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# Before the Seizure of Power: American and British Press Coverage of National Socialism, 1922 to 1933

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BEFORE THE SEIZURE OF POWER: AMERICAN AND BRITISH PRESS  
COVERAGE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM, 1922 TO 1933

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
History

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by  
Andrew Brian Henson  
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Accepted by:  
Dr. Donald McKale, Committee Chair  
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Dr. James Burns

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the coverage of the National Socialist movement by the American and British press in the period from 1922 to 1933. Two major newspapers from both the United States and Great Britain were reviewed, as were several magazines and periodicals from those years. The nature of the coverage, as well as its accuracy, was the primary concern of this work. For the most part, the Anglo-American press emphasized the most visible political activities of the National Socialists and especially the prominent role of Adolf Hitler. American and British journalists addressed the violent, aggressive nature of the movement much more so than its inherent anti-Semitism and racist goals. Though a handful of journalists recognized that the party's hatred of the Jews was seminal to Nazism, this view was never addressed frequently or prominently. The Anglo-American press consistently underestimated the ability of the party to implement their goals. Instead, the party was considered a temporary outlet for German economic woes in both the early 1920s and early 1930s. In reality, following the failure of an attempted Nazi coup in 1923, the party reorganized and expanded its potential base of support, setting the stage for a more enthusiastic support than was perceived by the foreign press. Overall, the American and British press was able to accurately assess the nature of the National Socialist movement before it took over Germany, but in an imbalanced way that did not take its aggressive aspirations seriously. Though there was alarm when Hitler was made Chancellor

in 1933, American and British journalists honestly believed that his power would be limited.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and family for all of their support during my academic career.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Donald McKale for his guidance and help in the completion of my thesis as well as for his excellent instruction. In addition, I am grateful to Dr. Alan Grubb, who provided many valuable suggestions for this thesis and contributed greatly to my understanding of the profession of history. I would also like to thank Dr. James Burns for participating on my thesis committee and for his fascinating class on film and history. Finally, I am appreciative for the guidance of Dr. Steve Marks while part of the graduate program and for his outstanding direction and example while working as his assistant.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

On May 29, 1922, the British press first took notice of a small south German political movement that would bring unprecedented suffering on the world, the National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, shortened to Nazi party or NSDAP).<sup>1</sup> Advocating an aggressive and racist ideology based on the pseudo-scientific beliefs of its leader, Adolf Hitler, the Nazi Party would eventually lead Germany into a series of wars against many of its neighbors and other countries abroad. The horrors World War II unleashed were unmatched in human history, and included millions of victims of Nazi racist murder, most notably the Jews. The National Socialists represented the worst aspects of humanity, and it cost millions of lives to defeat them.

England, the Soviet Union, and the United States spent years trying to eliminate the threat of a Nazi-dominated world, going to war with Germany, Britain in 1939, Russia and America in 1941. By 1939, it was clear to the world that the Nazis represented a grave threat to world security, as they had intimidated other European powers into making concessions to Germany while at the same time terrorizing parts of their own population.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, many abroad had hoped that the responsibility of leading a country would tame the movement, forcing it to leave behind some of its more radical policies. As the decade progressed, it was clear

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<sup>1</sup> "Imperial and Foreign News Items," The Times 29 May 1922, 9g.

that power only incited Hitler and his followers and did not restrain them. Yet the Western powers of Britain and France did nothing to stop German transgressions, while the United States did not fully engage Germany until Hitler declared war on America.

Given these responses, the question arises of how well the former allies and their citizens knew and understood the true intentions of the Nazi party before 1933 - specifically, if it was possible to know that Hitler's intentions were never at any point a limited scheme of returning Germany to its pre-war status, but rather a plan to build an ethnically German empire throughout much of Europe. Hitler's memoir *Mein Kampf*, or "My Struggle," published in 1924, enumerated many of the ideological, racial, and foreign policies the Nazis would endorse, but it was not available in even an abridged English version until October 1933, almost nine months after Hitler became German chancellor.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis intends to answer the question about the availability of information concerning the Nazis in the West by examining English and American press coverage from the point when the Nazis were first mentioned in the press of these countries, May 1922, until Hitler was named chancellor in January 1933. The accuracy and nature of the information available in the Western press during those years is important to determine, especially because a significant source of knowledge of the Nazi party for American and British citizens came from what they read in newspapers and magazines.

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<sup>2</sup> James J. Barnes and Patience M. Barnes, [Hitler's Mein Kampf in Britain and America: A Publishing History, 1930-1939](#) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6-7, 73.

After the First World War, the United States, Great Britain, and Germany followed very different paths. To Americans, the war had been a great mistake, and for many years following its conclusion, American citizens wanted little or nothing to do with the problems of the European continent. This isolationist attitude lasted into the 1930s, when the effects of the Great Depression caused many Americans to focus on their problems.<sup>3</sup> Official interaction between the United States and Germany from the end of the war until 1933 was mainly in the form of negotiations on reparations and loans made by the U.S. government and private firms to both the Allied nations and Germany.<sup>4</sup> Great Britain was faced by a variety of internal and external difficulties in the 1920s, though it was an unquestioned leader of the European community. An economic downturn began at the war's end that would not be alleviated fully until World War II. Continuing economic troubles plagued England, and the British had to take a leading role in trying to sort out post-war European financial agreements in order to help stabilize their own economy.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Great Britain experienced some serious problems in the 1920s and early 1930s, however, it did not have to deal with the multifaceted social, political, and economic upheavals that shook Germany after the war and contributed to the rise of National Socialism. Following the war and resulting political revolution in the country, a republic was set up in Germany in the city of Weimar in 1919, replacing the German empire that had led the country to war in

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Kennedy, Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 385-388.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-73.

<sup>5</sup> Felix Gilbert and David Clay Large, The End of the European Era: 1890 to the Present (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 196-201.

1914. The new Weimar government faced severe problems from the outset, including political strife that saw several of its important leaders assassinated. There were serious attempts from both the political left and right to take over the country. The Weimar republic also had to deal with the repercussions of the Treaty of Versailles, which faced bitter opposition from almost all Germans.<sup>6</sup> The same year that the republic was founded, a former Bavarian army corporal by the name of Adolf Hitler joined a fledgling nationalist party in Munich known as the German Workers Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*). At the time, the party was only one of numerous nationalist conservative parties in the city where many of the ideas that would be incorporated into the Nazi party were circulating.<sup>7</sup> Over the next three years Hitler assumed almost total control of the group, slowly building the organization into an influential force in Munich politics.<sup>8</sup> It was in 1922 that the Western press first took notice of this charismatic demagogue and his band of followers, and the importance of its coverage of the National Socialist movement thereafter should not be underestimated.

The press can play a powerful role in determining public opinion, which in turn may help shape the policy of a country's government. The Nazis themselves knew how crucial foreign press coverage of their movement would be, and they worked to cultivate favorable opinions among American, and especially British, journalists.<sup>9</sup> Historian Deborah Lipstadt emphasized the importance of the press

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 186-190.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W.W. London and Company, 2000), 126-127, 134-136;

<sup>8</sup> Milan Hauner, *Hitler: A Chronology of his Life and Time* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 18-33.

<sup>9</sup> Frank McDonough, "The Times, Norman Ebbut and the Nazis, 1927-37," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992): 408-409, 412-419.

in her groundbreaking work examining American press coverage of Nazi anti-Semitism and the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945. Referring to the concept of the press as “a looking glass to history,” she wrote: “The press does far more than passively hold up that looking glass; it positions the glass, and the way it does that serves to shape the events themselves. The mirror, as the medium, becomes part of the message.”<sup>10</sup> Though she was referring to the level of knowledge the American press related concerning the Holocaust, her words also apply to the coverage of the National Socialist movement from 1922 to 1933 by American and British journalists. The information available to American and British policymakers on the National Socialists was important when considering the foreign policy of those countries during the 1930s, when they had to interact with a government led by that party. The press can in fact shape what the people think about, and in what way they think about it.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore important to determine how the press characterized the Nazi movement before it came to power in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis will focus mainly, but not exclusively, on two newspapers each from the United States and Great Britain. The two American papers are the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Both began covering the National Socialist movement in the early 1920s and dedicated a large amount of attention to the party’s evolution. The *New York Times* utilized a sizable group of correspondents in Germany to cover the Nazis, while the *Washington Post* relied more heavily on

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<sup>10</sup> Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Within this thesis, the term Western press refers to the specific sources chosen from the United States and Great Britain.

reports from the Associated Press. Such articles were nonetheless important, as they represented information that many smaller American newspapers had access to.

*The Times* of London and the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* are the two newspapers from Great Britain that will be analyzed. *The Times* provided detailed information from on site correspondents as did the *New York Times*. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was a collection of the most important articles from the daily publication of the *Guardian*, combined into one release. It provided another English viewpoint on the unfolding events in Germany.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the newspapers, a variety of magazines from the 1920s and early 1930s were consulted to provide a more complete view of the National Socialists in the eyes of the Anglo-American press. Of such publications, *Time* magazine was the most important because of its weekly sections dealing with foreign affairs, often focusing on Germany and the Nazis. *The Nation* provided several important features concerning the Nationalist Socialists. In 1932, *Collier's*, *Scribner's*, and *The Atlantic Monthly* all contributed important articles as the Nazis began their attempts to win power through several German elections.

There were a myriad of reasons that allowed the National Socialists to come to power in Germany. Historians have focused on a combination of economic, social, and political factors which played a significant role in the

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<sup>13</sup> For histories of these newspapers during the 1920s and 1930s see Meyer Berger, *The Story of the New York Times: 1851-1951* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951); Chalmers M. Roberts, *The Washington Post: The First 100 Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977); *The History of The Times: The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948*, Vol. 4 (London: Office of the Times, 1952); David Ayerst, *The Manchester Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971).

development of a political atmosphere that allowed a large segment of the German people to accept a radical and violent Nazi platform.<sup>14</sup> The American and British press put many of these issues on display in their coverage of the National Socialist movement from 1922 to 1933. In those years, it provided crucial information about Nazi intentions should the party ever come to power, indeed the only extensive information that was available about Hitler and his early movement to many citizens of the United States and Great Britain. What information the press provided readers, and the way in which it was presented, should be considered an important basis for examining the Western response to the Nazis following their takeover of Germany.

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<sup>14</sup> Peter D. Stachura, "Introduction: Weimar, National Socialism and Historians," The Nazi Machtergreifung, Peter D. Stachura ed. (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 1-11.



## CHAPTER TWO

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS: MAY 1922 TO OCTOBER 1923

The British and American Press had little reason to devote much coverage to the relatively small and insignificant National Socialist German Workers Party before 1922. Anti-democratic agitation in Bavaria was rampant as reactionaries, supporters of a strong nationalist and conservative policy, poured into the state. Bavaria served as an open venue to vent against and foment for the destruction of the republican Weimar regime in Berlin, and the Nazis were only one radical group among many. In 1922, however, events would lead to limited recognition of the young Nazi movement and its fanatically energetic leader, Adolf Hitler. Benito Mussolini led his Fascist party forces to power in the Italian government in October, something some press agencies saw as a possibility with Hitler and his followers. Also, the German economy began experiencing serious problems by the end of the year, exacerbated by the invasion of the Ruhr by French forces in early 1923, whose aim was making sure German reparation obligations were met.

In this environment, Hitler was able to garner significant coverage abroad. His tireless recruitment of party followers in Bavaria led some to believe that he could call upon a virtual army of armed and fervent troops ready to march on Berlin and impose the return of a monarchy or dictatorship. Though almost a decade away from gaining control of Germany, the Nazis were deemed a potential threat to the stability of Europe that might warrant closer coverage. In these first months of the NSDAP's international presence, the fundamental characteristics of

Nazism were on display for all to see. An inherent violent and xenophobic party nature was plainly visible in the reports of American and British journalists, as was the core belief of the Nazis, their vehement hatred of the Jews. In this period, Hitler and his charismatic leadership would be a central focus of many journalists, as some writers even helped in the construction of the myth that was already being built around an emerging *Führer*. Reports made it clear that the Nazis would work ruthlessly to see their goals realized, and they are early indicators of what would happen once they seized power in the 1930s.

The first report on the Nazis from either American or British press agencies appeared in May 1922. *The Times* of London reported in a short article on a group, “moddeled(sic) apparently on the lines of the Fascisti,” which went by the name of National Socialists. The article observed that the group would consider it an outrage for the German Federal President Friedrich Ebert to pay a visit to Munich, the capital of Bavaria, where many anti-Weimar and anti-democratic conservatives cared little for the leader of what was seen as a Socialist Republic.<sup>15</sup> Though lacking in details, the article represented accurately the party’s activities at the time, mainly agitating in order to gain public exposure. After Hitler’s consolidation of his control over the movement in July 1921 at the expense of other early party leaders, the small group of Nazis followed a course of rabble rousing meant to generate publicity.

A major source of discontent that Hitler tapped was the tension between Bavaria and the federal or Weimar government in Berlin. This conflict resulted mainly from reactionary and monarchist forces in Bavaria that despised the Reich

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<sup>15</sup> “Imperial and Foreign News Items,” *The Times*, 29 May 1922, 9g.

government and that opposed following orders from Berlin. This was evident in Bavarian Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr's decision not to implement emergency decrees that Ebert ordered in August 1921, during a period of political unrest. In this atmosphere, Hitler saw the possibilities of building support and gaining followers by railing against the federal government. The Nazis made their presence felt by disrupting meetings of competing groups of ideological opponents. These circumstances were combined with faltering German economic conditions that saw a large upswing in inflation through 1922 that became increasingly worse in the following year.<sup>16</sup> Though the Nazis gained in notoriety because of their own actions, the international spotlight focused upon the NSDAP as never before following the success of Benito Mussolini and his Italian Fascists.

Through much of the summer of 1922, Hitler spent his time speaking and agitating throughout Bavaria and Austria, attempting to garner new supporters and extend the reach of the party. Though speaking in front of large crowds that at times reached 70,000 or more, as he did on August 16 in front of members from various south German nationalist groups, the press in the U.S. and England paid little heed to the movement.<sup>17</sup> Only a few vague references from these months exist, and even they did not single out the Nazis specifically. The "Hakenkreuzler," wearers of the hooked cross or swastika, were mentioned in an article describing them as one reactionary and violent group among many that despised the Bolsheviks and the rule of the Jews. Though not illuminating the

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<sup>16</sup> Ian Kershaw, Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris (New York: W. W. London and Company, 2000), 163-165, 175.

<sup>17</sup> Milan Hauner, Hitler: A Chronology of his Life and Time (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 35.

specific nature of the party, the article left the impression that the wearers of the swastika were a brutal group from the dark ages who espoused massacres and pogroms.<sup>18</sup>

The National Socialists, and Hitler especially, would only gain a distinct place among the multitude of nationalist organizations in Bavaria because of events in Italy. On October 27, 1922 Mussolini and his fascists came to power by threatening large-scale marches on Rome. Mussolini used the threat of violence against the government and unwillingness of the Italian Army to protect the King to force him to grant a dominant position in a new government to the party, and the position of Prime Minister to its leader.<sup>19</sup> Western writers would now pay much more attention to the long-winded but charismatic Hitler, whom they saw as another possible Mussolini, focusing on the brute force of his political tirades that might sweep him into power in the way it had for Mussolini in Italy.

Nationalist forces in Bavaria gained inspiration and confidence from Mussolini's successes in Italy. The Nazis introduced banners into the party's armed formations, known as the *Sturmabteilung* or SA, in imitation of the Italian Fascists. The Nazi inspiration for a march on Berlin was found in the March on Rome, despite the fact that it had never actually taken place.<sup>20</sup> Almost immediately, the Nazis cast themselves in the Fascists' footsteps, with NSDAP member Herman Esser proclaiming Hitler to be the German Mussolini.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> "What is at Stake in Germany," The Nation, September 13, 1922, 241-242.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert, 208-210.

<sup>20</sup> Eberhard Kolb, The Weimar Republic (New York: Routledge, 2004), 50; Hans Mommsen, The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 162.

<sup>21</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 180.

press made this connection almost immediately. Some reports on the eve of Mussolini's takeover already described the Nazis as fascist emulators, who, in later articles, were intent on spreading Italian methods throughout Bavaria and then Germany.<sup>22</sup>

American newspapers focused closely on Hitler, referring to him as the Bavarian Mussolini, mistakenly believing this title had belonged to him for some time. The *Washington Post* even devoted an editorial to the Nazis because of the threat of the spread of fascism. The editors believed that the Bavarian fascists were copying the Italians down to the smallest detail, only replacing Italian symbols with German ones. While not drawing very much distinction between Mussolini and Hitler, the editors of the *Washington Post* pointed out the violent nature of the Nazi leader, claiming he was leading his party and Bavaria straight into a civil war instead of being a uniting force the way Mussolini had supposedly been.<sup>23</sup> Some observers saw the comparisons to Mussolini as unfair to the Italian, as did one writer for the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, who noted that Hitler was a muddle brained Bohemian, "devoid of solid convictions and incapable of a definite line of actions."<sup>24</sup> In the coming year, the rest of the world would discover such thoughts sadly untrue. Nevertheless, the success of the Italian fascists spurred inquiry into the nature of the National Socialist Party, as well into its aims.

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<sup>22</sup> "German Fascisti," *The Times*. 18 October 1922, pg. 11c; "Trouble Brewing in Bavaria," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 17 November 1922, 388.

<sup>23</sup> Cyril Brown, "New Popular Idol Rises in Bavaria," *New York Times* 21 November 1922, 18; "Bavarian 'Fascisti,'" *Washington Post* 22 November 1922, 6.

<sup>24</sup> "Bavarian Fascists: The German Mussolini," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 9 February 1923, 108.

As would always be the case with the Nazis, categorizing what the party stood against was far easier than what the party stood for. American journalist Cyril Brown wrote in November 1922 that the programs outlined by Hitler and the NSDAP “consist chiefly of half a dozen negative ideas clothed in generalities. He is ‘against the Jews, communists, Bolshevism, Marxian Socialism, separatists, the high cost of living, existing conditions, the weak Berlin government and the Versailles treaty.’” There were hints of the racial ideology that would become dominant later, seen in a report concerning Nazi recruiting drives in Berlin, where it was made clear that only racially pure Teutons were allowed to apply.<sup>25</sup>

One interesting press conjecture that emerged concerning the party was the claim that it was supportive of the monarchist movement to put a member of the former Hohenzollern or Wittelsbach ruling families on the throne of Germany. Other writers discerned that the Nazis had no interest in recreating a German monarchy, pointing out that no such demand could be found in the Nazis’ platform.<sup>26</sup> The Nazi party and Hitler envisioned the creation of a *völkisch*, or essentially racial nationalist, dictatorship for Germany, not the restoration of a monarch. Hitler did not even see himself as the possible dictator in this period, but rather as a follower, drumming up support for the future leader.<sup>27</sup> Besides political ideology, the question of Nazi violence and possible military capabilities would be a popular topic for foreign press agencies to discuss.

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<sup>25</sup> Cyril Brown, “New Popular Idol Rises in Bavaria,” New York Times 21 November 1922, 18; Cyril Brown, “Fascisti Movement Starts in Berlin,” New York Times 22 November 1922, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln Eyre, “German Republic Opposed by Political and Military Organizations in Bavaria,” Washington Post 4 January 1923, 4; Theodore von Sosnosky, “The New Pan-Germanism,” Quarterly Review 240 (1922): 308-322.

<sup>27</sup> Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 40; Kershaw, Hitler, 169.

Fears of masses of reactionary zealots flocking to Hitler's banner were common among Western journalists. Some level of trepidation existed about a renewed German military movement intended to exact revenge against internal enemies within Germany and quite possibly against the Western Allies. *The Times* made this clear in a report in early January 1923 concerning a massive gathering addressed by Hitler, where many called for action against those seen as responsible for Germany's suffering.<sup>28</sup> Many articles discussed the manpower that Hitler might have had under his control in case he called for a revolt against Berlin, gloomily reporting he could draw forth as many or more men to fight than the entire German army. Sheer numbers of supporters and the implications were often discussed. Some journalists mentioned 30,000 thousand members of the Nazi party in Munich, where Hitler supposedly rallied 180,000 to demonstrate in late January 1923, despite the opposition of the Munich government. It was feared that the Nazis might draw upon more supporters than the Republic could muster between *Reichswehr*, or German army, troops and regular police forces.<sup>29</sup> These concerns were not necessarily unfounded, at least from a numerical standpoint. Stipulations in the Versailles treaty limited the size of the German army to approximately 100,000 soldiers.<sup>30</sup> The threat of several hundred thousand reactionary troops, many of whom had served in the war, was potentially a serious one.

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<sup>28</sup> "An Army of Revenge," *The Times* 15 January 1923, 10d.

<sup>29</sup> "Bavarian 'Fascisti,'" *Washington Post* 22 November 1922, 6; "Herr Hittler's(sic) 'Storm Troops,'" *The Times* 30 January 1923, 10b; Lincoln Eyre, "Sees German Government Powerless in Face of Ills Political and Economic," *Washington Post* 2 January 1923, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Kolb, 30.

For the most part, however, the threat of a massive Hitler-led coup was overstated. By November 1923, the Nazi party had a membership of 55,000, but many members had only joined because of the disastrous economic circumstances. The Nazi semi-military formation, the SA, was relatively small. Military-style formations of other nationalist organizations were far larger than the forces the Nazis could muster.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, the press expressed more concern about Nazi forces, probably because of Hitler's leadership. Time would prove such anxiety well founded. An important aspect of National Socialism that would garner notice in both American and English news organs would be the violent nature of the party.

It is apparent from early press reports that Nazi attacks on enemies on both the left and right in Germany had made an impression on foreign journalists. For the most part, wherever groups of Nazis were found, violence followed quickly. Storm troopers frequently met their enemies in the streets. Reports mentioned the violence that accompanied political meetings and speeches. The *New York Times* described a likely premeditated attack by Nazi members on a group of socialists in Munich.<sup>32</sup> Hitler had designated the SA for just such a purpose when he created it in 1921. He intended it to push around opponents and protect Nazi party officials from similar treatment by rival groups. Historian Richard Evans pointed out that during this period "...Hitler and the Nazi Party felt no particular

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<sup>31</sup> Orlow, 45; Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 183.

<sup>32</sup> "Socialist Factions Battle in Munich," *New York Times* 28 April 1923, 3.

need to look respectable. Violence seemed the obvious way to power.”<sup>33</sup> Such violence, combined with the Party’s open scheming and planning of military campaigns, military drills, and subversive activities, made some feel uneasy about the future of Germany.<sup>34</sup>

Another frequently reported aspect of National Socialism was its anti-Semitism. This characteristic was written about throughout the period, for the most part only fleetingly. Western reporters at the time could have had little idea of the depth of hatred among Hitler and other leaders of the National Socialist Party for Jews, and of the horrific crimes to which such hate would lead. Nevertheless, Western journalists wrote disparagingly of the increased levels of anti-Semitic feelings that had emerged throughout Germany, including their especially virulent manifestation in Bavaria. One writer described Munich as among the most tolerant cities toward Jewish citizens before the war, allowing Jews to serve as officers in the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, something not allowed in the northern state of Prussia.<sup>35</sup> The Bavarian *Reichswehr* admitted a limited number of Jews as reserve officers, but using this as evidence of a more liberal atmosphere in Bavaria than in Prussia, where no Jewish officers were allowed, was misleading. From 1907 to 1913, the army commissioned only three Jewish reserve officers per year.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A.J. Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 100; Evans, 189.

<sup>34</sup> “Germany’s Internal Peril,” Manchester Guardian Weekly 19 January 1923, 46.

<sup>35</sup> “Bavarian Fascists; The German Mussolini,” Manchester Guardian Weekly 9 February 1923, 108.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Pulzer, Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 114-116.

In the wake of a brief but violent period of Socialist control in Munich after the war, however, a wave of anti-Semitism broke out in the city, inflamed by the many Bavarians who blamed Germany's loss of World War I on alleged traitors at home, including minorities such as Jews.<sup>37</sup> By January 1923 the situation became bad enough that one writer noted, "It is dangerous for a Jew to show himself in the streets of Munich."<sup>38</sup> The wave of anti-Semitic feelings had gained strength during the war, when many Germans used Jews as scapegoats. When the Bolshevik revolution occurred in Russia, many pan-German groups pointed to it as proof of a Jewish conspiracy to create world revolution to allow Jews to take over the globe.<sup>39</sup> This explained to some extent how the rising anti-Semitic feelings were linked to the Socialist government in Munich. Foreign journalists saw how the Jewish community was used as a scapegoat for all that was wrong in Munich and Germany. When describing the reactionary movement in Munich, a journalist for the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* observed how anti-Semitism could be used as a veritable war cry, when reduced into a simple formula that stated: "The world's capital is Jewish; Marxism is Jewish; Marxism and Capitalism are responsible for the desperate straits the world is in. Therefore

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<sup>37</sup> In the first half of 1919, Socialist and subsequently Communist groups gained control of the government in Munich and Bavaria, incited by the assassination of Socialist leader Kurt Eisner. This ended a period of tense political cooperation between parties on the right and left. Majority Socialists were discredited by extreme leftists who carried out the murder of several high ranking Bavarian aristocrats and conservatives in April of that year, spurring the national government to use army and freikorps troops to restore order forcibly in Munich. Reactionary groups used this event to stir up anti-Semitic sentiments since a handful of Socialist and Communist leaders who attempted to form a Bavarian Soviet were Jewish. See Charles Bracelen Flood, *Hitler: The Path to Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 48-57.

<sup>38</sup> "Bavarian Fascists; The German Mussolini," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 9 February 1923, 108; "Germany's Internal Peril," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 19 January 1923, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 100-101.

‘Down with the Jews!’<sup>40</sup> Foreign journalists saw anti-Semitism everywhere in Munich at the time, and they reported that the Nazis were basically no different. In reality, Nazi anti-Semitism had a unique blend of preexisting anti-Semitic elements, which differentiated its Jew-hatred from other groups.

Hitler discussed his view of the Jews long before 1923, including them in his first political statement written in September 1919 for his military superiors in the German army, prior to leaving the army and joining the tiny political movement in Munich that eventually became the Nazi party. In the statement he made it clear that he viewed the Jews as a race and not a religious movement, an idea he would maintain for the rest of his life. While other German nationalists and anti-Semites might have wanted to use anti-Semitism to create popular support, Hitler wished for a rational and methodical anti-Semitic movement to remove the Jews from participation in society, but whose final aim “...must be the uncompromising removal of the Jews altogether.”<sup>41</sup>

Hitler’s anti-Semitism had taken shape before World War I in Vienna, a city filled with virulent Jew-hatred and nationalism. The anti-Semitic politics of Vienna mayor Karl Lueger and the pan-German ideology of Georg von Schönerer, had great influence on Hitler.<sup>42</sup> The racially based anti-Semitism of

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<sup>40</sup> “Bavarian Fascists; The German Mussolini,” Manchester Guardian Weekly 9 February 1923, 108.

<sup>41</sup> J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., Nazism 1919-1945: A Documentary Reader, 3 vols. (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 1:12-13.

<sup>42</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 60-67, 125. Georg von Schönerer was the leader of an extreme nationalist pan-German movement in Austria during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He embraced a vicious brand of anti-Semitism, and believed vehemently in the reunion of Germany and Austria. Hitler would adopt many of von Schönerer’s ideas and copied the Nazi salute as well as his own title from his predecessor. Whereas von Schönerer represented an ideological influence upon Hitler, Karl Lueger was an important influence politically. Lueger was a talented orator and rabble-rouser who used populist sentiments to make his political party the most powerful in Vienna. Lueger

Hitler and other early Nazi leaders would be the foundation of National Socialist ideology throughout the party's existence. At least one American news article noted this fact, recognizing that anti-Semitism was indeed the fundamental principle behind National Socialism. This was because Hitler consistently linked questions of what he considered Germany's Jewish problem with the problems of the state itself.<sup>43</sup> Several articles would demonstrate how the Nazi hatred of the Jews was in a way unique and extremely dangerous because of its murderous intentions towards the entire Jewish community.

Reporters who attended early National Socialist meetings learned that the Nazis blamed the Jews for all German problems, much like other reactionary groups did in Munich. Members of the audience told one journalist that the Jews were communists as well as war profiteers, though the reporter clarified to his audience in the United States that the principal war profiteers in Bavaria were actually Christians.<sup>44</sup> The article drew a religious distinction with the Nazis' anger, however, with no elaboration on their racial hatred. The concept of race appeared rarely in articles, with the most prominent example quoting Hitler as stating, "The new banner, the swastika cross, is the symbol of the war we must wage against the race responsible for our downfall." This article did not point out that the Jews were the group to which Hitler was referring.<sup>45</sup> Most articles made only passing reference to Nazi anti-Semitism when it was mentioned at all,

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also used anti-Semitism as a political tool, including horrific imagery to ingratiate himself with his Viennese constituency. See Kershaw, Hitler, 33-35.

<sup>43</sup> "Hitler Talks of His Bund," New York Times 17 October 1923, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ludwell Denny, "France and the German Counter-Revolution," The Nation March 14, 1923, 295-297.

<sup>45</sup> "Bavaria's Fascists; The German Mussolini," Manchester Guardian Weekly 9 February 1922, 108.

observing that the party was known for attacking Jews or was rabidly anti-Jewish.<sup>46</sup>

The *New York Times*, on the other hand, published articles that made clear the attitude of the Nazis towards the Jews. In March 1923, one described a Nazi resolution concerning the invasion of the Ruhr by the French, which proposed that all Jews in Germany should be held hostage and shot if the occupation was continued. Another discussed possible financial support for the Nazis by Henry Ford, claiming that the professed anti-Semite Ford might have an incentive to support the movement since "...a part of the program of Herr Hitler...is the extermination of the Jews in Germany."<sup>47</sup> Though readers of the two short articles could not have known their horrific importance at the time, they implied that the Nazis possibly thought of using violent measures against Jews. Even though the Nazi party displayed an aggressive and violent nature directed so viciously against the Jewish community, the American and British press discussed both it and the party in general little. Just as the success of the Italian Fascists had been equated with the leadership of Mussolini, press coverage in the United States and England focused on the role of Hitler, whom the press focused on in great, if often inaccurate, detail.

