cause of the Nazi rise however inadvertently presents the Nazi Party as the sole opposition to the Weimar Republic. The Nazis had no such monopoly on protest as numerous individuals and organizations protested various aspects of the Weimar Republic. Therefore, before proceeding to explain the numerous ways Nazi ideology informed the citizenry's choices to vote for the Nazis, it is important to demonstrate the numerous avenues of disaffection within the Republic that would eventually filter into a mass protest vote.

The Weimar Republic brought on numerous changes across multiple planes that received mixed reactions amongst the German people. The Republic brought to Germany modernism, liberalism, and consumerism that many Germans endorsed, but these new concepts also received equal condemnation within the German community. Intellectuals in particular worried that “Americanism” was slowly taking over and diminishing German culture.<sup>181</sup> Americanism went beyond “trusts, high rises, traffic officers, film, technical wonders, jazz bands, boxing, magazines, and management,” but rather existed as the embodiment of the fear that German culture would disappear within the Republic.<sup>182</sup> Artist George Grosz, living in Weimar Germany, characterized the changes within the Republic as evoking amongst people “ghastly materialism and boredom.”<sup>183</sup> Others expressed ardent fears “of the conquest of Europe by America” and that “individual peoples are being worn away...becoming international.”<sup>184</sup> Such men did not endorse the ardent nationalism that would dominate the Nazi Party, but artists and

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<sup>181</sup>Rudolf Kayser, “Americanism,” 1925, German Historical Institute, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3853](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3853).

<sup>182</sup>Ibid.

<sup>183</sup>George Grosz, “Among Other Things, a Word For German Tradition,” 1931, German Historical Institute, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=4793](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=4793).

<sup>184</sup>Stefan Zweig, “The Monotonization of the World, 1 February 1925,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 397.



intellectuals were concerned by the degradation of the German mind that the internationalism the Weimar Republic invited. Thus, although many intellectuals voiced praise for the Weimar Republic, some did express hesitations with some of modernism's side effects swirling throughout Germany.

The Weimar Republic increased materialism and internationalism in Germany, but perhaps a more contested result of the Weimar system was a sharp revision in women's role within German society. The Great War eliminated a great deal of Germany's young male population which forced the nation's gender roles to alter. Women needed to work to provide for themselves and their families deprived of their original breadwinners. Many Germans of both genders expressed concerns over women entering prominence in the professional sphere. One chief concern centered on the belief that the independent woman would not want to give birth to the children desperately needed to replenish the German population following World War I. Alfred Polgar expressed this fear within his work *The Defenseless* in which a father and son exchanged beliefs about the rise of women. The father, representing the older generation, argued that "the pelvis of a woman is still broader and heavier than our own; they still bear the children."<sup>185</sup> Despite the rise of women and the gains they did make, those gains were not appreciated as many politicians and intellectuals called a woman's right of employment into question.<sup>186</sup> A more condemnatory opinion within the Republic comes from the testimonies gathered from various female textile workers in 1930. One woman stated "my view is that if a housewife and mother could be at home, then the household and children would be better served. In France, Alsace, and Saxony the women do not work in the factory and their life is easier than

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<sup>185</sup> Alfred Polgar, "The Defenseless: A Conversation Between Men, 1928," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 204.

<sup>186</sup> Hilde Walter, "Twilight for Women?, 7 July, 1931," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 210.

in Bavaria.”<sup>187</sup> Another woman criticized the lack of sustainable wages despite backbreaking labor stating “I would be happy if I could properly provide for my household and children.”<sup>188</sup> She went on to say that she does not “know a Sunday and holiday.”<sup>189</sup> Thus, not only were men unhappy with women’s presence in the work force, but many women themselves expressed a great deal of frustration at their current position brought on by the needs of the Weimar Republic.

As women became more prominent in areas previously unfamiliar to them, Germans began to notice that the youth were also drastically changing in many uncomfortable ways. The previously mentioned Polgar conversation between father and son began only after the son had refused to give his seat on the train to a woman forced to stand.<sup>190</sup> The father, stunned at his son’s disregard for women, fears he has lost the ability to love and show respect, symbolic of the fear that Germany’s men were becoming more effeminate and weak.<sup>191</sup> The youth themselves did not help ease the older generation’s concerns as historian Felix Gilbert fondly related that in his Weimar era youth he and his friends “enjoyed shocking our elders by not wearing hats in the summer, by not wearing tuxedos when we went out in the evenings....we liked to live our own lives, not bound to firm, tight schedules.”<sup>192</sup> Beyond abandoning the conventions of the past, sexuality began to feature prominently within public discourse, but not just sexuality concerning a married man and woman, but between single people, sometimes of the same gender. In 1929,

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<sup>187</sup>Textile Workers, “My Workday, My Weekend, 1930,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994),208.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>190</sup>Polgar, “The Defenseless: A Conversation Between Men, 1928,” 204.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>192</sup>Felix Gilbert, “Felix Gilbert on Berlin in the 1920s: The Weimar Generation,” 1988, German Historical Institute, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3850](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3850).

the League for Human Rights called for homosexual women to “show that you are not merely to be tolerated, but are also prepared to fight for your freedom.”<sup>193</sup> Many individuals began to argue that sex was no longer a woman’s “duty” to her man and her nation but rather could be had for the enjoyment of life.<sup>194</sup> Some even condemned the institution of marriage for failing to help people reach the fullest extent of happiness possible.<sup>195</sup> Many more traditional people still stood up for sex between a married man and woman, such as the German Association for the Protection of Mothers which in 1922 asserted that they strove “to unmask the offensive social conditions and ethical views which tolerate and promote prostitution and venereal diseases.”<sup>196</sup> However, the damage to public discourse had been done as even this association recognized “human sexuality as a powerful instrument, not only for the propagation but also for the progressive development of joy in living.”<sup>197</sup> The Weimar Republic allowed a seemingly uncontrollable generation the freedom to not only defy valued social conventions but also to bring sexuality into public discourse.<sup>198</sup> As the youth became less amenable, the older generation increasingly grew to blame the Weimar Republic that appeared to endorse such expressions of personal freedom.

Beyond the loss of culture, the changes in masculine domination, and the pervasiveness

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<sup>193</sup>League For Human Rights, “Appeal to All Homosexual Women, 18 September 1929,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 704.

<sup>194</sup>Grete Ujhely, “A Call for Sexual Tolerance, 1930,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 710.

<sup>195</sup>Helene Stöcker, “Marriage as a Psychological Problem, 1930,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 705-708.

<sup>196</sup>German Association for the Protection of Mothers, “Guidelines of the German Association for the Protection of Mothers, November-December 1922,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 697.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 697.

<sup>198</sup>For those interested in learning about the sexual revolution that occurred in Weimar Germany a valuable resource is Eric Weitz's *Weimar Germany* that features a chapter devoted to the topic in addition to analysis of the numerous cultural changes occurring in Germany at this time Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*.

of the youth, the Weimar Republic witnessed one of the worst economic collapses Germany ever experienced. As Germans faced massive unemployment, inflation, and hyper-inflation the Weimar Republic generated a considerable amount of opposition. Heinrich Hauser described the migration of desperate Germans along the Hamburg-Berlin highway. From his account, the homeless of Germany “walked separately or in small groups with their eyes on the ground. And they had the queer, stumbling gait of barefoot people...as they plodded forward in dumb despair.”<sup>199</sup> From a closer perspective the economic difficulties of the Weimar era presented Germans with obstacles they were wholly unprepared for. Betty Scholem, a woman of Weimar Germany, categorized the conditions she was enduring as “catastrophic.”<sup>200</sup> While relaying the events of the day to her daughter via multiple letters, Betty described the staggering difficulties of existing in a Germany where bread cost between 900 million and 5.5 billion Reichsmarks.<sup>201</sup> The exchange rates that Betty described would resemble the humorous musings of an economic satirist gone mad if only they were not true. Numerous pictures exist of people carrying wheelbarrows full of cash to buy a single loaf of bread and others depict children using bundled Reichsmarks valued in the billions as building blocks. Thus, the Weimar Republic lost a great deal of its original shine in the light of such tragic economic circumstances. The economic crisis ensured that the Weimar Republic would lose many of its initial supporters.

Perhaps the most significant condemnation leveled against the Weimar Republic involved the fact that this new form of government considerably altered politics within Germany. The new parliamentary system received condemnation amongst Germans used to the direct rule and

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<sup>199</sup>Heinrich Hauser, “The Unemployed, April 1933,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 84.

<sup>200</sup>Betty Scholem, “Betty Scholem on the Inflation, October 1923,” German Historical Institute, accessed July 26, 2012, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3842](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3842).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

immediate results of Imperial Germany. German intellectual Carl Schmitt condemned parliamentary democracy because in the presence of mass democracy the individual had no place for true freedom but was instead oppressed by the majority.<sup>202</sup> As far as Schmitt was concerned even if Fascism and Communism disappeared from German political discourse, “the crisis of contemporary parliamentarism would not be overcome” as there existed a fundamental and “inescapable contradiction of liberal individualism and democratic homogeneity.”<sup>203</sup> Conservative Ernst Niekisch condemned the Weimar Republic for bowing to the conventions of the Treaty of Versailles blaming social democracy for concealing “from the worker the social effects of the policy of acceding to the treaty demands.”<sup>204</sup> Communist Ernst Thälmann would accuse the SPD and its government of duplicating the supposed Nazi efforts to defend “the capitalist system against the revolutionary proletariat.”<sup>205</sup> Thus, the Weimar Republic created many enemies of differing political backgrounds who, like the Nazis, despised the institution for many different reasons, but mostly because the institution existed in the first place.

Returning to the overall argument of this chapter, it becomes evident that as Fritzsche among others asserted a mass protest vote was rising throughout the Republic before the Nazis became a factor. Many opposed the changes seen within Germany’s cultural priorities and the steady Americanization of Germany. Others opposed the rising prominence of women and women protested the despicable conditions they faced in their expanding role. The older

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<sup>202</sup>Carl Schmitt, “On the Contradiction Between Parliamentarism and Democracy, 1926,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 334-337.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 337.

<sup>204</sup>Ernst Niekisch, “Where We Stand, August 1926,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 338.

<sup>205</sup>Ernst Thälmann, “The SPD and NSDAP Are Twins, 19 February, 1932,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 327.

generation grew to despise the pervasive perceived perversion of the young generation fostered by the liberalism of the Weimar Republic. Others condemned the Republic as it failed in a government's sacred task to maintain economic stability for its citizenry. Finally, the parliamentary system that operated as the foundation of the Weimar Republic found enemies amongst Germans of various political affiliations. Arguments that the Weimar Republic's environment negatively impacted the German citizenry and opened the doors for the Nazi rise to power certainly embody a valid historical interpretation. However, all the Weimar Republic accomplished was opening the door for the Nazis, but this metaphorical door was theoretically open to any organization. Historians of the disaffection thesis are effusive in demonstrating that opposition to the Weimar Republic was extensive and was embodied within many individuals. Therefore, if, as argued, the Weimar Republic simply provided the opportunity the question becomes why were the Nazis the political organization that would use the woes of Weimar Germany to start the Third Reich?

#### The Failures of the DVP and DNVP

Returning to a previous assertion, the political rivals of the Nazi Party, the KPD and SPD, had their own problems that would prohibit them from maintaining political dominance of Germany. The SPD's political power ran central to the maintenance of the Weimar Republic making efforts to distance themselves from that institution's failures detrimental to their political authority. The KPD, believing in the revolutionary paradigm of Communism, did not ardently participate in mass-electoral politics, sticking to their worker support base, as any such efforts to promote stability would hinder the progress of the ultimate Communist goal, the fall of capitalist

Germany. One of the hardest obstacles for these organizations to overcome was their disregard for nationalist concepts. Historian William Gutsman has made the argument that the SPD was caught between a rock and a hard place and could not come to any compromise with the increasingly radical nationalists without alienating its own worker base.<sup>206</sup> Also, historian Richard Bodeck made an argument to the effect that the KPD had no interest in concepts of German nationalism, nor cooperation with the SPD. Rather, the KPD focused on “defeating Hitler, building a new world, protecting the Soviet Union, and planting the Soviet flag.”<sup>207</sup> Thus, Germany's left-wing was unwilling to effect the change demanded by the disillusioned voting public. However, as Fritzche has argued, this radicalization and rise of nationalist politics predated the Nazi's rise to prominence in the 1930s. Subsequently, as opposed to focusing on why the SPD and KPD could not captivate the growing disaffection, it will be valuable to analyze the two prominent nationalist political organizations that predated the Nazi rise. Before Nazi ideology and the actions that enabled their eventual rise can be tied together, it is important to discuss why alternate nationalist ideologies failed to seize opportunity and rise to prominence within political discourse.

The German People's Party is a seldom discussed entity amongst non-academic historians, but its existence within the narrative of the Nazi rise adds a tragic tint of “what could have been.” Known as the DVP, this party advocated a nationalist ideology that while claiming “Marxism ha[d] been breeding a sickly international and pacifist romanticism in the place of a resolute will devoted to the fatherland” still advocated the maintaining of various parts of the Weimar constitution. The DVP further intended to add a separate chamber to the Reichstag modeled on

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<sup>206</sup>W.L. Gutsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875-1933* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 320.

<sup>207</sup>Richard Bodeck, “Communist Music in the Streets: Politics and Perceptions in Berlin at the End of the Weimar Republic,” in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. L. E. Jones and James Retallack (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 277.

the English House of Lords in which members would be appointed by “churches and institution of higher learning.”<sup>208</sup> However, despite this sharp departure, a great deal of the DVP's ideology matched aspects of Nazi ideology. The DVP, although advocating a new system, still held reverence for the German past claiming their faith and “view of life [was] rooted in the spiritual soil created in the times of Bismark and Bennigsen and before them the great minds of German idealism.”<sup>209</sup> They also shared a disdain for the resolution of the First World War claiming the German people's “*lebensraum* [was] brutally cut down” and their freedom to live “cast into chains through senseless treaties.”<sup>210</sup> The DVP demonstrated a penchant for struggle rhetoric calling for the citizenry to “wrestle its way back up through the strength of its love for the fatherland and national solidarity.”<sup>211</sup> Finally, the DVP stressed the primacy of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the “supreme law of the German people.”<sup>212</sup> Therefore, the DVP stood as a party fully capable of matching the rising tide of nationalist dissatisfaction.

The question then becomes, why did the DVP fail to see its vision of Germany's future implemented? The strictly electoral argument places the DVP at a disadvantage to the rising tide of new voters as the DVP demanded “that the franchise be restricted once again to those 25 years of age or older.”<sup>213</sup> The impact of new voters on the Weimar elections when the voting age was lowered to eighteen is a highly contested aspect of electoral historical interpretations of the Nazi rise as no one researcher has been able to find an effective and conclusive means of measuring the exact numbers of these new voters or how they voted. Abraham Miller and James Robbins take early electoral historians to task on their arguments for the disaffection thesis claiming the

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<sup>208</sup>Deutsche Volkspartei, “Program,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 115-116.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, 115

<sup>210</sup>Ibid, 115.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid, 115.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid, 115.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid, 116.



numbers do not add up.<sup>214</sup> The disaffection thesis contends that a mass group of voters became alienated by the failures of the SPD and DVP to maintain a stable Republic and eventually migrated to the Nazi Party. Through their research Miller and Robbins argue that, as opposed to disaffection, the previous non-voters were the major contributors to the Nazi rise, a claim this work certainly agrees with in part and will explore later.<sup>215</sup> For the time being, the massively important swing of new voters certainly had a negative impact on the uninterested DVP.

More pragmatically, the major pitfall for the DVP was the death of its fundamentally important leader Gustav Stresemann in 1929. Historian Stephen Fritz has a great deal to discuss on the Stresemann front claiming that the leader was the backbone of the DVP's popular appeal. Per Fritz, Stresemann sought to turn the DVP into a centrist party with mass appeal by advocating his belief that the party “should form a positive link to the past, act as a harmonizer between left and right in the present, and promote the future growth of the national community.”<sup>216</sup> Stresemann was instrumental in the formation and maintenance of the Grand Coalition of the SPD and DVP that allowed the DVP to wield more power than its numbers provided. This coalition existed until a few months after Stresemann's death when the DVP leaned towards the industrialist and conservative members of the party who broke with the Grand Coalition. However, Fritz is careful not to place too much importance on the death of Stresemann claiming that he “for all his personal prestige and talents could take cultural-liberalism [and Volksgemeinschaft focus] only so far.”<sup>217</sup> The DVP suffered from “its rather elitist nature, loose organization, and ideological split between those who favored cooperation with all elements in

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<sup>214</sup>Abraham H. Miller and James S. Robbins, “Who Did Vote for Hitler?: A Reanalysis of the Lipset/Bendix Controversy,” *Polity* 21, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 662.

<sup>215</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup>Stephen Fritz, “The Search for Volksgemeinschaft: Gustav Stresemann and the Baden DVP, 1926-1930,” *German Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (1984), 252.

<sup>217</sup>*Ibid.*, 280.

society and the industrial-big business wing of the party.”<sup>218</sup> These flaws would certainly have limited mass-support for the DVP, but Stresemann's death did signal the end of any chance for a liberal nationalist ideology succeeding in Germany.

Beyond Miller's and Fritz's argument for the failure of the DVP to implement its vision of Germany's future, the disparity of their ideology in comparison with Nazi ideology offers a few solutions for the DVP's failure to gain mass-support. The DVP's wish to see the continuation of the Reichstag was particularly damning for the prospects of nationalist support. Also, the idea of a second chamber not electable by the people demonstrated the DVP's elitist nature and further hindered its prospects. For all the potential of their agenda, ignoring the masses and seeking to limit their impact on the government made the DVP stick out like a sore thumb against the backdrop of the Nazis who advocated “equality of rights for the German people” and asserted that “administration and law belongs only to the citizen.”<sup>219</sup> Therefore, in addition to the loss of the youth vote and the fractures that resulted after Stresemann's death, the DVP could never have risen to prominence as it would never be able to represent a true Volkspartei.

Perhaps the most prominent right wing party beyond the Nazis was the German National People's Party, otherwise known as the DNVP. If an opening presented itself for the nationalist wing of Germany to return to prominence, the party most likely to accomplish this task initially seemed to be the DNVP. Following the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch the Nazi Movement was for all intents and purposes outlawed which left the cause of German nationalism with the already well-established DNVP. In the May 1924 elections the DNVP received 20.1 percent of the vote, shy one percent of the SPD and over thirteen percent ahead of the National Socialist

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<sup>218</sup>Ibid, 252.

<sup>219</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS],” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. IV (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946).

Freedom Party, the organization formed to stand in for the illegal Nazi Party.<sup>220</sup> In December of the same year elections would again be held in which the DNVP would increase by eight seats while the National Socialist Freedom Party lost eighteen.<sup>221</sup> The DNVP had more support than the Nazis following the failed Putsch, the Nazi Movement's highest early fame, and would continue to endure in the 1928 elections despite a loss of thirty seats.<sup>222</sup> If any party besides the Nazis could have taken advantage of the disaffection within the Republic, it would have been the German National People's Party.