Descriptions of Hitler in Western news articles during 1922 and 1923 often tended to be dismissive or derogatory in nature, as for example, one that compared Hitler and Mussolini; it was less than impressed with the young

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<sup>46</sup> "Herr Hittler's(sic) Storm Troops," *The Times* 30 January 1923, 10b; Lincoln Eyre, "German Republic Opposed by Political and Militar Organizations in Bavaria," *Washington Post* 4 January 1923, 4.

<sup>47</sup> "Threaten German Jews," *New York Times* 17 March 1923, 2; "Says Ford Aids Royalists," *New York Times* 8 February 1923, 3.

Austrian, writing that he was all show and no action.<sup>48</sup> Some journalists attempted to discredit the threat that Hitler posed to German and European security by attacking his physical appearance. A *Times* story emphasized his short height and undistinguished past, asserting that he had barely gotten by on speaking fees in Munich.<sup>49</sup> Other journalists, however, were obviously impressed with Hitler's abilities. The characteristic of Hitler's they focused on most was his oratorical skills. Writing for the *New York Times*, Cyril Brown concluded: "He has the rare oratorical gift, at present unique in Germany, of spellbinding whole audiences regardless of politics or creed."<sup>50</sup> Other reporters who attended Nazi meetings tended to agree, noting that Hitler was seen as a savior or prophet among many in the audience.<sup>51</sup> Such writers were witnessing the reverence for Hitler among his early supporters that would grow to almost religious proportions in the coming decades in the German population. In early 1923, Hitler still claimed to be paving the way for a future leader who would direct Germany back to glory, but some in the NSDAP, including Hermann Göring, were already labeling Hitler as the destined *Führer*.<sup>52</sup> Journalists recognized the importance that Hitler had in creating support for the party, as well as his growing leadership of the extreme conservative and nationalist community in Munich. This would encourage them to examine Hitler's background more closely in an attempt to

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<sup>48</sup> "Bavarian Fascists: The German Mussolini," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 9 February 1923, 108.

<sup>49</sup> "Militarism in Bavaria, Fascist Movement Spreading," *The Times* 22 May 1923, 11a.

<sup>50</sup> Cyril Brown, "New Popular Idol Rises in Bavaria," *New York Times* 21 November 1922, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Ludwell Denny, "France and the German Counter-Revolution," *The Nation* 14 March, 1923, 295-297.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22-23.

discern the Nazi leader's motivation, but in doing so they would publish some of the myths that were already being spread about him.

Hitler's background before World War I is still, in some ways, difficult to document many years after his death. His youth in Austria and Vienna left few sources to trace his ideological and personal development, though contemporary historians have done an admirable job in reconstructing much of it.<sup>53</sup> During 1922 and 1923, it was nearly impossible for journalists to obtain accurate information on his early life. Most of what they found came from rumors, the Nazis themselves, or even rivals of the National Socialists. Hitler's Austrian heritage was generally known, but how he had spent his youth there was up for debate. Some sources called him a worker or locksmith, and nearly all portraits of Hitler mentioned his artistic pretensions in Vienna.<sup>54</sup> In reality, however, Hitler lived off of others or in squalor, rarely attempting to better his circumstances while living in the Austrian capital. Historian Ian Kershaw has written about Hitler in Vienna: "Systematic preparation and hard work were as foreign to the young Hitler as they would be to the later dictator."<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, American and British reporters in Germany during 1922 and 1923 began illuminating for their audiences back home for the first time the origins of Hitler's deranged and dangerous politics.

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<sup>53</sup> Hitler's autobiography, Mein Kampf, was often factually incorrect and of little use in trying to reconstruct his life in Vienna. Much of the information on his Vienna period was derived from the memories of four of Hitler's passing acquaintances in Vienna, all of whom knew him for only a short period. Thus, recreating this period of Hitler's life and its importance to his ideological development was exceedingly difficult. See Kershaw, Hitler, 30.

<sup>54</sup> Cyril Brown, "New Popular Idol Rises in Bavaria," New York Times 21 November 1922, 18; Ludwell Denny, "France and the German Counter-Revolution," The Nation 14 March, 1923, 295-297.

<sup>55</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 39.

A fascinating piece of information in several articles involved the circumstances in which Hitler decided to become a politician and leader of a political party. The press accounts related the supposed visions Hitler experienced while convalescing in a hospital after being gassed and suffering injuries to his eyes and lungs on the Western Front during World War I. The American journalist Ludwell Denny noted, "In the hospital [Hitler] was subject to ecstatic visions of victorious Germany, and in one of these seizures his eyesight was restored."<sup>56</sup> Probably the story was related to Denny and other journalists by Hitler's followers or during one of his speeches. This was almost a year before Hitler would include a modified version of the supposed event in *Mein Kampf*, his autobiography, in which he wrote that it was this experience that created the hatred and resolve necessary for him to enter the political arena.<sup>57</sup> In a way, journalists who reported on the alleged episode helped to spread an early legend about Hitler that would only grow.

In reality, Hitler's decision to oppose those he saw as responsible for the defeat of Germany took shape in the months following the end of the war, during which he molded various animosities and extremist right wing political beliefs into his singular *Weltanschauung* or world view. It was not due to some quasi-religious experience.<sup>58</sup> Considering the picture that had been drawn of his leadership, however, it is of little surprise that the Western press was cautious of such a highly effective demagogue who could claim divine inspiration and

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<sup>56</sup> Ludwell Denny, "France and the German Counter-Revolution," The Nation 14 March, 1923, 295-297; "Bavarian Fascists: The German Mussolini," Manchester Guardian Weekly 9 February 1923, 108.

<sup>57</sup> Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 203-206.

<sup>58</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 104-105.

allegedly convert even communists and skeptical former German generals to the Nazi cause through his oratory.<sup>59</sup> While Hitler had little use at the time for foreign journalists, they would document the growing unrest Hitler contributed to in Bavaria, as conflicts between the state and federal governments grew more heated in light of French action toward Germany in early 1923.

The decision by France to occupy the Ruhr, a heavily industrialized region of northwest Germany on January 9, 1923, appeared to be a golden opportunity for German nationalist and conservative forces.<sup>60</sup> Not only could such forces foment anger towards France, but they could also focus the German people's animosity on their own Weimar regime for inaction and for ever-increasing economic woes. Using delays in the shipments of reparation goods as a pretext, France sent military forces into Germany in order to guarantee their delivery. All the while, some French political elements pressed for the separation of the Ruhr from the rest of Germany, and hoped to accomplish this through occupation.

The German government responded with a policy of passive resistance, whereby German workers in the occupied region refused to work for the French, seeking to thwart their aims. The government financed what amounted to a general strike through the almost unlimited production of German currency. This policy led to disastrous consequences, a hyperinflation of prices that threw the country's economy into crisis. The French were able to bypass the strike by bringing in foreign workers, thus making the policy of passive resistance a total

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<sup>59</sup> "Hitler New Power in Germany," New York Times 21 January 1923, XX12.

<sup>60</sup> Kolb, 47.

failure. Consequently, the policy was abandoned in late 1923.<sup>61</sup> The crisis environment was perfect for Hitler and the National Socialists to exploit for their purposes the widespread German hate for the occupiers. A British news report described it well: “It is not likely that the German Fascists will ever again have an opportunity like the present.”<sup>62</sup>

The outcry against the French occupation was almost universal throughout Germany, recreating to some the sense of unified will present in the nation at the beginning of World War I.<sup>63</sup> Within days of the occupation, Hitler already made use of the event, attacking both the Republic and France in his characteristically racist way, reportedly stating in a quote that appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*: “We dishonored and disarmed ourselves and have become objects of contempt, a laughing-stock to the enemy and the world. We have fallen to complete slavery. France holds us lower than a negro state.”<sup>64</sup>

Nazi street thugs (SA) attempted to attack hotels frequented by foreigners as well as the office for the Inter-Allied Commission in Munich.<sup>65</sup> Rumors circulated that the Bavarian fascists would attempt a *Putsch* (coup) in light of recent events, reports that would be echoed through the remainder of the year.<sup>66</sup> The Bavarian government took such threats seriously, attempting to prevent the National Socialists from staging a series of rallies planned for the end of January.

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<sup>61</sup> Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 59-60.

<sup>62</sup> “The Threatening Danger from German Nationalists,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 16 March 1922, 210.

<sup>63</sup> Kolb, 47-48.

<sup>64</sup> Cyril Brown, “German Protest Now World Wide,” *New York Times* 13 January 1923, 1.

<sup>65</sup> “An Army of Revenge,” *The Times* 15 January 1923, 10d; “State of Siege in Bavaria,” *The Times* 27 January 1923, 10d.

<sup>66</sup> “Bavarian Fascisti,” *The Times* 17 January 1923, 10c; “Gaiety and Despair in Germany,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 26 January 1923, 64.

Only upon guarantees from Hitler that a *Putsch* would not take place did the authorities allow the rallies to go forward, whereas in the rest of Germany there was an outright prohibition against the party even existing.<sup>67</sup> Conflicts would only grow more common in the coming months as the Nazis attempted to garner as much attention as possible.

Hitler, emboldened enough by his successes in Munich and growing support throughout Bavaria because of the crisis, made threats against both the French occupiers and the Berlin government. To the French Hitler stated in a press interview reported in the U.S.: “A people may be goaded to that degree of desperation that they become convinced all hope for them is gone. Then they will choose gigantic ruins as their death monument, and, like Samson, pull down on all what may remain of the structure of civilization and culture.” Perhaps presaging his sinister attitude in the Second World War, the statement made clear that Hitler would rather see death and devastation to spite the French than any kind of negotiation. He also noted that should the policy of passive resistance fail, German political leadership would face serious consequences.<sup>68</sup>

The idea of passive resistance was anathema to Hitler, who desired a more active and violent opposition to the French. Attacking Berlin’s policy was also simply another way of assaulting the so-called November criminals, the leaders who had signed Germany’s surrender and formed the republic, which Hitler blamed for putting Germany in such a subordinate position in the first place. These attacks enhanced the growth of the Nazi party in Bavaria, where

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<sup>67</sup> Hauner, 37-38.

<sup>68</sup> “Hitler Issues Warning Against Invading Bavaria,” Washington Post 15 February 1923, 1.

separatist sympathies were strong and hatred for the republican government in Berlin was equal to, and perhaps even greater than, the hatred for France.<sup>69</sup> As the economic and political crisis became more serious, confrontation between the Nazis, Bavaria, and the federal government in Berlin would escalate. Extreme nationalist and conservative forces became desperate to act under what was considered fortuitous circumstances for attempts to take control of Germany.

The political atmosphere in Bavaria and the rest of Germany was strained severely by the events of early 1923. Conflicts between the Bavarian and Weimar governments originated mainly because of the right wing sympathies of Bavarian leaders for the multitude of nationalist forces within its borders. Bavaria had been intransigent about disbanding armed civilian defense formations that remained as vestiges of the *Freikorps*, paramilitary organizations of counter-revolutionaries used by the democratic Berlin government to stave off communist revolution after World War I. The *Freikorps* had eventually played a role in the suppression of the Kapp Putsch of 1920.<sup>70</sup> Bavaria had also consistently been a thorn in the side of Berlin's republican leaders because of the presence of avowed monarchist and separatist leaders, such as Gustav von Kahr. He had been elected minister president of Bavaria in 1920 and advocated the return of a monarchy.

Another point of contention with Berlin was the Bavarian government's decision to ignore the implementation of the Law for the Protection of the

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<sup>69</sup> Hauner, 38; Mommsen, 156.

<sup>70</sup> Mommsen, 109; Peukert, 66-69. The Kapp Putsch was an attempt by right wing and military forces to displace the Weimar Republic in March 1920. Led by several prominent generals who served during World War I, including Erich Ludendorff, the revolt was ended when the government's call for a general strike proved successful in immobilizing the troops the rightists had been able to rally to their cause. See Kolb, 37-39.

Republic that had been instituted following the assassination in 1922 of German-Jewish Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau by nationalist sympathizers. This law gave the states the right to ban dangerous organizations such as the Nazi party. While Prussia and other states carried out the law, Bavaria did not, referring to it as invalid.<sup>71</sup> The Nazis would make the most of the conflict between Bavaria and the federal government, using the protection of the sympathetic state government in an attempt to create new sources of support and influence for the NSDAP. They would exacerbate the tensions between Munich and Berlin, especially since the Nazis came into conflict with the Bavarian leadership for being too provocative.

During 1923, the political leaders of Bavaria had a difficult time maneuvering between what they saw as two extreme dangers. On the left they saw revolution, even from the moderate Social Democrats, the largest political party in Germany. The threat from the right was just as serious, with extremists like the Nazis awaiting an opportunity to make a revolution of their own, even at the expense of sympathizers in Bavaria.<sup>72</sup> Hitler stepped up his attacks against any and all possible enemies as his popularity and clout in the south German state grew steadily throughout the year.

Foreign reporters saw the tensions within Germany firsthand. An article in the *Times* discussed the crackdown on radicalism within Prussia by the Minister of the Interior in that state, Carl Severing. He labeled Hitler as one of the most dangerous men in the country and blamed the laxity of the Bavarian

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<sup>71</sup> Mommsen, 125, 153-154

<sup>72</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 197.

government for allowing such a threat to Germany to exist at all.<sup>73</sup> Hitler's party was seen with such fear that the German Supreme Court in Leipzig declared it illegal, because of its avowed opposition to and press attacks upon the federal government. Hitler was able to brush such pronouncements off, however, even when proceedings against him were undertaken in April 1923.

A *New York Times* writer noted accurately when describing the relationship between the Nazis and the Bavarian government: "The fact that Hitler himself has not been molested by the authorities, notwithstanding his expressed scorn of the Bavarian Government leads some of the German writers to hint that the Conservative Cabinet is merely using camouflage while secretly backing the so-called National Socialists..."<sup>74</sup> The *Times* reported the response to the charges against Hitler and the Nazis in the official party organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which stated that there was no question of Hitler appearing before the Leipzig "Cheka", a comparison of the court to the brutal Soviet secret police. Hitler's newspaper called on Bavaria to take action against the charges.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Nazi political opportunism was on display for readers in the United States and England, as Hitler attempted to force Bavaria and the federal government into conflict in order to strengthen his own position and incite a revolt against Berlin.

Some foreign journalists recognized that the actions of the Nazis were becoming more provocative as the months wore on. Nazis and socialists skirmished on several occasions, especially near May Day. Reporters believed

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<sup>73</sup> "Prussian Putsch Arrest, 'Dangerous People,'" *The Times* 24 March 1923, 10c.

<sup>74</sup> "Plot in Bavaria Laid to Cabinet," *New York Times* 20 March 1923, pg. e7.

<sup>75</sup> Cyril Brown, "Hitler Organization Declared Illegal," *New York Times* 17 March 1923, 14; "Bavarian Fascisti Unrepentant," *The Times* 18 April 1923, 11c.

the police were only barely able to contain the rampant violence. The socialists members of the Bavarian *Landtag* (Parliament) attempted to implement the ordinances against the Nazis like the rest of Germany had, but were blocked by other parties, something that apparently gave encouragement to the extreme rightist parties.<sup>76</sup> One reason the foreign press became increasingly wary of Nazi aggressiveness was the apparent alliance between Hitler and the former World War I General, Erich Ludendorff. The *New York Times* suspected that Ludendorff was running the Nazi party behind the scenes, using Hitler as a figurehead.<sup>77</sup> Ludendorff had been introduced to Hitler by one of Hitler's young fanatical followers, Rudolf Hess. The general would work closely with members of the extreme right in Munich, eventually becoming for a time a close collaborator of the Nazi leader.<sup>78</sup>

A few journalists were aware of how Hitler used the former general's reputation and connections to help the NSDAP while at the same time keeping Ludendorff from a leading position. *The Times* quoted Hitler as saying about Ludendorff: "Excellency, a man who fled to Sweden for safety and who, as a Prussian, prefers to seek refuge in Bavaria can never be a leader of our national movement. If, however, we should be in need of your organizing ability or your knowledge of tactics and strategy, we shall be glad to call upon you, but our leader you can never be."<sup>79</sup> Hitler used Ludendorff in much the same way he used

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<sup>76</sup> "Control Officer Rebuffed, Bavarian Extremists' Activity," *The Times* 30 June 1923, 11e; "Socialists and Storm Troopers, Reinforcing the Law," *The Times* 26 April 1923, 12b; "Fascisti Battling Munich Socialists," *Washington Post* 30 April 1923, 3.

<sup>77</sup> "Links Ludendorff to Plot to Upset German Republic," *New York Times* 24 March 1923, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 194-195.

<sup>79</sup> "Bavarian Fascism; Significance of Sunday's Demonstration," *The Times* 7 September 1923, 9d.

the Bavarian government - for the benefit of the party. Many journalists saw the Nazis as pawns of such figures as von Kahr or Ludendorff, but in reality Hitler never planned to play a subordinate role to anyone. During September and October 1923, the fears of a revolt led by Hitler became justified as extremist nationalists of many different groups began agitating for action.

On June 15, 1923, as the value of the mark decreased daily, the *New York Times* reported that in Germany the rumor was “Bolshevism in Germany before winter is over, if not sooner.”<sup>80</sup> German economist and future head of the Reich’s federal bank, Hjalmar Schacht, noted that the threat of communist revolt was very real in several German states, such as Saxony and Thuringia, and many people were willing to listen as the fall of the mark’s value reached disastrous proportions – some 4.2 trillion marks to the American dollar by November.<sup>81</sup> The president of the Weimar Republic, Ebert, was forced to introduce a new chancellor or prime minister in Berlin, Gustav Stresemann. Stresemann moved to end passive resistance against the French, which was done on September 26. The inflation, however, continued to mount.

Hitler adjusted his tactics to the new chancellor by attacking the inflation and end of passive resistance. The end of resistance in the Ruhr also did not stand well with Bavarian political leaders, leading them to declare a state of emergency and von Kahr the virtual dictator of Bavaria.<sup>82</sup> Events that had unfolded during the previous year would come to a climax in this new political climate in Bavaria,

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<sup>80</sup> “Germany Stirred As Mark Goes Down,” *New York Times* 15 June 1923, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin C. Sax and Dieter Kuntz, *Inside Hitler’s Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 51-53.

<sup>82</sup>Noakes and Pridham, 27; Hauner, 41.

with Hitler realizing that time might be running out to maximize support for an uprising under his leadership.

These events were seen in various lights by the Western press. Some papers wrote that the intention of von Kahr's elevation to the post of general commissioner of Bavaria was to stave off an imminent *Putsch* by Hitler, which it did for a short while. Others saw his appointment as a provocative move, noting that the Weimar president Ebert had sent troops to the Bavarian border in case von Kahr attempted an offensive against Berlin.<sup>83</sup> Hitler wanted preparations for an armed march on the German capital, but the meetings planned for such were banned by von Kahr. However, problems emerged over the control of the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, or army, when orders were sent from the federal government to suppress the Nazis' newspaper, the *Völkische Beobachter*. General Otto von Lossow, the commander of the Bavarian *Reichswehr*, did not carry out the orders, leading to his dismissal. This too was ignored and his troops apparently remained loyal to him, not Germany. This led immediately to the possibility of armed conflict between the two armed forces.<sup>84</sup>

Journalists could see other problems developing within Bavaria as well, where unaffiliated nationalist organizations had to choose which leader to support, Hitler or von Kahr, a competition *The Times* believed had sapped Hitler's support. His position was strong enough that von Kahr would not attack Hitler

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<sup>83</sup> "Kahr has Complete Power," *New York Times* 27 September 1923, 1; "Berlin Sees Hostile Move," *New York Times* 27 September 1923, 1; "Distracted Germany," *The Times* 28 September 1923, 11b.

<sup>84</sup> "Great Military Coup in Germany Prevents Civil War, Is Belief," *Washington Post* 28 September 1923, 1; "Hittler(sic) Paper Suppressed by Dictator of Germany," *Washington Post* 30 September 1923, 8; "German Military Ruler is Defied by Bavarian Dictator," *Washington Post* 20 October 1923, 1; Noakes and Pridham, 27.

directly, but von Kahr also would not give Hitler his support, something important in the fall of 1923.<sup>85</sup> The Nazis had played an important role in creating a situation that might lead to civil war, which Hitler would have had no problem with. However, circumstances forced him into a corner in which he had to make a decision about carrying out an attempted coup. Both the American and English press generally covered the ensuing German crisis and the Nazis' role in it in a comparable way, as had been the case with most, but not all, aspects of National Socialism.

Newspapers in the United States and England first recognized in 1922 the potential threat of National Socialism to German democracy, devoting more consistent and thorough, though not necessarily prominent, coverage beginning in the fall of the year. Though mentioned in dozens of articles, during almost two years the Nazis were discussed in only seven stories on the front page of the *Washington Post* and twelve on the front page of the *New York Times*. *The Times*'s front page was devoted to advertisements, but the paper mentioned the Nazis in the first column of the foreign news section only four times. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* included them in ten issues. For the most part, the Nazis were perceived at first as a local threat that had little chance of being a political factor outside Bavaria, but as the months progressed and the situation in the state worsened, the Nazis were seen as a growing problem. The Western press generally attempted to learn about the NSDAP and what its program was. An exception was *The Times*, which concerned itself more with reporting the Nazis'

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<sup>85</sup> "Rally to Bavarian Dictator; Hitler's Extinction," *The Times* 6 October 1923, 10b; "Bavaria's Aims," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 12 October 1923, 289.

political activities and their possible repercussions. The treatment of nearly all aspects of the early National Socialists was generally similar within the press. Only the *New York Times*' covered Nazi anti-Semitism thoroughly. This was an outgrowth of the paper's ownership, which was of German-Jewish descent. The *New York Times*'s ownership had personal ties to Germany that made gaining information concerning the Jewish community easier, and took an activist role in publishing anti-Semitic stories when they emerged.<sup>86</sup> Overall, such press coverage of the Nazis was fundamentally similar on both sides of the Atlantic, portraying the party as a serious, but most likely fleeting phenomenon. The characterization of the Nazis that can be gleaned from news articles was often inaccurate in specifics, but was surprisingly precise concerning the core nature of the National Socialist movement.

Newspapers would not refer to the National Socialists as Nazis for many years, yet even in 1922 they had singled the movement out for special attention. Even though the Nazis appeared to be simply one reactionary monarchist party among many, or a pale imitation of the Italian Fascists, the impression from the Western press articles makes it clear that the Nazis differed from both. Hitler was seen as a crude Austrian who did not have the courage to see through the violence of his rhetoric, yet some British and American journalists were clearly in awe of the charismatic appeal he wielded in inciting the hatred and anger of many Germans. His leadership gave the Nazi party a prominent role in Munich. To an extent, foreign journalists were witnesses to, and participants in, his nascent cult

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<sup>86</sup> Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12-13.

at the time. In general, they represented the NSDAP as incipiently violent and aggressive, as were many of the other nationalist groups in Munich. It was likewise clear that the Nazis targeted certain groups as the source of Germany's problems, including especially the Jews. As several journalists made clear, however, Nazi animosity for the Jews went beyond simple stereotypical hatred, reflecting the pseudo-scientific racism of the party's leadership that professed a willingness to contemplate and advocate mass violence.

Alongside anti-Semitism, an important characteristic illustrated in this period by journalists was the party's ability to take advantage of crisis. As the political and economic situation in Germany deteriorated, the Nazis were able to expand their base of support, making them a threat not only to the Bavarian leadership, but the Weimar Republic as a whole. Later the Nazis would use this experience to make another national emergency work to their utmost advantage during the early 1930s. In the months following October 1922, the party leadership exhibited another important characteristic to American and British reporters - namely its limitless ambition and drive for power and notoriety. The attempt by the Nazis to take over Germany by force, which became known as the Beer Hall Putsch, and the results of that endeavor, would be avidly covered by a Western press that during the previous year had become frightened by the prospects of renewed European conflict originating in southern Germany.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVOLT AND DECLINE: NOVEMBER 1923 TO DECEMBER 1924

For much of 1923, American and British journalists expected that the Nazis would lead a *Putsch* against the Weimar government. The economy continued to decline and relations between Bavaria and Berlin had almost been severed. Circumstances seemed perfect to incite a rebellion among the thousands of conservative nationalists in Bavaria, and it was not likely that the opportunity would last long. The new government of German chancellor Gustav Stresemann worked quickly to stabilize the economy and come to some kind of agreement with France to remove occupation troops from the Ruhr. In November 1923, Hitler decided he had to act or risk losing his supporters, which included not only Nazis but also other nationalist groups in Munich allied with the party. Along with former German General Erich Ludendorff, he led the Nazis and other nationalist followers in an attempted coup meant to sweep the movement into power, in a manner similar to Mussolini. Western journalists considered this event the possible outbreak of a new armed conflict in Europe.

Before the *Putsch* was fully underway, however, it was almost immediately snuffed out by Bavarian political leaders. In the eyes of British and American writers, Hitler turned from a menace to a laughingstock in a matter of hours. They believed his failed coup attempt discredited the Nazis and made their leader politically powerless. Reporters dutifully related the subsequent trial of the rebellious leaders, with low expectations of justice for crimes of treason. It was

well known that justice was impossible given the sympathetic Bavarian climate to the rightist cause. British and American writers who described the Beer Hall *Putsch*, its resultant trial, and the lax sentence imposed on Hitler and others demonstrated crucial characteristics of National Socialism and German public opinion for western audiences. While some accused leaders of the coup attempted to blame others, Hitler squarely accepted the consequences of his plans. The Nazis may have been opportunistic politically, but their long term goals and convictions to gain power and wield it unmercifully were unwavering. Though the party was decimated after this period and many thought the National Socialist movement would fade away, the Nazis were firmly committed to seeing their perverse political ideology come to fruition.

The political situation in Bavaria was tense during the first week of November 1923. Writers believed that Hitler was preparing for something, as he stepped up his polemics against the Bavarian dictator von Kahr, which Western journalists included in several dispatches. Hitler was highly critical of the Bavarian regime, describing it as on the verge of collapse after only five weeks of existence. Moreover, he voiced his treasonous intentions loudly, stating to an assembled group of followers that he would see through his beliefs "...even if he were alone and forsaken. The question would only be solved when the red, white, and black and the Swastika flags waved over Berlin." This was followed by the statement that "...we [the nationalist forces loyal to Hitler] would march..." on

the German capital city.<sup>87</sup> Hitler had used such language before, but it was clear the circumstances made his threats real.

As the economic situation in Bavaria worsened, observers knew nationalist supporters were ready and willing, and in some cases impatient, to participate in an uprising. A writer for *The Times* drew attention to the economic troubles in Germany. The reporter wrote that a train ride he had taken that day at a cost of 2.7 billion marks had cost only 1.2 billion marks the previous day. Von Kahr, who was made the virtual dictator of Bavaria in September, had trouble keeping control of the various rightist groups in Bavaria for this reason, allowing Hitler to step into a leading role.<sup>88</sup> Rumors reportedly set the date of the revolt for November 7, and nationalist groups allegedly readied themselves throughout Germany at the command of Hitler and other nationalist leaders. Fears of a *Putsch* were so strong that the French government told Berlin that a revolution creating a nationalist military dictatorship in Germany would not be tolerated.<sup>89</sup> This stance by the French government was interesting. The French were willing to risk invading Germany to stop a possible victory by Hitler and other rightists in 1923, but would not be willing to take such a strong stance when the Nazis consolidated control in 1933. French government officials had little to worry about at this time though. Hitler indeed led an attempted revolt against Berlin, but a combination of a lack of foresight and the betrayal of supposed allies made it a short-lived uprising.

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<sup>87</sup> "Bavarian Nationalist Bluster; Talk of 'March on Berlin,'" *The Times*, 2 November 1923, 12b.

<sup>88</sup> "Reactionaries in Coburg; Continuous Drilling," *The Times* 5 November 1923, 13b; "Bavarian Fascists Impatient," *New York Times* 7 November 1923, 1.

<sup>89</sup> "Revolt in Germany by Monarchists is Set for Wednesday," *Washington Post* 5 November 1923, 1; "French Warning to Berlin; Dictatorship Menace," *The Times* 9 November 1923, 12b.

The plans for carrying out this coup were almost nonexistent, representing Hitler's belief that he had to obey the desires of followers in Munich quickly or risk losing their support. Several of his closest allies made it clear that if no action was taken, their supporters might decide to desert the united rightist movement.<sup>90</sup> Hitler also believed that he had to move quickly because von Kahr could lead his own monarchist coup against Berlin, costing Hitler a chance at power.<sup>91</sup> Von Kahr had taken steps to limit Hitler's capabilities after becoming dictator, and threatened to resist any violent steps that Hitler initiated. On November 6, Hitler and other leaders hastily created plans to take over the Bavarian government, hoping to gain control of the Bavarian army and police for use in the march on Berlin. The original plans called for action to go forward on November 11, but Hitler worried that von Kahr might declare Bavarian independence beforehand and return a Wittelsbach, the former monarchs of Bavaria, to the throne.

This eventuality would rob Hitler of the opportunity to form his national government. The takeover was then scheduled for the evening of November 8, when Hitler and other nationalist leaders had been invited to hear von Kahr speak at the *Bürgerbräukeller*, one of Munich's largest and most famous beer halls. Knowing that the Bavarian dictator could announce plans harmful to Hitler's own, the Nazis resolved to begin the rebellion while von Kahr was speaking.<sup>92</sup> The Nazis launched their planned coup, described by historian Peter Fritzsche as "an amateurish production that rested on a stunning exaggeration of Hitler's sway

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<sup>90</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 202-203.

<sup>91</sup> Evans, 192.