As nationalists, the DNVP's views were not all that different from the Nazi Party's beliefs. In their program the DNVP advocated "the liberation of the German people from foreign domination."<sup>223</sup> They also supported Austrian self-determination, which would likely have led to unification with Germany.<sup>224</sup> Additionally the *Burgfrieden* existed as a foundation to their own ideology as their program argued "a solidly unified German nation provides the most important foundation for German greatness."<sup>225</sup> They also shared with the Nazis a rejection of certain aspects of modernity, in particular art which the DNVP argued existed not in modernism, but "grows in the soil of a vital nationalism" thus condemning modernist art that rose from individual expression.<sup>226</sup> Thus, some of the pillars that the Nazis held as critical to their vision of a future Germany were featured prominently in the DNVP ideology, but because the DNVP

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<sup>220</sup>Aleskerov, Holler, and Kamalova, "Power Distribution in the Weimar Reichstag in 1919-1933." 17.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>223</sup>Deutschnationale Volkspartei, "Program," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 348.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 348-349.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.352.

ultimately failed to dominate Germany the question becomes why did they fail?

From an electoral perspective, Jürgen Falter and Detlef Mühlberger contend that the DNVP alienated the rural support they had relied on through the twenties which first led to the formation of splinter rural parties.<sup>227</sup> By the 1932 elections, the Nazis had converted these splinter parties to their cause eliminating pivotal DNVP support. Thomas Childers showed that DNVP loss to the Nazis went beyond the rural populations claiming “the primary victim of Nazi success within the urban old middle class in handicrafts after 1920 appears to have been the DNVP.”<sup>228</sup> Additionally, Childers demonstrated that the DNVP also suffered white collar defections to the DVP.<sup>229</sup> These splits indicate that the DNVP itself was fracturing between the nationalist liberalism of the DVP and the radical right wing nationalism eventually embodied within the Nazi Party before the Nazis became a true factor.

The DNVP could not withstand the pressures of representing the right wing, failing to ensure even the unity of its own electorate. Despite similarities in ideology and electoral opportunity, the DNVP would eventually suffer in part because of its differences from the Nazi Party. The DNVP called for the implementation of a constitutional monarchy that would cooperate with a parliament elected by popular representation, a sharp departure from the Nazis advocating an abolition of any popular representation which they claimed was inherently corrupt and inefficient.<sup>230</sup> Additionally, the DNVP called for equal political representation, participation for women, and religious toleration, aspects the Nazis would ardently oppose particularly as their

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<sup>227</sup>Jürgen Falter and Detlef Mühlberger, “Anatomy of a Volkspartei: The Sociography of the Membership of the NSDAP in Stadt and Landkreis Wetzlar, 1925-1935,” *Historical Social Research* 24, no. 2 (1999): 58–98.

<sup>228</sup>T. Childers, “The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976), 21.

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid*, 23.

<sup>230</sup>Deutschnationale Volkspartei, “Program,” 349.

ideology resided in masculinity and anti-Semitism.<sup>231</sup> A reading of both the platform the Nazi Party was founded upon and the DNVP platform will demonstrate that the Nazis were much more aggressive in their demands than the DNVP. The DNVP advocated a “revision” of the Treaty of Versailles, whereas the Nazis wanted the despised treaty canceled in its entirety.<sup>232</sup> Thus, the Nazis and the DNVP did have sharp differences that provide an opening for justifying why the DNVP did not seize Germany, but these differences do not fully explain the decline of the DNVP that allowed the Nazis the room to rise to prominence.

The DNVP was the second most powerful party in the Reichstag through most of the 1920s and therefore was only slightly less culpable in the course of the calamitous Weimar Republic than the SPD. The DNVP could claim the SPD was responsible for many failures, but nonetheless the stench of failure and the taint of the Republic attached itself to every member and action of the DNVP. Thus, as the Republic declined further, proving less and less able to support the people, the DNVP became less and less appealing to the voting public. Meanwhile the Nazi Party stood in contradistinction to all political parties of the Weimar Republic with its rhetoric of activism and struggle. The Nazi Party significantly differed from the rest of the political spectrum because it was free of the failures of the Republic. The Nazis had never had any prominent role in the Reichstag but more importantly had taken early action against the Weimar Republic. As times got worse, the Nazis’ Putsch attempt seemed more justified, making the Nazis more attractive as a political party.

Returning to the overall argument of this chapter, it has been argued that the difficulties of the Weimar Republic opened the door for a nationalist party to rise to prominence. The

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 350.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 348. The DAP platform states “we demand the equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations and the revocation of the peace treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain.” Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Program of the NSDAP, 24 February 1920. [Doc 1708-PS].”

German People's Party could not maintain unity amongst its ranks nor field a message that had mass appeal to the growing electorate. The German National People's Party also failed to maintain unity amongst its own electorate nor could the organization unify right wing nationalism.<sup>233</sup> Both the DVP and DNVP expressed little activist struggle going as far as supporting various tenets of Social Democracy even as the situation across the republic worsened. Only a party capable of touting an ideology appealing to the masses would succeed in unifying the mass of disaffected voters across Germany. Unfortunately for Germany, that party would rise from the ashes of the Beer Hall Putsch and eventually take the German electorate by storm.

### Ideology and the Path of Legality

The Weimar Republic provided an opportunity for a party unassociated with the Republic's failures to seize the moment and rise to prominence. Previously powerful nationalist ideologies of the DVP and DNVP failed to elicit mass-support from the citizenry leaving room for a new ideology to establish itself. However, in 1924, the Nazis were hardly the organization capable of winning over anywhere near the thirty-seven percent of the German electorate they would in 1932.<sup>234</sup> The Nazi movement had just attempted the fateful Beer Hall Putsch that led to the death of many members, wounded others, landed its leader in jail, and most importantly forced the Republic to outlaw the movement.<sup>235</sup> The Nazis seemed to be all but discounted from

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<sup>233</sup>Larry Eugene Jones, "Nationalists, Nazis, and the Assault Against Weimar: Revisiting the Harzburg Rally of October 1931," *German Studies Review* (2006): 483–494.

<sup>234</sup>Aleskerov, Holler, and Kamalova, "Power Distribution in the Weimar Reichstag in 1919-1933."

<sup>235</sup>Explained in the First Chapter, it may be valuable to reiterate here the difference between the Nazi Party and the Nazi Movement. The Nazi organization that existed before the Beer Hall Putsch can hardly be considered a party as it abhorred electoral politics and threatened violent overthrow of the Weimar Republic. Therefore, when the "Nazi Movement" is mentioned within this chapter reference is being made to the organization of the early 1920's. When the "Nazi Party" is mentioned reference is being made to the organization that resulted after

the political sphere after losing their revolutionary gamble. The remarkable turnaround experienced after 1925 therefore raises many questions, some beyond the scope of this work. In order to assert that the Nazis were not only actively responsible for their own successes, but that ideology had a tremendous impact on those successes, the activities of Hitler and the Nazi remnant following Hitler's release is critical as shortly thereafter the Nazis changed themselves from a rabidly anti-Republican movement into the beginnings of a sophisticated political party.

Most know that Hitler put together his political testament *Mein Kampf* while he was imprisoned in Landsberg. *Mein Kampf* is fascinating for ideological study after 1933 in that it helps clarify many of the actions the Nazis would eventually take once they seized power, including the foundations to Hitler's eventual decisions to start World War II. However, *Mein Kampf* should not be regarded as a warning that everyone missed foretelling impending atrocities. People knew about *Mein Kampf*, but, to put it bluntly, nobody was going to lend much credence to a poorly written book penned by the jailed revolutionary of an outlawed party. Nonetheless, Hitler's stay in prison afforded him the time for a great deal of reflection and summarily he came to a conclusion that would prove fateful for the future of Germany.

During the process of putting together *Mein Kampf* Hitler received a friend and loyal supporter Kurt Ludecke for a visit. According to Ludecke, Hitler was beside himself with optimism about his release claiming he would be out in months and as opposed to years and subsequently the party would be re-organized shortly thereafter.<sup>236</sup> Of particular importance to this work however, is a statement Hitler made in prison describing a critical change in Nazi direction. Per Hitler, "Instead of working to achieve power by armed conspiracy, we shall have to

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the 1925 reestablishment of the Nazi political organization.

<sup>236</sup>Kurt Ludecke, "Hitler's Decision to Adopt the Parliamentary Tactic, 1924," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974),67.

hold our noses and enter the Reichstag.”<sup>237</sup> Hitler went on to argue that “if outvoting them takes longer than outshooting them, at least the results will be guaranteed by their own Constitution!”<sup>238</sup> Hitler was laying out his famous path of legality in which the Nazis would become a legitimate political party, attempt to seize control of the government via the confines of the electoral system, and then change the government into something much more fitting Nazi ideology. As proof of this plan's durability, the Führer would later give testimony at a 1930 trial of three army lieutenants who supposedly worked with the Nazi Party. Per Hitler, “The National Socialist movement will try to achieve its aim with constitutional means in the state...we shall try to gain decisive majorities in the legislative bodies so that the moment we succeed we can give the state the form that correspond to our ideas.”<sup>239</sup> Thus, in 1925 Hitler laid out a political plan that would endure as a core Nazi strategy through 1930 and into the Third Reich.

The significance of the path of legality cannot be stressed enough because it represents not only a change in political strategy but is often viewed as a fundamental change in Nazi ideological identity. Since their beginnings, the Nazis had preached overthrowing the Weimar Republic but more importantly had refused to participate in the mechanics of the Weimar Republic. By presenting themselves as a movement above the petty politics of the time, the Nazis could garner vague pockets of support and maintain somewhat popular appeal. The 6.8 percent support in the May 1924 election demonstrated that the idea of a Nazi *Movement* had a certain appeal but ultimately would fail to attain any meaningful political presence as seen in their four percent drop just six months later.<sup>240</sup>

When faced with decline in the attractiveness and viability of their political strategy, the

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>239</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Hitler’s Oath of Legality at the Leipzig Trial, September 1930,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974),119.

<sup>240</sup> Aleskerov, Holler, and Kamalova, “Power Distribution in the Weimar Reichstag in 1919-1933,” 17-18.



Nazis fundamentally altered the frameworks of their organization and prepared themselves to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Weimar Republic. The path of legality certainly stands as a radical change considering violent removal of the Republic was discarded. Such a dramatic change simultaneously casts doubt on the sincerity of the activism and struggle foundations of Nazi ideology. Despite the changes, masculine activism was continued and in many ways intensified as political violence still allowed the Nazis to maintain their identity as the heirs to the Volunteers of the 1914. Such a scale back of the violent means to their goals may seem like a cop out, but the basic function of Nazi violence did not change. The SA of the Nazi Movement acted often independently of the organization and the SA would continue to do so while on the path of legality. Regardless of what part of the 1920s one picks, the SA can be witnessed spreading Nazi ideology to the public with fists directed towards the enemies of Germany. Thus, the path of legality did not put a significant dent into the activism and struggle aspect of Nazi ideology.

With the path of legality as the new directive, Hitler upon his release attempted to unify the former members of the Nazi movement under his flag. This task was easier said than done as various members split themselves into numerous organizations. The unifying rhetoric of the national community Hitler used to unify the Nazis would be exemplary of the future political campaigning to be undertaken by the party and as such requires a momentary analysis. Hitler claimed it his task as leader of the Party “to direct the various temperaments, talents and qualities of character in the movement into those channels...[so that] they benefit everybody.”<sup>241</sup> Hitler thus used the same *Burgfrieden* beliefs in unity, in spite of differences, to bring the various factions back under his leadership. Additionally, Hitler chose not to bury the failure of the Beer

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<sup>241</sup>Adolf Hitler, “On the Revival of Our Movement, 26 February 1925,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 69.

Hall Putsch but rather embraced it as an event fundamental to the future of Germany and an event that should unify the divided factions of the Nazi movement into a miniature National Community, the Nazi Party. Per Hitler, “we do not only want to remember again those who in November 1923 became blood witnesses of our political beliefs and aims; we also want to thank all those who in this past year did not despair of the movement and what it stands for but labored in its service regardless of whatever camp they felt drawn to.”<sup>242</sup> In the same fashion that the Nazi Movement called back to World War I as a glorious moment of unity, power, and sacrifice Hitler would ensure the Beer Hall Putsch was put on an equivalent platform, a tool that would not only be helpful in the impending campaigns but maintain an ideological continuity between the Movement and the Party.

Perhaps most important to unifying fractured fragments of the movement into the Nazi Party, and most exemplary of the Nazis eventual campaign strategy was Hitler’s staunch assertion that although the Nazis would enter the ailing Republic, their ultimate goal of toppling said institution would not be abandoned. According to Hitler once the party was again unified, “it must be turned against that power to which above all we owe the collapse of our fatherland and the destruction of our people,” the Weimar Republic.<sup>243</sup> Further, “this does not mean an alteration in or a ‘postponement’ of the old and main aim of our struggle, but simply its reassertion.”<sup>244</sup> The Nazis would therefore enter the Reichstag elections but would not abandon their initial goals the success of which would be measured, as they had been in the days of the Movement, by “the extent to which Marxism is destroyed and by the degree of enlightenment about its originator,

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<sup>242</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Hitler’s Call to the Former Members of the NSDAP, 26 February 1925,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 68.

<sup>243</sup> Hitler, “On the Revival of Our Movement, 26 February 1925,” 69.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, 69.

the Jews.”<sup>245</sup>

Thus, after February 1925 the Nazis were entering new territory. They would abandon their previous status above the petty politics and risk tainting their ideology with democratic participation. However, despite a fundamental change in their method of attack, the Nazis would not change their ideology. They would still preach destruction of the Republic and struggle against the alleged Jewish Marxist influences that had brought about the devastating Treaty of Versailles. The only thing that changed was the arena in which the Nazis chose to make their fight for their vision of Germany's future. If anything, as opposed to representing a break from their ideology, the new path offered the Nazis an opportunity to reconcile their actions with a fundamental aspect of their ideology, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. By seeking a more diffuse popular support base, the Nazis would strengthen the validity of an all-encompassing German national community. Thus, contrary to popular belief, the Nazi change to the path of legality, although opportunistic in nature, still existed as an action rooted in and motivated by Nazi ideology.

#### The NSDAP, the KPD, and Working Class Voters

As asserted, the Nazis would enter politics with a relatively unchanged political ideology. This ideology, as the name National Socialist German *Workers'* Party would indicate, centered largely on the workers of Germany. Therefore, all initial efforts of the Nazi Party to enter the electoral arena focused on gaining this voter population, which provided the Nazis with various advantages but also an equal amount of obstacles. The worker populations of Germany were rather disappointed by the Weimar Republic's economic instability and massive unemployment

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid, 70.

rates. With high unemployment workers and their unions had relatively little leverage in negotiations and could be taken advantage of with little protest. Thus, any organization that could provide a way for workers to escape this situation would receive considerable support when it came time to vote for Reichstag seats. The Nazi rhetoric of unification in a struggle to topple the Weimar Republic appealed to certain pockets of workers, but, pardoning the labor pun, the working electorate was not a closed shop. The Communist KPD preached a message of downfall for the capitalist Weimar that was allegedly oppressing the workers. Therefore, the successes and failures of this first political battle, the Nazi Party versus the KPD over worker populations, in particular the ways the Nazis tried to steal workers from the Communist fold, must be analyzed as a valuable step towards the Nazis eventual electoral and ideological successes.

The Nazi Movement always expressed considerable anti-Marxist rhetoric, claiming that Marxism existed at the center of the Jewish International Conspiracy.<sup>246</sup> Of considerable success to the Nazis was an older political tool that blended anti-Semitism with the assertion that the KPD's message of overthrow of the capitalist system would duplicate on German soil the terrors occurring in Communist Russia on German soil. In 1919, prominent Nazi Alfred Rosenberg, who Hitler had tried to leave in power during his imprisonment, claimed "Lenin is the only non-Jew among the people's commissars; he is, so to speak, the Russian storefront of a Jewish business."<sup>247</sup> Thus, by Nazi insinuations, the German KPD would be the storefront of a

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<sup>246</sup>The Nazi argument behind Marxism's role in the Jewish International Conspiracy is considerably extensive and unnecessary for the purposes of this work. Briefly, Marxism stood as a "weapon of terror" used by the Jews to manipulate workers, subsequently enabling the Jews to dominate both sides of economic conflict and thereby ensure their survival. However, for a more detailed analysis those interested would be wise to read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the aptly titled *Second Book*, which lay out this argument in excruciating detail. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999); Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, ed. Gerhard Weinberg, trans. Krista Smith (New York: Enigma Books, 2003), 235.

<sup>247</sup>Alfred Rosenberg, "The Russian-Jewish Revolution, February 1919," in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An*

Communist upheaval that would bring chaos into Germany. Vague anti-Marxist rhetoric stirred the anger of a crowd, but in order to turn such anti-Marxism into votes, Nazi efforts would have to take stronger, more tangible forms.

Many of Hitler's speeches featured fear tactics meant to dissuade potential KPD voters. In 1922, Hitler asserted "so now Germany is reaching that stage which Russia has."<sup>248</sup> Even earlier, Hitler asserted that "while now in Soviet Russia millions are ruined and dying....the 400 Soviet commissars of Jewish nationality do not suffer."<sup>249</sup> Hitler went on to criticize those who believed that the Communist revolution would eventually end after the realization of an enlightened world. Hitler claimed that the Communists "do not wish the end of the revolution, for they do not need it. For them the Revolution is milk and honey."<sup>250</sup> The KPD campaigns seemed to back this point as their own election strategy preached a downfall that would necessitate violent insurrection. One 1919 KPD poster depicted a stalwart Communist fighting a three headed hydra whose heads represented New Militarism, Capitalism, and Junkers, the perceived pillars of Imperial and the burgeoning Weimar Germany.<sup>251</sup> A 1924 poster depicted another stalwart Communist holding a torch above his head with the message "The flame of revolution must not be extinguished."<sup>252</sup> The call for revolutionary tumult remained in 1932

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*Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 52.

<sup>248</sup> Adolf Hitler, "Speech Following the Murder of Rathenau, 28 July 1922," in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 35.

<sup>249</sup> Adolf Hitler, "Genoa Conference Speech, 12 April 1922," in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939*, ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 9.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>251</sup> Translated from the following labels found on the Hydra's heads: "Neuer Militarismus," "Kapitalismus," and "Junkertum." Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, *Was Will Spartakus, 1919*, Images and Testimonies of German History, accessed November 2, 2011, [http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/bildzeug/qtvr/DHM/n/BuZKopie/raum\\_30.01.htm](http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/bildzeug/qtvr/DHM/n/BuZKopie/raum_30.01.htm).

<sup>252</sup> Translated from "Die Flamme der Revolution darf nicht erlöschen!" Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, *Die Flamme Der Revolution*, 1924, German Historical Institute, <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/images/SCHLI-R-1.jpg>.

when one poster, featuring a gigantic, threatening worker towering over a round table featuring capitalists, soldiers, and Hitler, exclaimed “Conclude with this system” threatening the end of the Weimar Republic.<sup>253</sup> The Nazis would make every effort to assert that the KPD was a crazed organization bent on seeing the suffering and destruction of everything the German people held dear. Thus, the Nazis built a foundation of fear to use against the KPD as they attempted to gain votes from workers.

Instigating fear alone does not easily convert itself into electoral support. Rather, if a political organization is going to rely on scare tactics to elicit votes that same organization must demonstrate beyond reasonable doubts that they will provide the security necessary to counter the fears they have made known. Thus, the burden fell to the Nazis to demonstrate that they would save Germany from the Communist collapse. Hitler had gone on record in his trial for the Beer Hall Putsch as being an enemy of Communism claiming forcefully that he was determined to become “the destroyer of Marxism.”<sup>254</sup> However, words are one thing, actions an entirely different matter. The Nazis, who had already demonstrated through the Putsch that they would resort to violent overthrow if necessary, chose to carry on this tradition and incorporate political violence into their electoral strategy.<sup>255</sup> The Nazis would continue their politically violent tactics from their pre-Putsch days and demonstrate through action that they were truly capable of

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<sup>253</sup>Translated from “Schluss mit diesem System.” Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, *Schluss Mit Diesem System, 1932*, Women in European History, accessed November 11, 2011, <http://womenineuropeanhistory.org/index.php?title=File:KPD.jpg>.

<sup>254</sup>Albrecht Tyrell, “Führer Befiehl,” in *Nazism: 1919-1945 A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 34.

<sup>255</sup>Criticism has been leveled on the claim that political violence existed as a pivotal electoral strategy that the Nazis used to very successful results. At this time it is necessary to state that this work does not endorse political violence as a tool for conventional political times. Rather, this work simply acknowledges that Nazi violence demonstrated to the voters an activism that other parties could not duplicate, thus giving the Nazi electoral strategy a distinct advantage. A pragmatic analysis of violence's impact on electoral campaigns is not a unique methodology taken by this work. Thomas Childers and Eugene Weiss have also taken pragmatic looks at Nazi political violence. Childers and Weiss, “Voters and Violence: Political Violence and the Limits of National Socialist Mass Mobilization.”

providing protection against the Communist threat.

Political violence took many forms that have been discussed in numerous historical works and as such the reader will be spared the numerous graphic tales of the violence meted towards numerous Communists.<sup>256</sup> For the purposes of this work, it is more important to study how this violence was portrayed and conveyed to the voting public. In February 1927, Communists attempted to disrupt a speech by Joseph Goebbels and violence broke out. Unfortunately for the KPD, “the Communists were gradually pushed under the gallery which [Nazis] had taken care to occupy.”<sup>257</sup> The whole event was portrayed the next day as a Nazi trap set to defeat “Marxist Terrorism.”<sup>258</sup> Thus, the Nazis spun a spontaneous brawl into a premeditated strike not against political rivals, but terrorists, further equating Communism with insurrection. Additionally, even those against the Nazi Party acknowledged the compelling activism behind the political violence the Nazis used. Emil Julius Gumbel, a seldom referenced anti-Nazi from the Weimar era wrote two substantial works on a specific aspect of Nazi political violence, assassination. Gumbel argued that the left’s penchant for and foundations in workers’ unions enforced the belief that “mass action is the sole effective means of struggle,” but the right “adheres to the heroic conception of history, according to which the hero ‘makes’ history.”<sup>259</sup> As such, even despicable assassinations helped in their own way to convince the voters that the Nazi Party was committed to protecting the German people from suffering the atrocities occurring in Soviet Russia.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup>Those interested in the specifics of Nazi violence, Richard Evans' *The Coming of the Third Reich* has accounts and statistics detailing the violence occurring during the Weimar Republic and its role in the eventual Nazi rise to power. Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

<sup>257</sup>Martin Brozat, “Goebbels and the Communists, February, 1927,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 84.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>259</sup>Emil Julius Gumbel, “Four Years of Political Murder, 1922,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 101.

<sup>260</sup> Per Gumbel, the right committed 354 political murders compared to the 22 done by the left over the course of

Although fear, one of the most ancient political tools, and activism through violence certainly had their uses in Weimar Germany, the Nazis used anti-Marxist rhetoric outside of fear and violence that they hoped would help them gain necessary electoral support from the KPD electoral base. A particularly intriguing argument that left wing Nazis posed to KPD supporters was that the KPD was an extension of the overall Communist International and by extension had very little interest in *German* causes. In 1925, Joseph Goebbels exemplified this tactic in a letter directed to Bolsheviks following a debate the previous day. In the letter, Goebbels told Communist supporters that they and the Nazis were not all that different. Their main difference, Goebbels maintained, was that Nazism embodied a truer form of German Socialism than what Communism offered.<sup>261</sup> Goebbels's most powerful statement to this effect, that "Lenin sacrificed Marx and instead gave Russia freedom. You want to sacrifice German freedom for Marx," effectively struck at the heart of Nazism versus Communism.<sup>262</sup> Thus, Goebbels contended that the KPD supporters wanted to eliminate the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the personal freedom of its utopian unity in favor of accord with the terrifying Soviet Union. Therefore, the German people would be lost in the shuffle of a greater Communist ideology, but if workers wanted to be loyal to German causes they should join the *Volksgemeinschaft* and unify under the Nazi Party that had their interests at heart.

Nazi effort to win the working class vote is a highly contested topic within the historiography. Present work in the field seeks to undo two egregious errors in work postulated over the years by Marxist historians. The first error contends that leftist leaning Nazis, such as

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1918-1922. That disparity alone would demonstrate the degree to which the Nazis would go to see their vision of Germany protected. Additionally, Gumbel correctly asserts that Nazi violence was generally accepted as many judges handed down lighter sentences to street brawlers of the right and heavier sentences for those of the left. *Ibid*, 101-104.

<sup>261</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "National Socialism or Bolshevism, October 25, 1925," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 127-128.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 128.



Gregor and Otto Strasser, were kicked out of the party when Hitler broke with them in 1926. Otto definitely broke with Hitler early, but Gregor remained in prominence until the end of 1932. However, a great deal of literature exists to prove that the Strassers and other left-leaning Nazis still featured in Nazi campaign efforts and publications up to the seizure of power. Richard Hamilton agrees that leftist Nazis still existed in some capacities but cautions that what they brought to the table was negligible. Per Hamilton, few “convinced Marxists” were convinced by this rhetoric and those workers who did join the Nazi Party “were not likely to have done so because of leftist themes.”<sup>263</sup> However, in making such a claim Hamilton seems to ignore Joseph Goebbels, one of the most noteworthy left-leaning Nazi Party members, and his importance to Nazi electoral efforts. The standard interpretation of Goebbels and his leftist origins claims that his 1926 promotion from Gregor Strasser's private secretary to Gauleiter of Berlin represented his break from the leftist camp.<sup>264</sup> However, arguing that Goebbels's completely broke with the left is difficult to assert when arguments like the previously mentioned “National Socialism or Bolshevism” demonstrate his desire to reconcile the Nazi Party with the workers.<sup>265</sup> Thus, Marxist historians are wrong in their claims that leftist Nazis had no say or role in the Party as not only did Gregor Strasser and other left-leaning Nazis maintain a role in the Party throughout the electoral period, but Joseph Goebbels, himself a leftist, attained one of the Third Reich's highest positions.

The second error committed by Marxist historians fostered the *Mittelstand* thesis by postulating that workers never tainted themselves by supporting the Nazis. Historian Peter Stachura is particularly effusive in his criticism of this point contending that “the image of a powerful, self-conscious and ideologically committed German working class valiantly resisting

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<sup>263</sup>Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted For Hitler?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 389-390.

<sup>264</sup>Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 92.

<sup>265</sup>Goebbels, “National Socialism or Bolshevism, October 25, 1925.”

the Third Reich...has no basis in reality. It is an unadulterated myth.”<sup>266</sup> Historians have demonstrated that even though workers did not universally support the Nazis there were pockets of support amongst that population. Jürgen Falter contends that while unemployed workers supported the KPD, areas with small employment numbers typically supported the Nazi Party.<sup>267</sup> This claim is particularly telling about the reception of Nazi arguments of the *Volksgemeinschaft* versus the Soviet Union. The unemployed resented Nazi arguments for protection of property, but those who held property feared losing their property to the collectivist terror in place in Russia. Gary King and his associates would certainly agree with this contention as they argue that those beyond the workers, Nazi ideology had an inherent appeal to those with means who were afraid to lose their hard fought property.<sup>268</sup> Falter also critically argues that working class households by 1932 made up nearly forty percent of the Nazi electorate, a number that was tiny compared to the total population of workers, but significant to the Nazis.<sup>269</sup> Richard Hamilton also acknowledges Nazi support from a conservative worker base he compares to English Tory workers citing their disillusion with the leftist worker parties, the SPD and KPD.<sup>270</sup> Beyond the disaffected, Mühlberger argues that “the Nazis were successful in attracting a section of the large number of workers not politically engaged elsewhere.”<sup>271</sup> Thus, from all appearances Nazi support from the working class was a diffuse but not universal grouping of disaffected workers.

During February 1927 a political debate between the KPD and Nazi Party ended in violence which a later Nazi report indicated “visibly [demonstrated] that National Socialism is

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<sup>266</sup>Peter D. Stachura, “National Socialism and the German Proletariat, 1925-1935: Old Myths and New Perspectives,” *HISTORICAL JOURNAL-LONDON-CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS*- 36 (1993), 716.

<sup>267</sup>Jeffries, “Weimar, the Working Classes, and the Rise of National Socialism,” 71.

<sup>268</sup>Gary King et al., “Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler,” *Journal of Economic History* 68, no. 4 (2008), 960.

<sup>269</sup>Jeffries, “Weimar, the Working Classes, and the Rise of National Socialism,” 71.

<sup>270</sup>Hamilton, *Who Voted For Hitler?*, 171.

<sup>271</sup>D. Mühlberger, “The Sociology of the NSDAP: The Question of Working-class Membership,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 3 (1980), 504.

determined to reach the workers.”<sup>272</sup> From the reformation of the party in February 1925 to two years later the Nazis fought an electoral battle with the single goal of winning the working-class electorate. However, the gains experienced by 1932 were far from a reality in 1928. In the May 1928 election, the Nazis lost two seats while the KPD gained nine.<sup>273</sup> The results were fairly discouraging as many Nazis had hoped to rob the KPD of their electorate and take the world by surprise, but those in control of the reins had tempered their expectations long before election day. Sensing that the Nazis would experience an electoral embarrassment the Party leaders, led by Adolf Hitler, would make another change to their plan of attack that this time would lead to significant electoral gains.

### Nazi Recognition of German Disaffection

In December 1927 the Nazis would make perhaps their most important political decision without which this work would likely never have been written. In a conference of party leaders Hitler asserted that the Nazis “shall not yet succeed in winning much ground from the Marxists in the coming elections.”<sup>274</sup> Accepting that the Nazis had reached as much ground amongst workers as they were going to at the moment, the conference agreed that the Nazis would need support from both small businessmen and white collar workers.<sup>275</sup> Thus, the Nazi Party decided to diversify its efforts and expand the Nazi electoral base.<sup>276</sup> The Nazis yet again recognized a fundamental flaw in their strategy and adapted in a pivotal and, as to be seen, effective manner.

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<sup>272</sup>Brozat, “Goebbels and the Communists, February, 1927,”83.

<sup>273</sup>Aleskerov, Holler, and Kamalova, “Power Distribution in the Weimar Reichstag in 1919-1933,” 19-21.

<sup>274</sup>Adolf Hitler, “The Change in Emphasis from the Workers to the Middle Class, December 1927,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 90.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 90.

The decision to expand their electoral base, abandoning their position as a solely worker political organization put the Nazis on the path to power.

From 1928 until Hitler's appointment to the Chancellery the Nazis would conduct an all or nothing campaign in which they made numerous promises to various social groups in order to gain electoral support. Many of these promises were absolutely hollow if not outright false. Empty promises are typical of every political campaign in history and it is impossible to tie ideology to every promise. However, ideology ran central to the electoral campaign in a very subtle but sophisticated and compelling fashion. Already demonstrated earlier in this chapter, a strong disaffection vote existed in Germany that the Nazis recognized as valuable to their cause. However, based on previous elections the Nazi message was of a limited appeal. Every political party made promises to fix the ills of Germany and disillusion with such parties was becoming evident. Thus, utopian, opportunistic promises would not have carried a cynical electorate. Professor William Brustein has made the argument that Nazi votes were not merely negative protest votes, but positive votes made after weighing the pros of the Nazi Party against the cons of previous voter affiliations.<sup>277</sup> In the scope of this discussion, this work agrees with Brustein's argument in that it asserts that the mass-protest vote did not by default fall to the Nazi Party, but the ways in which the Nazis actively demonstrated themselves as an outlet for protest propelled them to power. This work departs from Brustein in that he claimed economic factors led to voter endorsement. Nazi stances on the economy were often contradictory depending on where and who in the Party was providing information. This work contends that Nazi ideology, as opposed to economic stances, would prove compelling and establish a depth to Nazi support that no other party was able to maintain. The best way to demonstrate Nazi ideology's compelling influence on the Nazis' electoral actions and the voting public is to take a look at specific Nazi efforts to win

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<sup>277</sup>Jeffries, "Weimar, the Working Classes, and the Rise of National Socialism," 73.

over specific electoral groups.

Small-business owners for a long time belonged to the SPD, but the Nazis took extensive efforts to secure their loyalties. In April 1932, the Nazis published a pamphlet directed at middle class small business owners criticizing the department store Woolworth's as a foreign entity sent to destroy the small business owner.<sup>278</sup> Department stores were becoming more prevalent through the Weimar Republic and, although they helped create jobs and the semblance of marketplace stability, these one stop shops were putting many small business owners out of business. The Nazis recognized this problem and, in line with their general disdain for individual materialism fostered by the stores, accused the department stores of being tools of the Marxist International Conspiracy.<sup>279</sup> Although blatantly false, the Nazi attack not only took action against a direct concern of small business but also changed the issue into a nationalist one, thereby tying the plight of the small business owner with the Nazi Party cause. Before 1930, only 26,563 of Germany's self-employed were members of the Nazi Party.<sup>280</sup> However between 1930 and January 1933 the Nazi Party had 124,579 self-employed members, a significant increase and conversely a substantial loss for the SPD.<sup>281</sup> By commiserating with this electoral population and presenting themselves as an entity capable of stopping the decline of the small-business, the Nazis received a satisfying membership bump from this previous SPD voter population.

White collar workers and big business were also electoral populations the Nazis wanted to infiltrate in order to increase their support base. One such attempt featured Hitler address the

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<sup>278</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, "Propaganda Aimed at Artisans and Retail Traders, April, 1932," 106.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>280</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, "Partei-Statistik: Party Members as of 1 January 1935, Divided According to Jobs and Date of Membership," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 113.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, 113.

Industry Club, a collection of white collar workers and business owners, in January 1932. In this speech, Hitler lashed out against welfare and internationalism, issues which were of considerable importance to big business.<sup>282</sup> In particular Hitler argued that despite the considerable industrial productivity and demand for industrial goods, “if bolshevism as a world idea tears the Asiatic continent out of the human economic community, then the condition for the employment of these industries” would be unable to sustain itself.<sup>283</sup> Thus, Hitler conveyed to this audience, and many like it, that if the SPD and KPD had their way, many white collar jobs would be lost and profits would take sharp dives.<sup>284</sup> Per Hitler, “there can be no economic life unless behind this economic life there stands the determined political will of the nation absolutely ready to strike and to strike hard.”<sup>285</sup> As far as the Nazis were concerned, the Weimar Republic had already proven its inability to strike, and the sooner people realized that, the sooner they could cast their vote for the Nazi Party. Therefore, supporting the Nazi Party, who demonstrated their willingness to combat leftist menaces in the streets, would topple the Republic and secure a stable economic future for Germany. Before 1930 31,067 white-collar workers were members of the Nazi Party, but between then and 1933 they numbered 147,855.<sup>286</sup> Despite the contradicting needs of the small-business owner and Big business, percentages of both populations found Nazi arguments of struggle and change compatible to their general disdain for the other political parties.

Once the Nazis made inroads into these organizations, they began to look for other avenues of support and one group presented itself, the rural populations. The Nazi Party craved the rural electorate in particular because of its support of the similarly minded DNVP. One Nazi

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<sup>282</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Address to the Industry Club, January, 27, 1932,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 138-141

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, 138-141

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>286</sup> Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “Partei-Statistik: Party Members as of 1 January 1935, Divided According to Jobs and Date of Membership,” 113.

directive of 1932 laid out the procedure by which party members needed to elicit support from rural populations. Party representatives needed to know the answers to any local questions that might be asked, personally send out invitations to Nazi functions to each and every farmer, and gain collections at said functions.<sup>287</sup> The Nazis intended to duplicate this process all across rural regions, culminating in a “big German Evening...the primary task [of which would be] making the audience enthusiastic for our cause.”<sup>288</sup> The Nazis also went on the attack against rival political parties that held pockets of support in the rural lands. The Nazis released a leaflet entitled *German Farmer You Belong to Hitler! Why?* in which the Nazis demonstrated the ways by which the state capitalism of the SPD and the Marxism of the KPD would bring about the end of the farmer’s success.<sup>289</sup> Once again, the Nazis presented themselves as a unified front capable of not only honoring the local interests of various rural areas, but strong enough to prevent leftist sabotage of those interests. Nazi Party membership increased considerably within this group as well. Before 1930, peasants numbered 17,181, but by January 1933 there were 89,800 peasants in the Nazi Party.<sup>290</sup> By extolling their message through the lens of various social groups’ problems and desires, the Nazis secured the large disaffection vote and thus called on a significantly diverse electorate by the time the 1932 elections rolled around.

One of the aspects of Nazi ideology that has not been discussed in-depth in this work centers on Nazi ideology’s firm belief in a Jewish conspiracy undermining the frameworks of German society. This complicated aspect takes full works to summarize and understand in depth.

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<sup>287</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “The Organization of Rural Propaganda, July, 1932,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 105.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>289</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “German Farmer You Belong to Hitler! Why?,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Jay Martin, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 142.

<sup>290</sup>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, “Partei-Statistik: Party Members as of 1 January 1935, Divided According to Jobs and Date of Membership,” 114.

For the purposes of tying Nazi ideology to Nazi action though, the Nazi Party's views on solving the “Jewish Problem” help explain in part why Nazi ideology as a whole was so captivating to the disaffected citizens of Germany. In line with the solution to many problems, the Nazi solution to the “Jewish Problem” during the 1920s and 1930s involved ensuring that the German people admitted that they had a Jewish problem.<sup>291</sup> Hitler argued that the major reason that races suffered under the manipulations of the Jews was that people refused to acknowledge that the Jews actively manipulated multiple facets of society.<sup>292</sup> According to Hitler, “only a knowledge of the Jews provides the key with which to comprehend the inner, and consequently real, aims of Social Democracy.”<sup>293</sup> Before proceeding it is important to stress that the anti-Semitism of Nazi ideology did not drive people into mass-support of the party, but rather Nazi recognition of the numerous problems of Social Democracy, although through a flawed lens, captivated Nazi voters, who then tended to become more anti-Semitic.