<sup>92</sup> Flood, 456-457.

over other people's troops...," resulting in disaster for the NSDAP.<sup>93</sup> The American and British press had fretted about the possibility of a coup in Munich headed by Hitler. They believed he might perhaps be able to enlist the tens of thousands he had spoken in front of to fight. When Hitler needed these followers the most, however, he was unable to find them because of the actions of his supposed allies.

Hitler launched the Beer Hall *Putsch* with approximately 4,000 viable SA and other troops. They outnumbered police and army units within Munich, but government reserves were close to the city in substantial strength. Since accounts of possible Nazi-led uprisings had circulated several times before, few had any inclination that the Nazis would actually do anything on November 8. Many simply feared that the atmosphere was perfect for some group to take advantage. Even von Kahr was confident that Ludendorff and Hitler would not take the initiative and that they would consult him beforehand if they did. He was wrong in this assumption. Hitler arrived at the *Bürgerbräukeller* slightly past 8 p.m. while von Kahr was speaking. Hitler and a group of S.A. troops used gunfire to quiet a raucous and drunken crowd before forcing their way to the stage to declare the formation of a new national government.<sup>94</sup>

The first details of the *Putsch* reached foreign newspapers on November 9, a day behind the unfolding drama in Munich. Early reports were pessimistic about the repercussions of Hitler and Ludendorff's actions. It was feared that a civil war would break out in Germany. Several selections from the *New York*

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Germans Into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 185.

<sup>94</sup> Harold J. Gordon, Jr. *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 270-275, 283-288.

*Times* expressed this possibility. The articles related that General Hans von Seeckt, the national army commander, would likely send units to march against the Hitlerites, while federal President Ebert was calling on the German people to resist the traitors.<sup>95</sup> The *Putsch* was front page news in the United States, and was a prominent story in the foreign section of *The Times*. It, along with the *Washington Post*, described the revolt as if Ludendorff was the driving force behind it, and that he would emerge as the leader of a new government were it successful.<sup>96</sup> With the chaos and rapidity of events in Bavaria, one would expect that the press would not have all the facts concerning the unfolding situation. Surprisingly though, the presence of reporters in Munich allowed them to see first hand what was transpiring in some cases, and how it ignominiously ended for Hitler and his troops.

American and British audiences received relatively accurate information regarding the failure of Hitler and Ludendorff to execute their attempted coup. This was in part because of lax security in the *Bürgerbräukeller*, which allowed foreign correspondents in attendance to sneak out through the kitchens and relay descriptions of the situation.<sup>97</sup> They wrote that Hitler stormed into a nationalist meeting while von Kahr was speaking, took the stage and declared a new government for Germany. Accounts differed on the leaders of this new government, some naming Hitler, others Ludendorff. The most accurate account of what took place was in an official press release from the German government

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<sup>95</sup> Cyril Brown, "Coup Starts in Beer Hall," *New York Times* 9 November 1923, 1; "Ebert Summons People," *New York Times* 9 November 1923, 1.

<sup>96</sup> "Ludendorff Coup," *The Times* 9 November 1923, 12a,b; "Bavaria has Revolted; Ludendorff Dictator; March on Berlin Begun," *Washington Post* 9 November 1923, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Flood, 512.

stating that Hitler and Ludendorff had only overthrown the Bavaria government. The release added that the two had arrested the Bavarian Prime Minister von Knilling, and pronounced Ludendorff the head of the German army and Hitler the leader of the new government. Von Kahr and Lossow were also given important positions according to articles reprinting the official statement from Berlin.<sup>98</sup> Early communiqués had them willingly joining Hitler’s crusade, as they had been sympathetic to the nationalist cause for some time. In later articles, the story emerged that Hitler had forced the two men into service at gunpoint.<sup>99</sup> The second story proved the more accurate.

Hitler stormed into the *Bürgerbräukeller* on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup>, firing gunshots into the ceiling to intimidate von Kahr and others in attendance. He quickly cordoned off von Kahr, Lossow, and one other Bavarian leader, Colonel Hans von Seißer, the head of the Munich police. Hitler asked for their support, and they all agreed to join him, allowing Hitler to speed off to see to arrangement in other parts of the city. Ludendorff was left in charge of the beer hall, and the general allowed the three Bavarian officials to leave, believing they would be true to their agreement with Hitler.<sup>100</sup> This proved a serious blunder on his part. Hitler and Ludendorff had badly misjudged the willingness of other reactionary leaders in Munich to engage in a civil war with the rest of Germany. Fear and foreboding had been apparent in Western press reports that appeared on

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<sup>98</sup> “Hitler Invaded Kahr Meeting,” *New York Times* 9 November 1923, 1; “Bavaria has Revolted; Ludendorff Dictator; March on Berlin Begun,” *Washington Post* 9 November 1923, 1.

<sup>99</sup> “Von Kahr Declares for Monarchy; Holland to Hold Ex-Crown Prince,” *Washington Post* 9 November 1923, 1; “The Revolution Which Failed,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 16 November 1923, 369.

<sup>100</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 206-208.

November 9. On November 10, the American and British press breathed a sigh of relief as the takeover attempt fell quickly apart because of the decisive actions of von Kahr and Lossow.

Readers were greeted by a very different set of headlines concerning Hitler's *Putsch* on November 10 than those of the previous day. Merely hours after beginning their uprising, Hitler and Ludendorff's revolt had been brought to an end. The *New York Times* alone included eleven separate articles related to the *Putsch* in its various daily editions. These chronicled the coup's transformation into a humiliating failure. The details as to how events developed were unclear in some articles, but it was well known that Lossow and von Kahr had reneged on their agreement with Hitler. After leaving the beer hall they had allegedly arranged to use army and police forces to put down the revolt. At first it was believed that Hitler and Ludendorff had been captured by these forces during an assault against a Munich office where they were entrenched.<sup>101</sup> In the subsequent days it was clear that events had taken a different course.

Upon learning of von Kahr's betrayal on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Hitler decided to lead a large group of followers into the city to force von Kahr's surrender. Those Hitler gathered walked straight into the fortified forces Lossow and von Kahr assembled, resulting in a short exchange of gunfire. One writer, describing the actions of Hitler's followers under fire, wrote that they fled at the first sounds of fighting. The result was Ludendorff's capture while Hitler

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<sup>101</sup> Cyril Brown, "Brief Battle Ends Revolt," *New York Times* 10 November 1923, 1; "Ludendorff Captured; Munich Revolt Checked; von Kahr Changes Sides," *The Times* 10 November 1923, 12e,d.

escaped.<sup>102</sup> This account came closest to the actual events. As soon as the Bavarian leadership left the *Bürgerbräukeller*, it began preparing to thwart Hitler's plans. It amassed an overwhelming force in order to prevent fighting if possible. The *Putsch* leadership found out about this as its plans began to go awry. An expected outpouring of support from troops in Bavaria and the rest of Germany never materialized.

Never lacking confidence, Hitler and Ludendorff believed they could march on the government buildings in Munich and force von Kahr and Lossow into submission. They had hoped the presence of the legendary general would prevent their enemies from firing upon them. They were once again incorrect in their suppositions, as the *Putschists* were attacked, resulting in the deaths of sixteen men.<sup>103</sup> Hitler had predicted this betrayal from von Kahr. In an article that appeared after the uprising, Hitler told an Italian correspondent before the *Putsch* that von Kahr "...always falls down at the last moment."<sup>104</sup> Hitler never forgot this betrayal. During the purge of the Nazi party in June 1934 known as the Night of Long Knives, after he had seized power in Germany, Hitler had von Kahr dragged from his Munich home and murdered by Nazi assassins.<sup>105</sup> British and American journalists might not have provided every detail of what took place during the coup, but their accounts provided accurately the results of the event –

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<sup>102</sup> "Uncertainty in Munich," *The Times* 12 November 1923, 12c,d; "The Revolution Which Failed," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 16 November 1923, 369.

<sup>103</sup> Gordon Jr., 342-343; E.J. Feuchtwanger, *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany, 1918-33* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), 133-134.

<sup>104</sup> "Hitler's Headquarters are Described by Visitor," *New York Times* 18 November 1923, x8.

<sup>105</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 515.

namely that the nationalist rightist movement in Munich had been dealt a crippling blow.

In the months following the attempted overthrow, more specific details emerged concerning the events in Munich. One of the most accurate, if not objective, accounts appeared in March 1924 in the American periodical *Living Age*. That publication reprinted a story from the Berlin daily newspaper *Vorwärts* written by a supporter of Hitler's who took part in the *Putsch*. The article detailed the failed attempts by the *Putschists* to obtain weapons and maintain control of positions in Munich. It also illustrated the failed march on the Munich government offices. It was sympathetic to Hitler and antagonistic towards those seen as betraying the nationalist cause, mainly von Kahr. This adoration of Hitler was evident in the author's heroic description of the end of the coup. He claimed to have seen a wounded Hitler bravely carry a dying child to his get away car before fleeing to safety. The article revealed some of the more horrifying aspects of Nazi intentions for the country when the party believed it held political control.

The author of the *Living Age* article recalled walking into the *Bürgerbräukeller* in the early morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, to be greeted by what he considered a humorous image. He wrote: "Who was there? Fifty-eight Jews, mostly in their underwear and socks, just as they had been dragged out of bed." One of the Jewish prisoners asked to have word sent to his wife that he was alive. The author "...laughed in his face and said, as I left, that I couldn't do it, for so

far as I knew our people would begin to shoot them in a few minutes.”<sup>106</sup> The Jews mentioned in this piece had been brought to the *Bürgerbräukeller* forcibly, and were added to another group of Jews unlucky enough to be in attendance when Hitler sprang his coup. Nazi thugs were ordered into the city to terrorize and round up any Jewish residents that they found, though they were only able to bring back several dozen people. Many were beaten and terrorized for the few hours they were held prisoner, and threatened by SA men with execution. Nazi leader Hermann Göring overheard these threats and told the SA troops that “We do not have the right or authority to execute – yet.”<sup>107</sup> Other major press publications did not include this episode in their releases. By March 1924, when the *Living Age* article was released, most Western journalists no longer considered the Nazis a serious political threat.

It was clear to American and British audiences that the risk of a new conflict emerging out of the Munich coup was no longer a possibility. One *New York Times* article observed that the French government called off meetings intended to draw up a response to the *Putsch* because its intervention was no

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<sup>106</sup> F. Götz, “How Hitler Failed,” *Living Age*, March 1924, 595-599; In his analysis of the *Putsch*, Harold Gordon noted that Fritz Götz, the author of the *Living Age* story, leaked this information to a Socialist agent within the Nazi party. Gordon asserted that some details of Götz’s story were fabricated, but it was unclear whether Gordon was referring to the entire account, or only Götz’s false assertion that Lossow had provided the *Putschists* with weapons. Gordon did describe Nazi orders to keep Jews from fleeing the city, as well as at least one Nazi officer who took it upon himself to round up Jewish citizens. See Gordon, 450, n.73 [450], 307, 332.

<sup>107</sup> John Dornberg, *Munich 1923: The Story of Hitler’s First Grab For Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 179-188; The English Consul-General in Munich, Robert Clive, also wrote in a report for the British government that orders were immediately given on the night of the *Putsch* to round up Jews in Munich in order to prevent them from leaving the city. This proved to Clive that the racial rhetoric that Hitler had been espousing was more than mere words, and represented a real danger. See Detlev Clemens, “The ‘Bavarian Mussolini’ and His ‘Beerhall Putsch’: British Images of Adolf Hitler, 1920-24” *The English Historical Review* 114 (1999): 81-82.

longer necessary.<sup>108</sup> American and British editors displayed a new overall opinion of Hitler and Ludendorff in opinion pieces on November 10. The leaders were referred to as lunatics, especially the more famous Ludendorff. His sanity was questioned, with one newspaper adding this failure to the long list of his prior miscalculations.

Hitler was treated even more disparagingly. Called a house decorator and a demagogue by one editor, he was ridiculed for his political naivety and inability to gauge the attitudes of his co-conspirators accurately. Questions were raised about what the two men's failure meant for Germany. Some were of the opinion that Germany was in a state of civil war, while others thought this was a positive thing for the stability of the country. Most of these journalists saw the failure of the Hitlerites as an opportunity for the Western Allies to work together to make future *Putsch* attempts impossible. What was apparent from these editorials was that writers in England and the United States considered Hitler and his followers failures, who were now political nonentities in Germany.<sup>109</sup> Though Hitler was still at large and rumors of his raising new troops in Bavaria circulated widely, it was clear that he would not be able to achieve any of his goals. Despite this, Hitler and the Nazis continued to be semi-popular subjects for writers, especially in the wake of a farce trial of the *Putsch* leaders for the crime of high treason.

Worries over the possibility of Hitler leading a renewed assault against Munich quickly dissipated, though rumors of a renewed National Socialist

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<sup>108</sup> Edwin L. James, "Failure of Revolt Halts Paris Plans," New York Times 10 November 1923, 1;

<sup>109</sup> "Bavarian Opera Bouffe," New York Times 10 November 1923, 12; "German Chaos and French Policy," Washington Post 10 November 1923, 6; "The Menace to Europe," The Times 10 November 1923, 13c.

movement in Bavaria lingered.<sup>110</sup> Demonstrations against von Kahr were rampant in the city, as remaining Nazi sympathizers attempted to stir up support in the following days, and the press believed Hitler had fled to the Isar Valley or Rosenheim outside Munich. Finally, however, government forces captured him in the house of one of his followers, Ernst Hanfstaengel, in the small village of Uffing south of Munich.<sup>111</sup> Hitler was slightly wounded in the fighting, and he had fled with no intention of raising new troops. Rather, he had gone to Hanfstaengel's to hide and to compose a political will, which placed the NSDAP leadership in the hands of fellow Nazi Alfred Rosenberg.<sup>112</sup> Now that Hitler had been captured, articles concerning Hitler and the Nazi party appeared less frequently. Most of the articles published concerning the Nazis were devoted to assessing the ramifications of the *Putsch* for all involved.

It was widely believed that Hitler and other leaders would not face stiff penalties for their actions. While awaiting trial, Hitler was interned at Landsberg fortress outside of Munich, known as a very comfortable prison. The only real restriction placed on Hitler and other co-conspirators was that they were forbidden to leave the grounds, though the public was assured that Hitler's guards had been specially chosen to resist his magnetic personality. He and other leaders of the *Putsch* were to go to trial early in 1924, and they would probably not face

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<sup>110</sup> "Bavarian Political Tension," The Times 3 December 1923, 12f; "Socialist Uprising Near, Munich Hears," Washington Post 20 December 1923, 1.

<sup>111</sup> "Hitler's Refuge is Still in Doubt," New York Times 11 November 1923, 2; "Bavarian Riots Continue," New York Times 12 November 1923, 1; "Say New York Man is Hitler's Backer," Washington Post 13 November 1923, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 211.

the death penalty.<sup>113</sup> Several selections in the British and American press demonstrated a lack of concern about what punishment Hitler would receive, however, because they believed his movement was dead.<sup>114</sup> This should have been the case. If he had been tried in other parts of Germany, he might have very well been executed. Unfortunately, the Bavarian judicial system would prosecute a "...melodramatic trial that gave [Hitler] unparalleled publicity," and transformed him from a Bavarian celebrity to a well-known figure throughout Germany.<sup>115</sup>

The trial of the coup's leadership was not pursued immediately by Bavarian officials. Western reporters knew that the reason for this was the reticence of leaders such as von Kahr and Lossow to be linked to Hitler's movement in testimony that would emerge throughout the proceedings. The official argument for delaying the trial was that there were fears of another *Putsch*, but it was obvious that the Bavarian leadership did not want its own treasonous activities displayed for the rest of the Germany.<sup>116</sup> While awaiting trial, Hitler lived comfortably in Landsberg fortress. Initially disheartened by the course of events, he went on a hunger strike upon hearing of his indictment on charges of treason. Pleas from several of his followers imprisoned with him, as well as from the Nazi party founder Anton Drexler, convinced him to end his hunger strike. Several different groups sprang up in Bavaria to take the place of

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<sup>113</sup> "Hitler a Prisoner in Landsberg Fort," New York Times 15 November 1923, 2; "Hitler Confined in a Fortress," The Times 15 November 1923, 12f; "Hitler Critically Ill," New York Times 20 November 1923, 3.

<sup>114</sup> "Bavarian Political Hopes; Secret Military Effort," The Times 26 November 1923, 14b; Joseph Gollomb, "Peasant-Ruled Bavaria Wants Monarchy," New York Times 6 January 1924, xx5.

<sup>115</sup> Fritzsche, 185.

<sup>116</sup> "Tension in Bavaria; Threat of Another Revolt at Munich," The Times 9 February 1924, 9e; "Bavarian Reluctant to Try Monarchists," New York Times 10 February 1924, e3.

the National Socialist movement, which was now banned by the state government, and Hitler had no role in administering any of them.

Hitler was content to be fawned over by a multitude of visitors and well wishers that came to visit him before his trial. He had recovered from his injuries sufficiently to be declared fit for trial in January 1924.<sup>117</sup> Articles from *The Times* and the *New York Times*, both of whose reporters covered the trial closely, noted that it was to begin on February 18, though it was postponed to the 26th. The atmosphere in Munich was uneasy as the trial date approached, as many citizens saw Ludendorff and Hitler as heroes according to Western reports. An article explained that at least 80 percent of the people wanted von Kahr brought up on treason charges and Hitler released.<sup>118</sup> The Bavarian government declared that it would try the case, instead of handing the prisoners over to the federal government. By having the trial in Bavaria, instead of at the German Supreme Court in Leipzig where it normally would take place, the Bavarian leadership hoped to limit the amount of information revealed. Even though there was residual support for the leaders charged with treason, the Bavarian government had little fear of a new uprising, so it was desirable to have a quick and painless trial with only minimal sentences.<sup>119</sup> The defendants would not allow von Kahr and Lossow to escape suspicion though. Hitler especially used the trial as a platform to attack these men and shape his actions as only national devotion.

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<sup>117</sup> Hauner, 45; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 213-214.

<sup>118</sup> "Ludendorff Trial is Set for Feb. 18," *New York Times* 26 January 1924, 5; "Imperial and Foreign News Items," *The Times* 12 February 1924, 11g; "Hitler-Ludendorff 'Putsch'; Trial Tomorrow," *The Times* 25 February 1924, 11d.

<sup>119</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 214-216.

In pre-trial interrogations, Hitler let the Bavarian prosecutor's office know his intentions for the trial, and how he would use it to his full advantage. He provided no official statement about what had taken place during the *Putsch*. He told his interrogator, though, that he would expose the treason of von Kahr and Lossow, stating that he would find the right words to use once he spoke in court. One fact that unsettled the Bavarian government was Hitler's knowledge of the Bavarian army's involvement in the training of paramilitary forces for a march on Berlin.<sup>120</sup>

Though not privy to all the details of von Kahr's involvement with Hitler, the Western press knew the trial would likely paint him in a very unfavorable light with the federal government. Both he and Lossow resigned from their respective positions in the Bavarian government and army only days before the trial began because of mounting suspicion of their role in the Bavarian rightist movement.<sup>121</sup> This trial became a political lightning rod throughout Germany, and it was noted that rightwing forces throughout the country demanded that the trial be a "mere formality" while left wing supporters wanted harsh punishments for those involved.<sup>122</sup> This trial should have been an opportunity to demonstrate the consequences of violent, subversive action against the state in a forceful manner. Because of the people involved and the sympathetic nature of Bavaria to the national conservative cause, though, there was no way that a trial convicting the criminals with a maximum sentence was possible.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 214-215.

<sup>121</sup> Flood, 574.

<sup>122</sup> "Ludendorff Trial; Sequel to Bavarian 'Putsch,'" The Times 26 February 1924, 12g.

As the trial opened, American and British journalists realized that it would provide anything but the justice desired by German leftists. One writer observed that since the two lead defendants were almost worshiped in Bavaria, a just verdict would be impossible.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, two Western reporters portrayed the atmosphere of the court room as friendly to the defendants. Ludendorff was allowed to commute to the trial freely each day from his home in Bavaria, while the other defendants would be kept in the Munich army school.<sup>124</sup> Ludendorff's very presence at the proceedings turned it into a national event, something the German press referred to as the trial of the age. The case could not be prosecuted in a normal courtroom, as the number of audience members, gathered from all over the world, could not possibly fit. Subsequently, the trial was relocated to a lecture hall in the Munich Infantry School. The defendants would not face a jury, but rather a tribunal traditionally sympathetic to the radical nationalist cause.<sup>125</sup> This was the setting in which Hitler and Ludendorff stood trial for treason.

On the first day of the proceedings, Western reporters wrote that Ludendorff was cheered as he entered the courtroom, and even the judges referred to him as Excellency throughout the trial. Hitler was called by the president of the court to give his testimony after the indictment against the accused was read. The indictment labeled Hitler as the main instigator of the revolt instead of Ludendorff, as many reporters had assumed. Hitler used the opportunity to testify at length, speaking for four hours that day. He was sure not to address the issue

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<sup>123</sup> "Story of the Hitler Plot," Manchester Guardian Weekly 29 February 1924, 172.

<sup>124</sup> "Ludendorff Cool as Trial Begins," New York Times 27 February 1924, 19; "German Treason Trial: Ludendorff, Hitler, and von Kahr," Manchester Guardian Weekly 29 February 1924, 172; "Ludendorff Trial; Sequel to Bavarian 'Putsch,'" The Times 26 February 1924, 12g.

<sup>125</sup> Flood, 573-575.

of his leadership of the coup. Rather, he focused the discussion on his supposed role in saving Germany from the internal criminals that had allegedly produced its defeat in the First World War. This included the vision that he supposedly received while in the hospital in 1918, an account of which reporters had relayed earlier in 1923. The court president told Hitler to stay on the topic of the events of November 8 and 9, but within minutes Hitler was speaking as if he were back in a Munich beer hall, letting loose one of his usual tirades.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, few other details were provided by the press about Hitler's statements this first day.

One American correspondent wrote that Hitler and Ludendorff both attacked the Jews and the Bavarian leadership, especially von Kahr, in their opening speeches. Little else was clarified other than how absolutely ludicrous much of it sounded to him.<sup>127</sup> This was not surprising considering Hitler's message was not intended for foreigners. On that first day, his speech was carefully crafted to appeal to the German people. He discussed the outcome of the World War and how Germany was stabbed in the back, a popular myth that Germany had lost the war because of betrayal at home. Marxism and the evils France had perpetrated on Germany also assumed a prominent role in his speech, in an attempt to justify the use of violence during the *Putsch*. Hitler eventually came to his main argument, an indictment of von Kahr and Lossow. He argued they were no different than him in planning to overthrow the government in

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<sup>126</sup> "Munich Treason Trial," The Times 27 February 1924, 14e; "What the Indictment Charges," New York Times 27 February 1924, 19.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas R. Ybarra, "Ludendorff's Talk at Treason Trial Dismays his Party," New York Times 2 March 1924, 1.

Berlin, and in this point he was correct.<sup>128</sup> The question of the Bavarian leadership's culpability with Hitler's schemes would become a major issue in the trial. This helped advance Hitler's goal making his own actions appear as heroic, and not seditious, while making von Kahr and Lossow look like the true traitors.<sup>129</sup>

As the trial progressed, few American and British reporters focused on the information revealed about the intentions of the conspiracy's leadership had they been successful. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* differed in this regard. It made a point to divulge the plans for many summary executions laid out by Hitler and others. The paper also noted what would likely have resulted had Hitler and Ludendorff been successful in Bavaria - specifically civil war and untold further suffering for the citizens of Germany.<sup>130</sup> Unfortunately other Western reporters had a difficult time focusing on such facts. Instead, they emphasized the carnival-like atmosphere that emerged in the court as von Kahr and Lossow became progressively more involved. One American journalist was entertained by the trial. He observed that the trial had produced "several thrills," including a challenge to a duel made by a German Army officer to Lossow on Ludendorff's behalf.<sup>131</sup>

*The Times* and the *New York Times* followed the trial on almost a day by day basis, but both papers concerned themselves mostly with the arguments and accusations that flew back and forth between the defendants, von Kahr, and

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<sup>128</sup> "Von Kahr Deserted Putsch, Is Defense," *Washington Post* 4 March 1924, 1; Flood, 575-577.

<sup>129</sup> See Sax, 76-78 for the text of Hitler's statement.

<sup>130</sup> "Ludendorff's Aims," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 7 March 1924, 111; "Leipzig Murder Trial," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 21 March 1924, 227.

<sup>131</sup> "Treason Trial," *Time* March 17, 1924, 9.

Lossow. The atmosphere of the court was poor compared to a proper trial, so much so that the chief prosecutor quit at one point because the defense had been allowed to enter large amounts of irrelevant evidence and testimony, holding the trial up. Lossow and Hitler came close to a physical confrontation when Lossow charged Hitler with being treasonous for breaking an agreement with von Kahr not to begin any uprising. He also belittled Hitler's position within the extreme right, labeling him as a tool for others and nothing more.<sup>132</sup> The trial, a little over two weeks into the proceedings, had become little more than a farce. Hitler used what remained to his full advantage, claiming responsibility for the uprising and becoming a heroic figure to the extreme nationalist conservative movement throughout Germany.

As the trial ended in late March 1924, reporters knew Hitler had tried to implicate others for the crime of treason, but he was not trying to disavow anything he had done. Ludendorff attempted to downplay his role in the *Putsch*, maintaining he had nothing to do with its planning. He claimed he had joined Hitler only upon hearing that the revolution had begun, and that he had no intention of creating a permanent government. He insisted he was paving the way for the return of a monarch. One reporter for the *New York Times* relayed the effect this had on Hitler: "Ludendorff's reluctance to shoulder any portion of responsibility only seemed to inspire Hitler to reach out for the lion's share of the blame." Hitler told the court his intentions were to cast down the government in

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<sup>132</sup> "Munich Trial Wrangle; State Prosecutor Leaves the Court," *The Times* 7 March 1924, 11e; "The Munich Revolt; General von Lossow's Version," *The Times* 11 March 1924, 13b; "The Munich Trial; Quarrel in Court; Hitler's Outburst," *The Times* 15 March 1924, 10e.

Berlin and create a new, permanent system for Germany.<sup>133</sup> He wanted the citizens of Germany to know he was willing to eradicate what he considered a weak and ineffective government.

Only one article discussed Hitler's closing statements, in which he declared that treason was only a crime when it failed. His defense argued that he had carried out the *Putsch* with only the best intentions for Germany.<sup>134</sup> Hitler's closing speech contained some important elements that were not included in Western press reports though. He elaborated on his intention to have neither a monarchy nor a republic in control of Germany, as well as his plans to free Germany from its alleged stock-exchange slavery and to reintroduce compulsory military service. He stated that in the future, November 9 would be a holiday in a new Germany when the army was on his side.<sup>135</sup> Sadly, there would one day be a holiday on November 9, in celebration of the farcical coup attempt. Hitler used the failed takeover for propaganda purposes for the rest of his career, attributing greater significance to the events than they deserved.<sup>136</sup> He had little to fear by making such bold pronouncements during the trial since he and the rest of those in attendance knew he was going to receive only a minimal punishment.

The sentences for those involved in the Beer Hall *Putsch* were handed down on April 1, 1924. Considering what they entailed it was not surprising they were seen as an excellent April Fool's joke, and many Munich residents

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<sup>133</sup> "Munich Trial Ending; No More Witnesses to be Heard," The Times 19 March 1924, 13e; "The Hitler-Ludendorff Revolt; Another Inquiry Opened," The Times 21 March 1924, 11c; Thomas R. Ybarra, "Ludendorff Puts Blame on Others," New York Times 19 March 1924, 6.

<sup>134</sup> "The Munich Trial; Closing Speeches," The Times 22 March 1924, 11f.

<sup>135</sup> Hauner, 46-47.

<sup>136</sup> Norman H. Baynes, ed. The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922 – August 1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), 1: 149-160.

reportedly had a good laugh over them.<sup>137</sup> The verdicts were carried on the front page of the *New York Times*, but less prominently in other sources. It was noted that Ludendorff had been completely acquitted for his involvement, while Hitler received five year's imprisonment. The court ruled, however, that Hitler would not be expected to serve the full sentence, and that he would be released in six months time. Many supporters of Hitler were ecstatic with this pronouncement.<sup>138</sup> The sentences stood in stark contrast to the ones handed down against Bavarian communists and socialists in previous years, who received far harsher punishments for less serious offenses.<sup>139</sup>

The prosecution had asked for Hitler to be sentenced to eight years in prison, but even this was too harsh in the judges' opinion.<sup>140</sup> Many Germans were surprised at the lax nature of the sentence, considering the *Putsch* resulted in the deaths of four policemen, the theft of 14.6 billion Marks, and the kidnapping of several important figures in Munich, including prominent government officials. Also ignored was the fact that Hitler was on probation on a conviction of breaching the peace in 1922. He served his short sentence at Landsberg fortress, making his time in prison similar to an extended vacation. His jailors were generous to and sympathetic toward him, some even greeting him with 'Heil Hitler.'<sup>141</sup> The trial ended extensive coverage of National Socialism for the

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<sup>137</sup> "Verdict Called April Fool Joke," *New York Times* 2 April 1924, 1.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas R. Ybarra, "Ludendorff Freed, Acclaimed as Hero by Munich Crowds," *New York Times* 2 April 1924, 1; "Munich Treason Trial; Farcical Sentences; General Ludendorff Acquitted," *The Times* 2 April 1924, 14e; "Ludendorff Free, Hitler Convicted in Treason Trial," *Washington Post* 2 April 1924, 3; "An Acquittal," *Time* April 7, 1924, 10.

<sup>139</sup> "Munich Treason Trial Verdict," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 4 April 1924, 271.

<sup>140</sup> "The Munich Trial," *The Times* 22 March 1924, 11f.

<sup>141</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 217; Hitler had ordered the seizure of money from government printing offices in order to pay impatient troops and purchase supplies. See Gordon, 333.

American and British press, since it considered the event Hitler's last act on the German political stage.

Coverage devoted to the National Socialist movement for the remainder of the year dealt with the leadership of the extreme right in Bavaria and the new directions it would follow. After the trial, any articles mentioning the extreme right in Bavaria or Hitler were no longer featured prominently. Most American and British reports discussed the various parties attempting to replace the Nazis, who were now banned by the Bavarian government. It appeared that there was much disagreement within the extreme right, and that recreating a united front would be impossible.<sup>142</sup> Ludendorff's possible ascension to the leadership of the National Socialists was mentioned. Apparently Hitler had lost favor with some of his supporters, necessitating his replacement by Ludendorff. Another article claimed that Ludendorff took over the movement because Hitler had temporarily retreated from politics to write his memoir, and that he expected to resume his leadership role once he was released from prison.<sup>143</sup> Little of this information was actually accurate. Hitler had ceded leadership of the NSDAP to Alfred Rosenberg, a devout Nazi and editor of the party's newspaper. What the writers referred to was a coalition of conservative and nationalist parties that Ludendorff attempted to orchestrate in early- to mid- 1924, which caused disagreement between many NSDAP branches.

Hitler made it known that he wanted nothing to do with politics while in Landsberg. He had little access to what was going on with various leaders both

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<sup>142</sup> "Reactionary Ranks Split in Germany," New York Times 23 October 1924, 23.

<sup>143</sup> "Ludendorff Shelves Hitler; Heads Party," Washington Post 9 July 1924, 4; "Gen. Ludendorff and Catholicism," The Times 26 July 1924, 11c.

inside and outside the Nazi party, who were constantly bickering over tactics and policies.<sup>144</sup> Besides, as one article had mentioned, Hitler was working on a book, and the *New York Times* devoted a short article to it. Hitler had announced his intention to write a book during an interview at Landsberg. During the interview he emphasized his belief that an ultra-nationalist, *völkische* dictator was the only salvation for Germany.<sup>145</sup> He dedicated himself to writing during his imprisonment, completing the first volume of what he wished to title *Four and a Half Years of Struggle Against Lies, Stupidity, and Cowardice*. Max Amann, who would become the press magnate of the Third Reich, suggested shortening the title to *Mein Kampf*, or “My Struggle”, for publication.<sup>146</sup> Hitler purposely removed himself from the spotlight as the NSDAP foundered, using his book as an excuse not to deal with the bickering of his followers. As the year came to a close, all that was left of any importance for the press to report was Hitler’s release from prison.

By the end of 1924, Hitler and the Nazi party were considered mere curiosities and pariahs of the extreme nationalist cause. The *New York Times* even included a repudiation of the Bavarian fascists from Mussolini himself in one edition. When asked about what he thought of the link drawn between his movement and the German fascists, Mussolini reportedly replied: “I know – I know that Hitler, Wulle and Ludendorff crew. One of them, I forgot who, even

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<sup>144</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 224-231.

<sup>145</sup> “Hitler Writes a Book While in Prison Cell,” *New York Times* 30 May 1924, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Hauner, 48-49; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 158, 241.

came here and asked me to receive him. I refused, of course, to have anything to do with them. Is it possible to be misunderstood like that?"<sup>147</sup>

Because of the perceived unimportance of a shunned political figure, Hitler's parole was treated as a mere formality in American and British reports. Only one newspaper mentioned the refusal on the part of the Bavarian government to free Hitler in October when his term was due to end. This was because of his alleged involvement or contact with a new extremist organization.<sup>148</sup> He was not released until December, when various articles simply stated that he was set free along with several other *Putsch* leaders. No real mention of Hitler's future plans was made for the most part, except that he was expected to remain in Bavaria.<sup>149</sup>

One article was more descriptive of Hitler and his intentions upon release than others. This was an article carried deep within the December 21st issue of the *New York Times* that labeled Hitler as a "much sadder and wiser man" than when he stood trial for treason, and that it was expected he would return to Austria in retirement. The headline to this article summarily stated he had been tamed by prison.<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately, the reporter's words were not borne out. Hitler had used his time in prison to crystallize his hateful ideology even further. He decided to follow a new path to power in Germany, a path only he could dictate to the party as its unquestioned leader.

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<sup>147</sup> "Mussolini Says: 'Live Dangerously,'" *New York Times* 9 November 1924, sm7; Wulle probably referred to Reinhold Wulle, a Reichstag member and important figure in a rival north German reactionary party, the Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei, or DVFP. See Kershaw, *Hitler*, 227, 263.

<sup>148</sup> "Hitler Release Order Cancelled," *The Times* 1 October 1924, 13c.

<sup>149</sup> "Adolf Hitler Released," *New York Times* 20 December 1924, 3; "Telegrams in Brief," *The Times* 19 December 1924, 13g; "Adolf Hitler Released," *Washington Post* 20 December 1924, 3.

<sup>150</sup> "Hitler Tamed by Prison," *New York Times* 21 December 1924, 16.

The impressions gleaned from American and British press reports from November 1923 to December 1924 vary slightly. Most believed that the National Socialist movement was finished, and that if there was any lingering threat in Bavaria, it came from the destabilizing influence of a large group of newly formed, yet heterogeneous, right wing parties. Only the *New York Times* printed a story dealing with the long term impact of events upon Hitler, believing it had broken his spirit. Other British and American press sources concluded that Hitler was happy at having gotten off so easily for crimes that he would likely have been executed for elsewhere. Articles dealing with the NSDAP's intentions for Germany and its ideology became scarce following the failed *Putsch*. Instead, reporters turned their attention to the antics that took place in the courtroom where Hitler, Ludendorff, and other leaders were tried.

The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was the only source focusing even cursory attention on plans the Nazis would have put into effect had the coup succeeded. This was unfortunate, because the speeches and interviews that Hitler and other Nazis made available demonstrated they were committed as ever to their racial, hate-based ideological goals. A lone article from *Living Age* demonstrated how quickly the Nazis turned on the Jews once they believed they held power, but this was a reprinted story from Germany. After their failure, coverage of National Socialism became less emphatic as well. The NSDAP had been on the front page, or at least featured in prominent columns, several times throughout 1922 and 1923. Only a few instances of the trial coverage were deemed important enough to be accorded that position. It would be over five

years before the press would consider the National Socialists important enough to warrant renewed serious consideration. Despite less informative material on the party ideology and program than was available the previous year, the months from November 1923 to December 1924 helped provide a fuller picture of National Socialist politics in action.

Even though coverage of the National Socialist party focused on specific events from November 1923 to December 1924, reporters in the United States and Great Britain provided readers in England and the United States with important information. The Beer Hall *Putsch* demonstrated that the Nazis were willing to use violence to achieve their aims, and that they would use it ruthlessly. Almost as soon as the uprising was under way, the Nazis sent troops in search of those considered dangerous to Germany, most notably the Jews. Though the article from *Living Age* was the only one to relate the kidnap and treatment of Jewish hostages, it was nevertheless indicative of the racist priorities of the Nazis, who threatened their Jewish hostages with execution as soon as they were sure of their takeover. The American and British press did not carry much substantive information from the trial of Hitler and the other coup leaders either, but they demonstrated that Hitler believed in the goals he had pursued in the *Putsch* wholeheartedly. While Ludendorff tried to play down his role in the uprising, Hitler brazenly told the court he accepted full responsibility for his crimes, and that he had been ready to die for them. He made such a firm statement because he knew the court would sentence him to a light punishment, but there was no reason to believe that Hitler fabricated his beliefs. The *Putsch* and the resultant trial

demonstrated Nazi intentions of not simply gaining power, but instituting a new social order based upon their malevolent political ideology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### YEARS OF OBSCURITY: JANUARY 1925 TO AUGUST 1930

After Hitler's release from prison at the end of 1924, journalists in the United States and England believed that there was little need to provide extensive coverage of the National Socialist movement. With the NSDAP outlawed by most of Germany already, the *Putsch* forced even Bavaria to ban the party for a short time. For much of the five and a half years following 1924, the Western press devoted little attention to the Nazis except for a few scattered reports. While the Nazis might have been considered powerless by outsiders, these years proved crucial to the formation of a more resilient and politically oriented party. Hitler consolidated the movement under his leadership alone, and he worked to remove or subordinate any possible rivals. Following his release from Landsberg prison, he cultivated the concept that was the basis of this consolidation – namely that he was the ultimate authority, and that the power structure of National Socialism emanated from him downwards.

These years were also important for the party's growth outside of south Germany, with hundreds of new branches founded throughout Germany to lay the foundation for explosive growth later on. In addition, the movement shifted its political strategy within Germany, publicly renouncing violence as a means to power and embracing a democratic path to control. In reality, violence would always be integral to National Socialism, but Hitler intended to gain control of the country through the ballot box and not through another revolution. The party

instead used violent street confrontations with its enemies to gain publicity, mainly with the German public. This strategy created attention in the foreign press as well, and many of the articles that appeared between 1924 and late 1930 related Nazi involvement in political altercations. Just as the Nazis had fed off of the economic and political crisis in Germany during the early 1920s, they would wait for another period of turmoil to attempt to resurrect a stronger, more nationally-oriented movement. When the economic crisis of the late 1920s began to sweep the globe, the Nazis benefited with surprisingly strong support in German elections. By the middle of 1930, American and English correspondents who had paid little attention to the National Socialists for much of the previous five years realized that the Nazis were heading for a dramatic, and legal, electoral victory in Germany.

In the early months of 1925, Hitler began reorganizing the Nazi party. His first step was to make the organization and its newspaper legal again in Bavaria. To do so, Hitler pleaded with the recently installed Bavarian Prime Minister, Heinrich Held, during a private meeting. Hitler told Held that the NSDAP would no longer turn to violence to meet its aims, labeling the *Putsch* a serious mistake. Hitler promised the Nazis were firmly dedicated to supporting the state and its political system, as well as fending off Marxism. The abrupt turnaround in Hitler's policies made an impression on Held, and he agreed to lift the ban on the Nazi party, allowing the Nazis to again become a legal organization on February 16. Held took the same view as the *New York Times* correspondent who wrote in late 1924 that prison had tamed Hitler. In reality, it had only changed his

methods, not the results he hoped to achieve in Germany. Following his release from prison, Hitler fortified his position as the sole leader of the Nazis. He openly stated this before many important *völkish* leaders on February 26. Several, including Ludendorff, did not like the idea of ceding all leadership to Hitler, and were reluctant to do so.<sup>151</sup> Hitler was not concerned though. Even the legendary general was not allowed to contest Hitler's leadership.

Hitler's attempt to reorganize the National Socialist movement under his firm control came as little surprise to one Western publication that kept track of the meeting between the Nazi leader and Held. In February 1925, *The Times* carried a story explaining that Ludendorff and several other leaders had ended any pretensions of party control, and had resigned the leadership of their temporary nationalist organizations created when the Bavarian government banned National Socialism. The resignations were not viewed as shocking for several reasons. The British journalist believed that the nationalist leadership desired to reunite the splinter rightist movements as they had been before the *Putsch*. Ludendorff's resignation was linked to his recent unpopular attacks on the Catholic Church and clergy. Whatever the reason for their submission, Hitler's consolidation of the party under his control was seen as the primary result.<sup>152</sup>

Once the NSDAP could operate openly again, Hitler wasted little time in reaffirming his support of the core National Socialist goals. Towards the end of

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<sup>151</sup> Hauner, 50; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 262-263; "Hitler Tamed by Prison," *New York Times* 21 December 1924, 16.

<sup>152</sup> "General Ludendorff's Blunders; Changes Among the 'Fascists,'" *The Times* 14 February 1925, 11f; Ludendorff had made many disparaging remarks concerning the Catholic Church and the clergy in the previous year, bringing him into conflict with the church and its supporters. Hitler voiced his opposition to such sentiments, and openly admonished Ludendorff to Held, helping to regain legality for the party. See Kershaw, *Hitler*, 262.

February, he returned to the *Bürgerbräukeller* to speak in front of 3,000 supporters. *The Times* journalist covering the speech wrote that Hitler told the audience he was combining all of the small National Socialist parties that had split off following the failed coup into a united movement once again, with several former leaders rushing to accept him as leader. He also took the opportunity to denounce Marxism and the Jews. His speech that night proved detrimental to the party, however, as the Bavarian government forbade him to speak for some time afterwards. The authorities justifiably feared his ability to spur his followers to action.<sup>153</sup> While information concerning a reunited Nazi party was indeed important for Western audiences, they did not understand the importance of Hitler's message.

The speech in the *Bürgerbräukeller* went beyond the reunion of the small nationalist conservative parties. In the speech, Hitler told his followers of his desire to bear the entire weight of leadership for the National Socialist movement upon his shoulders. In what historian Ian Kershaw described as "pure theatre," various rival leaders went onto the stage where Hitler was speaking and swore allegiance to him. *The Times* correspondent noted this, but did not address the almost religious manner in which it took place. From this point forward it was believed that Hitler would act as the glue to the entire Nazi cause, which was composed of disparate nationalist and conservative elements of the extreme right. Members of the NSDAP who had been unable to hold it together in Hitler's absence began to perceive the leader as the one factor that could hold the

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<sup>153</sup> "Bavarian Fascist Rally; Herr Hitler's Return to Public Life," *The Times* 2 March 1925, 13c; "German Presidential Election; Herr Hitler Forbidden to Speak," *The Times* 27 March 1925, 13b.

movement united. For this reason, the adulation demonstrated by the party leaders following Hitler's speech began to revere him as a destined leader or *führer* even before the idea had solidified in his own mind. In the leadership's opinion, he could transcend differences among the party's membership, and lead it to glory. One of the few remaining obstacles for Hitler was Ludendorff, who was still popular with some south German extremists. Hitler had a plan to discredit Ludendorff though, evidence of which appeared in Western publications.<sup>154</sup>

In March 1925, reports emerged that Hitler was supporting Ludendorff in that year's upcoming presidential elections. A *New York Times* article observed that Hitler was backing the general over another candidate who had garnered most of the rightist support in Germany.<sup>155</sup> Hitler had worked to convince Ludendorff to run for president, knowing that in all likelihood he would lose miserably. Ludendorff was indeed humiliated in the elections that March, and Hitler knew that the general's image had been tarnished among the German ultra-nationalist movement.<sup>156</sup> Hitler's plan worked, though Ludendorff attempted to play down his defeat. His subsequent break with the south German nationalists was reported on the front page of the *Washington Post* in May 1925, which explained that he had tired of politics on such a small scale considering his former army colleague, General Paul von Hindenburg, had been elected the new German President.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 266-267; Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*, 24-26.

<sup>155</sup> "Six in German Race; Others May Enter," *New York Times* 17 March 1925, 6.

<sup>156</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 268-269.

<sup>157</sup> "Ludendorff, In a Huff, Through with Politics," *Washington Post* 24 May 1925, 1.

Hitler's attempts to consolidate the party under his control were well on their way, though the Western press showed little interest.

For the remainder of 1925, little of real substance was reported about National Socialism. Several articles linked Hitler and the outbreak of anti-Semitic uprisings in Vienna. The riots included attacks on Jewish businesses and citizens. The perpetrators of the hate crimes, which took place in mid and late 1925, dressed in the attire of Hitler's troops, wearing swastikas and the Nazi uniform. It was never proven that Hitler had anything to do with organizing the attacks as he was still in Germany.<sup>158</sup> The *Washington Post* informed its readers that Hitler had been deprived of his Austrian citizenship, carrying a short article on the subject on the front page. The article also mentioned that Bavaria had denied an application for German citizenship on Hitler's behalf, and that he would reapply at the national level.<sup>159</sup>

Hitler actually requested an end to his Austrian citizenship in April 1925. He based the application on his service in the Bavarian army during World War I, and the Austrian government was happy to oblige. Thereafter, both Austria and Hitler no longer feared deportation, which would return the troublemaker to his homeland. Attempts to gain him citizenship status in Germany remained futile, and for several years he continued to live in Germany without any national affiliation.<sup>160</sup> Little else of Hitler's movements and actions were included in the American and British press in 1925, though one other prominent Nazi, Joseph

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<sup>158</sup> "Anti-Jewish Riot in Vienna," *New York Times* 19 July 1925, 6; "Anti-Semitism in Vienna," *The Times* 13 August 1925, 9f; "Vienna Racialists Guarded in Parade," 23 August 1925, 24.

<sup>159</sup> "Austria Makes Hitler Man Without Country," *Washington Post* 25 May 1925, 1.

<sup>160</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 237-238.

Goebbels, made his first appearance in the Western media near the end of the year.

A *New York Times* article printed in November 1925 discussed an outbreak of violence in Berlin which involved the Nazis. The riots began because of political speeches comparing Vladimir Lenin, the former leader of the Bolshevik party and head of the early Soviet Union, and Hitler. The article mentioned that the speaker who made the comparisons was a Dr. Goebbels, who reportedly asserted that "...Lenin was the greatest man, second only to Hitler, and that the difference between communism and the Hitler faith was very slight..." This apparently precipitated a fight, though the participants were not described.<sup>161</sup>

The article was the first mention of Joseph Goebbels to appear in the western press, and the nature of Goebbels's words demonstrated a major problem for Hitler in consolidating control of the NSDAP in northern Germany. Born in the *Rhineland* in October 1897, Goebbels was an intelligent student and a gifted orator early in life, and he obtained his Ph.D in German literature in the early 1920s. He became one of the most powerful figures in the Third Reich, despite a club foot that he claimed was a result of a childhood accident, heading the ministry of propaganda and controlling almost every aspect of the German media. In late 1925, however, Goebbels was part of the northern German National Socialist movement, which was expanding because of the leadership of Gregor Strasser, a talented Nazi leader Hitler had sent to facilitate the party's growth outside Bavaria. The north German Nazis viewed the southern branch of the party somewhat suspiciously, since it emphasized the socialist aspect of the

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<sup>161</sup> "Hitlerite Riot in Berlin," *New York Times* 28 November 1925, 4.

movement more so than Hitler. That branch hoped to appeal to supports of the Socialist and Communist parties by emphasizing its support for the proletariat. Many member in the northern branches of the party were from proletarian backgrounds, but Hitler would be unwilling to following a leftist path for the party. Goebbels helped make the expansion of the party possible with his talent for incendiary and effective propagandizing. In 1925, he was still not devoted to Hitler's brand of National Socialism despite being an ardent anti-Semite, and he advocated a stronger socialist direction for the movement.<sup>162</sup>

Though it would be odd for a south German party member, Lenin fascinated Goebbels, and he compared Lenin to Hitler in several speeches and publications in 1925. The information reported in the article from the *New York Times* demonstrated Goebbels's adoration of Lenin and a growing admiration of Hitler. Goebbels used Lenin's name to help garner support from working class sections of the north German population, and German communists understandably attempted to break up such propaganda whenever possible.

The issue of the northern Nazi party's belief in a more leftist course for the movement was resolved at a meeting with Hitler at Bamberg, in Bavaria, in February 1926. At the meeting, Hitler upbraided Strasser, who had also become combative with Hitler, and Goebbels's position. Afterwards Goebbels decided to follow Hitler's directions faithfully. Over the next few months, he transformed himself into one of Hitler's most sycophantic followers, accepting that Hitler represented the only path to Germany's nationalist renewal. Hitler recognized

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<sup>162</sup> Evans, 202-204, 396-397; Viktor Reimann, *Goebbels* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1976), 13-16; Orlov, 63-65.

Goebbels's talents, as well as his emerging slavish devotion, and he knew he could use Goebbels to help solidify control in north Germany by removing one of Strasser's most able supporters. Hitler made Goebbels the head of the Berlin branch of the Nazi party, allowing Hitler to have confidence in his control of the party in the German capital.<sup>163</sup> The American and British press did not convey any information at all concerning such squabbles within the Nazi party, and the only information concerning Goebbels before 1929 came from the short *New York Times* communiqué, which did little to elaborate on his importance. Yet by early 1926, Hitler had solidified his leadership of the party in north Germany, subduing another possible competitor in Strasser and acquiring the devotion of Goebbels, who in the years that followed helped cast Hitler in an almost religious mold.

Hitler extended his effective control over the entire National Socialist movement in 1926, but for American and British journalists, such events went completely unnoticed. Western press coverage of Hitler and the Nazi party reached its lowest level from 1926 to 1928. Only a handful of articles mentioned the movement. Reports from 1926 had little of substance concerning Nazi machinations, for the most part mentioning Hitler's name fleetingly in relation to some other personality, such as Ludendorff. For example, a *New York Times* article related that Alfred Hugenberg, a wealthy German industrial magnate and an extreme conservative in his own right, was seeking to combine his political movement with the National Socialists.<sup>164</sup> Hugenberg was a leading member of the German National People's party, and he eventually would move the

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<sup>163</sup> Evans, 206; Reimann, 47-61.

<sup>164</sup> Lincoln Eyre, "German Fascisti Organizing to Put Dictator in Power," *New York Times* 26 March 1926, 1.

organization in an even more extreme direction than its traditionally ultra-conservative stance. Later in the 1920s and early 1930s, Hitler would work closely with Hugenberg.<sup>165</sup> Other semi-important articles from 1926 mentioned a speech in which Hitler espoused his belief in conflict between nations instead of reconciliation, and another relating an outbreak of violence between Nazis and Socialists in Berlin.<sup>166</sup> Even this scant coverage in 1926 continued to demonstrate the Nazi belief in conflict and violence, despite Hitler's public disavowal of such activity.

Despite the meager coverage offered in American and British press sources, Hitler and the Nazis were working feverishly to organize the party and develop its constituency. In July 1926, Hitler declared the creation of the *Hitler-Jugend*, or Hitler Youth organization. This was a part of Hitler's plans to enable the NSDAP to infiltrate as many aspects of German society as possible. Over the next few years, the Nazis initiated a wide range of social and professional organizations, including associations for women, students, teachers, and lawyers. The groups were meant to broaden the attractiveness of National Socialism to as many disparate groups as possible.<sup>167</sup> The Nazis also began looking to new groups for electoral support. For some time the party had attempted to build a base of support among the urban working class, but recruitment efforts were not very successful in the mid 1920s. During the late 1920s, the NSDAP began to make inroads with rural protestant population in northern agricultural parts of

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<sup>165</sup> Evans, 94-95.

<sup>166</sup> "German Colonial Aims," The Times 24 November 1926, 13b; "A Fascist Affair in Berlin," The Times 29 November 1926, 11c.

<sup>167</sup> Peter D. Stachura, Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Books, 1975), 22.

Germany, finding there a much more willing base of support. By 1929 the shift to the new constituency began to bear fruit, and Nazi membership roles increased significantly.<sup>168</sup> Another important development was Hitler's commitment to combat Marxism more aggressively than ever. To this end, he ordered the reorganization of the SA. He expressed his wish to increase radically the size of the Nazi para-military formation from hundreds of members to hundreds of thousands. This would allow the National Socialist movement to, in Hitler's words, become "...masters of the streets..."<sup>169</sup>

The Nazis had long been involved in vicious street fighting with its opponents in Munich, but the new party policy led to violent confrontations throughout Germany. Hitler wanted the expansion of violence and bloodshed to combat the German communists and any other political opponents. According to historian Richard Bessel, the Nazis sought to demonstrate that they were "...prepared to abandon respectable bourgeois behaviour(sic) in the struggle against the 'reds' and 'would never quit the field.'"<sup>170</sup> The violence of the SA was never meant to be a means to an end, however. Hitler had no intention of trying to seize power again violently, no matter how large the SA grew. One of the SA's main roles was to generate publicity and notoriety within Germany, demonstrating that there was an organization willing to confront the elements in Germany the Nazis blamed for every conceivable problem, including Jews, Poles,

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<sup>168</sup> Evans, 208-209, 211.

<sup>169</sup> Hauner, 55.

<sup>170</sup> Richard Bessel, "Violence as Propaganda: The Role of the Storm Troopers in the Rise of National Socialism," The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933 Thomas Childers, ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 132.

and various other political groups besides the communists.<sup>171</sup> Even these developments went without much notice in the Western press during 1926.

But eventually, articles from the American and British press began to take limited notice of emerging German political violence. During 1927 and 1928, reports appeared discussing the outbreak of fighting between fascist and communist forces. Accounts of the violence rarely included much detailed information other than the fact that they were ferocious.<sup>172</sup> Communists were not the only target of Nazi aggression. Anyone who voiced opposition to their program was a target. At one Nazi meeting, a Lutheran minister was nearly beaten to death after voicing his opposition to one of the National Socialist speakers. The Berlin police responded by banning the Nazis from operating within the city for a short time.<sup>173</sup> Prussian authorities were much more active in trying to curb the excesses of Nazi street troops than their counterparts in Bavaria had been in the early 1920s. In August 1927, the authorities stopped a trainload of Nazis returning from a party meeting in Nuremberg, arresting 435 of them. The incarcerated men were all eventually released, but at least the police attempted to prevent some of the public violence from taking place.<sup>174</sup> The trouble seen in the various reports only escalated in the following years, as the economic woes of the Great Depression helped both the communists and the Nazis find new members.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 133-134.

<sup>172</sup> "Faction Fight in Berlin Suburb," The Times 22 March 1927, 13e; "222 Reported as Red Riots Sweep German Cities," Washington Post 1 October 1928, 1; "Disorders Near Hamburg," The Times 2 October 1928, 15d.

<sup>173</sup> "German Fascisti Mob Two," New York Times 5 May 1927, 3; "29 German Fascisti Charged with Rioting," Washington Post 6 May 1927, 1; "Berlin Police Disband National Socialists," New York Times 6 May 1927, 6.

<sup>174</sup> "Trap for German 'Fascists,'" The Times 23 August 1927, 13a; "Arrest German Fascisti," New York Times 23 August 1927, 27; "German 'Facists' Released," The Times 24 August 1927, 9d.

Little was reported about Hitler's actions during 1927 and 1928. He had been under a ban keeping him from making public speeches throughout most of Germany, which probably accounts for why little was written about him. It did make news in 1927 when he spoke in Berlin on May Day, supposedly for a counter-demonstration to the regular socialist and communist activities on the worker's holiday. It was not a very successful show of force, however, as Hitler was limited to speaking privately to a select group of Prussians.<sup>175</sup> While hundreds of thousands of his opponents marched in Berlin, Hitler spoke in front of only 5,000 people.<sup>176</sup> The ban on Hitler speaking in Prussia would not be lifted until September 1928, when the government and most others in Germany thought the NSDAP was completely finished following small gains by the National Socialists in that year's *Reichstag* election.<sup>177</sup> It did not take long, however, for him to help create trouble. In October 1928, a street fight between communists and Nazis broke out at one of his first public speeches in Prussia.<sup>178</sup> On November 16, he gave his first major speech in Berlin in front of 10,000 supporters at the *Sportpalast*, a major Berlin arena, where he commented on the degenerative influence of Jazz music.<sup>179</sup> The following year proved to be a slightly more active one for the party, as the Western press slowly began to recognize that while the Nazi party might be suffering for support, it had not disappeared or deviated from its core belief, the hatred of the Jews.

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<sup>175</sup> "May Day Abroad; In Berlin," The Times 2 May 1927, 13a; "300,000 Meet in Berlin," New York Times 2 May 1927, 3.

<sup>176</sup> Hauner, 56.

<sup>177</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 304.

<sup>178</sup> "222 Reported as Red Riots Sweep German Cities," Washington Post 1 October 1928, 1.

<sup>179</sup> Hauner, 60.

During 1929, the *New York Times* noted the anti-Semitic activities of the Nazis. First, the paper mentioned that the Prussian Diet was considering sanctioning several of its National Socialist members, and revoking the immunity from prosecution that they enjoyed. Several members had lent their names as publishers of National Socialist publications which produced large amounts of libelous, anti-Semitic material. The publications remained immune from prosecution, however, because of the association with a legislature member. The article specifically mentioned a deputy accused of such maneuvers.<sup>180</sup> It referred to Robert Ley, the future leader of the German Labor Front during the Third Reich. Ley was fined in September 1929 after being found guilty of insulting Jewish religious leaders in a Nazi newspaper. Ley was not the only Nazi sanctioned for such publications. Two others in Nuremberg reportedly were sentenced to jail terms for printing stories about Jewish ritual murders.<sup>181</sup> The *New York Times* included several more articles in 1929 describing Nazi hostility toward German Jews, including the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in the small town of Hermeskeil.<sup>182</sup> Such reports demonstrated that the Nazi hatred of the Jews had not withered in the years since the *Putsch*, but had remained as vicious as ever.

American and British correspondents also took notice of the Nazis' vocal protest against the Young Plan. It was the first time in several years that Hitler

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<sup>180</sup> "Jail for Anti-Semites," *New York Times* 27 January 1929, e3.

<sup>181</sup> Ronald Smelser, *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labor Front Leaders* (New York: Berg, 1988), 1; "Anti-Semitic Editor Fined," *New York Times* 8 September 1929, e7; "Jail for German Anti-Semites," *New York Times* 24 November 1929, e8.

<sup>182</sup> "Nuremberg Police Curb Hitlerites," *New York Times* 11 August 1929, e6; "Jews Wounded in German Riots," *New York Times* 3 September 1929, 21.

and his movement were recognized for their stance on a major German political issue. The Young Plan was an agreement between Germany and the Western Allies of World War I concerning German reparations payments, replacing the prior arrangement of the Dawes plan. It called for reparations payments to be extended well into the 1980s but significantly lowered the amount Germany was expected to pay in the initial years of the agreement. Foreign supervision was to be withdrawn, and the Allies agreed to remove all remaining troops in the Rhineland five years ahead of schedule. The Young Plan was attacked viciously by right wing elements in Germany, who argued that it was simply another agreement enslaving Germany to decades of repayments. The opposition to the plan was led by Alfred Hugenberg, head of the German National People's party. Hugenberg enlisted the aid of other extreme nationalist groups in Germany, including the Nazis. National Socialist participation provided Hitler with a new outlet to reach a large audience with his program.<sup>183</sup> He used the party's resources to agitate for a referendum condemning the passage of Young Plan, a referendum that barely succeeded and had no important impact. Nevertheless, the party's opposition to the Young Plan exposed it to a larger German audience than ever before. The publicity gained the NSDAP new respect among nationalist and rightwing supporters, who began to drift away from the older groups into the seemingly more vibrant Nazi party.<sup>184</sup> Western press coverage of the Nazis' involvement on the issue was limited, but it was recognition of the renewed importance of the National Socialists within German politics.