The DVP and DNVP acknowledged certain problems with the Weimar Republic, but left many of its institutions untouched if not stronger. The Nazis entered the political arena prepared to demonstrate that almost every population in Germany suffered in some way under the Republic. Although many of these accusations carried duplicitous promises and anti-Semitic rhetoric, what appealed to the masses was the simple fact that the Nazis acknowledged the totality of the Weimar Republic's failure. Furthermore, the Nazis backed this recognition with aggressive pushes to see the institution replaced with something brand new. Thus, Nazi ideology's desire for recognition and removal of Germany's problems informed the party's electoral efforts in that those efforts universally worked to make the ills of the Weimar Republic universally known.

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<sup>291</sup>Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 339.

<sup>292</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid, 65.



## Closing Thoughts

In the quest to marry Nazi ideology to action, this chapter has explored the ways that ideology impacted and directed two critical Nazi actions. The first such action, the switch to the path of legality, has often been seen as a compromising of Nazi ideology for the sake of attaining political power. However, numerous continuities existed between the Nazi Movement and the Nazi Party, such as the image of the Nazis as heirs to the 1914 volunteers and the methods of street violence, that dispel the idea of a split from ideology. If anything, the legality tactic matched Nazi ideology more firmly by allowing the Nazis to expand the membership of the *Volksgemeinschaft* thus unifying Germans in opposition to the Weimar Republic. Independent of these continuities, the primary goal of the Nazi movement involved toppling the Weimar Republic, a goal maintained in the legality tactic. The critical difference would be destroying the institution from within as opposed to previously failed attempts at external action. Therefore, Nazi ideology did not change with the implementation of legality but in actuality informed that pivotal change.

The second action, gaining disparate support from the electorate, is much more difficult to marry to ideology, but once argued fundamentally proves Nazi ideology's significant impact on the Nazi rise. The Weimar Republic alienated numerous select populations of Germany from the status quo of left-wing politics. This burgeoning protest vote lent its support to various nationalist parties, most notably the DNVP and the DVP, and elected World War I hero Paul von Hindenburg to the Presidency. Hindenburg, as a symbol of the past disrespected by Social Democracy, managed to maintain popular support despite the ups and downs of the Republic until his death. However, the nationalist parties lost support as time went passed. The DVP's and

DNVP's failures to eliminate the woes of Social Democracy on top of their cooperation with those institutions led to a fracturing of support at the end of the 1920s which would be compounded by the influx of equally disaffected youth voters. These circumstances led to the formation of a mass-protest voting bloc that would look for outlets to express their frustration.

Despite all appearances this protest block did not flock entirely to the Nazi Party. Childers points out that SPD defection to the Nazi Party was limited which King and associates second claiming that “the July 1932 election witnessed a swing to the Far Left.”<sup>294</sup> While a swing of SPD supporters to the KPD existed, the results of such a defection was not on a massive scale, but nonetheless demonstrate that the disaffection vote did not deterministically swing towards the Nazi Party.<sup>295</sup> However, those adherents who did choose the Nazi Party did so for various reasons, but all boiled down to one core concept of Nazi ideology. The Nazis, like other parties, offered solutions to the woes of the citizenry, but what stood the Nazis apart from other parties was the completeness with which they assaulted the problems of the Weimar Republic. Although promises were sometimes duplicitous, these promises demonstrated Nazi recognition of how woefully inadequate the Republic addressed various pockets of the German population. For these voters, hearing such an encompassing criticism meant a great deal.

Stephen Fritz sums up the above voter interpretation of Nazi ideology rather completely. Per Fritz, “Nazism, then, was a curious mixture of fear, anxiety, and idealism- with a sense of creating a new Germany, but in order to rectify past injustices or prevent something worse.”<sup>296</sup> The voters looked to the Nazis who not only recognized their problems, but offered the simplest

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<sup>294</sup>Childers, “The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote,” 26; King et al., “Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler,” 982.

<sup>295</sup>Per King, the KPD increased by five percentage points, most of which came from blue-collar workers and the unemployed. King et al., “Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler,” 982.

<sup>296</sup>Stephen Fritz, “The NSDAP as a Volkspartei? A Look at the Social Basis of the Nazi Voter,” *The History Teacher* 20, no. 3 (May 1987): 379–399.

solution to their problems, one that no other politicians could convincingly call for, the destruction of the Weimar Republic. The destruction of the Weimar Republic would not only fix the wrongs of Social Democracy but prevent the KPD from turning Germany into a second Soviet Union. The Nazi Movement had already demonstrated their willingness to act against the Republic and the Party's continued street fighting against Communists further proved that the Nazis could back their belief system with action. Simultaneously, the Nazis, as inheritors of the volunteers of 1914 would in similar fashion to the presidency of Hindenburg offer a valuable connection to the prized German past even as something brand new would be implemented. All of these ideological aspects were captivating on top of Nazi advocacy of the reestablishment of the *Burgfrieden* in the form of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. It is little wonder then why so many disaffected voters would turn in support for the Nazi Party. Therefore, despite the duplicity and opportunism present in the political actions of the Nazi Party during the Weimar Republic, these actions were rooted in and forwarded by entrenched aspects of Nazi ideology that found an enthralled audience in various pockets of disaffected German citizens.

## CHAPTER 4

### VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT: 1933 TO 1938

On March 21, 1933, German writer Erich Ebermayer recorded his thoughts on that day's Spring Military Ceremony in Potsdam. Ebermayer effusively relayed his excitement as the ceremony featured President Hindenburg, the imperial world, and Hitler, herald of the "newly ascendant world" coming together to celebrate a renewal of the German spirit.<sup>297</sup> Although the ceremony was directly meant to convey the power of the newly formed Reich government, a strong symbolic element ran through the entire event. In the same fashion that spring would bring Germany out of a cold winter and renew dynamic and beautiful elements of nature long dormant, so too would the Nazis bring the German people out of the frigid social democratic world that quelled the nationalism of Imperial Germany.

In his speech at the Potsdam Ceremony, Hitler echoed these sentiments of renewal. According to Ebermayer, Hitler's declarations stood out in their "striking moderation."<sup>298</sup> Hitler did not allude to any racial or ideological enemies within or outside of Germany.<sup>299</sup> Rather, Hitler gave the people what they wanted discussing "preservation of the great tradition of our nation, stability of the government instead of constant vacillation, taking into consideration all the experiences in the life of the individual and the community."<sup>300</sup> The ceremony was emotional, bringing many people to tears, as the German people came to the realization that they were being ushered into a new era of German history that also respected Germany's past.<sup>301</sup> Ebermayer was

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<sup>297</sup>Erich Ebermayer, "Diary Entry on the Day of Potsdam, 21 March 1933," in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 141.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>299</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>300</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>301</sup>Ibid. 141.

so taken aback by the ceremony that he retreated to the woods for some time alone with his thoughts, but not everyone was as deeply affected. The writer described a young man, twenty-one years old, who, unmoved by the ceremony, thought it was “all merely a rigged act” ending his comments by warning Ebermayer rather forebodingly, “You’ll see what will happen.”<sup>302</sup> Although dismayed by the comments, Ebermayer took a stance in support of the Third Reich that many Germans at the onset of Nazi power shared.<sup>303</sup> Germans stood on a precipice, their back to the ailing Weimar Republic looking forward onto a vast valley of promise offered by the Third Reich. Many German citizens felt the compulsion to step forward and fall into a realm they believed would renew the German spirit long dormant, but to the great misery of many that step would in all actuality lead somewhere far different than the valley of promise Hitler and the Nazi Party offered.

Once the Nazis’ seized power and purged the Third Reich of their political rivals, the Reich Government turned its attention to the German citizenry.<sup>304</sup> During the elections of the

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<sup>302</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>304</sup>Along the lines of this work's overall task to tie ideology to action and thereby demonstrate that Nazism was more intricate than the established opportunistic identity allows, the question must be asked were the Nazi political purges of 1933 to 1934 hastened acts of power-hungry opportunists done for the sole purpose of gaining political domination of Germany? The simple answer is most definitely yes. The Reichstag fire of 1933 allowed the Nazis the excuse to justify a mass purge of the Communist Party thereby weakening the overall strength of left wing opposition. The KPD's absence in the Reichstag, and an alliance with the Centre and Nationalist Parties, provided the Nazi Party with the numbers necessary to push out the SPD via the Enabling Act. With the SPD and KPD out of the picture, an agreement with the Vatican neutralized the Centre and the nationalist organizations were simply ignored into obscurity. One year later, Hitler was led to believe the SA would soon be launching a coup against his rule and proceeded to purge a faction of the Nazi Party from the Third Reich. All of the above constituted the actions of power-hungry, opportunists, but if the Reichstag fire had not happened...would these purges have never occurred? The Nazis had already been gathering names and locations of prominent Social Democrats and Communists long before the Reichstag fire occurred. Catholicism was more than willing to acquiesce to the lesser evil of Nazism over the entirely atheistic Communist Party. While the purges themselves were hastened and opportunistic, they were a fundamental part of the Nazi's long-term ideological plans to replace the Weimar Republic with a Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Since the formation of the DAP, Communists and their alleged anarchic desires for a damaging, chaotic revolution were viewed as fatally detrimental to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Therefore, Nazi ideology would have mandated their removal; the Reichstag Fire simply provided the opportunity. The SPD, their tenets of individual expression, and their endorsement of the debilitating Weimar Republic stood as the next most serious threat to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. If political Catholicism had been allowed to continue it would have existed as an entity capable of dividing the

1930s, the Nazis led a campaign in which they highlighted the numerous problems of the Weimar Republic and advocated that these issues would be solved with the formation of the all-encompassing national community, known to the Germans as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The ideals and emotions behind the *Volksgemeinschaft* certainly correlated with the sentiments of unification and camaraderie that coursed through the Spring Potsdam Ceremony. However, the two different reactions to the ceremony experienced by Ebermayer and his young friend represent two different views of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as it was experienced during the 1930s. Ebermayer was swept up in the ideological aspects of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in which Nazi Germany would usher in a resurrection of the *Burgfrieden* from 1914, under which all Germans became united regardless of party and class for the benefit of the German nation. The young man, who believed the Nazi ceremony was simply a political stunt, views the *Volksgemeinschaft* from the political-pragmatic viewpoint in which the Nazis simply manipulated the German citizenry with ideas of a national community to achieve their own ends. Both of these interpretations represent the complicated nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in Nazi Germany that many citizens of the time struggled to fully understand, never receiving the full vision in any direct fashion from the Nazi government.

In the same fashion that the citizenry of Germany struggled with the dual nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, scholars face equal difficulty coming to a common conclusion on this aspect of Nazi ideology from which almost every facet of Third Reich history branches. As the

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*Volksgemeinschaft* along religious lines. The DNVP would similarly divide the *Volksgemeinschaft* along political lines. Therefore, both the Centre and DNVP would have been neutralized in some fashion. Finally, the Roehm faction threatened to undo all of Nazism's gains and, as any enemy of the *Volksgemeinschaft* would be treated, felt the wrath of the Third Reich. All of these factions that were eliminated from Germany constituted threats to the Nazis' vision of Germany's future and as such would have to have been removed regardless of opportunity. Therefore, the purges the Nazis implemented against the Social Democrats, the Communists, the Centre Party, rival nationalists, and the Roehm faction should not only be viewed as the opportunistic haphazard actions of the sadistic Nazis who would commit the atrocities of the Holocaust, but in keeping with the intricacies of Nazism should be also, if not primarily, viewed as the implementation of the long held goals for the implementation of the ultimate Nazi ideological goal, the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

*Volksgemeinschaft* itself was a fragmented concept spread throughout the entirety of the Reich, scholarship on this subject is at least equally if not more fragmented in its efforts to ascertain the true nature, ideological or political-pragmatic, of the national community. As many scholars of the *Volksgemeinschaft* tend to have a particular, narrow focus on a specific aspect of the national community, only an analysis and combination of scholarly work could possibly strive to resolve the fragmentation present in this field. This chapter will explore the various arguments scholars have made on the ideological foundations and subsequent applications of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in an effort to determine the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The previous chapters have sought to marry ideology to Nazi actions, but the connection between ideology and action is easier to establish before the Nazis took power. Without having to worry about public opinion the Nazi Movement and Party were able to act in unison with their ideology without significant hindrance. Once the Nazis formed the Reich government, ideology and action became thoroughly mingled to the point where ideology appears to have taken a back seat to action. After 1933, ideology features in post-hoc justifications for controversial actions in order to keep the citizenry loyal. This work does not dispute the use of ideology to provide lip service to the concerns of the German people. While after the fact justifications may be hollow throwbacks to ideology, the various actions that necessitated ideological justification themselves fit together with significant Nazi ideological goals. Therefore, to assert that Nazi ideology ran central to and pushed forward many of the actions of the Third Reich not only must the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the central ideological framework for the Reich, be understood, but also an overarching understanding that framework's role in the Reich Government efforts to establish the Thousand Year Third Reich must be achieved.

### Citizen Interaction or Pacification?

The first step towards determining the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft* involves solving a chicken and the egg quandary. The *Volksgemeinschaft*, as experienced in the Third Reich, was a blending and balance of both ideological and political-pragmatic aspects. In order to define the *Volksgemeinschaft*, a scholar must determine whether the *Volksgemeinschaft* originated from ideological notions of the national community internalized by the German people that subsequently informed the political actions of the Nazi Party, or whether the ideological belief system behind the *Volksgemeinschaft* was updated to match the Nazis' political visions. Historians differ in their assessment of this dilemma, some believing that Nazi policy echoed the *Volksgemeinschaft* while others ardently contend that the Nazis altered the national community for their own political ends. If the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft* is to be determined, the complex problem of the origins of the national community within Nazi ideology and the Third Reich must be addressed.

The *Volksgemeinschaft* existed as a national community of people who were inherently German and only German. As such, many historians argue that the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* originated from already inherent anti-Semitism within the German citizenry that called for a racial reordering of Germany. Historian Peter Fritzsche does not stand as the only historian to make the fairly obvious argument that the *Volksgemeinschaft* had a strong racial foundation, but Fritzsche is unique in his assessment that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was never in any form an explicitly Nazi idea. The foundation of Fritzsche's argument contends that the German citizenry participated in the national and social reordering of Germany through a willingness to see their racially pure version of *Volksgemeinschaft* implemented. Germans held onto notions of the



*Volksgemeinschaft* from the *Burgfrieden* of the Spirit of 1914, when, at the onset of World War I, the upsurge of German nationalism served to unite Germans “who had long been divided by class, region, and religion.”<sup>305</sup> The German failures in World War I and the following Weimar years would sublimate these notions of unification and divide Germans to an extent entirely unknown to most citizens. First, the Treaty of Versailles’s territorial arrangements separated many German people territorially from the main German state. Then, the Weimar Republic ushered in various economic catastrophes that caused considerable financial disparity and outright poverty amongst the citizenry. Worse still Germans were left to fend for themselves in a hostile Germany built on entirely alien concepts of social democracy. Thus, Germans looked longingly on the days of the Kaiser when Germany was a fortress against the ills of the outside world.

The various impediments to the fortress of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that German citizens aspired to eliminate became personified in numerous perceived enemies of the German people. Jews featured prominently as the enemies of national community because not only had the Jewish people been a typical European scapegoat for centuries, but they received the burden of responsibility for allegedly undermining German domestic society, thus forcing the Imperial government to agree to a premature peace that led to the ruinous Treaty of Versailles.<sup>306</sup> Thus, according to Fritzsche, the German people were the originators of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, not the Nazi Movement. By this argument, the Nazis rose to power because they simply “offered a comprehensive vision of renewal, which many Germans found appealing.”<sup>307</sup> The Nazis ultimately appealed to notions that Germans already held ingrained, but the Nazis added to these

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<sup>305</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 38.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

notions a sense of urgency and fear of German enemies. Therefore, Fritzsche argues that the *Volksgemeinschaft* informed Nazi ideology, a stance which taken to its logical conclusion, acknowledges the complicity of the German people for the formation and success of the Nazi Party. But, did the political actions of the Third Reich correlate or diverge from the national community that the German people conceived?

Fritzsche rejects the frequently argued belief that fear-based tacit consent from the German people enabled the anti-Jewish purges. Instead, Fritzsche makes a controversial argument in which the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* and acts done in its name occurred because the Nazis “simply dared to implement preconceived ideas” about the national and social nature of Germany.<sup>308</sup> In addition, the Nazis would have never been able to accomplish their racial purges to the extent that they did without the active help of various German citizens of many different walks of life.<sup>309</sup> Through the help of various local officials the Nazis were able to expel and, when plans changed, exterminate, the Jewish populations of Germany and the rest of Europe. Fritzsche furthers his accusations of German citizenry by demonstrating that a great deal of opportunism existed for German citizens who chose to manipulate the racial policies of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Multiple cases exist featuring Germans denouncing Jewish rivals to the Gestapo in the hopes of removing an undesirable competitor.<sup>310</sup> The Holocaust could not have reached such a tragic magnitude without the active participation of the German citizenry. Therefore, through his ardent argument that German citizens were not free from blame for various atrocities occurring within the Third Reich, Fritzsche contends that the racial activities of the Reich Government were in step with the German citizenry’s conceptions of what a national community, free of Jewish influence, should become.

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid, 8.

Is Fritzsche correct in his assertion that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was a citizen supported national and social reordering of Germany led in a racial direction? Throughout the Third Reich, various actions were taken against Jewish people by German citizens including a mass boycott against Jewish shops, but often anti-Semitic actions were of a much more inflammatory nature.<sup>311</sup> One citizen related the events of a mass book burning held in Berlin on 10 May 1933. The observer specifies that this book burning was not merely a Nazi Party function because in addition to party members, mobs of citizens and students participated throughout the day before the master of ceremonies, Joseph Goebbels, arrived.<sup>312</sup> Per the observer, upon his arrival Goebbels, enthralled by the emotionalism of the moment, stood in front of the crowd and yelled “The age of extreme Jewish intellectualism has now ended, and the success of the German revolution has again given the right of way to the German spirit.”<sup>313</sup> Goebbels used the same imagery to justify book burning that Fritzsche uses to prove that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was about the racial renewal of the German citizenry. As such, the *Volksgemeinschaft* was held independently of the Nazi Party and subsequently received a great deal of approval, as evidenced in the mass participation of all-day book burning. However, despite the appearance of a citizen led formation of the national community, there are aspects of the racial *Volksgemeinschaft* which fail to demonstrate that every action of the Nazi Party directed against the Jewish people occurred with the tacit consent of the German citizenry.