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<sup>183</sup> Kolb, 66, 109; Peukert, 196.

<sup>184</sup> Evans, 211-212.

Western press reports of Nazi involvement in the agitation against the Young Plan portrayed the party as secondary to Hugenberg and his nationalist party. Nevertheless, Nazi demonstrators were important in attempts to pass the national referendum preventing Germany from ratifying the Young Plan. An article from *The Times* covered Nazi efforts in the cause, relating the propaganda speeches of two party members in Cologne. The speakers repeated a series of rumors and lies about the terms of the agreement, including a fabrication that German men and women would be forced into slave labor in Siberia should German default on reparation payments.<sup>185</sup> Other articles dealt with the downfall of Hugenberg and Hitler's schemes, mainly because of the open opposition of the German president von Hindenburg. He took issue with a part of the referendum that would subject those signing any international agreement, including the Young Plan, to criminal prosecution. He perceived this as a personal attack, and his opposition dealt a serious blow to the referendum, since he was a revered military figure to German rightwing elements.<sup>186</sup>

A *New York Times* opinion piece justifiably believed that von Hindenburg's opposition had harmed Hugenberg and his party, but it made no mention of the effects the entire referendum had on the Nazis.<sup>187</sup> The lack of support for the referendum was reported on October 23, 1929, and an American journalist covering the story believed that this "...has left Dr. Hugenberg, Adolf

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<sup>185</sup> "Nationalist Agitation in Germany; Inflammatory Speeches," *The Times* 8 October 1929, 18e.

<sup>186</sup> "Hindenburg Scores Young Plan Attack," *New York Times* 19 October 1929, 8; "German Referendum Campaign; President's New Declaration," *The Times* 19 October 1929, 11d.

<sup>187</sup> "Hindenburg For Peace," *New York Times*

Hitler and their clique of agitators in a state of withering isolation.”<sup>188</sup> For the remainder of the year, articles from the *New York Times* proved this was the case for the DNVP and Hugenberg, but not for the Nazis. The referendum against the Young Plan succeeded, passing by the narrow margin of 8,000 votes, although there was apparent voter fraud in several areas. There was no possibility of the referendum against the Young Plan ever succeeding, though, since neither the *Reichstag* nor the 41 million votes necessary to pass a plebiscite would materialize.<sup>189</sup> The Nationalist party suffered because of its failure to mobilize support, but the Nazis benefited. In November municipal elections in Berlin, the Nazis increased their share of the votes, mainly at the expense of the nationalists. Hitler also did well personally, moving into a large apartment in Munich. This led reporters to believe he was well supplied by wealthy German supporters of his movement.<sup>190</sup> The Nazis were riding a new wave of support that would carry them firmly to renewed importance on the German political scene as well as with the international press.

The years from 1924 to 1929 had seemingly been a stable period within Germany, but serious problems had developed during the period that would help serve the Nazis as a springboard to power. A major characteristic of those years was the demonstrated willingness of the German people to support anti-Republican elements. Nowhere was this more visible than with the election of former General Paul von Hindenburg in 1925. His firm dislike of representative

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<sup>188</sup> “Germans Shun Vote Against Young Plan,” *New York Times* 24 October 1929, 11.

<sup>189</sup> “Plebiscite Assured by 8,000 in Reich,” *New York Times* 26 November 1929, 6.

<sup>190</sup> “Berlin Foresees Another Election,” *New York Times* 19 November 1929, 8; “Communists Gain in Berlin Election,” *New York Times* 18 November 1929, 8; “German Fascist Chief Prospers,” *New York Times* 3 November 1929, e7.

government helped to undermine the effectiveness of democratic processes in Germany and demonstrated the willingness of many voters to support nationalist, anti-democratic movements and leaders. Another major problem facing the Weimar Republic was the advent of a severe new economic crisis.

Early in 1929, economic difficulties began emerging in the agricultural sectors of the German economy; such problems would eventually spread into other parts of the country as the Great Depression began to engulf the world.<sup>191</sup> The first widespread economic problems in agricultural areas arose during the winter of 1929, coinciding with Hitler's re-emergence as a prominent political figure. During the depression unemployment increased significantly and national output collapsed.<sup>192</sup> As the 1930s began, circumstances in Germany were perfect for a surge of support for the Nazi party. Voters who had demonstrated a dislike for the Weimar regime with the election of Hindenburg found a new party to support in the Nazis, who staunchly supported Germany's rebirth as a great world power. The economic crisis of the Great Depression also provided the Nazis with new supporters, when the situation became so grave for many that they were willing to listen to the National Socialist's extreme policies.

During early 1930, German economic disruptions began to affect more and more people. Unemployment rose sharply, climbing above 2,000,000, a figure that did not include many whose unemployment benefits had already expired.<sup>193</sup> American and British journalists recognized that the National

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<sup>191</sup> Martin Broszat, Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany (New York: Berg, 1989), 67-69, 71-72.

<sup>192</sup> Kolb, 111-112.

<sup>193</sup> "2,000,000 Unemployed in Germany," Manchester Guardian Weekly 24 January 1930, 66.

Socialists were gaining in popularity in an environment of such economic and political instability, and that they would likely benefit at the ballot box. This electoral support materialized quickly in state elections throughout Germany. The *New York Times* noted that the Nazi party won a large enough share of the electorate in the states of Mecklenburg, Saxony, and Thuringia to be included in coalition governments. In Thuringia, the party garnered its first cabinet position. Wilhelm Frick, a long time party member, was made the Minister of the Interior.<sup>194</sup> Frick had taken part in the *Putsch* in 1923 and, like Hitler, was imprisoned for a short time. Following the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933, he assumed control in Berlin of the Ministry of the Interior, the same position he held in Thuringia.<sup>195</sup>

Frick's placement was part of a plan by Hitler to assume the most important political posts in Germany. Hitler went to Thuringia to plead the case of the Nazis for inclusion in a coalition with the German People's Party, and he was able to secure the position for Frick. He knew that the Nazis were gaining a new wave of support, and he wanted to be able to exploit the opportunity. The Ministry of the Interior controlled the police and civil services at both the state and federal level, and he believed that Nazi control of these branches of government would facilitate the National Socialist rise to power.<sup>196</sup> Frick's attempts to influence the Thuringian police and educational system on the Nazis' behalf created many problems for the NSDAP with the federal government, but it

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<sup>194</sup> "Hitler Man Police Head," *New York Times* 19 January 1930, 58; "Growing Strength of German Fascists," *New York Times* 26 January 1930, 11b.

<sup>195</sup> James Taylor and Warren Shaw, *The Penguin Dictionary of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 100.

<sup>196</sup> Broszat, 77-78.

was undeniable that Nazi influence was expanding rapidly throughout the country.

Frick's activities in Thuringia demonstrated Nazi government policy, and what would likely result should the party come to power at the national level. The British press reported in March 1930 that the Thuringian government and the federal government were in conflict over Frick's policies concerning the police. Apparently Frick had ordered all possible police recruits to be questioned about their political loyalties. Any applicants who disagreed with Nazi policies were rejected. Upon discovering this, the federal Minister of the Interior, former Prussian official Carl Severing, ended national subsidies to Thuringia for police forces. The police was not the only area of Thuringian policy that Frick tampered with. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* reported that he had introduced a bill in the Thuringian state legislature "...making it illegal (under ferocious penalties) for any German to marry Jews or coloured(sic) people or in any way to pollute Teutonic civilization."<sup>197</sup>

The end of funds from Berlin caused an outcry against Frick within Thuringia, but he remained in office despite the economic problems he had brought to the state.<sup>198</sup> The British reports concerning Frick's attempted conversion of Thuringian police and civil services into loyal outlets of the Nazi party was an important lesson for Western audiences. It demonstrated that Hitler was telling the truth about wanting to come to power in Germany through the

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<sup>197</sup> "Fascist Activities in Thuringia; Reich Subsidy Suspended," *The Times* 20 March 1930, 15b; "Fascist Activities in Thuringia; Open Conflict with the Reich," *The Times* 21 March 1930, 13f; "German and Fascism; Reich Step Against Thuringia," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 21 March 1930, 227.

<sup>198</sup> "German State 'Fascism,'" *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 28 March 1930, 245.

electoral system. It was also true, however, that the Nazis desired to use the positions gained through elections to tear down Weimar democracy from the inside.

While the Nazis gained new sources of popular support during the economic crisis, the German government began experiencing difficulties on how to help alleviate the suffering of the German people. The collapse of the American stock market in the fall of 1929 caused the withdrawal of loans made to Germany, which in turn produced bankruptcies and exacerbated the unemployment situation. The government deadlocked over the issue of funding unemployment benefits because of the tight financial situation, and this resulted in the removal of the regime of then chancellor Herman Müller. His government was replaced by one headed by Heinrich Brüning.<sup>199</sup>

Brüning, a leader of the Catholic Centre party, ran the government through the presidential decrees of von Hindenburg, deciding not to rely on any legislative coalition or backing for his decisions. He employed the emergency power granted to the president in Article 48 of the Weimar constitution. Von Hindenburg had no problem ruling in this manner, since he disliked a legislative system filled with many leftist parties that he despised. The German legislature was firmly against Brüning's attempt to bypass its authority, and it voted to rescind his ability to rule through presidential decree. Rather than backing down, Brüning dissolved the *Reichstag* on July 18, 1930, setting the stage for a new

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<sup>199</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 54.

series of elections in September.<sup>200</sup> The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* explained to its readers the expected outcome of the elections: “The election campaign is dreaded by all except the National Socialists (who stand to score very heavily) and the communists (who at least do not stand to lose).”<sup>201</sup> American and British journalists understood that the dissolution of the *Reichstag* paved the way for meaningful Nazi involvement in the German federal government.

Hitler knew the opportunity to expand the NSDAP’s position had come. In late July, he organized the propaganda and party machine he had been building, and began campaigning for the National Socialists.<sup>202</sup> In the weeks before the September elections, the Western press relayed the fears of some in Germany about what results the elections would return. The *New York Times* observed that various middle class parties were hoping to form coalitions among themselves to help stave off the expected movement of voters to both the extreme right and left.<sup>203</sup> The gains were predicted even though it was well known that both the Nazis and the communists desired to create a dictatorial system in place of a democratic one.<sup>204</sup>

The Western press observed that the Nazis had established a large foundation among German youth as well as among the middle classes. Referred

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<sup>200</sup> Mommsen, 291-298; Article 48 of the Weimar constitution gave the German president sweeping powers in times of emergency. This included the suspension of many civil rights included in other articles of the constitution. The article was vague in its description of what constituted an emergency, stating that “The Reich President can, if the public safety and order of the Reich are seriously disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are deemed necessary to restore public safety and order.” This allowed the president to use his own discretion to determine this. In the 1930’s, President von Hindenburg and his various chancellors relied on the decree to administer the country, and when Hitler came to power in 1933, he did the same. See Sax, 53-54.

<sup>201</sup> “Reichstag Dissolved,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 25 July 1930, 64.

<sup>202</sup> Hauner, 65.

<sup>203</sup> Guido Enderis, “Germans to Renew Party Union Effort,” *New York Times* 5 August 1930, 8; Guido Enderis, “Fusion of Parties Fails,” *New York Times* 8 August 1930, 6.

<sup>204</sup> “German Political Parties,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 8 August 1930, 110.

to as the most effective campaigners of the election by far, the Nazis planned to hold in excess of 34,000 campaign meetings in the weeks before the elections. Projections concerning how many seats the Nazis would gain varied, but all were substantial. One correspondent predicted the Nazis would win close to 60 seats in the *Reichstag*. Another thought that the Nazis and communists would probably obtain around 100 seats between them.<sup>205</sup> Even that result would increase dramatically the prestige and power of the Nazi movement.<sup>206</sup> Hitler hoped that such estimates would prove accurate; he thought 60 seats were a marked victory considering the party had won only twelve in 1928.<sup>207</sup> Both Hitler and the Western press's estimates of Nazi gains were inaccurate. Even the Nazis were shocked when, in September 1930, they received enough votes to become the second largest political party in the German legislature.

From 1925 through the first months of 1930, the British and American press devoted little space in their publications to the National Socialists, which was understandable. The NSDAP lost a significant number of followers after the fiasco of the *Putsch*, and appeared banished from the German political mainstream. For this reason, the Western press included only cursory references to the Nazis in their publications, not realizing that some party activities were harbingers of a reconstituted National Socialist movement. The reports from 1925 through 1928 mentioned Hitler's troubles with Ludendorff and the northern

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<sup>205</sup> "Big Fascist Gain due in Reichstag," *New York Times* 22 July 1930, 12; Guido Enderis, "Extremists Likely to Gain in Germany," *New York Times* 18 August 1930, 1; "Extremists Meet in German Politics," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 29 August 1930, 166.

<sup>206</sup> T.R. Ybarra, "Hugenberg, Hindenburg, Hitler," *Outlook and Independent*, August 27, 1930, 665.

<sup>207</sup> Hauner, 65-66.

wing of the movement. It was unimportant to Western audiences that Hitler was consolidating the party under his sole leadership, mobilizing it to spread throughout the country and finding new venues to disseminate its program.

The Western press had given Hitler what he desired in late 1929, though, by prominently including his name with Hugenberg and other protestors of the Young Plan. Though reported in a secondary light, the National Socialists were the only beneficiaries of the failed attempt to prevent the signing of the treaty. American and British writers were not concerned at the time with the growing support for the Nazis, but early in 1930 this attitude changed. Wilhelm Frick's placement in the government of Thuringia demonstrated what a Nazi government would look like, but the press did not make the connection at the time. Frick's use of government power to influence the police in favor of the National Socialist cause should have raised alarms about the how Nazi legality was going to work. Rather, what the British and American press noted was how quickly the federal government was moving to stop Frick's excesses. The confidence in the federal government had to wane, however, when the Weimar Republic collapsed under the strain of the Great Depression. Only two newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, dedicated much coverage to the Nazi's success in exploiting these circumstances, but even they were not concerned the NSDAP would have influence in the government, believing it would win around 60 *Reichstag* seats. This lack of concern would continue into the following year.

Though limited in scope, the Western press provided its readers valuable information concerning the National Socialists in the years from 1925 to 1930.

The Nazis consolidated the party during this period, preparing themselves to move forward and become a successful political movement. Hitler disposed of any possible opposition to his sole leadership of the NSDAP, laying the way for his role as *Führer*, not only of the party but for the millions of Germans he hoped to rally to his cause. He shifted the emphasis of the party away from violent takeover to attaining power through parliamentary means, though he in no way abandoned the use of the SA in confronting the party's opponents. One constant theme present in Western press reports was the omnipresent violence surrounding the party and its activities. The press did not mention the various social and professional organizations that the Nazis founded to further their interests among new segments of the population, but they did take notice in the late 1920s of the growing support for the movement within the German middle classes. Not surprisingly, they had no idea how deeply the economic crisis had allowed that support to go.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE END OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC: SEPTEMBER 1930 TO DECEMBER 1931

Elections in September 1930 made the NSDAP second only to the Social Democrats in representation in the *Reichstag*. The months following the Nazi victory foreshadowed what a Nazi-controlled Germany might resemble, and the Western press provided in-depth coverage of the movement and its activities. American and British journalists supplied their readers with a wealth of material about the nature and intentions of the Nazi party and the dangers its electoral victory created for the world. Western correspondents and editors attempted to play down the threat of the Nazis, though, believing that the NSDAP was a fleeting expression of German discontent. Some thought that taking part in the government would restrain the Nazis, or that other responsible German factions would keep them from power.

Though the National Socialists were effectively kept from having a say in the government in 1931, the party's breakthrough only spurred on Nazi excesses, at times causing Hitler and others to more brazenly flaunt their violent and racist intentions while attempting to maintain an appearance of respectability. Hitler openly announced his goal to punish ruthlessly those Germans responsible for the Versailles treaty. He also espoused his belief in using war to free Germany from what he considered enslavement imposed by the agreement. The National Socialist antipathy toward Jews also showed no sign of abating, and several

examples of Nazi hatred and violence toward the Jewish community appeared in Western press articles. American and British journalists saw the Nazis as a barbaric reflection of Germany's problems; the writers hoped fervently that good sense would take root among German voters. They were sorely disappointed as Nazi electoral victories continued to mount throughout the country. Fears grew that the Nazis could gain some kind of control over the German government.

As the September *Reichstag* elections approached, the Western press was relatively muted in its coverage of the political situation in Germany. British newspapers described problems with Hitler's control of the SA and whether he maintained its loyalty. *The Times* reported that Hitler had maintained domination of the Storm Troopers by assuming the position of supreme commander of the group and by increasing their pay. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* attacked Hitler as an empty-headed demagogue, and stated that he had lost control of the movement, but this was not the case.<sup>208</sup> Hitler had experienced problems with the SA leadership over the issue of the group's representation in the party's *Reichstag* delegation. This dispute led to the resignation of the SA commander and some violence by the SA branch in Berlin, but Hitler maintained control.<sup>209</sup> Other reports elaborated on pre-election violence, including a series of brawls between the National Socialists and communists. *Time* magazine discussed several rumors circulating in Germany concerning President von Hindenburg's support for the

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<sup>208</sup> "German Fascists' Quarrel," *The Times* 3 September 1930, 11b; "German Election Violence," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 5 September 1930, 187.

<sup>209</sup> Hauner, 65.

Nazis, which the magazine asserted had no factual basis.<sup>210</sup> The relative silence of the British and American press ended abruptly following the *Reichstag* election of September 14, 1930.

The Nazis had expected that they would gain handsomely during the election, but even their projections fell far short of estimates. A few months prior, Goebbels had estimated the party would win forty seats. He noted that all were stunned when the returns showed the Nazis had won 107 seats, increasing their share of the vote from 2.6% in 1928 to 18.3%. This made the Nazis the second largest *Reichstag* party, smaller only than the Social Democrats.<sup>211</sup> In the United States, the victory of the National Socialists was considered a severe blow to German republicanism, and details of the elections were prominent front-page stories. The *New York Times* asserted that the NSDAP had received a groundswell of support from the middle class as well as from workers who were not affiliated with the socialists or communists. The electoral breakthrough compelled the paper to reintroduce Hitler to its audience, calling his fiery oratory an important factor in creating support among young Germans. A description of the party's platform was also included, elaborating on many of its extreme qualities, including the objective of excluding the Jews from German society.<sup>212</sup> While a large portion of the Nazi support came from the German middle classes, the actual makeup of the party's electoral support was diverse. The party had

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<sup>210</sup> "German Election Violence," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 12 September 1930, 205; "Complications," *Time*, September 1, 1930, 23.

<sup>211</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 333-334. For a state-by-state breakdown of the National Socialist share in German elections from 1924-32, see Fulbrook, 56.

<sup>212</sup> "German's Republic Shakes in Landslide of Radical Ballots," *Washington Post* 15 September 1930, 1; Guido Enderis, "Fascists make Big Gains in Germany, Communists also Increase Strength as Moderates Drop in Reich Election," *New York Times* 15 September 1930, 1; "Fascists Glorify Pan-German Ideal," *New York Times* 15 September 1930, 2.

been able to appeal to a wide variety of Germans from an assortment of social, political, and religious backgrounds.<sup>213</sup>

A *Washington Post* editorial on September 16 made several observations about the election that became common among the Western press. This included the belief that the German vote was simply a protest against economic conditions, and not actual support for the party. Another idea in the opinion piece was the argument that the strong support for the Nazis and communists, who had also gained heavily, was temporary and would eventually fade. The editorial expressed the conviction that the moderate and responsible parties of Germany would not allow the Nazis any chance at participation in the government, making fears of the imminent collapse of the Weimar Republic groundless. Once again referring to Hitler as the German Mussolini, the *Washington Post* asserted that he had been able to play on the anxieties and economic distress of German voters, intimating that once those problems ended, so would the Nazis' support.<sup>214</sup> Other media mirrored the rejection of a real threat posed by the National Socialists. Writing for the American weekly magazine *Outlook and Independent*, H.L. Binsse argued that most in Germany would never go for the foolishness of a the Nazi movement, which was in his opinion nothing more than a German version of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>215</sup> This rejection of the immediate threat of the Nazi electoral breakthrough became common on both sides of the Atlantic.

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<sup>213</sup> Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundation of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 140-191; Kolb, 114.

<sup>214</sup> "The German Elections," *Washington Post* 16 September 1930, 6.

<sup>215</sup> H.L. Binsse, "Adolf Hitler, German Hypnotist," *Outlook and Independent* October 11, 1930, 256-257.

In Great Britain the press treated the National Socialist victory in a similarly incredulous manner. A *Times* article dealing with the election observed that a dozen reasons could explain the success of the Nazis, but the main factor had to be the economic crisis and the delay by other political parties in dealing with it. The paper noted that the Germans had to have voted with very little reflection about the implications considering the Nazis were a negative and violent movement. The *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* addressed the possible coalitions now that the Nazis were the second largest party, and neither newspaper, unlike their American counterparts, discounted the possibility of Nazi participation.<sup>216</sup> Just like the American newspapers, the *Times* published several articles devoted to reacquainting its audience with the Nazis and their leader. Most of the information regarding Hitler came directly from *Mein Kampf*, which meant the newspaper was printing several fabrications created by Hitler. This included his claim to have been a founding member of the NSDAP and its seventh member, which were both lies.<sup>217</sup> The British and American press publicized the international reaction to the German elections, obviously out of fear that the success of both the Nazis and communists might lead to new European tension.

It was clear that France considered the outcome of the German elections a potential threat. Reports described the mood in France as uneasy. The French believed the vote demonstrated German unwillingness to cooperate with

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<sup>216</sup> "The German Elections; Full Returns; Sweeping Fascists Success; Future of the Government," *The Times* 16 September 1930, 12a, b; "Political Outlook in Germany," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 26 October 1930, 250.

<sup>217</sup> "Herr Hitler's Career," *The Times* 16 September 1930, 12b; "The Rise of the Nazis; From Six to Six Million," *The Times* 18 September 1930, 11a; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 127.

international arrangements. A *Times* article explained that France would watch the situation closely. The paper produced a veiled warning that the success of the German right might necessitate a French response.<sup>218</sup> Austria was reportedly also upset by the victory of the Nazis because of fears that it might spur internal fascists to attempt a takeover of their own. Italy was apparently not expecting the sweeping victory of Hitler's party. The Italian government released a statement that the elections were evidence of fascist theories that parliamentary governments did not work. The German foreign minister, Julius Curtius, was dispatched to the League of Nations where he declared that despite the elections, the moderate path of the German government would not be abandoned.<sup>219</sup> Though the American press tried to reassure its readers that the Nazis would not come to power, it was clear that a political upheaval had taken place in the European and international political arena.

The Western press attempted to sort out what the German government would look like in the wake of the elections. An early article in the *Times* indicated the Nazis wanted control of the national ministries of interior and defense, probably basing this assertion on the experience with Wilhelm Frick in Thuringia. The *Times* noted that this would be tantamount to handing the country over to the National Socialists.<sup>220</sup> It appeared, though, that the Nazis would be given no opportunity to have a say in a coalition government. Members of a

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<sup>218</sup> "France and German Elections," *The Times* 16 September 1930, 11d; "Paris is Disturbed by Hitler's Success," *New York Times* 15 September 1930, 1.

<sup>219</sup> "Reich Vote Stirs Austria," *New York Times* 16 September 1930, 3; "Hitler Surprises Italy," *New York Times* 17 September 1930, 6; Clarence K. Streit, "League is Uneasy Over German Vote," *New York Times* 16 September 1930, 3.

<sup>220</sup> "The German Elections; Full Returns; Sweeping Fascists Success; Future of the Government," *The Times* 16 September 1930, 12a, b.

coalition of the German middle class parties stated that they would not seek any cooperation with the Nazis. The possibility existed for a limited coalition between the Center party and the socialists, or of bypassing legislative government altogether with Brüning continuing to rule by presidential decree.<sup>221</sup> Whichever path the government eventually took, the press reported, the Nazis would have no influence on government policy, at least for the time being.

The question of Nazi intentions for Germany was a popular topic for the Western press to discuss. Nazi anti-Semitism was only hinted at within the British press, but in the *New York Times* the issue received considerable attention. Journalist Guido Enderis reported that the Nazis represented the largest anti-Jewish legislative group in over fifty years within Europe. He observed that the NSDAP had been playing down this aspect of its program in its mass appeals, but Enderis singled out a chilling warning from the Nazis to German Jews found within the party newspaper: “The day will yet come when you Jews will have nothing to laugh at, and then may God have mercy on you.”<sup>222</sup>

The *Washington Post* included a dispatch from the Associated Press that contained another portent of Nazi intentions towards the Jews, this time from Joseph Goebbels: “I have been told the Jews think the only means to get rid of us is to pick off our leaders one by one. If a single leader thus falls, we shall answer with a pogrom.”<sup>223</sup> The statement foreshadowed Goebbels’ actions in 1938, when

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<sup>221</sup> “The Centre and the Nazis,” *The Times* 18 September 1930, 11b; “A Dictatorship for Germany,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 3 October 1930, 264; “Bruening May Seize Reins to Block Hitler,” *Washington Post* 27 September 1930, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Guido Enderis, “Anti-Semitic Fight Looms in Reichstag,” *New York Times* 21 September 1930, e3.

<sup>223</sup> “Rumors of Fascist Plots Stir Berlin,” *Washington Post* 21 September 1930, 1.

he orchestrated the brutal *Kristallnacht* pogrom at Hitler's request.<sup>224</sup> Even though the Nazis limited their open attacks against Jews somewhat, as Enderis mentioned, Goebbels's statement demonstrated the long-term violent intentions of the Nazis towards the Jewish community had not diminished in the least.

Another opportunity to gauge the intentions of the Nazis for the country came towards the close of September 1930, during the trial of three junior *Reichswehr* officers. These officers were charged for their attempts to increase participation between the army and the Nazis. The army leadership wanted to end such subversion, and it had three of the most prominent officers in the movement who had collaborated with the National Socialists brought to trial. Hitler was called to testify by Hans Frank, a Nazi lawyer who defended one of the officers.<sup>225</sup> Just as he had done during the *Putsch* trial of 1923, Hitler used the opportunity to publicize the movement and its policies. The press covered his testimony closely. It reacted harshly when Hitler's words intimated a murderous agenda should the party ever come to power. When questioned about Nazi intentions for Germany, Hitler reiterated his stance that the Nazis would only seek power through legal and not violent means. His statements, however, caused a vigorous reaction in the Western press. Hitler asserted bluntly that once the Nazis were in power, they would rip up the Versailles treaty and other international

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<sup>224</sup> Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 116-119.

<sup>225</sup> Evans, 248-249.

agreements and set up tribunals in order to sentence and to execute summarily the so-called November criminals.<sup>226</sup>

There was nothing but condemnation in the British and American press for Hitler's testimony. Now newspapers discarded the earlier opinion that having the weight of responsibility on their shoulders might moderate the Nazis. A *New York Times* editorial called Hitler's remarks childish, noting, dubiously it would seem, that Hitler's plans had none of the constructive elements that Lenin and Mussolini had espoused when they came to power. The article called for the responsible German political parties to keep the Nazis from power. *The Times* referred to the Nazis as dangerous romantics, whom the moderate German parties should justifiably shy away from. Hitler's remarks would, in *The Times's* view, only bring about ridicule and irritation rather than any positive result. The newspaper questioned the common sense of German voters who would endanger international good will by supporting such an incendiary group. *Washington Post* editors reflected the view shared by several other press outlets that Hitler had become emboldened by the Nazi electoral victories, and was displaying his true feelings concerning Nazi policy.<sup>227</sup> While the Western press disapproved of Hitler's position, many Germans reacted positively. They focused on Hitler's promise not to stage a violent attempt to take over the government, allaying fears

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<sup>226</sup> Guido Enderis, "Hitler Would Scrap Versailles Treaty and Use Guillotine," *New York Times* 26 September 1930, 1; "Nazi Policy Declared; Herr Hitler's Boast; The 'Criminals of 1918; A Threat to Treaties,'" *The Times* 26 September 1930, 12a; "Ford Rejects Plea for Fund to Aid Fascism," *Washington Post* 26 September 1930, 1; "Real Character of the Nazis; Herr Hitler's Outburst," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 3 October 1930, 270; "Heads Shall Roll," *Time*, October 6, 1930, 23.

<sup>227</sup> "Hitler's Rhetoric," *New York Times* 27 September 1930, 11; "Herr Hitler's Indiscretion," *The Times* 26 September 1930, 12b; "Fascism in Germany," *Washington Post* 28 September 1930, s1.

of a possible civil war.<sup>228</sup> Just as he had done over six years earlier, Hitler had used the judicial spotlight afforded him to help increase the political reputation of the Nazis among the German people.

During the first weeks of the Nazi re-emergence on the German and international political scene, the position of *The Times* concerning the National Socialists merited special consideration. In his chronology of the life of Hitler, historian Milan Hauner argued that the origins of the policy of appeasement that *The Times* would follow late in the 1930s could be found in articles from September and October 1930.<sup>229</sup> Later in the decade, the newspaper advocated concessions in order to appease Hitler and Germany. These included handing over the Sudeten territories in Czechoslovakia to Germany in order to stave off hostilities.<sup>230</sup> For the most part, however, Hauner's assertion that early vestiges of appeasement could be found in articles dating from late 1930 had little support. Before 1933, *The Times* encouraged its Berlin correspondent, Norman Ebbut, to make his reports on the Nazis more sensational in order to compete with other papers in London. The editors at the *The Times* also often shortened many of the articles that he sent to England, but Ebbut's reports on the Nazis were not singled out for this treatment. Beginning in 1934, *The Times* took a conciliatory, appeasing stance towards Germany, and intentionally began shortening Ebbut's articles that were critical of the Nazis. Before 1934, however, Ebbut was mostly unhindered in his reporting on the Nazis, and he covered the movement

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<sup>228</sup> Evans, 249.

<sup>229</sup> Hauner, 65-66.

<sup>230</sup> Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 428.

objectively despite viewing them as a grave threat, especially towards Germany's Jews.<sup>231</sup> The position of *The Times*' articles from late 1930 was not condemnatory towards the Nazis on a day-by-day basis, but neither were they sympathetic or conciliatory toward their cause.

Articles in *The Times* describing the Nazi electoral victory labeled the party as a destructive force lacking any constructive policies. Despite such an opinion, the paper believed at first that it might be possible for the NSDAP to grow into a positive and more moderate group in time.<sup>232</sup> Following Hitler's speech at the officers' trial, however, *The Times* discarded even this viewpoint, rightly asserting that the Nazis should not have any role in the German government.<sup>233</sup> Another of Hauner's arguments was that *The Times* began portraying the Nazis as the frontline in the defense of Europe against communism.<sup>234</sup> This idea was addressed in several *Times* articles, but did not originate with the newspaper. The notion came from the Nazis themselves. In an interview with Hitler carried on October 4, he asserted that the Nazis were the best hope for keeping Bolshevism from coming to Great Britain. Hitler was conciliatory towards Britain, attempting to ingratiate his movement with the English people.<sup>235</sup> The periodical *Literary Digest* related another blatant fabrication intended for the British that also originated with the Nazis. The publication reprinted several lines from the London *Evening Standard*, asserting

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<sup>231</sup> McDonough, "The Times, Norman Ebbut and the Nazis, 1927-37," 408-409, 412, 419.

<sup>232</sup> "The German Elections; Full Returns; Sweeping Fascist Success; Future of the Government," The Times 16 September 1930, 12a, b; "The Rise of the Nazis; From Six to Six Million," The Times 18 September 1930, 11a.

<sup>233</sup> "Herr Hitler's Indiscretion," The Times 26 September 1930, 12b.

<sup>234</sup> Hauner, 66.

<sup>235</sup> "Nazi Foreign Policy; Herr Hitler's Statement," The Times 4 October 1930, 9c.

that Hitler had played a prominent role in ousting the Bolshevik style government that took over Munich shortly after the end of World War I.<sup>236</sup>

The idea that the Nazis could serve as protection from Bolshevism running rampant throughout Europe was not limited to English newspapers. In a *Commonweal* article reprinted in the *Washington Post*, journalist George Shuster called the Nazis a possible blessing for its opposition to communism.<sup>237</sup> Throughout the early 1930s, the Nazis attempted to sway the foreign press in their favor, granting inside information to those correspondents who presented favorable viewpoints of the party. Ebbut was not considered a friendly journalist by the Nazis, and they worked to have him replaced as the *The Times*' Berlin representative.<sup>238</sup> This supports the argument that while *The Times* was not explicitly hostile towards the National Socialist movement, neither was it taking a position of appeasement in the early 1930s.

Another opportunity for the Western press to denigrate the Nazis and warn of the danger they represented came with the opening of the first *Reichstag* session in which their now numerous representatives took part. In order to demonstrate their militant devotion to the Nazi cause, the party's representatives marched into the legislature in formation wearing party uniforms. The party's brownshirts were forbidden in Berlin, but the immunity granted to representatives allowed the National Socialists to don the party's attire. This elicited laughs from

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<sup>236</sup> "Hitler – Germany's Would Be Mussolini," *Literary Digest* October 11, 1930, 15-16.

<sup>237</sup> George N. Shuster, "Germany at Low Tide," *Washington Post* 17 November 1930, 6.

<sup>238</sup> McDonough, 408-412.

other politicians as well as derisive comments from the press about the apparent lack of experience many of the Nazis exhibited.<sup>239</sup>

Accompanying the opening of the *Reichstag*, however, was a series of riots and attacks, proving that the Nazis were not content just to sit in the parliament. In the Berlin business district, several Jewish storefronts were smashed by supporters of the National Socialists as well by some Storm Troopers. Hitler did not support the attacks, quickly labeling them out of line with NSDAP policy. He stated that the movement did not advocate violent anti-Semitism and denied his party had anything to do with the riots, claiming that the communists had to have played a role in provoking it.<sup>240</sup> Hitler was obviously attempting to play down the violent aspect of the party to help maintain its public image. He wanted to pin the blame on Marxist influences, but the fact that so many Nazis and their supporters attacked Jewish property without orders proved that violent anti-Semitism was the core of Nazi policy.

Despite Nazi successes in the September elections, they were nonetheless left out of the government and played no role whatsoever in shaping German policy. Brüning had been able to convince the Social Democratic Party, the largest *Reichstag* party, to join a coalition of the Center party and other middle class parties to create a majority in the legislature. The coalition had many internal differences, and the parties united mainly in order to protect the country,

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<sup>239</sup> Guido Enderis, "Reichstag Laughs at Fascists' Entry," *New York Times* 14 October 1930, 16; "Anti-Jewish Excesses in Berlin," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 17 October 1930, 305.

<sup>240</sup> "Hitlerites in Riots, Stone Jewish Shops as Reichstag Opens," *New York Times* 14 October 1930, 1; "Nazi Policy; Herr Hitler's Statement; Repudiation of Reparations," *The Times* 15 October 1930, 12d; "Reichstag Opens Amid Berlin Riots," *Washington Post* 14 October 1930, 1; "Hitler Hints Reds Led Riot in Berlin," *New York Time* 15 October 1930, 14.

not out of shared political goals.<sup>241</sup> Many middle class politicians were wary of the Socialists and their semi-Marxist platform. The *New York Times* reported that some members of the group of bourgeois parties were thinking it a good idea to give the Nazis some responsibility in order to remove the “poison” from the movement, believing the Nazis would be strong defenders against leftist policies.<sup>242</sup> This move towards cooperation with the Nazis by middle class political parties only grew over time.

Nevertheless, for the remainder of the year the Nazis were left with little else to do but protest in the *Reichstag* and oppose every action taken by Brüning. In the last months of 1930, they also went on a cultural crusade against the film version of Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The Nazis saw the film as pacifist and slanderous towards German soldiers. Goebbels led the charge against the film in Berlin where he had assumed control of that city’s branch as well as control over the party’s propaganda efforts. He made several speeches against the film, presumably using his appointment in the Nazi *Reichstag* delegation to agitate against it. The Nazis took drastic means to keep filmgoers from seeing the movie, including allegedly letting mice and snakes loose in theatres.<sup>243</sup> A *Manchester Guardian Weekly* editorial declared the German nationalist opposition to the film deplorable, stating that it feared the film’s message would undermine the German myth of the glorious war

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<sup>241</sup> Broszat, 96.

<sup>242</sup> Guido Enderis, “German Leaders Divided on Nazis,” *New York Times* 28 December 1930, e4.

<sup>243</sup> “Nazi Beasties,” *Time*, December 22, 1930, 15; “Bruening is Victor Again in Reichstag,” *New York Times* 11 December 1930; “Reichstag Upholds Decrees,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 12 December 1930, 470; Guido Enderis, “Nazis Renew Fight on Remarque Film,” *New York Times* 10 December 1930, 10; Orlow, 92-94, 204-205; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 303.

experience.<sup>244</sup> Eventually the film was banned in Germany, though not for its depiction of war, but because the government felt the controversy generated by the film might worsen the already strained political circumstances, and that it was best to keep the country as stable as possible.<sup>245</sup> This episode presaged the strict Nazi control of the media.

Through the end of the year, Hitler attempted to popularize the party's policies and stump for support, making a series of speeches throughout the country. He gave one such speech to students at Berlin University, among whom in attendance was a young Albert Speer, who would later become an important member of the Nazi party and government.<sup>246</sup> In the speech, Hitler gave an indication of his vision for the German people. He extolled the students to spurn the idea of internationalism and the vice of democracy and instead accept the holiness of the fatherland that the students should serve unquestionably. He told the students, "Respect the authority of a person of genius and of ability and submit to the next highest in authority. Do away with the insanity of pacifism and with the idea that anybody else will help you."<sup>247</sup> The speech emphasized the Nazi concept of unquestioned subordination to one's superiors, as well as the acceptance of violence and war.

During the fall of 1930, several important developments within the NSDAP took place in these months that escaped the notice of the press. This included the separation of the *Schutzstaffel* or SS from the SA in November

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<sup>244</sup> "Not So Quiet," Manchester Guardian Weekly 19 December 1930, 483.

<sup>245</sup> Modris Ecksteins, "All Quiet on the Western Front and the Fate of a War," Journal of Contemporary History 15 (1980): 363.

<sup>246</sup> Hauner, 67.

<sup>247</sup> "Hitler Extols the Sword," New York Times 5 December 1930, 12.

1930.<sup>248</sup> Only one article had mentioned the SS by 1930. *The Times* explained that the group was the black shirted Nazi defense squads who supplied Hitler's bodyguards.<sup>249</sup> Led by Hitler devotee Heinrich Himmler, the SS would become the vanguard of the Nazi movement, eventually displacing the SA.<sup>250</sup>

In early 1931, the Western press expressed the hope that the Nazi party was beginning to decline. A tough stance by the federal government toward the National Socialists had supposedly weakened the party, and many argued that Nazi electoral support would subsequently falter. There was little hope of a political partnership, as Center party officials continued to resist consideration of any kind of alliance with the Nazis that might bring the party into a governing coalition. The *New York Times* relayed the opinion of some German newspapers that Hitler's movement had reached a high water mark, demonstrated by a decrease in its support in some district elections in Pomerania.<sup>251</sup>

The most serious piece of evidence that Western journalists claimed suggesting that the Nazis were weakening came in February 1931. On February 10, the National Socialist delegation in the *Reichstag* began a boycott of the legislature, refusing to attend. The Nazis left the *Reichstag* because of new parliamentary rules meant to speed up proceedings and cut down on the interference by any single delegation. Some reporters referred to it as a retreat in the face of a government standing firmly behind Brüning. *The Times* reported that the view of many other politicians was that the Nazis had not been effective

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<sup>248</sup> Hauner, 67.

<sup>249</sup> "The Rise of the Nazis; From Six to Six Million," *The Times* 18 September 1930, 11a.

<sup>250</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 301.

<sup>251</sup> "Centrists Ban Regime Including Hitlerites," *New York Times* 5 January 1931, 9; "Setback for Hitlerites," *New York Times* 11 January 1931, 56.

at all, and they chose to leave to end any further embarrassment in the legislature. The *New York Times* claimed that the actions of the Nazis had provided the German population evidence of their “schoolboy” platform: “The sober second thought of the nation is now against the Fascists.”<sup>252</sup> A series of events in April further strengthened the belief that the National Socialists were weakening.

On April 1, the political momentum of the NSDAP suffered a major setback. The Thuringian Interior Minister, Nazi member Wilhelm Frick, was forced to resign his post. The German People’s Party, with whom the Nazis had helped formed a government in Thuringia, forced Frick out.<sup>253</sup> Western journalists wrote that Frick had been ousted because he had proven difficult to work with and that he had worked solely for the benefit of the National Socialists. Apparently, Frick and other Nazis had even made attacks on the People’s Party, with whom they were aligned.<sup>254</sup> A *New York Times* editorial concerning Frick and Thuringia was titled optimistically “Hitler’s Ebb Tide.” Despite the title, the paper was skeptical that the event marked the beginning of the end for the Nazis. The editors emphasized that stabilization or retrogression might be better descriptions of what was happening to the National Socialists. The paper asserted that the Germans seemed to be coming to their senses, because as civilized people, they could not have gone on supporting the anti-Semitic campaigning of the Nazis. Such anti-Semitism was referred to as “...the utterance of unhappy and

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<sup>252</sup> “German Fascists’ Retreat; Nazis Retire from Parliament,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 13 February 1931, 130; “Common Sense in Germany,” *Washington Post* 12 February 1931, 6; “Nazis’ Boycott of Reichstag; Resort to the Country,” *The Times* 12 February 1931, 11b; “Curtius Versus Hitler,” *New York Times* 12 February 1931, 19.

<sup>253</sup> Feuchtwanger, 245.

<sup>254</sup> “Setback to Nazi Fortunes; Defeat of Dr. Frick,” *The Times* 2 April 1931, 9e; “Heavy Nazi Defeat; Domination ended in Thuringia,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 10 April 1931, 290.

illiterate peasant masses seeking an outlet, or the resource of unpopular dynasties and regimes looking for a scapegoat...”<sup>255</sup> Besides the removal of Frick from his ministerial position, a revolt by a section of the Berlin SA provided even more evidence of possible Nazi decline.

Many SA leaders were at odds with Hitler over his policy of coming to power through legal channels. The issue was partially responsible for the problems Hitler had with the SA in late 1930. The leader of the SA in Eastern Germany, Walter Stennes, advocated publicly in the Nazis’ Berlin newspaper, *Der Angriff*, the violent takeover of the government. Hitler had to reassure the public that his party had no such intentions, creating a tense relationship between the Berlin Storm Troopers and the party leadership.<sup>256</sup>

Further problems stemmed from the actions taken by the President. On March 28, 1931, von Hindenburg declared that he was going to begin ruling through presidential decree, cutting the *Reichstag* out of the electoral process as he had done in 1930. He empowered the police to crack down on political violence and propaganda throughout Germany, limiting civil rights as allowed by Article 48 of the Weimar constitution. The press interpreted this announcement as being directed at the Nazis, whose violent fights with the communists had begun to get out of hand.<sup>257</sup> The press saw the President’s decree as a serious blow to the Nazis, and Hitler appeared to share this view. In an article from the *Völkischer Beobachter* reprinted in *The Times*, Hitler announced that the

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<sup>255</sup> “Hitler’s Ebb Tide,” *New York Times* 3 April 1931, 23.

<sup>256</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 347, 349.

<sup>257</sup> “Von Hindenburg to Rule: Puts Curb on Civil Rights to End Political Violence,” *New York Times* 29 March 1931, 1; “Order by Decree,” *New York Times* 31 March 1931, 23.

President's actions were illegal and that the Nazi leader would attempt to overturn the decree in the Bavarian Supreme Court. Hitler nevertheless ordered his followers to comply with the edict and not create unnecessary problems.<sup>258</sup>

Hitler's pronouncement did not sit well with some in the SA, who were already perturbed by the emergency powers granted to the police to limit their ability to confront their political opponents.

Hitler moved to depose troublemakers within the NSDAP who might disobey his commands and bring harsh retribution from the federal government. To this end, at a meeting of party officials in Weimar, he removed Stennes as leader of the East German SA. Just after the decision had been made to dismiss Stennes, word was received that he and a loyal group of SA troops had taken over Nazi offices in Berlin.<sup>259</sup> Stennes was upset with Hitler's orders, and upon hearing of his dismissal he decided to take action against the party. He arranged for the publication of an entire edition of *Der Angriff* filled with attacks on Hitler. Knowing that the revolt could turn into a public relations nightmare, Hitler reaffirmed publicly his commitment to peace and declared that he would remove the radical elements of the SA. He demanded that all SA commanders personally pledge their loyalty to him and his leadership.<sup>260</sup> The Berlin police assisted the Nazis in removing the SA rebels from the party offices and support for Stennes fell apart quickly. Most of the SA leaders throughout the rest of the country

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<sup>258</sup> "Nazi and the German Emergency Decree," The Times 1 April 1931, 13e; "Hitler Plans to Test Hindenburg's Decree," New York Times 1 April 1931, 10.

<sup>259</sup> Evans, 273; Kershaw, Hitler, 349.

<sup>260</sup> "Rebels Break Away From Hitler Ranks," New York Times 3 April 1931, 9; "Hitler Will Purge Party of Radicals," New York Times 4 April 1931, 9; "The Nazi Split; 'Rebels' in Berlin Headquarters," The Times 4 April 1931, 9.

quickly signaled their support for Hitler, ending the crisis.<sup>261</sup> Taken with Frick's displacement, this uprising made some Western journalists believe the Nazis were falling apart. An astute Berlin politician clarified the situation though. A member of the Prussian political police told *Time* magazine that, despite such embarrassments, in his estimation the Nazis were only growing.<sup>262</sup> This official's statement was accurate, as the Nazis continued to accumulate electoral success at the state and local level.

While Western journalists wrote of the possible stagnation of the National Socialists, it was hard to dispute the success of the Nazis at the polls. These triumphs eventually forced the Western press to acknowledge that, if anything, the Nazis were only gaining in support from most sectors of German society. In January 1931, the *New York Times* hoped that a bad showing by the Nazis in Pomerania represented the party's high water mark, but just two months later the paper reported large Nazi gains in Brunswick. In that election, the Nazis polled 17,000 more votes than they had the previous September, taking many votes from the German middle class parties.<sup>263</sup>

After a setback in elections in Hesse in April, the Nazis had a major triumph in the state of Oldenburg. The returns made the Nazis the largest party in the state legislature, the first time they had accomplished this at any level. In the same election, the communists increased their share of the vote, demonstrating that German voters were flocking to the extreme political ideologies and away

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<sup>261</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 349-350.

<sup>262</sup> "Traitor Hitler!" *Time* April 13, 1931, (need page).

<sup>263</sup> "Setback for Hitlerites," *New York Times* 11 January 1931, 56; "Hitlerites Make Gain in Brunswick Poll," *New York Times* 2 March 1931, 8; "German Fascists Gain at Election," *Washington Post* 2 March 1931, 4.

from the center.<sup>264</sup> A *Manchester Guardian Weekly* editorial admitted that the tough stance assumed by the federal government towards the Nazis had no effect whatsoever on the NSDAP's popularity. Referring to the election in Oldenburg, the editors wrote that the middle class parties had lost half the support they had enjoyed only eight months before during the *Reichstag* election. Nazi policies seemed much more attractive to voters than the slow reforms endorsed by Brüning's government.<sup>265</sup> Nazi gains only accelerated following the Oldenburg elections.

It appeared by mid-1931 that the Nazis were heading for some type of influence in the government if their electoral support kept growing. Hitler reached out to some of the middle class leaders to demonstrate that he held no animosity towards their constituencies, even if he cared little for a parliamentary system. Throughout the summer, he toured Germany making contacts with industrial and financial leaders.<sup>266</sup> He believed that Nazi control of the government was close at hand. The September elections in Hamburg could only have reinforced the belief. The Nazis obtained 43 of 160 seats, bringing them close to the size of the socialist party in the state. This was a significant victory for the Nazi movement considering that urban Hamburg had traditionally voted for leftist parties.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> "Nazis' Slip Back in Hesse," *New York Times* 26 April 1931, e8; "A New Nazi Success; Largest Party in Oldenburg," *The Times* 19 May 1931, 15a.

<sup>265</sup> "The Progress of Hitlerism," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 22 May 1931, 403.

<sup>266</sup> Hauner, 71-72.

<sup>267</sup> "Extremist Gains in Hamburg," *The Times* 28 September 1931, 11e; "Nazis and Reds Gain Heavily in Hamburg Vote as Franco-German Amity is Sought in Berlin," *New York Times* 28 September 1931, 4; Hauner, 73.

In November the Nazis reversed the losses they had experienced earlier in the year in Hesse. In a new election they more than doubled their total vote from 137,000 to 300,000.<sup>268</sup> The *New York Times* maintained the belief that even with these gains the Nazis would never be able to field a majority in the national legislature. Nevertheless, in an opinion piece following the Hesse elections, the paper espoused the attitude that the Allied governments had to meet the threat of any Hitler-led government head on. The editorial made it clear that the aggressiveness of the Nazis should not cow the Western allies into concessions: “Not to be frightened by Hitler into surrender but not to be driven by him into coercive measures is the indicated course for the Allied Governments.”<sup>269</sup> Even at this early state, the journalists of the *New York Times* could tell that Nazi blustering might intimidate other nations frightful of war to back down and give in to Hitler’s demands.

The success of the Nazis in their drive to gain control of the German government led many Western journalists to consider what would happen in Germany should the Nazis take over. Not surprising given the disastrous worldwide economic circumstances, the press focused on the Nazi stance on reparations. *The Times* argued that it might be wise to reevaluate the situation in Germany, to assess the extent to which reparations were harming the country. But the Nazis did not wish to study the situation. In late November, Nazi officials

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<sup>268</sup> “Hitlerites Triumph in Hessian Election,” *New York Times* 16 November 1931, 1; “Elections in Hesse; Big Nazi Gains,” *The Times* 16 November 1931, 11b; “Hitlerites Sweep Election in Hesse; National Socialists Win 27 Mandates; Now Strongest Party in Diet,” *Washington Post* 16 November 1931, 1.

<sup>269</sup> “German Voters,” *New York Times* 9 December 1931, 24; “Another Hitler Threat,” *New York Times* 17 November 1931, 24.

such as Frick proclaimed that the party would not recognize any international financial agreements entered into by the Brüning government.<sup>270</sup> In an attempt to assuage fears of the international community, Hitler reportedly remarked that all of Germany's private debts would be fulfilled, and that only the politically imposed obligations would have to be removed. Hitler also sent one of his party leaders, Alfred Rosenberg, to England in an attempt to reassure the British government that the Nazis had nothing but legal, peaceful intentions when it came time for the Nazis to run Germany.<sup>271</sup> Rosenberg's mission was important to the Nazis in light of the possibly incriminating evidence found at the time in the German state of Hesse.

In late November 1931, Hessian government officials discovered a document belonging to the local Nazi leadership that supposedly exposed Hitler's claims of peace and legality as fraudulent. The document contained details of Nazi plans should an armed uprising occur.<sup>272</sup> Western journalists recounted the contents of the documents, observing that they were plans of action should a communist coup overtake the country. The plans called for the SA to overthrow the government by a counter-coup, and for any citizen disobeying orders from the Storm Troopers to be shot. The document also provided that the newly established dictatorship would abolish wage labor, force all able-bodied Germans, excluding Jews, into labor divisions, and institute a rationing system for food.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> "Palliative or Cure?" The Times 22 July 1931, 13b; "Prussian Diet Asks End of Reparation," New York Times 26 November 1931, 12.

<sup>271</sup> Guido Enderis, "Hitler Backs Debts, Bars Reparations; Sees Victory Soon," New York Times 5 December 1931, 1; P.J. Philip, "Sounds London and Paris," New York Times 5 December 1931, 8.

<sup>272</sup> Hauner, 74.

<sup>273</sup> "Repudiators," Time December 12, 1931, 18.

Hitler had no knowledge of the plans, which were known as the Boxheimer Documents, and they embarrassed the party at a time when legality was the proclaimed Nazi policy.<sup>274</sup> Hitler publicly denounced the documents. Once again, he ordered his followers to adhere to the party dictates and not involve themselves in unproductive violence when victory was seemingly so close at hand.<sup>275</sup>

Towards the end of 1931, some journalists began taking Hitler's talk of a third empire, or Third Reich, seriously. The first two empires were the Holy Roman Empire and the one formed by Otto von Bismarck in 1871 when Germany was unified under Kaiser Wilhelm I. Hitler claimed that he would maintain a form of German democracy, which he described as the "choice of a leader to whom unlimited authority is given." *New York Times* journalist Harold Callender wrote that such a powerful leader could repair all of Germany's ills through the imposition of order and discipline. This included the removal of inconvenient treaties, recovering lost territory, suppressing usury, "weed[ing] out all who are not pure-bred Germans..., and possibly re-establish[ing] the old German religion in place of an imported one of Semitic origin."<sup>276</sup> The idea of a third empire led by a strong leader was not novel to the National Socialist movement. It had existed for some time within ultra-nationalist circles within the country, as had the concept of a Germanic religion.<sup>277</sup> Despite these radical pronouncements, Hitler

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<sup>274</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 365.

<sup>275</sup> "Hitler Bids 'Nazis' Shun Violent Steps," *New York Times* 3 December 1931, 14.

<sup>276</sup> Fullbrook, 2-3; Harold Callender, "Germany Today: A Study in Contrasts," *New York Times* 16 August 1931, 68.

<sup>277</sup> References to a Third Reich had been widespread before Hitler, as had the concept of an ultimate ruler, or *Führer*, and of a renewal of a Germanic religion of some kind. The concept of a Germanic religion involved fusing some aspects of Christianity with the instinctive religious

did not address any specific elements of the NSDAP platform. In interviews with foreign journalists in December, he stressed the friendly intentions of the Nazis toward foreign nations, especially England, and the fact that the Nazis were purely a political and not militaristic movement. He refused in the interview with Callender to discuss openly the topic of anti-Semitism in the Nazi movement. When asked about it, Callender noted that Hitler skirted the issue. Hitler only replied that Germany was “cramped” with people and that the Germans could not even be the masters of themselves.<sup>278</sup> Other members of the Nazi party gave a clearer picture of the violent, racist intentions of the movement.

While Hitler maintained a somewhat moderate tone towards France, Gregor Strasser was reputed as stating that any kind of international agreement with France was madness, and that a new war between Germany and France was a foregone conclusion. He wanted Germany to seek out alliances with all of France’s enemies in preparation for the conflict.<sup>279</sup> Strasser made even more incendiary comments at a meeting of National Socialist Pharmacists and Doctors held in Leipzig early in December.<sup>280</sup> The *New York Times* report on the meeting was carried on the front page of the paper, and no other article from 1931

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interests of the German people. As conceived by German critic Paul de Lagarde, this religion would do away with what he referred to as Jewish abstractions and provide Germany with an assurance that it was destined for a cultural, spiritual, and moral renaissance under the guidance of a future great leader. Over time, the Nazis would bend these concepts to their own ends. See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 35-52, 240-241, 253-254.

<sup>278</sup> “Herr Hitler’s Policy; ‘Threshold of Power’; Reparations and Debt,” *The Times* 5 December 1931, 10d; Harold Callender, “Herr Hitler Replies to Some Fundamental Questions,” *New York Times* 20 December 1931, xx5.

<sup>279</sup> “Herr Hitler’s Claims; French Distrust of Nazi Policy,” *The Times* 7 December 1931, 11d; “German View: Herr Hitler and his Lieutenants,” *The Times* 7 December 1931, 11d.

<sup>280</sup> Strasser made this speech at the annual rally of the association on December 5. See Peter D. Stachura, *Gregor Strasser and the Rise of Nazism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 149 note 69.

displayed the core, fundamental nature of the Nazi party in such a distinct manner. Formed at the Nazi party gathering in Nuremberg in 1929, the Nazi Physicians' League was founded to help promulgate the inclusion of racial science into the mainstream and to help Hitler's party in all matters of health science and information. It was an outgrowth of the Nazi attempt to create a host of professional and social organizations meant to broaden the overall appeal of the party.<sup>281</sup> At the meeting, several statements were made that characterized what actions the Nazis would take once in power

According to the correspondent reporting on the meeting, Nazi officials asserted that racial purification would be the prime objective of the future Nazi regime. The reporter described one attendee's emphasis on the point: "The Nordic race – 'the finest flower on the tree of humanity,' as one speaker described it – it was said, must be bred and secure unquestioned predominance according the 'criteria of race hygiene and eugenics.'" Three tiers of races were described, placing the Nordic on top. Those placed on the second tier would be tolerated by the Nazis, but those on the bottom rung would be subjected to forced sterilization. After the cleansing of German society, the Nordic race would have every right to expand ruthlessly: "If the 'genuine' Germans so restored to their pristine purity found their dwelling place too narrow for life's needs...there would be nothing for them but conquer more room, sword in hand." Strasser gave a fiery speech in front of the assembled doctors, stating "...that when the 'Nazi' movement gained ascendancy it would restore to the German people their primitive vigor, would

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<sup>281</sup> Michael H. Kater, "The Nazi Physicians' League of 1929: Causes and Consequences," The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933 Thomas Childers, ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 147.

bring the women back from the factories and offices to the kitchen, would abolish 'Jewish abstractions' such as stock companies and trade unions and would liberate the people even against their will, from 'slavery.'"<sup>282</sup> The *New York Times* account presented a picture of the racially oriented social structure that the Nazis intended to create. It also demonstrated the long term goal of waging war to increase the living space for what the Nazis considered the superior Nordic race.

Following the elections of September 1930, the Nazis emerged as a powerful force within German politics, a position they maintained from that point on. For the British and American journalists covering the situation in Germany, it appeared that the Nazis were simply the beneficiaries of the crushing economic problems afflicting the rest of the globe, and to some extent this was the case. The Western press was hopeful that German voters would come to their senses and realize that the Nazis represented only negative and violent possibilities. British and American writers were dismayed as support for the National Socialists held up in state and local elections throughout the year. The fear of a German regime bent on violent repudiation of the agreements made in the Versailles also was a source of concern. During the officers' trial in Leipzig, Hitler explicitly outlined the road he would lead Germany down when the Nazis came to power. Though he shied away from violent proclamations to foreign correspondents afterwards, the Western press was perceptive enough to realize that this was an

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<sup>282</sup> "'Nazis' Would Assure Nordic Dominance, Sterilize Some Races, Ban Miscegenation," New York Times 8 December 1931, 1.

act, and that the violent, racist speeches of his subordinates were more representative of what National Socialism stood for.