A 1935 citizenship law dictated that “a Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs; he cannot occupy a political office.”<sup>314</sup> The law went on to define

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<sup>311</sup>Jules Streicher, “Appeal for the Boycott of All Jewish Enterprises, 31 March 1933.,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 143-144.

<sup>312</sup>Louis Lochner, “The Burning of the Books, May 10 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 344.

<sup>313</sup>*Ibid*, 345.

<sup>314</sup>Office of the US Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, ed., “[Doc. 1417-PS] First Regulation to

Jews explicitly in a racial context.<sup>315</sup> This law and many others that the Nazis put into effect prohibited Jewish people from being citizens and holding political office, but the laws against Jewish citizenry were far more stringent than what Fritzsche's racial, citizen driven *Volksgemeinschaft* called for. The Jewish racial qualifications set forth by the Nazi Party were severe and allowed for many Germans who were not previously considered Jewish by popular standards to be classified as Jewish and summarily ostracized in the name of the national community. As far as the Reich Government was concerned someone with three full Jewish grandparents, two full Jewish parents, offspring of a marriage with one Jew or an extramarital relationship with a Jew, and other relatively minor associations with Jews was labeled Jewish and subject to the full extent of the Third Reich's wrath.<sup>316</sup> The 1935 Law for Protection of German Blood and Honor extended the purging of the national community by outlawing marriage and extra-marital intercourse between German citizens and Jews.<sup>317</sup> The Nazis pursued the ends of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to a greater extent than the Germans' notions of a national community allowed for. If renewal of the German Spirit through the exclusion of foreign and Jewish elements existed as the prime directive of the German citizens' *Volksgemeinschaft*, basic laws of exclusion and forced emigration would have sufficed to meet the German citizen's requirements. The Reich Government however went much further than what the Germans consented to and followed their own fanatic desire to form a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*. Therefore, Fritzsche's assertion that the *Volksgemeinschaft* existed as a call for racial renewal by the German Citizenry, enacted faithfully by the Nazi Party, although accurate to a certain degree,

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the Reichs Citizenship Law of 14 Nov. 1935," in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. IV (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 9.

<sup>315</sup>Ibid, 8-9.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>317</sup>Office of the US Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, ed., "[Doc. 3179-PS] Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor of 15 September 1935," in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. V (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), [Doc. 3179-PS], 916-917.

fails to fully identify the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

If Fritzsche's citizen led reordering argument is deemed an inaccurate interpretation, can the *Volksgemeinschaft* still exist as a largely citizen held ideology that the Reich Government endorsed independent of Nazi ideological racial extremes? John Connelly uses his article "The Uses of the *Volksgemeinschaft*" to stipulate that the German citizenry participated actively in many aspects of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Connelly researched a set of letters exchanged between the citizenry of the German town of Eisenach and the local Nazi Party offices. Connelly believes that within these correspondences he has found a unique interpretation of the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Connelly argues that the letters he found demonstrate a bottom up construction of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in which the local party took cues from the citizenry in the implementation of the national community.<sup>318</sup> Thus, the *Volksgemeinschaft* was formed and altered locally every time a citizen evoked "the catchword of *Volksgemeinschaft* to pursue their own agendas."<sup>319</sup>

Connelly begins his argument by stipulating that the Nazi Party set up "advice centers" in which they hoped to receive the personal grievances of local citizens as a way to maintain "meaning and power."<sup>320</sup> In theory, the citizenry would bring their problems to the local Nazi Party branch at which point the Party would use the complaints to establish a "barometer for judging the hopes, inclinations, longings, and distresses of the people and adjust its policies to what it finds."<sup>321</sup> Connelly argues that the head of the Eisenach branch of the Nazi Party, Herman Kohler, took great efforts to listen to his citizenry and change the social hierarchy within his

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<sup>318</sup>John Connelly, "The Uses of the *Volksgemeinschaft*: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939-1940," *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. No. 4 (December 1996), 901.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid, 901.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid, 901.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid, 902.

corner of the Reich.<sup>322</sup> Kohler was seemingly obsessed with generating opportunities for the “Aryan commoner” and “welcomed opportunities to advance the lot of fellow disgruntled plebeians.”<sup>323</sup> Connelly uses many of the letters sent to Kohler to demonstrate that the citizenry would often contact their local Nazi Party branch to denounce various individuals often in an effort to acquire selfish gains. Per Connelly, as the economy rebounded under the Third Reich the German citizens setup a zero-sum situation where, “to take advantage of a resource, one had to show why someone else should be excluded.”<sup>324</sup> Kohler fostered such behavior and slowly purged many undesirables from the economy and subsequently from the national community. Thus, Connelly would argue that the Nazi Party established a system of grievance that the citizenry actively used to purge various individuals from the national community.

Connelly contends that there was a truly corrupt nature to the *Volksgemeinschaft* present in the local environment. The *Volksgemeinschaft* was meant to unite all Germans, irrespective of class and politics, into a community where each citizen worked for the benefit of one another. However, “in many senses party membership implied greater claims to the services of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.”<sup>325</sup> Connelly’s argument allows for such a claim because in a realm where a party member wanted a certain position held by a non-party member, all that had to be done was write a letter to the local Nazi Party branch and the situation would be resolved, to the benefit of the party member. Situations of private denunciations certainly existed as a critical aspect of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Denunciations proved fatal, however, to the citizen led *Volksgemeinschaft* by, as Connelly contends, “making the political private,” i.e. exploiting the notions of the

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<sup>322</sup>Ibid, 903.

<sup>323</sup>Ibid, 904, 903.

<sup>324</sup>Ibid, 905.

<sup>325</sup>Ibid, 915.

*Volksgemeinschaft* for personal gain, the citizenry “had made the private political.”<sup>326</sup> In order to judge one person’s claim to being a stronger example of the national community, that person’s loyalties and actions had to be investigated. However, Denunciations often brought with them increased attention from the Reich Government into the activities of the accusers’ daily life. Therefore, Connelly argues that the German citizenry, through denunciations, not only actively participated in initial purges, but also opened the door to further Party-led purges of the national community. Thus, Connelly believes that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was initially a citizen held ideology that the German people manipulated and corrupted to such an extent that the Nazis easily replaced it with their own version of the national community.

Despite the compelling nature of the bottom-up argument that Connelly makes using very valid primary evidence, there are many flaws within his assertions. For instance, the *Volksgemeinschaft* is a *national community*, not an Eisenach community. To stipulate that every city within the Third Reich matched this model stands as quite the logical leap. Eisenach was just one city and it stands as unique to many Nazi cities in that its local branch leader, Kohler, made himself actively available to the citizenry, holding office hours for six hours every week.<sup>327</sup> In a Reich Government filled with corrupt Nazi Party officials, Kohler went out of his way in many cases to assert the will of his citizens and maintain the national community as *he* perceived it. Connelly on multiple occasions alludes to the excessive zeal of Kohler, specifically calling Kohler “exceptional” and “a particularly fanatical political leader.”<sup>328</sup> Kohler follows a strict code that Connelly even mentions went beyond the notions of responding to public demands and operated outside of those demands.<sup>329</sup> The examples Connelly subsequently provides, Kohler’s

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<sup>326</sup>Ibid, 922.

<sup>327</sup>Ibid, 902.

<sup>328</sup>Ibid, 905.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid, 923.

exclusion of Jews, the mentally handicapped, and the formerly imprisoned are ideas that came directly from Adolf Hitler and the Nazi upper echelon.<sup>330</sup> Thus, the *Volksgemeinschaft* that Connelly argues, consisting of manipulations of local party leaders done initially at the behest of the citizenry, does not mesh with actual events because not only is Connelly's example of Eisenach unique to much of the Reich, but also Kohler's loyalties were very typical of the Third Reich that insisted that party leaders duplicate the policies of the main Party.

To a certain degree, Connelly's argument asserts the presence of a citizenry that expressed contentment with the *Volksgemeinschaft* because they felt they were actively participating in its maintenance. Per Connelly, citizens in Eisenach "knew that district leader Kohler-and the system he served-reserved terror for those outside the *Volksgemeinschaft*."<sup>331</sup> This assertion begs the question, how did the German citizenry know that they were within the *Volksgemeinschaft*? Fritzsche would argue that the German citizenry knew their position in the national community because their notions of German nationalism informed the entire concept. However, as demonstrated through racial laws and Connelly's arguments, the Reich Government took considerable efforts to enforce its own definitions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* while attempting to get the citizenry to think and act racially. Therefore, arguing that the citizen's ideological conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft* informed the actions of the Nazi Party is, if not exactly implausible, at least incomplete.

David Welch stipulates as much in his article "Nazi Propaganda and the *Volksgemeinschaft*: Constructing a People's Community." Welch does concede that the German citizenry's preconceived notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* existed before the Nazis ever took power because for any of the Nazi propaganda to have been effective, it needed to "preach to

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<sup>330</sup>Ibid, 923.

<sup>331</sup>Ibid, 930.



those already converted.”<sup>332</sup> However, as opposed to being active shapers of the national community, Welch, in contradiction to Fritzsche and Connelly, believes the German citizenry ultimately were the recipients of the Nazi interpretation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Welch asserts that “the political function of propaganda was to co-ordinate the political will of the nation (the citizenry) with the aims of the state,” and if this strategy failed propaganda needed at the very least to instill “passive acquiescence.”<sup>333</sup> Therefore, Welch contends that the Nazis used these already instilled notions of the German national community to establish approval for their own Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Welch contends that the Nazi propaganda served two purposes in the realm of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. First, propaganda persuaded “the population that short-term sacrifices were necessary” in order for the *Volksgemeinschaft* to be realized.<sup>334</sup> Second, propaganda publicized, “through the means of compensation, the measures being introduced by the regime.”<sup>335</sup> Thus, propaganda called for people to put themselves second to the greater national community and if they did so great rewards would follow for the loyal members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This assertion meshes well with Nazi ideology before 1933 that called for sacrifice in unity. Welch acknowledges that discontent and unenthusiastic complacency existed within the Third Reich, but propaganda managed to depoliticize much of this resistant group and subsequently allowed the German citizenry to buy into the Nazis’ vision of the national community.<sup>336</sup> As unemployment declined and Germans as a whole benefited from Nazi rule, people became willing to accept Nazi propaganda messages and acquiesced to follow the measures of the Nazi Party. Welch provides a compelling argument where the Nazis exploited

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<sup>332</sup>D. Welch, “Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People’s Community,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004), 214.

<sup>333</sup>Ibid, 218.

<sup>334</sup>Ibid, 223.

<sup>335</sup>Ibid, 223.

<sup>336</sup>Ibid, 225.

notions of the past and used their various successes to pacify the citizenry and subsequently win tacit consent for the Nazi ideology's interpretation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The Reich Propaganda Ministry exists as a perfect demonstration for Welch's interpretation of the top down model for the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Joseph Goebbels used a March 1933 speech to specify what he viewed as the role of propaganda in the Third Reich. Goebbels plainly stated that "it is the task of State propaganda to simplify complicated ways of thinking that even the smallest man in the street may understand."<sup>337</sup> Goebbels intended to use propaganda to secure the support of the masses for Nazi policies and the necessary tool for such acts was a radicalized, repressed press corp.<sup>338</sup> Fritz Sanger, representative of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, commented on the nature of Nazi press conferences stating, "in these conferences there was no discussion, we were simply spoken to somewhat one-sidedly (by the government)."<sup>339</sup> The Reich Government told reporters what the news was and prohibited newspapers from covering various topics that portrayed the Party in an ill light. For instance, the Propaganda Ministry banned newspapers from publishing photos in which high ranking party members were sitting at tables featuring empty alcohol bottles, presumably consumed by said high ranking members.<sup>340</sup> Subsequently the Nazis were able to edit and shape any news event or Reich action to receive approval amongst the citizenry. The Nazis clearly had power over the information the public received and subsequently, as Welch argues, the Party could easily spin citizen-held notions of a national community for their own benefit; much like the citizens of Eisenach had manipulated the *Volksgemeinschaft* for their own gains.

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<sup>337</sup>Joseph Goebbels, "The Tasks of the Ministry Propaganda," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 334.

<sup>338</sup>*Ibid*, 334.

<sup>339</sup>Fritz Sanger, "The Government Press Conference, 1964," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 334.

<sup>340</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., "Press Directives of the Ministry of Propaganda, 1938," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 335.

To return to the initial quandary, was the *Volksgemeinschaft* a German ideal that informed Nazi policy or was the national community an ideal incorporated and edited by the Reich Government for its own ends? The *Volksgemeinschaft* generally rose out of notions of German camaraderie emerging from World War I. As such, Fritzsche contends that the origins of the *Volksgemeinschaft* resided in the German people and the Nazis simply followed these notions as a means to maintain power. However, the stringent nature of the Reich Citizenship Law's Jewish categorization existed to demonstrate that the Nazis operated independent of the will of the citizens. Subsequently, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was an ideology separate from the notions of World War I most Germans had previously internalized.

Connelly argues that while the citizenry made initial pleas to the notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* shared between the people and the Nazi Party, these pleas allowed the local party to intervene in the private lives of their citizens providing the local party the means to implement its own version of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. However, Connelly uses one town's documents and an ardent party supporter to establish his argument, consequently invalidating said argument by demonstrating that, through party fanatic Kohler, the higher party still informed the implementation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Therefore, arguments that contend the German citizenry's interpretation of the national community remained dominant throughout the Third Reich fail to fully appreciate the Nazi Party elites' impact on the formations of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*.

David Welch's argument represents an accurate appraisal of the formation of the Third Reich's *Volksgemeinschaft*. Welch argues that the Nazis used propaganda to misappropriate notions of the nationally held conceptions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* so that these conceptions would match and justify Nazi policies. By manipulating and actively editing these notions, the

Nazis were able to achieve tacit support for many of their initiatives allowing for a steadily progressing, aggressive policy implementation towards total state control. The Nazis thus used the *German Volksgemeinschaft* to create a loyal citizenry, but all of the arguments made about the origins of the *Nazi Volksgemeinschaft* dance around a particular and pressing difficulty. Given the extensive nature of the Third Reich and its pervasive presence in all aspects of Germany, simple pacification could not have been the ultimate goal of generating a national community. If Welch is correct, as this thesis contends he is, in asserting that the Reich Government actively manipulated and edited the German citizenry's conceptions of the national community for political-pragmatic ends, what ends were the Nazis pursuing in the name of their own *Volksgemeinschaft*?

### Goals of the National Community

The origins of the *Nazi Volksgemeinschaft*, as Welch asserted, may have stemmed from the Nazi Party's need to create a complacent citizenry, but if the *Volksgemeinschaft* existed solely as a pacifying measure, why were policies of the national community like the Reich Citizenship Law taken to such extreme ends? Even though the origins of the *Nazi Volksgemeinschaft* as a political-pragmatic party led ideology have been determined, that effort was just a first step towards ascertaining the truly complicated nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. There existed a clear intentionality behind the development of the national community that went far beyond maintaining a pliant citizenry. Thus, the issue that now must be addressed in order to advance knowledge of this complicated topic involves determining what the Reich government intended to accomplish with the implementation of their version of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The Reich Government forcibly removed many individuals from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but not all those who received the negative attention of Nazi authorities were targeted on a racial basis. Many of the perceived enemies of the *Volksgemeinschaft* were under attack because they embodied political threats to the Nazi establishment of power. Robert Paxton presents an interpretation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* within his work *The Anatomy of Fascism* that argues in favor of a strictly political nature inherent in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Paxton's work analyzes fascism in general and as such he views the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a political tool common within many Fascist regimes. Per Paxton, "fascists pull forward toward dynamic, leveling, populist dictatorship, prepared to subordinate every private interest to the imperatives of national aggrandizement and purification."<sup>341</sup> Aggrandizement and purification of the German race were two aspects that featured heavily within policies of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and as these aspects featured in different fascist regimes Paxton is able to operate in direct opposition to many scholars who contend the *Volksgemeinschaft* was a uniquely German ideal.

Paxton would contend processes of coordination, the unification of various aspects of life into equivalent Nazi Party organizations, brought about the steady progression of Germany towards "national aggrandizement and purification."<sup>342</sup> Paxton lays out a political model in which "terror, division, minor concessions, and integration devices" all helped to progress the formation of the national community as a political tool that would allow the Nazi Party to dominate all aspects of a citizen's life.<sup>343</sup> Paxton's most elaborate explanation of coordination comes in the form of the Nazi Labor Front. Terror eliminated direct opposition within the German population while purges slowly divided the Social Democratic and Communist coalitions within the workforce. At Hitler's insistence, the Nazi Party eliminated unions and

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<sup>341</sup>Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 120.

<sup>342</sup>Ibid, 120.

<sup>343</sup>Ibid, 136.

formed the Nazi Labor Front under which all labor would be integrated fostering a sense of unity in workers' lives.<sup>344</sup> However, as workers remained somewhat oppositional to these measures, further integration was brought in through the Strength through Joy program, designed to foster the Party ideology in combination with German labor's increased leisure time.<sup>345</sup> Slowly, even a recalcitrant population such as workers came to be integrated within the national community, but only after various efforts were taken by different elements of the political sphere to ensure such actions succeeded.

As Paxton uses the Nazi Labor Front as an example, it would be best to investigate that set of events to determine the validity of his contention. After a large and nationalistic May Day celebration the Nazi Party swiftly moved against workers unions and replaced them with the Nazi Labor Front. In April 21, 1933, Dr. Robert Ley laid out the plan for the coordination of the trade unions that demonstrates that this act represented a serious political action as the "SA as well as SS (were) to be employed for the occupation of trade-union properties and for taking into custody the people concerned."<sup>346</sup> After the Trade Unions were forcibly removed, the Nazi Labor Front was established with the expressed *Volksgemeinschaft* goal of internal social unification while simultaneously educating "all Germans who are at work to support the National Socialist State and to indoctrinate them in the National Socialist mentality."<sup>347</sup> The Nazi Labor Front would strive to indoctrinate the remaining workers and thus induct them into the political, and perceivably brainwashed, national community thus demonstrating Paxton's strictly political outlook on the *Volksgemeinschaft*

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<sup>344</sup>Ibid, 137.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid, 137.

<sup>346</sup>*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, "Nazi Plan to Take over Free Trade Unions, 21 April 1933," in Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 423.

<sup>347</sup>*Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., "Proclamation to All Working Germans, 27 November 1933," in Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 434.

Paxton's interpretation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, despite a strong political-pragmatic outlook, is incomplete as his interpretation of the Fascist state contends that Fascism can never settle into a state of order, eventually destroying all aspects of government in a constant need for conflict.<sup>348</sup> Per Paxton, "Fascist regimes had to produce an impression of driving momentum-permanent revolution."<sup>349</sup> Under this assumption of fascism the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as a political tool was just that, a short-term political tool used to gain totality in all aspects of the state as just one step of the Nazis' power addiction. The Nazis used the notions of forming a national community to maintain the idea that oppositional forces existed within the Third Reich that the German citizens needed the Nazi Party to fulfill. However, asserting a strictly opportunistic outlook on the *Volksgemeinschaft* ignores the ample evidence that demonstrates multiple ideological goals of the *Volksgemeinschaft* the Reich Government professed. Although Paxton's interpretation does accommodate the Nazi Party's aggressive hand in the political aspects of the national community, his nihilistic portrayal of fascism in general fails to appropriately define the goals of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* which evoked some fashion of long-term plan.