The American press did not display sympathy or approval of the Nazis, and it became especially vitriolic towards the movement after Hitler's speech in Leipzig. This was true of *The Times* as well, which displayed no conciliatory view toward the Nazis. Just as it had early in the 1920s, the *New York Times* was the only newspaper visibly concerned with the National Socialists' anti-Semitic and racist policies. The paper illustrated the racist plans of party's Physicians League, and often expressed the fears of the New York Jewish community about Hitler's intentions toward German and European Jews.<sup>283</sup>

Even though other media sources did not address Nazi racism so explicitly, all were opposed to the Nazis ever coming to power. The Western press placed its hopes in the Weimar system, believing that the democratic government and parties would never allow the Nazis any say in the government. Most Western journalists believed democracy was somehow still functioning in Germany, even though that had not been true since mid-1930. By the end of 1931, democracy in Germany no longer operated effectively, as seen in the constant use the president made of Article 48, which marginalized the *Reichstag*. The only question that remained was what would follow. From January 1932

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<sup>283</sup> "Dr. Newman Inducted at Rodeph Shalom," *New York Times* 20 September 1930, 24; "Jews Urged to Unite to Resist Hitlerism," *New York Times* 20 October 1930, 16; "A Menace to Jews Seen if Hitler Wins," *New York Times* 13 December 1931, 16; "Wise Deplores Rise of Anti-Semitism," *New York Times* 28 December 1930, 12; Much of the work done to raise awareness in the U.S. of the threat posed by the Nazis to the Jewish community was done by Rabbi Stephen Wise. He recognized the serious implications for Germany and the world should the Nazis come to power when many others were yet to see it. See Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1982), 260-261.

to January 1933, the Nazis maintained their adherence to legislative decorum, while still engaging in violent assaults on their political enemies, and such a policy eventually gave them control of Germany.



## CHAPTER SIX

### A LEAP INTO THE DARK: JANUARY 1932 TO JANUARY 1933

The Western press hoped that the officials of the Weimar Republic would be able to manage the National Socialists and the threat they posed despite continuing economic unrest. Following the *Reichstag* election of September 1930, fears of Nazi participation in the government became common, but the party had not gained any significant hold on power. Though many American and British journalists knew that support for the Nazis had grown since the 1930 election, they hoped that the movement would be contained in 1932 as it had been the previous sixteen months. As the Great Depression continued to make life difficult around the world, the Western press focused on Germany's political life as never before. The press knew that Germany's political troubles could have dire consequences if Hitler was allowed to bring his party to power.

Nineteen thirty-two was dominated by a series of significant German elections, which the American and British press covered thoroughly. Elections for the German presidency took place in March and April, and the Austrian-born Hitler became a nominee after obtaining German citizenship. When he was defeated in the first presidential election and its subsequent runoff, the Western press believed this was a positive sign, claiming once again that Nazism was in decline. The presidential election was followed by state elections in April and *Reichstag* elections at the end of July, which proved that the Nazis were not weakening. The events of the year demonstrated that German democracy was

finished, as president von Hindenburg used his emergency executive powers in an attempt to alleviate the country's problems by installing two new chancellors. The strategy did not work, however, and, in January 1933, the aging former field marshal was forced to consider the one candidate many thought could impose order and reestablish stability in Germany. That month, Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor of Germany and hopes of a moderate future for the German government were diminished.

As the New Year began, Hitler appeared confident that by year's end the Nazi party would be the dominant power in Germany. In his New Year's message to party members, he declared that 1932 would be the hardest time of struggle yet, but that the party would persevere through all hardships. To ease such difficulties, he ordered the party faithful to adhere to the laws of the state scrupulously.<sup>284</sup> His hopes were encouraged by the surge in Nazi membership that had taken place the previous year. By the beginning of 1932, 5.7 million Germans were unemployed and the official membership of the NSDAP had grown to 806,300.<sup>285</sup> Hitler knew that the path to power would not be easy, but as long as the German economic and political situation remained grim, the Nazis would have a chance at taking over the government.

The *New York Times* used the relative political inactivity during the first week of the New Year to present an analysis of the situation in Germany relating to the Nazis. Correspondent Harold Callender wrote that the Nazis were the result of two factors that the world had yet to grasp – wounded national pride as a result

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<sup>284</sup>“Trotsky Against Hitler,” *Time* January 11, 1932, 22; “Through Hell to Victory,” *The Times* 1 January 1932, 9c.

<sup>285</sup> Hauner, 76.

of World War I and the terrible effects of the economic crisis. The analysis was not groundbreaking, but Callender recognized how both problems were wrapped up in the issue of reparations stemming from the Treaty of Versailles. He argued that the environment created by brooding for ten years over the defeat had helped create the Nazis, who appealed to a wide range of the German population as no other party did. The article included statements by John Maynard Keynes, the prominent British economist, who argued that given what Germany had been through, it was not unusual that the country behaved as it did. Some in Britain began to think that reparations had created the severe worldwide crisis and should end, at least for an extended period, as outlined by an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*.<sup>286</sup> An opinion piece in the *Washington Post* opposed any end to reparations staunchly, though, arguing that some in Europe were using Hitler as a bogeyman to help release them from debt to the United States.<sup>287</sup> Such attitudes demonstrated a clear lack of cohesion and resolution on the part of the Allies concerning both the war debt situation and Germany. By 1932, any economic concessions or aid to Germany would not have been enough to prevent the sequence of political events that took place considering how much had been done already to help relieve Germany's debts.

American and British journalists did not have to wait long for the beginning of intense political turmoil in Germany. It would characterize most of 1932. Plans had been underway since the fall of 1931 to find a way to keep German president Hindenburg in office, as his term was due to expire early in

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<sup>286</sup> Harold Callender, "The Nazi Mind," *New York Times* 3 January 1932, sm3; "Let the Creditors Yield," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 15 January 1932, 42.

<sup>287</sup> "Squirming Debtors," *Washington Post* 10 January 1932, 6.

March. Von Hindenburg hoped that his supporters could find a way to extend his term without an election. The plan they came up with called for the *Reichstag* to confirm von Hindenburg as president and extend his term by changing the constitution. Any alteration in the constitution required the sanction of at least two-thirds of the body, and this meant that the Nazis and the Nationalist party would have to support the measure for it to succeed.<sup>288</sup> On January 5, Hitler received a message from Wilhelm Groener, the minister of the interior and defense, requesting the National Socialist leader's presence at an important meeting in Berlin. Hitler was overjoyed, believing that he was now an indispensable figure in federal decision-making. On January 6 and 7, he met with most of the government federal leadership, including Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, who attempted to gain his support on von Hindenburg's behalf.<sup>289</sup> The Western press learned shortly thereafter that the fate of von Hindenburg rested in the hands of the National Socialists.

The meeting between Brüning and Hitler was covered prominently in both Great Britain and the United States. Journalists reported that Brüning had asked for Hitler's cooperation in the *Reichstag* to prolong the term of von Hindenburg's presidency. Some saw the proposition as proof of the growing power of the National Socialists, while others believed Brüning was attempting to hamstring Hitler by forcing him to pass judgment on von Hindenburg. *Time* magazine noted that choosing to support or oppose von Hindenburg held risks for Hitler. If he opposed the plan, it would appear that he stood against a war hero. If he

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<sup>288</sup> Evans, 277; Kershaw, Hitler, 360-361.

<sup>289</sup> Hauner, 76.

accepted, it would rob him of the opportunity to gain power through legal means, possibly in the upcoming presidential and Prussian elections. Hitler was noncommittal, reserving any decision until he had spoken to other nationalist leaders.<sup>290</sup> A *New York Times* editorial emphasized the possible risks to Hitler inherent in the plan, and it argued that Brüning was thinking only of the welfare of the country and not trying to stave off the NSDAP. The paper contended that should the Nazis ever come to power, reparations and arms negotiations would become difficult to carry out. The editorial expressed the opinion that Hitler desired power so badly, though, that he would moderate some of his radical positions. To the *New York Times*, this made an agreement on the issue of von Hindenburg's presidency more likely.<sup>291</sup> Once again the Western Press demonstrated the stance that power and moderation went hand in hand. Hitler was unwilling to compromise for the good of Germany, however, especially given the strong electoral position of the party.

He took several days to ponder the offer made by Brüning, but finally decided that the chancellor's plan would give away too much power. Hitler told the chancellor that his party would support the plan to extend the president's term only if the president dissolved the *Reichstag* and the Prussian Diet, held new elections, and allowed those newly elected bodies to vote on the matter. The chancellor refused and discussions ended.<sup>292</sup> Once negotiations over the matter

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<sup>290</sup> Guido Enderis, "Bruening Asks Help of Hitler to Extend Hindenburg's Term," *New York Times* 8 January 1932, 1; "Outlook in Germany; Dr. Brüning and Herr Hitler," *The Times* 8 January 1932, 9a; "Hitler to Rule on Hindenburg Office Tenure," *Washington Post* 8 January 1932, 1; "May Anticipated," *Time* January 18, 1932, 14.

<sup>291</sup> "Bruening Talks to Hitler," *New York Times* 9 December 1932, 16.

<sup>292</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 361.

closed, Hitler attempted to cast his party in a favorable light, and his version of the negotiations was disseminated in the first reports of the Brüning plan's failure. The explanation given by the Nazis for opposing the plan was that, having considered the maneuver unconstitutional on the part of the chancellor, it would not violate the due process of presidential selection.<sup>293</sup> Hitler used the failed negotiations to appear as though he cared about the German constitution and legal procedure.

The Nazis' rejection led to new appraisals of the strength of the party, and renewed hopes that the movement might be faltering. It was well known that Hitler believed he could do well in the upcoming elections and that he wanted to keep out of any entangling political alliances. There was optimism that his popularity had reached its limits, though, as the Nazis had made no headway supposedly in recruiting voters from socialist and communist quarters. A *New York Times* editorial placed the Nazis' maximum possible support at around 35-40 percent of the German electorate, which would keep them from obtaining a majority. Articles from the *Washington Post* and the American publication *Current History* emphasized the view that Nazi electoral support had reached its absolute limits, and though new elections would increase the party's representation at the national and state level, it would never obtain control.<sup>294</sup> The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* reported that in Germany it had become

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<sup>293</sup> "Say they Want Him Re-Elected," *New York Times* 12 January 1932, 18; "German President's Term of Office," *The Times* 13 January 1932, 11c; "Hitler's Reply to Dr. Brüning; 'Hitler Blocks Longer Tenure of Hindenburg,'" *Washington Post* 12 January 1932, 1; "Democracy Must Vanish," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 22 January 1932, 65.

<sup>294</sup> "Hitler Votes," *New York Times* 12 January 1932, 22; "Hitler Bogey Grows Less," *Washington Post* 10 February 1932, 6; Gerhard Friters, "Who are the German Fascists?," *Current History*, January 1932, 536.

fashionable to proclaim that the Nazis had played out and that the fear inspired by Hitler's movement was receding. The article was tentative about proclaiming an early demise for the movement, however, having learned a lesson from doing so in early 1931. The *Guardian* piece recognized that the fight in Germany between the republican forces and the Nazis was far from over, declaring that the fate of Western civilization might hinge on the outcome.<sup>295</sup> Much attention would be focused on the upcoming campaign and election for the German presidency.

After refusing the request made by Brüning, the Nazis dealt with the question of what to do about the presidential election. The party had not named a nominee, and Hitler was reportedly glum about the topic.<sup>296</sup> For the rest of January, the Nazis remained quiet about the election, preferring to spar with Brüning over the legality of the presidential extension.<sup>297</sup> The relative calm gave the Western press an opportunity to focus on some of the more obscure aspects of the party, which would get lost in the tumult of the upcoming elections. *The Times* reported one such piece of information, which involved the new marriage regulations placed on members of the Nazi protection squads, the SS. The regulations required the bride and groom to provide ancestries and biographies for verification by the organization's racial office. The article reported that once the marriage applications were reviewed, "Permission [to marry] will be granted or refused 'according to racial and hereditary considerations alone.'"<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> "Hitler's Hold Beginning to Weaken," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 22 January 1932, 65.

<sup>296</sup> "Hep! Hep! Oberst Epp!," *Time* January 25, 1932, 16.

<sup>297</sup> "Nazis and the German Presidency," *The Times* 19 January 1932, 11b; "Hitler's Statements Discounted in Berlin," *New York Times* 19 January 1932, 16.

<sup>298</sup> "Nazi 'Marriage' Licenses," *The Times* 12 January 1932, 11f.

Another account from January 1932 involved the death of a teenager who worked disseminating Nazi literature in Berlin. While news of political murders involving the Nazis was not new, both the *New York Times* and *The Times* reported on the young man's murder at the hands of communist enemies.<sup>299</sup> Those publications emphasized the story probably because of his age, but they had no way of knowing that the Nazis would turn the death of this young Hitler Youth, Herbert Norkus, into a propaganda tool. Both Hitler and Goebbels used Norkus as an example of sacrifice and devotion, and the young man's story was turned into a major propaganda film in 1933.<sup>300</sup> It was a small part of the propaganda machine unleashed upon Germany by the Nazis when Hitler decided to run for the office of president.

It was difficult for Hitler to decide to seek the presidency. He knew his followers expected it of him, but he also understood that if von Hindenburg ran against him, he would stand no chance against the popular leader.<sup>301</sup> Von Hindenburg announced his intentions to seek reelection on February 15, a move hailed by the *New York Times* as "a notable victory for the cause of peace and moderation in Germany and therefore in Europe as a whole."<sup>302</sup> His candidacy was seen as a great sacrifice by the president, who was eighty-four years old at the time, in order to serve his country during a time of great upheaval. Most expected that von Hindenburg would die in office, causing the respect many Germans held

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<sup>299</sup> "'Nazi,' 16, Killed by Reds," *New York Times* 25 January 1932, 6; "Nazi Schoolboy Killed in Berlin," *The Times* 26 January 1932, 11d.

<sup>300</sup> Jay W. Baird, "From Berlin to Neubabelsberg: Nazi Film Propaganda and Hitler Youth Quex," *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 495, 501-502.

<sup>301</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 361.

<sup>302</sup> "Hindenburg Against Fascism," *New York Times* 16 February 1932, 20; Guido Enderis, "Hindenburg Agrees to Seek Re-Election," *New York Times* 16 February 1932, 1.

for him reportedly to grow.<sup>303</sup> The threat of an extremist government of one form or another ran deep among Western journalists who were willing to support the election of a so-called “moderate” like von Hindenburg.

Hitler had discussed the possibility of running for the presidency with Goebbels in early February, but he took several weeks to decide. He was not a German citizen and thus unable to run for the office.<sup>304</sup> The question of his citizenship had been a topic of the Western press since the mid-1920s, and it reported recent rumors that Wilhelm Frick had secretly given Hitler citizenship by appointing him as a Thuringian police official in the summer of 1930. There was no truth to the story, however, as Hitler decided against such a course of action when Frick proposed it.<sup>305</sup> Hitler did decide to use the same maneuver to gain citizenship though. The state government of Brunswick was dominated by the National Socialists, and the party arranged for Hitler to be made an attaché for that state’s government delegation in Berlin.<sup>306</sup> Once he had sworn to defend the Weimar constitution as a part of his naturalization, the way was clear for his presidential candidacy.

Goebbels announced Hitler’s candidacy several days before Hitler confirmed the decision officially. Hitler ran as a Nazi candidate alone instead of

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<sup>303</sup> “Nominations,” Time February 21, 1932, 20; “President von Hindenburg,” Washington Post 16 February 1932, 6.

<sup>304</sup> Hauner, 77.

<sup>305</sup> “Herr Hitler and the Presidency; Reported Secret Move for Citizenship,” The Times 4 February 1932, 11b; Guido Enderis, “Charge Hitler got Citizenship by Ruse,” New York Times 4 February 1932, 8; “Hitler Naturalization Comedy; Herr Frick’s Explanation,” The Times 5 February 1932, 11b.

<sup>306</sup> “Herr Hitler and German Citizenship; A Brunswick Appointment,” The Times 26 February 1932, 11d.

running as a so-called nationalist candidate, which had been a brief possibility.<sup>307</sup> During his official acceptance speech for the Nazi nomination, Hitler claimed that the hated Weimar system of November 9, 1918 was at stake. He declared that the election would be the beginning of the destruction of the republic, which he associated with the surrender of Germany and the country's problems thereafter. He laid down an ultimatum to the only other real candidate in the election, von Hindenburg: "Old man, you are too venerable in our eyes for those whom we want to destroy to hide behind you. We are sorry, but you must step aside, for the others want a fight and we do too."<sup>308</sup> Hitler's words were an accurate description of the two blocks that opposed each other in the upcoming election. The supporters of moderation such as the Catholic Center party and the socialists stood behind von Hindenburg, while the extreme conservative nationalists supported Hitler almost exclusively.<sup>309</sup> The campaign was short but intense for the country and the American and British correspondents reporting on it.

The reaction from the Western press toward Hitler's candidacy ranged from incredulous to derisive. *Time* magazine called the nomination risky, while the *Washington Post* took a much firmer tone just before the vote: "In allowing himself to be drawn into the presidential race Adolf Hitler made the greatest mistake of his career. He will be hopelessly defeated, and the prestige of his party in the *Reichstag* will doubtless undergo a considerable shrinkage."<sup>310</sup> Some saw

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<sup>307</sup> "German Presidency; Herr Hitler to be a Candidate," *The Times* 23 February 1932, 14d; Guido Enderis, "Hitler Enters Race for the Presidency," *New York Times* 23 February 1932, 9; "Fascist Leader Decides to Try Race for Presidency," *Washington Post* 23 February 1932, 1.

<sup>308</sup> "German Presidency; Election Campaign Begun," *The Times* 29 February 1932, 11c.

<sup>309</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 362.

<sup>310</sup> "Nominations," *Time* February 21, 1932, 20; "President von Hindenburg," *Washington Post* 16 September 1932, 6.

the upcoming election as an indication of the path that German history was taking. American journalist W.H. Hale noted that 1932 marked both the ten-year anniversary of Hitler's first widespread notice by the public as well as the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the famous German poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Hale argued that a cult had developed around both men, calling the Germany that followed Goethe studious and conservative, while the Germany following Hitler was ruthless and fanatical. Hale maintained that the future of Europe rested upon the struggle between what he called the Goethe- Brüning faction and the Hitlerists.<sup>311</sup>

Hitler's candidacy sparked a wave of new recognition in the popular Western periodicals. Generally articles sought to describe what the Nazis stood for and how they had come to enjoy such a high level of support. Writing for *Scribner's Magazine*, William C. White emphasized the religious fervor surrounding Hitler. He recounted how a little girl hailed Hitler in the same fervent way as did SA troops, and how Hitler saluted the girl back with no sign of emotion. Referring to Hitler as a self-proclaimed reformer, White noted that he possessed the most important characteristic required by zealous reformers – belief in his own infallibility. The article observed that Hitler's critics constantly attacked his lack of a concrete program, but White argued that he did not need one. Much like other pseudo-religious figures, Hitler did not need to know the specific way to the alleged Promised Land, only that it existed. White was skeptical about whether Hitler could maintain his control of the party, though, as

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<sup>311</sup> W.H. Hale, "Ten Years of Hitler; One Hundred of Goethe," The Nation March 16, 1932, 307-8.

it was made up of such a diverse range of supporters. White pointed that many in the wings of the movement, such as former army officers or industrialist supporters, were waiting to usurp power from Hitler should the Nazis succeed in taking control of Germany.<sup>312</sup> White's treatment of the National Socialists conveyed the depth of pious devotion surrounding Hitler, much of which was a product of Nazi propaganda but was skeptical about whether or not his charisma could keep the party and country unified under this leadership.

Also journalist Nicholas Fairweather attempted to explain Hitler and the National Socialist movement to his audience, writing a two-part piece in *The Atlantic Monthly* on the Nazis in March and April 1932. Fairweather relied on *Mein Kampf* for much of his information. Hitler's autobiography glorified his role in the creation and rise of the movement, and Fairweather faithfully recounted some of the myths that Hitler created about himself, including his fabricated claim to have started the National Socialist movement.<sup>313</sup> Still, Fairweather's explanation of the principles explained in the book had its benefits. He laid out some of the most fundamental and important ideological underpinnings of National Socialism more effectively than most journalists had been able to do. He called Hitler's most important policy his "violent racial nationalism which springs from his conviction that the Aryan stocks in general, and the Germans in particular, are a chosen people in whose victorious survival the divine purposes are bound up." But Fairweather placed Hitler's hatred of Marxism ahead of his hatred of the Jews, likely because of party efforts during the

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<sup>312</sup> William C. White, "Hail Hitler," *Scribner's Magazine*, April 1932, 229-231.

<sup>313</sup> Nicholas Fairweather, "Hitler and Hitlerism: A Man of Destiny," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1932, 387.

early 1930s to downplay its anti-Semitic aspects and emphasize its anti-Bolshevism.<sup>314</sup> The article presented the party's intentions concerning France and German foreign policy once in power bluntly: "But when the time comes, when power at last returns to a Hitlerized Germany, then France must be crushed so that Germany may begin her conquest of land to the east."<sup>315</sup>

Hitler himself attempted to explain to Westerners that a Nazi takeover of Germany would not portend such aggression. In an interview for *Collier's* magazine with T.R. Ybarra, who had covered the 1923 *Putsch* trial for the *New York Times*, he claimed that Americans had been deceived about the Nazis. Those who thought Nazi control would be detrimental to Germany and its foreign relations had been misled by meddlers intent on keeping Germany submissive. Hitler told Ybarra that he hoped the US would be able to extricate itself from such a spirit of hatred created by France. In spite of Hitler's claims, Ybarra attempted to explain what would happen inside Germany once the party took control. He wrote that the Nazis "...will, by means of a ruthless house-cleaning, eliminate the ascendancy of elements in her population which, to Hitler's way of thinking, are a liability." Ybarra did not point out that this referred almost certainly to German Jews and communists. In summing up Hitler's political prospects, Ybarra believed that the only way the Nazis could come to power would be if the party moderated its extreme policies. Should the Nazis come to power in their current extremist form it would mean that either France had acquiesced to Hitler or that

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 380-381.

<sup>315</sup> Nicholas Fairweather, "Hitler and Hitlerism: Germany Under the Nazis," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1932, 516.

the Allies would have to act.<sup>316</sup> Ybarra's analysis was correct in this regard, as France and the other Allies did nothing once Hitler came to power in 1933.

In February 1932, however, it appeared that Hitler had little hope in the presidential election against the venerable von Hindenburg, who was extremely popular.<sup>317</sup> It was difficult for the Nazis to attack him outright, because von Hindenburg carried great respect among the German right. Just after Hitler announced his intention to run, Goebbels took the offensive in the *Reichstag*, where he was a member of the National Socialist delegation. He intimated that von Hindenburg had ties to socialism. Also, he declared that the Nazis would have nothing to do with the Brüning government since, in reference to Hitler, "the man of tomorrow is coming." His statement sparked a fist-fight within the legislature with Nazi rivals, resulting in Goebbels's suspension from the body for the rest of that day's session.<sup>318</sup> Goebbels was not creating a total fabrication since von Hindenburg, much to his own displeasure, had to rely heavily on the support of the Social Democratic party for which he had little respect.<sup>319</sup> The incident represented the characteristic struggle of the presidential campaign presented in the Western press. Journalists found it incredulous when Hitler wrote a letter asking von Hindenburg for a chivalrous campaign without slanderous propaganda when the Nazis themselves employed such tactics

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<sup>316</sup> T.R. Ybarra, "Germany's Brown Shirts," *Collier's*, March 11, 1932, 11, 49.

<sup>317</sup> Broszat, 109.

<sup>318</sup> "Reichstag Ejects Hitler's Chief Aide," *New York Times* 24 February 1932, 11; "Stormy Scene in Reichstag; Nazi Spokesman Ejected," *The Times* 24 February 1932, 11b; "German Presidency; Herr Hitler's Naturalisation(sic)," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 26 February 1932, 166.

<sup>319</sup> Broszat, 109.

continually.<sup>320</sup> Von Hindenburg's camp had little to fear from Hitler's propaganda machine, though, as the President was almost guaranteed re-election.

Nonetheless, Hitler and his supporters were confident that the election, to be held on March 13, would bring the party to preeminence. The party launched a vast propaganda campaign, and Hitler spoke in front of large crowds in twelve of the country's largest cities.<sup>321</sup> Though *The Times* noted that a surprising surge of support for Hitler was not out of the question since the party had sprung an electoral surprise once before, in September 1930, others were not so reticent. The *Washington Post* declared that German voters had a clear choice between von Hindenburg or the sure chaos the Nazi leader represented. The paper believed that many in Germany would, in retrospect, look back in thanks to the day when Hitler decided to throw his hat into the presidential competition inasmuch as it would mark his party's downfall.<sup>322</sup> The Western press was relieved when the *Post's* prediction for the election came to pass.

Because of a constitutional requirement, the first election on March 13 was not decisive, but it did produce a victory for von Hindenburg. He received in excess of 18 million votes in what was described as a relatively peaceful contest. However, the president failed to obtain an outright majority required by law, lacking only 170,000 votes. A second election had to be held on April 10. For the Nazis, the first election represented something of a disappointment, because Hitler did not receive the 13.5 million votes he boasted that he would accrue.

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<sup>320</sup> "German Presidency; Herr Hitler Rebuked by General Groener," *The Times* 7 March 1932, 11c.

<sup>321</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 362.

<sup>322</sup> "President of Germany; To-Morrow's Election; Von Hindenburg's Chances; Nazi Progress," *The Times* 12 March 1932, 12a,b; "Hindenburg or Chaos," *Washington Post* 1 March 1932, 6.

Instead, he received less than 12 million votes, which came as a surprise to some writers.<sup>323</sup> The vote was received with approval in the United States and France. The American government was pleased that a Nazi platform of debt repudiation would not be allowed to come to the forefront in Germany. The Italian press attempted to bend the results in Hitler's favor, noting that more than half the country had voted against the president.<sup>324</sup> Western press opinion was elated at the outcome, proclaiming German moderation had prevailed.

The American press seemed certain the von Hindenburg would win the run-off election, ensuring Germany's safety from a radical Nazi government. The *Washington Post* called the first election "...cause for felicitation, not only to Germany, but to the world. It is one more gratifying proof that the forces of disintegration, repudiation and reaction...are not as strong as their boasts have made them seem." The paper assumed that Europe could go on with its efforts to solve various problems without fear of a German agitator initiating a new conflict.<sup>325</sup> The *New York Times* believed the election proved that estimates of Hitler's support had been exaggerated and that he had reached the full extent of his electoral strength. It found von Hindenburg's support astounding given the economic circumstances and noted about his election that "The traditional stability of the German character is shown in the survival of the democratic

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<sup>323</sup> Frederick T. Birchall, "President has 18,661,736," *New York Times* 14 March 1932, 1; "The German Election; Choice of a President; Hindenburg's Poll; Second Ballot Necessary," *The Times* 14 March 1932, 14a; "Hindenburg Far Ahead But Fails at the Election; Runoff is Set for April," *Washington Post* 14 March 1932, 1; "Vive Hindenburg!," *Time* March 21, 1932, 14; "Reich Goes to Polls with Few Disorders," *New York Times* 14 March 1932, 8.

<sup>324</sup> "Result in Germany Elates Washington," *New York Times* 14 March 1932, 8; "Paris Acclaims Setback Apparently Given Hitler," *Washington Post* 14 March 1932, 1; "The German Election; Italian Sympathy with Herr Hitler," *The Times* 15 March 1932, 13d.

<sup>325</sup> "A Rational Germany," *Washington Post* 14 March 1932, 6.

Weimar Coalition after a dozen years in power.”<sup>326</sup> Fear of the consequences of an extreme German government was belied in such articles, which were supportive of the security that von Hindenburg represented. He had been elected in 1925 as a staunch opponent of democratic government, and German nationalists had expected he would roll back the liberal policies of the Weimar Republic.<sup>327</sup> Hope that he was a great champion of moderation and democracy was misplaced. In Great Britain, examinations of the election were no less laudatory than those in the United States.

*The Times* called the election an indication that moderation and continuity was winning out over extremism and abrupt change. An editorial piece discussing the election observed that voting patterns had shifted dramatically since 1925, however, with many of the nationalist supporters von Hindenburg had enjoyed that year swinging behind Hitler. The newspaper was reticent to proclaim an end to all threats to German democracy, preferring to call it a good start in the battle for “orderly progress and normal evolution.”<sup>328</sup> A *Manchester Guardian Weekly* editorial reflected the *The Times*’s stance. The *Guardian Weekly* appeared confident that even if all the voters from other small nationalist parties supported Hitler, von Hindenburg would still be successful on the second ballot. The vote in the initial election seemed to indicate that Hitler’s movement had hit a wall as far as the party’s growth was concerned, and that the party might have stalled. Another article explained that many Germans were questioning whether or not the Nazis could ever come to power since a Nazi majority in the

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<sup>326</sup> “German Republicanism,” *New York Times* 15 March 1932, 20.

<sup>327</sup> Fritzsche, 165-166.

<sup>328</sup> “A Battle Well Begun,” *The Times* 15 March 1932, 15b.

*Reichstag* now appeared to be an impossibility. Two years after the September 1930 election that swept the Nazis to prominence, the party had gained the support of barely a third of the voting population.<sup>329</sup> The struggle for stability in Germany was far from over, however, and the Nazis continued their intense campaigning efforts in further elections.

After the results of the first round of the presidential elections were announced, Hitler's camp was disappointed that its leader had not won the victory as predicted. The party was nevertheless ready to wage an even more aggressive campaign to make a better showing in the April run-off.<sup>330</sup> The Nazis used a new tactic to spread Hitler's message. In order to cover the largest amount of a territory possible, Hitler rented an airplane to visit several major cities, delivering more than 46 speeches in an effort that gained international attention.<sup>331</sup> An English journalist observing one of Hitler's campaign stops wrote that the Nazis had little to learn about stagecraft, stating they had put on an impressive spectacle to win over their audience. A further indicator of the curiosity surrounding the election was an American article that considered the electoral impact of a change in Hitler's hairstyle.<sup>332</sup>

Nazi opponents were also hard at work to discredit Hitler. Chancellor Brüning declared publicly that if the Nazis ever came to power, the German mark would experience a disastrous fall because of a lack of international confidence.

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<sup>329</sup> "The German Presidential Election," Manchester Guardian Weekly 18 March 1932, 222; "The German Outlook," Manchester Guardian Weekly 18 March 1932, 230.

<sup>330</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 362-363.

<sup>331</sup> Evans, 281; "Hitler, On Air Tour, is Hailed by 200,000," Washington Post 6 April 1932, 1.