The Reich Government clearly intended to construct some fashion of national community loyal to the perpetuation of the Third Reich, but the ultimate goal Paxton put forward does not take into consideration the ways the Nazis were revising and shaping the roles of its citizens, in particular women, on a micro level. Jill Stephenson's work *The Nazi Organization of Women* explores the various roles conceived for women in Germany from the Weimar through the Third Reich, in particular focusing on how those roles were implemented and in what ways they were not. Stephenson's arguments about the perceived position of women in the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* add insight into the exploration of the goal of the national community.

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<sup>348</sup>Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 148.

<sup>349</sup>Ibid, 148.

Stephenson contends that the women who initially supported the Nazi Party were not virulent, zealous followers of the Nazi ideology.<sup>350</sup> Per Stephenson, the women voters of the NSDAP “had been drawn from women who disliked female political activists and women rightists.”<sup>351</sup> The backlash from the allegedly immoral Weimar Republic had mobilized women to vote for a Nazi Party that wished to make women “wives, mothers, and homemakers.”<sup>352</sup> After the Nazis came to power and purges removed many of the feminist political activists, the Nazi women voters subsided into political obscurity.<sup>353</sup> The Nazis had differing perspectives on the inclusion of women in the national community and subsequently female involvement in the Nazi Party machinery. Robert Ley contended that “the organization of persons of one sex can therefore not be termed a community.”<sup>354</sup> Ley was in a stark minority however as most members of the Nazi upper echelon, in particular Adolf Hitler, were virulently against allowing women to have a political role in the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>355</sup>

As anti-feminist as such stances are, Stephenson contends that the Nazi women, who were rather politically inactive, did not often oppose such opinions. Rather, Stephenson contends that most women who joined women’s organizations in the Third Reich did so not because of any particular political desire, but rather they wished to elicit the benefits that came from being such a member.<sup>356</sup> Most damning to feminist assertions during the Third Reich were the following statements Stephenson includes from Nazi-supporting women like Lore Bauer: “we claim no rights for our sex such as that women politician [Rosa Luxemburg] demanded...rather

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<sup>350</sup>Jill Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 145.

<sup>351</sup>Ibid, 145-146.

<sup>352</sup>Ibid, 13.

<sup>353</sup>Ibid, 145.

<sup>354</sup>Ibid, 140.

<sup>355</sup>Ibid, 13.

<sup>356</sup>Ibid, 19.



we want to fulfill the tasks which the nations sets us as women.”<sup>357</sup> Many women thus did not want to assert themselves in the political realm, but rather wished to be dutiful citizens of the Reich helping to build the all-important *Volksgemeinschaft*. Stephenson echoes Welch’s pacification argument in her postscript claiming that “Once everyone *believed* that class and denominational differences were irrelevant...then there would be no more class conflict” which would inevitably “persuade the working class that they were too well off to be able to afford a class war.”<sup>358</sup> Stephenson argues that the Nazis took a stance that alienated women not only because that was the Party’s ideological belief, but also Nazi propaganda and actions tried to create a national community that guided women to believe that *Volksgemeinschaft* did not need women to be involved in politics.

Evidence exists to corroborate Stephenson’s contention that women were exiled from the Reich’s political process while the government simultaneously portrayed such exclusions as having value to the national community. In April 1934, Hitler banned women from becoming lawyers and judges because he and the Nazi hierarchy did not wish women to attain any power or influence in the legal system of the Third Reich.<sup>359</sup> Such exclusions inconvenienced numerous women who had already, at great personal expense, gone through various legal training only to have their personal investments ruined.<sup>360</sup> Exclusions of this nature led to discontent, not necessarily from women but men who protested the resulting practical difficulties from losing well trained barristers.<sup>361</sup> In 1933, Reich Minister of the Interior Frick furthered Hitler’s argument for the exclusion of women claiming that, despite his insistence that no direct laws

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<sup>357</sup>Ibid, 145.

<sup>358</sup>Ibid, 215-216.

<sup>359</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., “Hitler Forbids the Admission of Women to the Practice of Law, April 1934,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 367.

<sup>360</sup>Roland Freisler, “Hitler’s Decision Creates Practical Difficulties, January 1937,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 368.

<sup>361</sup>Ibid, 368.

existed prohibiting the hiring of women, “in the event of males and females being equally qualified for employment in the public service” the man should receive the position.<sup>362</sup> In order to justify such actions, the Nazi government needed to correlate these exclusions with the existing efforts to improve the economic status of the national community. By Nazi arguments, every woman exiled from a position freed that position for a male breadwinner.<sup>363</sup> According to Hitler, such actions stood to benefit the Reich as “the man’s world is said to be the state” and anything that benefited the state was necessary for the national community.<sup>364</sup> Going even further Hitler argued that women engaged in a smaller world in which husband, family, children, and home were of the greatest importance.<sup>365</sup> However, Hitler contended that the “greater world” that men inhabited would fail without the smaller world that women maintained.<sup>366</sup> Subsequently, at the Fuhrer’s behest the Nazis went to great efforts to justify their female exclusion policy as a way to lessen the discontent arising from women’s exile from political and professional life.

Stephenson’s argument echoes Welch’s and in that manner it also fails to determine the full extent of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Admittedly, defining the goal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* is not Stephenson’s main purpose for her work, but in spite of this she does provide a very interesting assessment that provides considerable insight into how the exclusion of women in the Reich helps to define the further goals of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. In her conclusion, Stephenson asserts “the entire Nazi system was based on diversion and disguise, temporary expedients to control the people until they-or, more likely, a new generation-were sufficiently re-

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<sup>362</sup> Wilhelm Frick, “Frick’s Guidelines on the Employment of Women Civil Servants and Teachers,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 367.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*, 367.

<sup>364</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Hitler’s Views on the Role of Women, September, 1934,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 365.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, 364.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, 364.

educated for the myth to assume the proportions of reality.”<sup>367</sup> Stephenson implies that the Nazis were simply buying time until a new generation of Nazi supporters could be brought into the fold and rendered the previous generation obsolete. For a new Nazi generation to arise the Reich Government needed new citizens and the only group capable of meeting this demand was women, as child bearers of the future Reich.

The Nazis made prevalent use of the ideal that women, excluded from the political and economic realms, should take on the pivotal role of the bearers and caretakers of the youth of the Third Reich. Jost Hermand argues in his article, “All Power to the Women: Nazi Concepts of Matriarchy” that the Nazis’ emphasis on a patriarchal society allowed room for “the concept of matriarchy and sought to place it in the service of a biologized view of history.”<sup>368</sup> The Nazis emphasized on numerous occasions the organic notion that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was tied to nature and subsequently this natural aspect would be represented in a very maternal fashion. The Volk came from the wellspring, or womb, of nature which recognized, as Hermand asserts, “the primordial maternal womb and simultaneously a maternalization of the national concept.”<sup>369</sup> In the same fashion that a womb gestates a child, the Nazi Party intended for its vision of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to gestate a citizenry capable of carrying on its vision. In strictly ideological terms therefore, Hermand asserts that the *Volksgemeinschaft*’s intention was to generate a citizenry that perfectly fit the Nazi vision.

Hermand does not operate entirely in the ideological realm, however, as he spends parts of his article dealing in the very practical world of women in Nazi Germany. Per Hermand, the Nazis had no interest in making women equal citizens to men, but did strive to incorporate

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<sup>367</sup>Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, 215.

<sup>368</sup>J. Hermand, “All Power to the Women: Nazi Concepts of Matriarchy,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 4 (1984), 651.

<sup>369</sup>*Ibid*, 652.

women into the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>370</sup> Hermand demonstrates that beyond chauvinistic condescension, the Reich Government went about various methods to demonstrate a respect for the women of Nazi Germany, but that respect was directed to those amongst women who decided to be mothers.<sup>371</sup> Hermand uses a quote from eugenic gynecologist August Mayer's 1938 work *German Mothers and the Rise of Germany* to demonstrate the important role women held in the notions of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* stipulating that "the worth of a nation is shown in the preparedness of its women to become valuable mothers."<sup>372</sup> Mayer went on to contend that the Third Reich needed "a sublime mothers' throne, before which men stand in respect (because) the existence or non-existence of our people is decided solely by the mother."<sup>373</sup> Mayer clearly expressed as backed by Hermand, that the Nazi hierarchy intended for women to become mothers of the future Reich citizens. These women would produce the children necessary for the future of the proposed Thousand Year Reich.

Stephenson contends, as backed up in the events, that women were exiled from the professional aspects of the community, at which point Hermand argues the Nazis placed an emphasis on women's role as mother of the Reich. Hermand's contention that women had an important ideological role as matriarch is demonstrated in a 1934 Hitler speech that expressed the Nazi belief in women as the womb of the Third Reich.<sup>374</sup> Hitler asserted that in order for the Reich to exhibit "strength of vision, of toughness, of decision, and of the willingness to act," the woman must be willing "to risk her life to preserve this important cell (the Reich) and to multiply it."<sup>375</sup> Women would risk their lives for the Reich in childbirth as Hitler claimed that

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<sup>370</sup>Hermand, "All Power to the Women," 661.

<sup>371</sup>Ibid, 662.

<sup>372</sup>Ibid, 662.

<sup>373</sup>Ibid, 662.

<sup>374</sup>Hitler, "Hitler's Views on the Role of Women, September, 1934," 364.

<sup>375</sup>Ibid, 365.

every birth was a battle a mother “waged for the existence of her people.”<sup>376</sup> Therefore, coming from the Führer one can see that Hitler had a general ideological plan for the women of the Third Reich, a sentiment that found support in the public. One woman of the Third Reich, Emilie Muller-Zadow, claimed that “the place that Adolf Hitler assigns to women in the Third Reich corresponds to her natural and divine destiny.”<sup>377</sup> Using language of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, Emilie goes on to claim that as all mothers care for their young, a national community would be formed where “old barriers and prejudices fall away, and the gulf of class differences is bridged over.”<sup>378</sup> However, as Hitler’s speech and Emilie’s words were spoken after the previously mentioned exclusion of women from the legal profession and other acts carried against women, the question becomes, was the matriarchal role of women brought on as an afterthought to keep women loyal to the Reich or genuine Nazi policy?

The Nazi ideological emphasis on women as the wombs of the Third Reich was not an afterthought argument meant to appease dissenters. Rather, the Reich Government actively sought to encourage births within Germany going so far as introducing an incentive system designed to encourage couples to produce future citizenry. In June 1933, the Nazi Government passed the Law for the Reduction of Unemployment in which section 5 called for the implementation of marriage loans.<sup>379</sup> Under this law, “people of German nationality” who get married can apply for a loan of 1,000 Reich marks.<sup>380</sup> However, as the law is intended for the reduction of unemployment, the loan could only be granted if a wife gave up her job and

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<sup>376</sup>Hermand, “All Power to the Women,” 364.

<sup>377</sup>Emilie Muller-Zadow, “Mothers Who Give Us the Future, 1936,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 185.

<sup>378</sup>*Ibid*, 185.

<sup>379</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., “Official Encouragement of Marriage, June 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 365.

<sup>380</sup>*Ibid*, 365.

intended to remain outside of the workforce for the term of the loan.<sup>381</sup> This qualification presumably freed up women to stay at home and give birth to the future members of the Third Reich. An added incentive of the marriage loans, directed towards childbirth, stipulated that upon the birth of a child a quarter of the loan was forgiven.<sup>382</sup> State secretary of the Reich Finance Ministry, Fritz Reinhardt, stipulated in 1935 that the loans saw an increase in marriage and childbirths, citing a 27.3 percent increase in marriage and 86,503 more births in the first six months of the loan program.<sup>383</sup> Thus, the Nazi Party's program of marriage loans fulfilled both the exclusion of women from the workforce that Stephenson argues and the matriarch role that Hermand argues.

To return to Stephenson's assertion about the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Nazis were trying to generate an increase in children, but not children who would be solely raised by these matriarchs. Rather, as Stephenson argues, the Nazis desperately desired from the revision of women's roles "a new generation" of Nazi supporters.<sup>384</sup> The Nazis made no secret that they desired to mold a future generation of ardent Nazi supporters out of the children of the current Reich citizenry. In a 1934 speech to the National Socialist Women's Organization, Hitler stated clearly that the youth "will become Germany when we no longer exist! They will preserve everything we have created and built. We are working for them."<sup>385</sup> This quote does not particularly appear to be demonstrative of a plan to convert the youth as any speech directed towards a matriarchal audience will emphasize sacrifice for the future generation. However, Hitler did not say mothers would work towards fostering the future German generations, but rather *we*, the Reich

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<sup>381</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridam, *Documents of Nazism, 1919-1945*. [London: Jonathan Cape, 1974], 365.

<sup>382</sup>Fritz Reinhardt, "Reinhardt on the Economic Recovery, January 29, 1935," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 367.

<sup>383</sup>*Ibid*, 367.

<sup>384</sup>Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, 215.

<sup>385</sup>Adolf Hitler, "Hitler's Speech to the National Socialist Women's Organization, September 1934.," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 183.

Government included, would take a hand in raising the German youth. Hitler romanticized the future plans of the youth by appealing to notions of the national community, an example being his statement that “the only thing that enables us to overcome all...is the view from the present into the future, from ourselves to the generation coming after us.”<sup>386</sup> However, despite Nazi language stressing the importance of parental influence in fostering the unifying notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* within their children, in action the Nazis had a far different vision for the German youth’s role in the Third Reich.

Although official Nazi inculcation of children had existed under the Reich Minister of the Interior, the Hitler Youth was not recognized as the official organization for conversion of the youth until December 1936.<sup>387</sup> In the law making the Hitler Youth official the Nazis declared that “the future of the German nation depends upon its youth, and German youth shall have to be prepared for its future duties.”<sup>388</sup> The Nazis intended to use the Hitler Youth to impress upon children their responsibilities in the future of the Third Reich, but this education would be accomplished in a manner separate from parents and educators as, according to the law, “The German Youth besides being reared within the family and school, shall be educated physically, intellectually, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism to serve the people and community, through the Hitler Youth.”<sup>389</sup> The Reich Government intended to indoctrinate children in the methods of National Socialism so as to generate a citizenship loyal to the Nazi vision of the national community, thereby generating their own enduring *Volksgemeinschaft*. If the Third Reich had lasted for multiple generations this vision would have been realized as the Nazis,

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<sup>386</sup>Ibid, 183.

<sup>387</sup>Office of the US Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, ed., “[Doc. 1392-PS] Law on the Hitler Youth, December 1, 1936,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. III (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 972-973.

<sup>388</sup>Ibid, 972.

<sup>389</sup>Ibid, 973.

through the Hitler Youth, were already creating die hard, ideologically driven supporters by 1936.

At the very beginning of a child's Hitler Youth career, the Nazi Party ensured that the member would be taken aback by the splendor of the Third Reich. According to one memo discussing how Hitler Youth inductions were to be carried out, "the cub and the young lass must regard this hour of their first vow to the Führer as the holiest of their whole life."<sup>390</sup> The ceremony of induction into the Hitler Youth itself was steeped in Nazi ideology. In the speech given by all Hitler Youth leaders, the youth were welcomed into "the community of all German boys and girls."<sup>391</sup> The leaders go on to say that "the Führer demands of you and of us all that we train ourselves to a life of service and duty, of loyalty and comradeship."<sup>392</sup> Subsequently, these recruits would represent a "proud picture of German youth."<sup>393</sup> The ceremony heavily emphasized the national community's unifying nature, culminating in a demonstration of subjugation to the will of Adolf Hitler as each member swore: "I promise always to do my duty in the Hitler Youth in love and loyalty to the Führer and our flag."<sup>394</sup> Thus from the beginning, the Hitler Youth used established aspects of Nazi ideology, in particular emphasis on the notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, to create a small force of citizens who were intended to become the most ardent supporters of Hitler to ever walk the earth.

Robert Paxton argued that the Nazis' goal with the national community was an explicitly pragmatic undertaking in which the *Volksgemeinschaft* existed solely as a political tool to gain total power over the citizenry. However, Paxton's argument contending a nihilistic aspect of fascism is rather short sighted because the Nazis expressed clear visions of the future

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<sup>390</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., "Ceremony of Admission into the Cubs of the Deutsches Jungvolk, April, 1940," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 357.

<sup>391</sup>Ibid, 357.

<sup>392</sup>Ibid, 357.

<sup>393</sup>Ibid, 357.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid, 357.



independent of the need for never ending conflict. Jill Stephenson's work on the exclusion of women in the Reich echoes Welch's pacification theory but also provides the caveat that the Nazis were actually appeasing the active citizenry in an attempt to buy time for another generation of even more ardent supporters to materialize. As Hermand asserts, women were given a matriarchal role in the Reich, but pacification was a secondary concern as the true intentions of exclusions were to act on the matriarchal role for women. The Reich Government sincerely believed women were of great significance to the Third Reich in exclusion from Hitler's "greater sphere" because they would give birth to the future generation of Nazi citizens. The goal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* therefore was to convert the German citizenry across multiple generations into pliable members of the Nazi's vision of the Thousand Year Reich. The Reich Government used notions of the national community already held dear by German citizenry, unity, sacrifice, and loyalty, to pacify the existing citizens into a state in which they would acquiesce to the creation of a truly Nazi citizenry. Nazi citizenship would not be tainted by social democracy nor raised in an environment of doubt. Thus, dating back to the first Nazi meetings in Munich, every action of the Nazi Movement, Nazi Party, and Reich Government slowly built towards a primary ideological goal, the conversion of a citizenship that fully matched the Nazi conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft*; a citizenry totally loyal to the will of the Führer and Germany's future within the Third Reich

### The Stark Implications of the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft

The Nazis used the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideology to appease the existing citizenry until a future Nazi citizenship could be developed thus forming the true Nazi national community. As

succinct as this definition seems, this description does not fully define the entire nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This explanation simply provides an origin, methodology, and an intermediate goal of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. All of Nazi history may have been building towards a conversion of German people into a Nazi Citizenship, but this was merely a step on the path to the creation of a truly pure Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Converting German people to the Nazi vision existed as a powerful and ambitious goal, but as long as foreign influences existed the Nazi Citizen would never be entirely pure. Thus, any attempt to determine the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft* would be woefully inadequate without investigating the ways that Hitler's plans for war, the sole means to eliminate foreign influences from the German citizenry, informed the Nazi conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Historian Richard Evans uses his vast narrative, *The Third Reich in Power*, to demonstrate that the Nazi conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft* slowly dominated every aspect of a German citizen's life with the ultimate purpose of slowly cultivating a citizenry prepared to devote themselves entirely to the Third Reich in the prosecution of war. Per Evans, "war had been the objective of the Third Reich and its leaders from the moment they came into power in 1933."<sup>395</sup> One aspect of citizens' lives that needed the aggressive attention of the Reich Government was the perceived presence of Jewish, corruptive influences. In order to mobilize the population for the impending war, a racial reordering would be necessary, but unlike Fritzsche, Evans contends that this racial reordering did not come from the citizenry, but from the top of the Nazi hierarchy, Adolf Hitler. Hitler believed the Jews were a "subversive, parasitical element" who needed to be removed from the Reich before the Germans could be strong enough to wage a war against those who tried to keep Germany down.<sup>396</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>395</sup>Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 705.

<sup>396</sup>*Ibid*, 15.

*Volksgemeinschaft*, according to Evans was a top down effort designed to eliminate Jewish and other foreign influences thereby preparing the German citizenry for war.

Evans argues that the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* generated a “cultural revolution, in which alien cultural influences-notably the Jews but also modernist culture generally-were eliminated and the German spirit reborn.”<sup>397</sup> Only if the Nazis took over all aspects of Germans’ lives while they simultaneously purged foreign influences would the Reich Government be able to cultivate a population capable of dominating the world in the name of Germany. Thus, Evans offers a much more encompassing and flexible narrative for the *Volksgemeinschaft* than the scholars previously mentioned. As opposed to focusing on a specific aspect of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, like the citizen, race, gender, and so on, Evans uses his vast narrative work to demonstrate that the Nazis very actively and persistently went after every aspect of a citizen's life that they felt stood in the way of the ultimate prosecution of war.

Ample evidence exists to corroborate Evans’s argument for the nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In September 1933 the Nazis setup the Reich Chamber of Culture which operated under the Reich Minister for People’s Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels who was empowered to “decree laws and general administrative regulations as well as amendments for the purpose of enforcing this law.”<sup>398</sup> This September law set up smaller chambers operating under this Chamber of Culture which would supervise archives, the press, radio, theater, music, and the creative arts.<sup>399</sup> Thus, Goebbels received ultimate control over various aspects of German culture and slowly proceeded to convert these institutions to the will of the Nazi Party. If an artist, journalist, actor, musician, and so on refused to join their respective

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<sup>397</sup>Ibid, 16.

<sup>398</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., “Law Relating to the Reich Chamber of Culture, 22 September 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 339.

<sup>399</sup>Ibid, 338.

chamber, there could be costly consequences for the outsider. For example, the Reich Editorial Law of October 1933 explicitly mandated that “editors are legally combined in the Reich Association of German Press. Every editor belongs to it by virtue of his registration on the professional roster.”<sup>400</sup> Thus, if you worked as an editor, you were a member of the Press Chamber. If you were not a member you were not allowed legally to be an editor. The Nazis implemented these procedures across the board in the Reich Chamber of Culture. In addition to mandating membership in the organization, one could only be a member if you “possessed German citizenship” and were “of Aryan descent, and not married to a person of non-Aryan descent.”<sup>401</sup> Thus, all cultural institutions would consist of racially qualified German citizens putting forth Nazi approved works in a process that steadily removed corrupting influences from the German citizenry,

Coordination of German culture involved more than bringing cultural institutions under the Reich because to fully ensure corrupting influences were removed from the *Volksgemeinschaft* those who refused to join Nazi backed institutions had to be disposed of. Early in the Third Reich those who would oppose the Reich Government’s power often emigrated in order to escape the attention and persecution of Hitler’s flunkies. According to Evans, “2,000 people active in the arts emigrated from Germany in 1933 and the following years.”<sup>402</sup> Those who did not wish to have their creative vision stymied, or quite frankly feared for their lives, chose to leave Germany. In some cases these individuals did not wish to leave Germany, but the financial situation that resulted from being excluded and denigrated by the Reich Government made it impossible to maintain a living within the Third Reich. Numerous

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<sup>400</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., “Editorial Law, October 4, 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 337.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid, 337.

<sup>402</sup>Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 16.

examples, two thousand at least, exist that tell this tale, but those stories are well known. Perhaps less renowned is Wilhelm Furtwängler's quiet inquiry into why the Nazis were waging a war with German culture.

A correspondence between Wilhelm Furtwängler, a prominent symphonic conductor who chose to stay within the Reich's good graces, and Joseph Goebbels demonstrates the impact of cultural coordination and the arguments used to justify such actions. In a letter directed to Goebbels, Furtwängler politely objected to the exile of his many esteemed peers, but he prefaced said objection with a statement in line with the Nazi ideology of the pure, unified *Volksgemeinschaft*. Furtwängler stated "let our fight be directed against the rootless, subversive, leveling, destructive spirit, but not against the real artist who is always creative and therefore constructive, however one may judge his art."<sup>403</sup> Despite the fact that this letter condemned Nazi coordination and forced exile, Furtwängler still claimed that the fight against subversive influences existed as "our fight."<sup>404</sup> As early as April 1933 the Reich Government was already able to force subtle resistive elements into a position of basic agreement with their policies. Goebbels's reply to this letter demonstrated the extent to which Nazi Germany was willing to go to rid German culture of any subversive elements. Per Goebbels, "art must not only be good, it must also appear to be connected with the people, or rather, only an art which draws on the people itself can in the final analysis be good and mean something to the people for whom it is created."<sup>405</sup> In addition, "there must be no art in the absolute sense as known by liberal democracy."<sup>406</sup> Goebbels invoked the exclusion of artists who experienced success thanks to notions of corruptive liberalism, but he only went this far after arguing that art needed to match

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<sup>403</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., "Correspondence Between Furtwangler and Goebbels, April, 1933," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 342-343.

<sup>404</sup>Ibid, 342.

<sup>405</sup>Ibid, 343.

<sup>406</sup>Ibid, 343.

the notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Cultural coordination demonstrates, unlike previous arguments, a truly adversarial, party led foundation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that strove for a purification of the community that would eventually be free of the parasitic Jewish influence Hitler despised.

Evans's argument for the *Volksgemeinschaft* is two-fold because once corruptive influences were removed from the Reich, the population needed to be prepared for a war that would return Germany to international prominence. Per Evans, "Hitler personally drove Germany towards war from the moment he became Reich Chancellor, subordinating every other aspect of policy to this overriding aim."<sup>407</sup> Ample evidence exists to prove that Hitler's main goal in the Third Reich was to launch what eventually became the Second World War. In a February 1933 meeting of the Reich Cabinet, Hitler insisted that rearmament of Germany begin immediately. Hitler stressed on multiple occasions that "for the next four to five years the main principle must be: everything for the armed forces."<sup>408</sup> Subsequently, "every publicly sponsored measure to create employment had to be considered from the point of view of whether it was necessary with respect to rendering the German people again capable of bearing arms."<sup>409</sup> The German people were to be made ready for a war and as such every manipulation and implementation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideology carried this element of military preparedness, not in the sense of being economically prepared, but rather being prepared ideologically to be loyal to the Reich beyond infringement.

Military preparedness of the German people predated and heavily influenced the other measures of the *Volksgemeinschaft* previously discussed. According to an official statement

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<sup>407</sup>Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 615.

<sup>408</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., "Hitler Insists on Priority for Rearmament, February 8 1933," in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 381.

<sup>409</sup>Ibid, 380.

following the nationalization of the labor unions, the conversion of the unions was in step with “the struggle against Marxism which has been proclaimed by the Führer.”<sup>410</sup> In Hitler’s speech to the National Socialist Women’s Organization, the Führer stated, “You must complement man in this struggle that we are leading for our people’s freedom, equality, honor, and peace, so that we can look to the future as fighters of our people!”<sup>411</sup> The speech given at the Hitler Youth induction read, “you too now march in step with the youngest soldiers.”<sup>412</sup> In addition Hitler Youth members motto was “Führer command-we follow!”<sup>413</sup> a statement furthered by a Hitler Youth poem which ends with “You, Führer, are our commander! We stand in your name. The Reich is the object of our struggle, it is the beginning and the Amen.”<sup>414</sup> Evans provides a very accurate argument for the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* because the national community ideology that permeated the German citizenry was itself thoroughly permeated by the idea of struggle in the form of Hitler’s desire to prepare the Third Reich for war.

Evans assertion that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was primarily an initiative to cultivate an entirely loyal German population for the purpose of waging war is obscured within his vast cultural-political narrative constructed in an effort to explain all Nazi history from 1933 to 1938. As such, Evans's narrative lacks a direct purpose for Hitler’s war beyond megalomania. Historian Stephen Fritz puts together a much more succinct argument for the Nazis’ use of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a preparatory agent for war. Combining Fritz’s argument with Evans's narrative provides a compelling and sound analysis of the military and ideological nature of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*.

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<sup>410</sup>Robert Ley, “Proclamation of the Action Committee for the Protection of German Labor, 2 May 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 425.

<sup>411</sup>Hitler, “Hitler’s Speech to the National Socialist Women’s Organization, September 1934,” 184.

<sup>412</sup>Noakes and Pridham, “Ceremony of Admission into the Cubs of the Deutsches Jungvolk, April, 1940,” 357.

<sup>413</sup>Ibid, 357.

<sup>414</sup>Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., “Poem for a Hitler Youth Ceremony in 1941,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 358.

Fritz begins his book *Ostkrieg*, an in-depth military history of the Eastern Front of World War II, in a fashion fairly unique to works of military history. Fritz devotes considerable attention early to the ways in which the ideology of Adolf Hitler, and subsequently the Nazi Party, led to the formation of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* and ultimately the Second World War. Similar to Evans's point, Fritz contends that the Nazis were pushed by "a radical anti-Semitism that viewed Jews as a conspiratorial, destructive force in world history."<sup>415</sup> However, whereas Evans takes a somewhat distended stance on the Nazis' use of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to foster a war population, Fritz takes a much more direct approach.

Fritz contends that almost all of the actions in the Third Reich stem back to Hitler's fears of repeating the mistakes of the First World War. Hitler fully succumbed to the Stab in the Back Legend, believing that a betrayal of Germany had come at the hands of the Jews consequently leading to the loss of the First World War.<sup>416</sup> Hitler argued before coming into power that if as many as twelve thousand Jews had been killed at the outset of the war, many German lives could have been saved and the war would have taken a much different turn.<sup>417</sup> This rabid anti-Semitism explains the initial exclusion measures carried out against various Jews and other perceived enemies of the Reich. Hitler did not want any corrupting influences within his *Volksgemeinschaft*, but more importantly, as Fritz contends, the national community was meant to bind all "racially valuable Germans and prepare them for the struggle ahead."<sup>418</sup> Thus, Fritz provides a military justification for Evans's focus on coordination as the *Volksgemeinschaft* was manipulated and crafted in order to prevent a future Stab in the Back by generating a national community that was explicitly created to not betray the Third Reich and revisit the shame brought about by the end of

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<sup>415</sup>Stephen Fritz, *Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in the East* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>416</sup>*Ibid*, 474.

<sup>417</sup>*Ibid*, 5.

<sup>418</sup>*Ibid*, 17.



the First World War.

Prevention of the Stab in the Back is not the sole justification Fritz provides for the establishment of a *Volksgemeinschaft*. According to Fritz, Hitler was also driven by “the necessity of securing Lebensraum (living space) for the German nation as a means of ensuring its survival.”<sup>419</sup> The *Volksgemeinschaft* existed as a cornerstone of the Nazis’ plans to create a German citizenry capable of seizing Lebensraum for the future perpetuation of the German Race. Fritz lays out a model for the development of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that relies heavily on the Nazis’ interpretation of Social Darwinism. Fritz claims that Nazis strove to create a national community that could compete with the United States for international dominance, but in order to do that the Germans needed to seize critical Lebensraum.<sup>420</sup> In World War I, the hunger blockade implemented by the British starved nearly 750,000 Germans and Hitler believed that the German people were subsequently weakened to such an extent that they were unable to oppose the Stab in the Back.<sup>421</sup> Given their borders in 1938, the Germans could easily be blockaded again and Hitler recognized that Germany had serious deficiencies in “food, capitalism, and raw materials.”<sup>422</sup> Thus, if the Nazis were to have any success on the international stage, land would be needed to in order for the German race to exist independently for the duration of the Thousand Year Reich.

Fritz would assert that Hitler believed the purpose of the Nazi state was to “secure the existence of the Volk.”<sup>423</sup> Coordination removed the enemies of the Reich and brought all German citizens under the Nazi banner of German unity. Through the various methods of coordination the German people were crafted into a loyal population and, as evidenced by the

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<sup>419</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>420</sup>Ibid, 475.

<sup>421</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>422</sup>Ibid, 13.

<sup>423</sup>Ibid, 475.

drastic state of affairs at the end of the Second World War, no betrayal of internal enemies would occur as long as the Nazi government was in power. A national community was formed capable of carrying on the military goals of the war, but, as far as the Nazis were concerned, the war itself was fundamental to the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. “Either the German Volk struggled for Lebensraum and assured its existence, or its racial enemies would deny it the means to life and, thus, assure its extinction.”<sup>424</sup> Therefore, Fritz asserts that the Nazis would eventually urge this carefully crafted national community to test itself against the world in a contest in which the strongest would be fit for survival.

Coordination as a tool against removing the possibility of another Stab in the Back is explicitly demonstrated Dr. Robert Ley’s proclamation following the May 1933 seizure of trade unions. In justifying the actions taken against the trade unions, Ley claims that “above all we must prevent your enemy, Marxism and its satellites, from stabbing you again in the back.”<sup>425</sup> Although the intention of using such a statement in this proclamation was meant to stir nationalist hatred for the end of World War I, the truth behind the statement should not be disregarded. A high ranking member of the Nazi Party used the Stab in the Back Legend as justification for removing the supposed corrupting influence of Marxism fostered by the trade unions. Thus, as Fritz asserts, the prevention of the mistakes of World War I featured throughout the coordination actions of the Third Reich.

Fear of repeating World War I certainly finds a basis within the events of the Third Reich, but does the risky notion of waging a war for the perpetuation of the German race in a social Darwinist conflict find solid foundations in the events? In the previously mentioned 1933 Reich Cabinet meeting, Hitler directly claimed that “Germany’s position in the world depended

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<sup>424</sup>Ibid, 475.

<sup>425</sup>Ley, “Proclamation of the Action Committee for the Protection of German Labor, 2 May 1933,” 424.

decisively upon the position of German armed forces.”<sup>426</sup> Hitler in 1933 substantiated, shortly after calling for major rearmament in four to five years, that war would be a necessary determinant of Germany’s power in the world. In addition, a September 1933 Hitler speech iterated Fritz’s Social Darwinist conclusion fairly decisively. Hitler contended that while it seemed that National Socialism at that time had taken over, “only those who have not fully comprehended the character of this tremendous struggle can believe that the struggle between ideologies has thereby come to an end.”<sup>427</sup> Hitler clearly geared up for a conflict with those he believed fostered the Jewish conspiracy. Thus, Fritz’s assertion that the *Volksgemeinschaft* existed as an item of the Nazis plan to wage a social Darwinistic war for the future of the German race is well founded.

Fritz and Evans have come to the heart of the contradictory nature within the *Volksgemeinschaft*. These two historians contend that the Reich Government used the notions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to prepare a strong and unified German citizenry capable of waging a total, racial, and ideological war. However, as Fritz asserts, this total war itself was necessary to the perpetuation of the national community. Without the catalyst of war, the German race would not be able to seize much needed materials or prove the dominance of the German race capable of earning international respect. However, the war had the potential destroy the national community, as eventually occurred with the fall of the Third Reich in 1945. Despite this risk, war was necessary because given the fact that German land was small and resource deprived, the *Volksgemeinschaft* could never truly be independent of corrupting international influence until sizable lebensraum had been achieved between the Reich and those corruptive elements. Therefore, according to these two scholars, the *Volksgemeinschaft* is best understood as the

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<sup>426</sup>Noakes and Pridham, “Hitler Insists on Priority for Rearmament, February 8 1933,” 381.

<sup>427</sup>Adolf Hitler, “Hitler on the Ideological Aims of National Socialism, September 1933,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 333.

desire to create a powerful and independent community of “true” Germans that could not be fully realized until the Third Reich opened itself up to the risk of war.

### Closing Thoughts

In a September 1935 Party Rally in Nuremberg, Hitler made a speech in which he took time to address the youth of Germany. Hitler claimed that the German people were becoming “more sturdy and disciplined” and the youth were beginning to follow suit.<sup>428</sup> Hitler went on to assert that the value of a German was no longer bound in their ability to drink copious amounts of beer.<sup>429</sup> Rather, “in our eyes the youth of the future must be slim and slender, swift as the greyhound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp Steel.” The Fuhrer then claimed that it was the obligation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to “educate a new type of man so that our people is not ruined by the symptoms of degeneracy of our day.”<sup>430</sup> It would only be a few more months before the Hitler Youth became the officially recognized mechanism for such an education.

Therefore, the ultimate goal behind the Nazi ideology was the establishment of a truly pure Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. In order for this to be realized, the Nazis called for the German citizenry to be crafted into a population capable of accomplishing all of the Reich Government's ambitious goals. However, the process towards establishing an entirely pliable and yet hardened society was not an overnight occurrence. The Nazis began to use notions of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* to attain approval for various Nazi policies while simultaneously crafting these notions into a Nazi interpretation of the national community that exceeded the standards

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<sup>428</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Views on Youth, September 1935,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 354.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, 354.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid*, 354.

held by most Germans. After achieving outward loyalty amongst the citizenry, the Nazi government began shaping spheres within the Reich; the masculine sphere strengthened the existing community while the feminine prepared the future community. As children were born into the Third Reich, they would be entered into Nazi youth organizations and begin an education steeped in Nazi ideology and myth. These children would eventually become the citizens of a Germany who would wage aggressive and all-encompassing war to determine that the Nazi citizen was truly superior and fit to dominate the world.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Antrieb<sup>431</sup>

At 11:30 on the night of April 28<sup>th</sup> 1945, a bewildered Traudl Junge, Adolf Hitler's youngest secretary, followed her boss to the military conference room of Hitler's Berlin Bunker.<sup>432</sup> Junge was confused as to why she was being summoned at such a late hour for dictation, a request made more puzzling given the environment surrounding Berlin. The Red Army had been firing artillery into the city of Berlin for the past four days as they prepared for their assault on the Reich capital.<sup>433</sup> Over the past few days various upper echelon Nazi officials, most notably Herman Goering and Albert Speer, had fled Hitler's bunker in the hopes of saving themselves and as much of their property as possible.<sup>434</sup> Certain members went beyond simply fleeing and blatantly forsook Hitler and the Third Reich, most notably Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler who, just a few days earlier, made surrender overtures to the Swedish Prime Minister.<sup>435</sup> All of these circumstances combined with the impending fall of the Third Reich and the end of the Second World War seemed far more important than simple dictation, but what Junge did not realize was that Hitler intended to dictate his final political testament.

Hitler's mind had been failing him over the previous weeks burdened as he was by the failed total war and the looming end to his personal rule. During his stay in the bunker, the

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<sup>431</sup> German for Impetus

<sup>432</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 821.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, 809.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid*, 799.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*, 819.

Fuhrer launched into acerbic bouts of rage that were more severe than any of his previous demagogic rants. Just six days earlier Hitler lashed out at four of his commanders for allowing the Red Army into the northern suburbs of Berlin.<sup>436</sup> For a half hour he screamed at these commanders to such an extent that even those used to Hitler's momentary bursts of anger were utterly stunned.<sup>437</sup> Beyond rage, Hitler dwelled in his own world, barely registering the severity of the situation or the input of those around him.<sup>438</sup> Thus, when Hitler set about making his final political testament, the Fuhrer was hardly of sound mind.<sup>439</sup>

After relaying matters of his personal affairs and estate, Adolf Hitler set about dictating his final political testament, knowing that he would take his own life shortly after its completion. The Führer began by arguing that he had never wanted to pursue a World War. According to Hitler, the war “was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests.”<sup>440</sup> Hitler had always blamed the Jewish people for everything wrong in the world and the fact that he held on to this belief system, including it in his final testimony calls the entirety of his already condemnable worldview into question. If Hitler staunchly believed Jews were truly responsible for a war clearly perpetrated by himself, a belief bed rocked in irrational denial, who is to say all of Hitler's beliefs were not based on similar denials? Who is to say that Nazi ideology, influenced to a considerable extent by Hitler's own *weltanschauung*, was not the expressions and manifest will of a psychopath

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<sup>436</sup>Ibid, 803.

<sup>437</sup>Ibid, 803.

<sup>438</sup>Stephen Fritz, *Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in the East* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 466.

<sup>439</sup>Hitler actually stated within the opening of the will, “before the closing of my Earthly career.” By current standards an expressed desire to end one's life would not constitute a sound mind, but nobody in Hitler's bunker would have taken the Führer to task on this point. Adolf Hitler, “[Doc. 3569-PS] My Private Will and Testament, April 29 1945,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, ed. Office of the US Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, vol. VI (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 259.

<sup>440</sup>Ibid, 260.

completely out of touch with his surrounding reality?

The Third Reich was supposed to last for a thousand years, but when Hitler committed suicide in 1945 the Reich crashed into oblivion after only twelve years. By 1945 Nazi Germany was losing across multiple fronts in Europe, suffering defeat at the hand of a coalition of nations evoking tenets stretching from welfare capitalism to Marxism. The drastic differences between 1938, when the Reich Government had guided Germany to unprecedented levels of political power, and 1945 are often used to demonstrate the failure of Nazism as a political philosophy. As Hitler tightened his grasp and began implementing the Final Solution he provided historians with all of the evidence they would need to assert the Nazis were simply power-hungry bullies with a racial agenda. As established throughout this work, very few historians actually credit Nazi ideology as being of any value against what many historians consider a largely opportunistic Nazi Party.

This work has not totally dissolved notions of opportunistic Nazis, but nonetheless has demonstrated that ideology was central to numerous pivotal actions throughout Nazi history. The Beer Hall Putsch exists not as a drunken rabble of nationalists attempting to take control of Germany; Hitler did not even have designs on the Nazis leading the new government. Rather, the Putsch existed as a band of Germans, aware of their subjugation and suffering under the Weimar Republic, joining together and, similar to the 1914 volunteers, taking action against the enemies of a united Germany. The switch to the path of Legality appeared to compromise of the violent aspects of Nazi ideology, but not only did violence continue, but such a path by accepting previously excluded elements of Germany into the Nazi fold, reaffirmed the primacy of a unified national community. The countless political, utopian, and opportunistic promises made during the Reichstag elections were motivated by Nazi ideology's insistence that the German people



recognize that their ills could be tracked to the Social Democracy and Marxism prevalent within the Weimar Republic. Finally, the Nazis intended to build a *Volksgemeinschaft* with the dual purpose of appeasing the present citizenry while that citizenry produced the future Nazi citizenship. In theory, the new Nazi citizenship would then be prepared for the struggle of existence to secure the *lebensraum* necessary for Germans to become the dominant race. Thus, this work has demonstrated that despite the historical profession's exclusion of ideology, treating it as an afterthought justification for action, Nazi actions cannot be separated from ideology.

Throughout this work ideology has been argued as not only tied to Nazi actions but has also been asserted as an impetus for such actions. The specific actions analyzed in the previous three chapters demonstrate Nazi ideology's influence and ties to Nazi action, but to argue ideology as the impetus stands as a truly bold assertion; an assertion rooted in the assumption that Nazi ideology was compelling enough to motivate action. Certainly this work has demonstrated the attractiveness of Nazi ideology. In the early stages of the Nazi Movement, the initial Nazi followers internalized various notions of German identity amplified by the intensity of the First World War. These first Nazis certainly found calls for a restoration of the masculine activism of the 1914 volunteers fascinating and inspirational, but to argue that these aspects of ideology motivated the followers of the Nazi Movement to conduct a Putsch certainly appears to ignore other fundamental motivations like peer-pressure, economic strife, and hunger, that most certainly had an impact on the decision to act. These differing motivations can be perceived throughout every stage of Nazi history. After 1933, the threat of violence, arrest, and murder certainly stand as strong evidence in favor of the argument that numerous motivations existed to compel action outside the parameters of Nazi ideology. Thus, if Nazi Ideology was not only tied to Nazi actions, but, as this work asserts, acted as a motivating impetus for such actions, said

ideology must be evaluated in terms of its ability to compel action.

In tying ideology to action, this work has sought to lessen the determinism of the view that Nazism was strictly opportunistic in nature. However, such a task is difficult because the Nazis often committed actions in stark contrast to their ideology. Such actions have spawned a considerable amount of historical work that has cemented the idea of an opportunistic Nazi organization in professional, public, and amateur interpretations. Much of this historiography has been explored throughout this work, but as much as such work has been analyzed countless more works exist. One such counter argument unexplored in this work resides in the life of Germans during 1937-1938. The most critical argument to be made against Nazi ideology as an impetus for action makes the claim that the true motivation for support of Nazism was not the compelling nature of its ideology, but the compelling nature of Nazism's results. Between 1933 and 1938 the German economy rebounded to a staggering effect restoring employment across Germany simultaneously restoring the German people's faith in the German economy. Thus, many historians have argued that the stability the Nazis provided, as opposed to the ideology they espoused, was what compelled the citizenry to support the Nazis. If Nazi ideology is to be demonstrated as compelling, it will be necessary to deconstruct the idea that citizens were motivated solely by the stability the Nazis offered.

The idea that economic stability fostered support of the Third Reich is far from a recent argument. Notably, Tim Mason argued in his 1977 work *Social Policy in the Third Reich* that the Nazis launched *Blitzkrieg* wars to increase their resources and military expansion without implementing unpopular economic measures.<sup>441</sup> More recently, Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband came together in 2005 to present their work *What We Knew*, a compilation of their

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<sup>441</sup>Shelley Baranowski, "Nazism and Polarization: The Left and the Third Reich," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 4 (December 2000), 1157.

research analyzing over three thousand written surveys and two hundred in depth interviews, taken from 1991 through 2001, of former citizens of the Third Reich.<sup>442</sup> The surveys were conducted amongst a strong number of both Jews and non-Jews in order to get a full picture of those living in Nazi society. *What We Knew* is of value to the present discussion in that many of the questions asked focused on determining the motivations for supporting the Third Reich. Admittedly there are problems with their survey work that are inescapable, many of which they acknowledge. For instance, the most problematic aspect of oral histories on Nazi Germany is that not many former citizens are willing to be forthcoming with their support of the Nazi agenda out of shame and fear. The inclusion of Jewish former citizens in the survey certainly precludes any support of Nazi ideology. Therefore, some responses may present false and biased data, a risk somewhat minimized by *What We Knew's* large sample. Next, assuming they were looking for a twenty-five year old during 1938, the age range of such respondents during the survey would be seventy-eight to eighty-eight years old depending on when Johnson and Reuband made contact. Additionally, such a distance of time between the survey and the events places a cap on the age of the respondents when they lived in the Third Reich. Thus, mostly youth during the Third Reich would be able to respond in numbers somewhat representative of their former populations. However, this last flaw works in favor of this work's analysis as the young were arguably the most indoctrinated by Nazi ideology offering a valuable comparison. Therefore, if ideology is to be asserted as comparable or surpassing pragmatic, economic concerns' ability to inspire action, analysis of *What We Knew's* findings will be of fundamental importance.

Breaking briefly from economic motivations, fear of Nazi terror stands as an often argued motivation for Nazi support. Johnson and Reuband asked respondents to mark whether they

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<sup>442</sup>Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Basic Books, Inc., 2006), XVIII.

feared either their own arrest or a family member's arrest “constantly,” “occasionally,” or not at all.<sup>443</sup> Contrary to popular arguments, between sixty-two to seventy-one percent of respondents, depending on certain cities' results, expressed no fear of being arrested by the Gestapo. Less than ten percent felt constant fear, thus fear as a motivator, one of the main foundations of the argument for opportunistic Nazism, was fairly weak amongst the younger Reich public. Returning to economic versus ideological motivations, *What We Knew* asked respondents to pick what they liked “best about National Socialism.”<sup>444</sup> Respondents picked three of eight different choices and these results were charted. The “fight against unemployment” featured on sixty-two to sixty-nine percent of respondents’ choices. The next three highest motivation aspects were “Less crime,” “Construction of highways,” and “support of families,” all parts of the practical benefits of Nazism, not the ideological. Ideological motivators such as “Community feeling,” “idealism,” “overcoming of powerlessness,” and “Jews less powerful” paled in comparison never combining in any city to exceed the “fight against unemployment.”<sup>445</sup> Therefore, putting aside the potential false representations of support, according to these surveys a large population of ideologically susceptible youth were most motivated to support the Nazis because of various pragmatic concerns, which has led historians to question ideology's role as a motivator and impetus for action.

*What We Knew's* results are certainly troubling to this work's argument of ideology's impetus role, but it is easy to assert the popularity of economic and practical aspects amongst citizenry. Beyond bias and fear, support tends to float towards those political organizations that better the economy and infrastructure, especially when times are prosperous. Along these lines, historian Shelley Baranowski agrees in full with the idea that economic, pragmatic motivations

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<sup>443</sup>Ibid, 354-355.

<sup>444</sup>Ibid, 340-341.

<sup>445</sup>Ibid, 341.

pushed those who supported the Nazis to act. Baranowski argues the centrality of consumerism to Nazism, going as far as asserting an implicit consumerist foundation to the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>446</sup> More importantly to the present discussion, Baranowski contends that even soldiers who lived outside of the material benefits of the Third Reich were nonetheless motivated by economic, pragmatic ends. Per Baranowski, “for the military, entertainment, tourism, and consumption became not merely ancillary to combat, but the very ends of warfare.”<sup>447</sup> However, Baranowski's conclusions, like many other historians who advocate economic primacy, suffer from the same two fundamental flaws. First, many historians gloss over the importance of pragmatic concerns to Nazi ideology not only as pacification measures, but as the desire to provide the German citizenry with proof that their lives should and would be demonstratively better than other competing races. Therefore, restoring unemployment, rebuilding infrastructure, and numerous other Nazi endorsed rebuilding actions correlated with the Nazi ideological need to strengthen Germany for the conflict of nations. Second, while economic and pragmatic concerns are often pointed to as reasons people supported and worked for the Third Reich, these arguments are easily established for the time period of 1933 to 1938, but what about 1942 to 1944?

With the Allied bombing campaign, fully underway by 1943, the German people were hardly able to enjoy some of the finer elements of the Third Reich. Additionally, the total mobilization for war hindered the economy leading to limits on foodstuffs, aesthetics, and other resources that previously fostered Nazi support. Yet, despite the loss of these economic and pragmatic resources, the German citizenry continued to fight, struggle, and work for the Third Reich until its utter collapse in 1945. Many would point to fear as a motivator for such support,

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<sup>446</sup>Baranowski, “Nazism and Polarization: The Left and the Third Reich,” 1165.

<sup>447</sup>Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 224.

but as Johnson and Reuband demonstrated, fear was not as strong, or at least as memorable, a motivator within Germany. So, as the German economy and Third Reich collapsed around them, what motivated Germans to act?

Stephen Fritz's work *Frontsoldaten* analyzes the mindset of the German soldier during the Second World War. Fritz asserts that ideology's importance to the soldier had been under-analyzed within the historiography claiming that "the average German soldier, perhaps to a surprising degree, exhibited and embraced various forms of ideological commitment to Nazism."<sup>448</sup> Fritz asserts the primacy of the value of community and camaraderie amongst the *landser* as evidenced by one such soldier's claim that "we believed in a new community, free from class conflict, united in brotherhood under the self-chosen Führer."<sup>449</sup> This same soldier wrote in 1937, "we're putting our conception of National Socialism into action: we are all the same in our service for our people, no one is asked his origins or class."<sup>450</sup> Certainly the *landsers* can be considered a different creature from the average citizen as their experience is noticeably isolated in comparison with other citizens. One such soldier acknowledged as much claiming "at home things are different, people walk straight past each other and only take notice at marches or rallies."<sup>451</sup> Therefore, one can consider the impact of the Second World War's combat on the *landsers* as comparable to the First World War's impact on the Nazi Movement; the war and combat amplified senses of ideology and identity not held as ardently by those separated from the front lines. Nonetheless, the average *landser* certainly had economic, pragmatic concerns to motivate action, such as wages for relatives back home, pensions, and the military-industrial complex. However, Fritz, in his copious analysis of these soldiers' wartime writings,

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<sup>448</sup>Stephen Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 159.

<sup>449</sup>Ibid, 161

<sup>450</sup>Ibid, 162

<sup>451</sup>Ibid, 168

demonstrates that despite these motivations the *landsers* still placed a primacy on ideology as their impetus for action even as defeat became inevitable.

Fritz asserts that for the Landsers as the war worsened “ideological instruction served as a welcome prop in sustaining morale and motivation.”<sup>452</sup> As the possibility for victory declined soldiers turned to ideology for motivation. Specifically, soldiers relied on the miniature national community of the front and the camaraderie it inspired to push them through those trying times. For the rest of Germany, ideology's impact is difficult to gauge. Fritz's second substantial work, *Endkampf*, analyzed the mindset of the German people as the Second World War came to a devastating close. Fritz splits the end of the war into three phases, the first of which is most important to this work. This phase featured the last relevant days of Nazi authority, after this phase Nazi rule by terror and enemy advances became muddled into a terrifyingly brutal existence for all parts of Germany. Per Fritz, before these collapses and “despite a general war weariness and desire to end the war, the majority of Germans nonetheless continued to follow the Nazi regime's orders and to do their duty.”<sup>453</sup> During this phase Fritz points out that ideas like “loyalty, courage, discipline, patriotism, and camaraderie” motivated the people to continue in the hopes of some kind of reversal of fortune.<sup>454</sup> Similar to the soldiers who relied on the national community to motivate them to persevere, the Reich citizenry fell back on the unifying rhetoric of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to keep working for a Nazi agenda that was quickly disintegrating. Therefore, when the economic and pragmatic benefits of the Third Reich were stripped away during the final phases of the war, ideology as an impetus for action was firmly demonstrated. The primacy of ideology as a motivator is debatable as a great deal of individual variation

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<sup>452</sup>Ibid, 201.

<sup>453</sup>Stephen Fritz, *Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Death of the Third Reich* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 270.

<sup>454</sup>Ibid, 270.

troubles such assertiveness. However, 1942 to 1944 Germany demonstrated that Nazi ideology could indeed motivate action within people, especially those who strongly adhered to such ideology before the war. Therefore, ideology not only informed actions but also could compel people to take action, validating the assertion of Nazi ideology as an impetus for action.

Returning to the question of “what was Nazism,” has this work helped the general historical effort to answer this question? Numerous historians covered throughout this work have asserted the opportunistic nature of Nazi adherents as the primary aspect of Nazism. This opportunism becomes more pronounced when the Nazis began their program of mass-extermination and totalitarian control of the German citizenry after starting the invasion of the Soviet Union. However, this work has sought to diminish the idea that Nazism was *solely* an opportunistic organization of power hungry sociopathic anti-Semites. While those descriptions are certainly apt in many cases, such portrayals simplify the nature of Nazi action. Under the opportunistic arguments, Nazism was simply the belief system of broken demagogues who gained a voice during uniquely stressful economic times. As such, Nazism can be trivialized as an entirely unique situation in history and summarily treated in exclusion to the rest of history. However, Nazism was far from simple.

If Nazism was strictly opportunistic racism then it would have remained on the outskirts of political and national relevance much like the American Klu Klux Klan. However, this work has demonstrated that Nazi ideology was very attractive to various sections of Germany. Nazi ideology preached more than anti-Semitism and anti-Marxist rhetoric. In all actuality, Nazi ideology was built on a foundation of inclusion and recognition. From its inception, Nazi ideology sought to duplicate the *Burgfrieden* and activism of the 1914 volunteers through the formation of a *Volksgemeinschaft*. The Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* would not only restore valued



aspects of German identity but recognize the problems face by both the present and past Germans. In solving these problems the Nazis would create a stronger, more durable Thousand Year Reich that would propel Germany to unprecedented heights. Belief in this future resided at the center of and compelled Nazism's followers to commit various high profile actions, even when the benefit of such actions were negligible or by 1944 non-existent. Therefore, Nazism is vastly more complicated than many historians believe, which mandates more in-depth analysis of ideology's importance to Nazism.

Despite demonstrating that ideology and action were tied together in pivotal ways, much more work needs to be done to determine the exact nature of Nazism. As asserted in the introduction any work that seeks to focus on one aspect of Nazism and determine the exact nature of Nazism from that aspect is doomed to fail before it ever begins. This work has no intention of establishing a catchall definition of Nazism but rather has simply chipped away at the vast scholarship supporting interpretations that too often focus on the condemned leadership and their opportunistic, eventually nihilistic, behavior. Hopefully, this work increases awareness of the historical relevance of Nazi ideology leading to further scholarship on the topic. Such scholarship will hopefully help demolish such simplistic understandings of Nazism. Only once such an identity is done away with can historians come to a fundamental and encompassing understanding of the belief system and actions that led to atrocity and terror. In a claim mentioned in the introduction, William Sheridan Allen stated that Nazism was a “problem of perception,” an assertion that rings true for the historiography of Nazi Germany as such scholarship cannot seem to avoid looking at Nazism through the lens of the Holocaust.<sup>455</sup> Until more efforts are taken to avoid portraying Nazism in terms of the terrible crimes committed in its

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<sup>455</sup>William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922 -1945* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), 281.

names, the true nature of this entity will forever be obscured and the Holocaust and the suffering it caused will still be misunderstood. The continuing scholarship that fosters arguments of Nazism as the expression of megalomaniacal mass-murders must yield to the reality that Nazi ideology not only informed and motivated many of the pivotal actions of Nazi history, but that this ideology surpassed its adherents finding commonality and expression in mass-society making Nazism a problem relevant to human nature, not simply an unbalanced and localized minority.

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