<sup>332</sup> "Presidency in Germany; Nazi Campaign," The Times 5 April 1932, 14e; "Political Effect Seen in Hitler's Haircut," Washington Post 3 April 1932, 7.

Reports also appeared concerning Hitler's father, Alois, revealing he had changed his name and claiming he had been a friend to Jews and disliked Prussians.<sup>333</sup>

The report may have held some truth, in that Hitler's father had changed his last name. He supported a political party that was loyal to the Austrian Emperor and admitted Jews to membership, although his specific views were never known.<sup>334</sup>

It was an attempt to discredit Hitler with his radical followers just before the election. The bid to weaken the Nazis was not successful, and while Hitler could not hope to defeat von Hindenburg, the Nazi propaganda machine helped increase his showing substantially.

The significance of the election was not lost on the Nazis. The momentum that the election provided the NSDAP was important because of the state elections to be held in Prussia on April 24.<sup>335</sup> In the second presidential election, von Hindenburg won an outright majority with over 19 million votes, entitling him to another seven-year term. The Nazis had increased Hitler's support to close to 13.5 million, however, providing a surge of confidence going into the elections in the largest German state.<sup>336</sup> Some of Germany's neighbors observed the Nazi gains with trepidation, but the Western press greeted the result much as it had the first election.<sup>337</sup> The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* attempted to downplay the fact that von Hindenburg's overall vote total increased less than was hoped, while

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<sup>333</sup> "See Mark's Crash if Hitler Wins," New York Times 6 April 1932, 11; "German Presidency," The Times 7 April 1932, 11c; "Says Hitler's Father Changed Name from Schuecklgruber," New York Times 9 April 1932, 1.

<sup>334</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 5, 62.

<sup>335</sup> "The German Duel," New York Times 10 April 1932, e1; Broszat, 113.

<sup>336</sup> "President of Germany; Von Hindenburg Re-Elected; Nearly 6,000,000 Majority; The Hitler Vote," The Times 11 April 1932, 12a; "Nazi Confidence," The Times 11 April 1932, 12b; "Hitler Stopped?," Time April 18, 1932, 15-16.

<sup>337</sup> "French Feel Alarm over Hitler's Gains," New York Times 12 April 1932, 10; "Hitler's Gains Disturb the Dutch," New York Times 12 April 1932, 10.

the *Washington Post* emphasized that Europe could look forward to a period of confidence in the stability of the German government.<sup>338</sup>

The *New York Times* asserted that von Hindenburg's re-election was evidence that the Germans wanted to maintain their republic. The election did not dispel the threat of Hitler and his party in the paper's opinion because there was still pervasive discontent in Germany. A *Times* editorial considered the election an indication of Germany's good sense, but it nonetheless raised fears about the upcoming elections in Germany's largest state, Prussia. Hitler's total support had risen even more than von Hindenburg's in absolute terms. The paper noted, "Herr Adolf Hitler and the movement for which he stands are not crushed. This issue is still open in German between the forces of continuity and of disruption, of moderation and violence," and they would be tested in the upcoming vote.<sup>339</sup> The struggle in Germany now moved to parliamentary elections, scheduled in late April for Prussia and several other German states.

Before the Prussian elections, Brüning and Groener decided to place a ban on the Nazi SA and SS formations. Rumors had emerged that the SA, which had grown sharply to around 400,000 members, was preparing for an uprising that the Nazi leadership would be unable to control, creating apprehension of another Nazi *Putsch*.<sup>340</sup> The Western press saw the ban as a courageous and important step on the part of the government considering the violence that the SA had perpetrated in previous months. It was expected that Brüning's decision might cause an intense

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<sup>338</sup> "Hindenburg Wins," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 15 April 1932, 303; "Hindenburg Wins," *Washington Post* 11 April 1932, 6.

<sup>339</sup> "Germany Stands Fast," *New York Times* 11 April 1932, 14; "President Hindenburg," *The Times* 11 April 1932, 11d; "The German Verdict," *The Times* 12 April 1932, 15b.

<sup>340</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 365-366.

struggle, and to the British and American press it proved that the chancellor and his supporters were ready for such a fight.<sup>341</sup> His decision, which appeared as the resolute action of a leader dealing with a dangerous political movement, had no effect upon Nazi support in the Prussian elections. The ban also initiated a chain of events that ended with Hitler as the chancellor of Germany.

Though several German states held elections on April 24, none was more important than the one in Prussia. Comprising more than half of the country, the Prussian vote created almost as much scrutiny as the presidential campaign had. When the results were announced, *Time* magazine informed its audience that, despite Hitler's setback in the presidential campaign, Germany had continued its march toward a fascist government. The Nazis increased their representation in the Prussian *Landtag* from 6 to 162 members. They were by far the largest party in the state parliament, yet could not count on a majority even with the support of the Nationalist party. Only a coalition with the Center party would allow the Nazis control, and some sources saw this as a certainty. Most assumed a political deadlock was likely to occur.<sup>342</sup>

Based on Hitler's support for the presidency, the outcome of the election was not unexpected. The *New York Times* acknowledged that the result was unpleasant, but would have been worse had the Nazis won a majority. The *Times* called the election the third time Hitler had been kept from power during 1932.

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<sup>341</sup> "Dissolving Hitler's Army," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 15 April 1932, 303; "Hitler's Army," *New York Times* 16 April 1932, 14; "A Courageous Step," *The Times* 14 April 1932, 13b.

<sup>342</sup> "Braun v. Brownshirts," *Time* May 2, 1932, 19-20; "The Prussian Test," *New York Times* 20 April 1932, 22; "Hitler Control in Prussia Depends on Concessions," *Business Week* May 4, 1932, 29.

Since the percentage support for the party was not significantly greater than in the presidential elections, the paper declared again that the Nazis might have reached their high-water mark. *The Nation* believed that Hitler might be forced to temper his demands in order to cooperate with the Center Party and forge a coalition government in Prussia.<sup>343</sup> These newspapers had a right to be somewhat optimistic, because support for the Nazis as a percentage of the population was close to topping out, at least during what remained of the Weimar Republic.<sup>344</sup>

By the end of April, the political repercussions of the ban on the SA began to take its toll on the Brüning government. When the prohibition of the Nazis' para-military organization was put into place, one of Groener's subordinates, General Kurt von Schleicher, voiced his opposition to the move. He was a protégé of several important military figures in the Weimar era, including Hans von Seeckt and Groener. Von Schleicher played an important role as the army's representative within the government. He thought trying to break the Nazi movement outright was not productive. He imagined it was possible to bring the Nazis into a governing coalition and exert control over Hitler. Von Hindenburg shared this belief, and von Schleicher began using his contacts and personal influence to undermine the chancellor, Brüning.<sup>345</sup> Evidence of von Hindenburg's receptiveness to such overtones became apparent when the president demanded that all militant organizations be banned so that the decree against the SA did not

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<sup>343</sup> "After the Prussian Test," *New York Times* 26 April 1932, 20; "Herr Hitler's Successes," *The Times* 26 April 1932, 17b; "Hitler's Victory," *The Nation* May 4, 1932, 501.

<sup>344</sup> Sax, 95.

<sup>345</sup> Broszat, 113; Evans, 276.

seem so one-sided.<sup>346</sup> Von Schleicher met Hitler in late April and early May to determine if he could count on his support for a new government in exchange for lifting the ban on the SA and for holding new *Reichstag* elections.<sup>347</sup> The Brüning government began to collapse shortly thereafter.

When the *Reichstag* reconvened on May 10, Groener came under attack for outlawing the SA, especially from the Nazis. He had little support from conservative backers, and found no other choice but to resign his post as minister of defense.<sup>348</sup> The Western press described the assault on the minister and explained that a staunch opponent of the Nazis had been ousted from his post.<sup>349</sup> Towards the end of May, a lack of confidence in Brüning's abilities expressed by von Hindenburg caught American and British journalists off guard, and events led quickly to the chancellor's resignation. The only information available immediately was that von Hindenburg was upset with Brüning's land redistribution policies in East Prussia.<sup>350</sup>

Brüning's plan to break up three large aristocratic estates gave the president an opportunity to act upon the suggestions of the highly conservative circle surrounding him. It saw the chancellor's cooperation with the socialists as leading the country down a Marxist path, and von Schleicher's intrigues had weakened Brüning's position immensely. Another group of ministers had already been prepared to lead the country even before he was forced to give up his office.

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<sup>346</sup> "New Decrees in Germany; Control of 'Private' Armies," The Times 5 May 1932, 13a.

<sup>347</sup> Hauner, 79.

<sup>348</sup> Broszat, 114.

<sup>349</sup> "Nazi Attack on War Minister," Manchester Guardian Weekly 13 May 1932, 385; Guido Enderis, "Groener, Nazis' Foe, Quits Defense Post," New York Times 13 May 1932, 8.

<sup>350</sup> Guido Enderis, "Hindenburg Ousts Brüning's Cabinet Over Home Policy," New York Times 31 May 1932, 1.

On the recommendation of von Schleicher, von Hindenburg appointed Franz von Papen, a member of the Center party with an aristocratic background, as the new chancellor. His cabinet was made up of conservative and nationalists who shared von Papen's upper-class background.<sup>351</sup>

By early June it was clear that political intrigue had been the main component of Brüning's downfall. *Time* reported that several German generals had been planning the chancellor's removal for months.<sup>352</sup> The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* and the *Washington Post* considered the change in German chancellors unsettling. Von Papen's newly appointed cabinet in no way represented German voters. It was made up of a group of men the papers expected to facilitate a Nazi takeover.<sup>353</sup> The *New York Times* maintained the opinion that as long as von Hindenburg was in office there would be no problems. Though the members of the new government might harbor militarist interests, the paper assumed that they knew there was no way Germany could fight another war. It hoped that a new nationalist government might be more effective in dealing with Hitler than Brüning's moderate cabinet.<sup>354</sup> That was the case as long as the government acquiesced to the Nazis on the issue of new elections.

Hitler said little while events that brought the new government to power unfolded. The Western press had almost nothing to say about the Nazis or their leader while the government shift took place. Aside from more violence, which included a Nazi-communist brawl in the Prussian *Landtag*, the most interesting

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<sup>351</sup> Broszat, 114-115, 117; Evans, 282-283.

<sup>352</sup> "Brüning Out," *Time* June 6, 1932, 17.

<sup>353</sup> "Confusion in Germany," *Washington Post* 6 June 1932, 6; "Germany's Future," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 10 June 1932, 466.

<sup>354</sup> "Bruening's Successor," *New York Times* 2 June 1932, 20.

report dealing with the movement was one in which Hitler expressed his desired role for German women. The *New York Times* covered a speech in which he declared “I am sorry, but I have no use for female politicians and female deputies. It is the job of men to take the future of the Reich upon their shoulders and to work and fight for the women in order to win their love.” The Nazis’ chauvinist view of women had been used against them in previous political campaigns, but it was another fundamental point of the party’s platform.<sup>355</sup> The party had little reason to attract attention with anything more insightful than this speech, having been informed that plans were underway to bring down Brüning. Its only demands of the new government were that the *Reichstag* be dissolved, new elections held, and the ban on the SA lifted. Von Papen announced the new election shortly after assuming office, and the Nazis publicized the decision as a great reward for the work and sacrifice of the NSDAP’s members.<sup>356</sup> Hitler and other Nazi leaders believed the new *Reichstag* would give them an outright majority and control of Germany.

The Nazis carried out another extensive propaganda campaign, though funds for such exertions were becoming an issue.<sup>357</sup> Violence characterized the effort more than before, especially once the ban on the SA was lifted in mid-June by the von Papen government. The decision met with opposition from several German states, mainly in the south. By the end of June the violence had become

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<sup>355</sup> “Hand-to-Hand,” Marks Diet Session,” *Washington Post* 26 May 1932, 1; “Hitler Would Allow No Women in Politics,” *New York Times* 29 May 1932, e4.

<sup>356</sup> “Next German Chancellor; The President’s Choice,” *The Times* 1 June 1932, 14a; “Dissolution of Reichstag; Herr von Papen’s Plans,” *The Times* 4 June 1932, 10e; “‘Reward’ for Nazi Sacrifices,” *The Times* 6 June 1932, 12b.

<sup>357</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 369.

so intense that von Papen pleaded with Hitler to rein in his troops.<sup>358</sup> Western editorials were pessimistic about a situation characterized by so much turmoil. *The Times* argued that von Papen had overestimated his ability to control the Nazis, and that he might be playing a role similar to that of Alexander Kerensky, a leader in the Russian government for a short time in 1917 after the fall of the Czar and before the Bolshevik takeover under Lenin. *The Washington Post* doubted if there was any way to keep the country out of the hands of the National Socialists. It believed that the elections would bring the Nazi “hot heads” into power. The paper assumed that the von Papen regime was hoping that the election would produce a political deadlock, making its rule through presidential backing secure.<sup>359</sup>

*The New York Times* predicted that the Nazis would be unable to obtain their goal of a majority, but that a coalition containing the party and other conservative and middle class parties was a possibility. The paper reported that the Nazis continued to agitate against German Jews as a part of their plans for a new Germany: “Naturally, into this idea of German world mastery the Jew does not fit, so Nazi theory relegates him to a position of inferiority, and the Nazi program actually contemplates stopping Jewish immigration, the restoration of the Ghetto, the exemption of the Jews from military service, barring them as judges and educators, printing their writings only in Gothic type and other absurdities.”

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<sup>358</sup> “Nazis’ Army Revived; Ban Lifted by the Cabinet,” *The Times* 16 June 1932, 14c; “Nazi Troops Back Again; Two States Veto Decree,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 24 June 1932, 511; “Heads Together,” *Time* June 20, 1932, 13-14; “Von Papen Adjures Hitler to Stop Riot,” *Washington Post* 27 June 1932, 5.

<sup>359</sup> “Uneasy Germany,” *The Times* 17 July 1932, 13b; “Germany in Turmoil,” *Washington Post* 23 July 1932, 6.

The author of the story, journalist Frederick T. Birchall, however, did not believe that the Nazis would be able to implement such radical policies, whatever the outcome of the election.<sup>360</sup> Birchall did not realize that such absurdities were an integral part of Hitler's plans and that some of them would be imposed on German Jews when the Nazis took over.

The July *Reichstag* election produced a dramatic increase in Nazi representation, but left the party far from domination. The Nazis won 230 seats out of 608, making them the largest party in the legislature. While it appeared to be an impressive performance, the Nazis did not receive a majority in the parliament and were unlikely to form a coalition with enough partners to support a Nazi chancellorship.<sup>361</sup> Apprehension in the American and British press decreased when the Nazis failed to garner a significantly higher percentage of votes than in the presidential election. For while Hitler had received 36.8% of the vote in April, the party received only 37% in the July election.<sup>362</sup> The press assumed the party was disappointed with the outcome, and that von Papen had to be encouraged. Because a coalition was doubtful, his government would continue. The *Washington Post* feared that discontented Nazi supporters might start a new *Putsch*, even though Hitler did not consider that an option.<sup>363</sup> The *New York Times* concluded that German voters had rendered a clear message on

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<sup>360</sup> "The German Election," *New York Times* 27 July 1932, 16; Frederick T. Birchall, "Reich Reactionaries Due to Gain Heavily," *New York Times* 27 July 1932, 7.

<sup>361</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 369-370.

<sup>362</sup> Hauner, 79, 81.

<sup>363</sup> "Germany's Political Turmoil," *Washington Post* 2 August 1932, 6; "The Reich Elections," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 5 August 1932, 102; "The German Election," *The Times* 2 August 1932, 11b; "Nazi Saturation," *Time* August 8, 1932, 13.

the topic of Hitler – namely that the movement had been stopped at 37% of the electorate and could expect little more.<sup>364</sup>

The election brought the party to a crossroads. Goebbels exemplified this, stating that faith in ever gaining a majority in the legislature was considered unlikely. Hitler was unsure what his next move should be, but soon he decided to seek an arrangement with the figure who had engineered Brüning's downfall, von Schleicher. Hitler believed the election, though indecisive, enabled him to negotiate from a position of strength.<sup>365</sup> Upon meeting von Schleicher on August 5, Hitler demanded most of the important positions in a new and reconfigured cabinet. He wanted the chancellorship for himself. The party was also to have control over the Ministry of the Interior as well as the same ministry for the state of Prussia. Von Schleicher was disinclined to make that kind of agreement, but negotiations continued for the first half of the month.<sup>366</sup> The Western press expected a compromise placing Hitler in the office of chancellor or at least giving the Nazis a significant share of the national government. By August 12, the press assumed that Hitler would get the go-ahead from von Hindenburg to form a new cabinet, creating a new and possibly dangerous situation in Europe.<sup>367</sup>

When they met Hitler on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Von Papen and von Schleicher were unwilling to turn over control; instead they offered the Nazi leader solely the newly created post of vice-chancellor. Hitler turned down the offer outright, and

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<sup>364</sup> "The German Election," New York Times 2 August 1932, 16.

<sup>365</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 370.

<sup>366</sup> Hauner, 81.

<sup>367</sup> Frederick T. Birchall, "Hitler is Expected to be Chancellor in Cabinet Shake-Up," New York Times 11 August 1932, 1; "After Thirteen Years," The Times 12 August 1932, 11b; "Germany Prepares," Washington Post 12 August 1932, 6.

the American and British press cheered the event as a republican victory over Nazism.<sup>368</sup> Hitler considered this turn of events a defeat, and the German government was left floundering regarding the form it would take. One option included doing away with the *Reichstag* altogether and creating a type of dictatorship through the office of the president.<sup>369</sup> While the Nazis had been willing to tolerate the von Papen government as long as they believed the chancellor would help the party gain control, the refusal to grant Hitler's wishes led to yet another political crisis.

The newly elected *Reichstag* assembled at the end of August. Upon meeting, Nazi Hermann Goering was elected as the legislature's president.<sup>370</sup> The *New York Times* conceded this was in line with precedent, since the Nazis had the largest delegation. The paper considered the move a submissive act to the regulations of the constitution. It assumed that Hitler's failure to gain power had tempered him even further: "This is obviously not the Fascist leader who was to take control of Germany's destinies by the strength of his good right arm. One does not demand the right to be accepted as a Napoleon or a Lenin or a Mussolini. One just goes ahead and is Napoleon, Lenin, Mussolini. The Hitler movement is being tamed visibly before our eyes."<sup>371</sup> In fact, Hitler adhered to constitutional strictures to further his cause, not because he held them sacred, and when the opportunity came to oust von Papen, he jumped at the opportunity.

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<sup>368</sup> Hauner, 81; "Republican Germany," *New York Times* 14 August 1932, e1; "Hitler is Thwarted," *Washington Post* 14 August 1932, m6; "Deadlock in Germany; Nazi Demand for Control; Hitler Rebuffed," *The Times* 15 August 1932, 10d; "Deadlock in Germany," *The Times* 15 August 1932, 11c.

<sup>369</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 380-384.

<sup>370</sup> "Struggle in Germany," *The Times* 31 August 1932, 10b.

<sup>371</sup> "Parliamentary Fascists," *New York Times* 1 September 1932, 18.

At the September 12 meeting of the *Reichstag*, unexpectedly the communists proposed a vote of no-confidence in von Papen, which would force him to resign his post if carried. Von Papen had obtained an order from the president giving him the ability to dissolve the legislature at will, but when he attempted to prevent the communist-proposed vote and disband the diet, Goering should have stopped the vote and allowed von Papen to speak. Instead Goering ignored the chancellor. The vote was against von Papen overwhelmingly, but the chancellor claimed that the dissolution decree took precedence over the vote.<sup>372</sup> Von Papen won the struggle, yet the vote illustrated clearly that he had almost no support from the various political parties. He was forced to call new *Reichstag* elections, which were scheduled for November 6. Hitler entered this new campaign energetically, attacking the government that had not allowed him to take over what he considered his destined position at the head of the German government.<sup>373</sup>

The Nazi leader made speeches all over the country in October, including once on the 2<sup>nd</sup> in which he exhorted thousands of Hitler Youth members to hold the nation in the highest esteem. He told his audience that its generation would never accept a policy of fulfillment, or carrying out the provisions of the Versailles Treaty.<sup>374</sup> Despite Hitler's enthusiasm, it was well known that the Nazis were not doing well with voters. Guido Enderis, a correspondent for the

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<sup>372</sup> "New German Crisis; The Reichstag Dissolved; Von Papen's Swift Move; Censure Motion Too Late," The Times 13 September 1932, 12a; Frederick T. Birchall, "Papen Uses Decree to End Reichstag as it 'Ousts' Him," New York Times 13 September 1932, 1; "Reichstag in Revolt," Time September 19, 1933, 14-15.

<sup>373</sup> Evans, 297-298; "German Political Affray Subsiding," Washington Post 16 September 1932, 3.

<sup>374</sup> "Hitler Addresses Huge Youth Rally," New York Times 2 October 1932, 26.

*New York Times*, wrote that Hitler was waging a preventive campaign to stave off an anticipated defection of supporters. Journalists assumed that the Nazis were going to lose a large number of their *Reichstag* seats. The *Washington Post* placed the expected losses at anywhere from 25 to 60. *The Times* assumed that Hitler's support, which it claimed was solely an expression of discontent, could not have been expected to last.<sup>375</sup> Such predictions were accurate, and the election led to the first major setback for the party since it burst into political prominence in 1930.

When the election was held on November 6, the Nazis lost 10% of their support and 4.7% of their proportional representation. Nevertheless the NSDAP remained the largest *Reichstag* party. It was reported that the results came as no surprise to Hitler.<sup>376</sup> The outcome had likewise been expected by Western journalists. The only obvious conclusion that it yielded was that a political deadlock would continue. Von Hindenburg was viewed as the only stable part of the entire German government. American newspapers, especially the *New York Times*, declared the election the beginning of the end for the Nazis. *The Times* argued that any prospect of Hitler controlling the country was finished.<sup>377</sup> *Time* magazine declared that the election had tamed Hitler, since his party had lost

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<sup>375</sup> Guido Enderis, "Germany is Uneasy as Election Nears," *New York Times* 23 October 1932, e3; "The German Campaign," *New York Times* 23 October 1932, e1; "Tumult in Germany," *Washington Post* 18 October 1932, 6; "Another German Election," *New York Times* 5 November 1932, 11d.

<sup>376</sup> "The German Election; Nazis' Losses, But Still Biggest Party," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 11 November 1932, 385; "Nazis Receive First Big Loss in Reich Vote," *Washington Post* 7 November 1932, 1.

<sup>377</sup> "The German Election," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 11 November 1932, 382; "Political Paradox in Germany," *The Times* 8 November 1932, 14c; "Germany's Election," *Washington Post* 8 November 1932, 6; "German Prospects," *New York Times* 8 November 1932, 20.

almost 40 seats in the legislature.<sup>378</sup> The American and British press did not dwell on the reasons behind the Nazi losses. It assumed that von Papen and von Schleicher had attempted to implement a policy emphasizing several important aspects of the Nazis' own platform, especially dealing with reparations and rearmament, so there was little reason for voters to support the party. The result was seen as the beginning of the end of German radicalism.<sup>379</sup>

There were several reasons behind the decrease in support for the Nazis that the Western press did not comprehend. Many of the party's local branches had begun to run out of money following several intense electoral efforts. By November, it was difficult to obtain donations for propaganda from a populace grown tired of the political chaos.<sup>380</sup> In addition, the party had shifted its emphasis from the middle classes, believing that it had exhausted its support from that segment of the population. Greater importance was placed on appealing to the working classes. But this approach had a negative effect on voters fearful of the encroachment of Marxism.<sup>381</sup> When the party lent its support to a transport strike in Berlin in the fall of 1932, it further alienated some of its middle class supporters. Voters became disillusioned with Hitler as well when he refused to join the cabinet in August. The apparent aimlessness of the party's propaganda, which did not establish any firm program and promised instead only a glorious

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<sup>378</sup> "Hitler Tamed," Time November 14, 1932, 17-18.

<sup>379</sup> "Another German Election," The Times 5 November 1932, 11d; "German Prospects," New York Times 8 November 1932, 20.

<sup>380</sup> Thomas Childers, "The Limits of National Socialist Mobilisation: The Elections of 6 November 1932 and the Fragmentation of the Nazi Constituency," in The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933, Thomas Childers ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 236-237.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 240-242.

future, began to drive away even NSDAP members.<sup>382</sup> The Western press had described the party as a heterogeneous movement whose parts could not stay together for a long duration, and by the end of 1932 this appeared to be the case.

The Nazis were going through a crisis of support, but the government was not doing much better in finding a way to administer the country effectively. After the November elections, von Papen was unable to find a majority in the *Reichstag* to support his chancellorship. Von Schleicher began to undermine the chancellor, much as he had done earlier with Brüning. He believed he could do a better job of creating a political consensus.<sup>383</sup> On November 18, the Western press reported von Papen had resigned because of his inability to garner the legislative support necessary to continue the republican system in a normal fashion.<sup>384</sup>

Hitler was expected to attempt to convince von Hindenburg to appoint him chancellor. It was clear that no majority was possible, so the Nazi leader wanted the president to allow him to rule through presidential decree, suggesting his idea at a series of meetings on November 19 and 21.<sup>385</sup> Von Hindenburg was against the proposal, demanding that Hitler find the necessary political support from the *Reichstag* before the president would give him the go-ahead to form a cabinet. After a series of interchanges between the Nazis and the president's office, Hitler turned down the opportunity to form a cabinet, alleging too many constraints had

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<sup>382</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 390-391.

<sup>383</sup> Broszat, 127-128.

<sup>384</sup> "Von Papen and All His Cabinet Resign," *Washington Post* 18 November 1932, 4.

<sup>385</sup> "The German Chancellorship," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 25 November 1932, 425; Hauner, 86.

been placed upon him.<sup>386</sup> Von Hindenburg was unwilling at that point to allow Hitler and the Nazis a large amount of power, assuming they would translate it into a dictatorship.<sup>387</sup> The president was correct in his belief. He hoped that some other option might prevent the creation of an authoritarian regime.

At the beginning of December, von Hindenburg decided to appoint von Schleicher chancellor, once again leaving Hitler out of the government. The move was seen as the best option given the situation, and American and British journalists interpreted the president's action as unwillingness to entrust the welfare of the country to radicals.<sup>388</sup> Hitler let it be known that the Nazis would not support the government under any circumstances.<sup>389</sup> Von Schleicher, who wanted to marginalize Hitler, hoped he would be able split the Nazi party by appealing to Gregor Strasser, the party leader who had been at odds with Hitler since the mid-1920s. The possibility that von Schleicher would offer the vice-chancellorship to Strasser was publicized, as was the prospect that a large segment of the party might pull away from Hitler should another Nazi join the government. The overtures to Strasser created a crisis within the movement, but

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<sup>386</sup> Guido Enderis, "Hitler Gets Chance to Combine Parties," New York Times 20 November 1932, 1; "German Cabinet Prospects; The President and Herr Hitler; Conditions of Hitler," The Times 22 November 1932, 12c; "German Crisis; Herr Hitler and the President," The Times 24 November 1932, 12f; "Hitler Spurns Cabinet Offer as Too Limited," Washington Post 22 November 1932, 1.

<sup>387</sup> Kershaw, Hitler, 394-395.

<sup>388</sup> "Germany's Cabinet Hiatus," Washington Post 26 November 1932, 6; "General von Schleicher's Turn," The Times 3 December 1932, 11c; "Germany's New Chancellor," New York Times 3 December 1932, 16.

<sup>389</sup> "Nazi Attitude," The Times 5 December 1932, 12d; "Hitler Says Nazis Won't Back Regime," New York Times 3 December 1932, 7; "Christmas Chancellor," Time January 12, 1933, 14.

Hitler pulled the party together and portrayed Strasser as a traitor. His efforts were successful, and Strasser resigned from the party shortly thereafter.<sup>390</sup>

The Western press took little notice of the party's troubles. It reported only that Strasser had gone on a leave of absence and that Hitler was assuming his duties. Other German parties were apparently jubilant that a Nazi rupture was close, although Hitler had proven his control over the movement once again.<sup>391</sup> Following the November elections and the possibility of a split in the party, the Western press asserted justifiably that Nazism was falling apart. The fact that there was still no agreement between the *Reichstag* and a cabinet appointed by the president, however, opened the door to Hitler's takeover.

For much of January 1933, the U.S. and British press had little of interest to report on the NSDAP. Now understanding that Strasser had left the movement, it reported the outside chance that he would lead a split in the movement. The press believed also that the Nazis would tolerate the von Schleicher government out of fear of what new elections might mean for the movement.<sup>392</sup> Early in the month there were reports that von Papen and Hitler were holding talks about overthrowing von Schleicher, though they denied this was the case. Von Papen claimed he was trying to convince Hitler to support the chancellor.<sup>393</sup> Despite von Papen's statement, the two men came to an agreement that von Schleicher had to go. Von Papen worked behind the scenes for most of

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<sup>390</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 396-402.

<sup>391</sup> "Hitler Takes Over Strasser's Duties," *New York Times* 11 December 1932, 18; "Hitler Calls Himself Sole Leader of the Nazis," *Washington Post* 11 December 1932, 1; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 403.

<sup>392</sup> "Germany's Political Outlook; The Nazis and the Government," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 6 January 1933, 10.

<sup>393</sup> "Papen Hitler Meeting; An Intrigue Against the Chancellor Alleged," *The Times* 6 January 1933, 11f; "Von Papen Reports on Talk with Hitler," *New York Times* 10 January 1933, 9; "Brasses and Plots," *Time* January 16, 1933, 16.

the month to secure the creation of a new government and the removal of von Schleicher. Agreements were reached among various influential groups around the president that a Hitler chancellorship was the only workable solution to the government deadlock, as long as appropriate restraints on his authority were put in place. Von Schleicher, who declared early in January that Hitler was no longer a threat, was faced with a vote of no confidence much as von Papen had when the last *Reichstag* met. He requested that von Hindenburg give him the authority to dissolve the body and delay further elections. When von Hindenburg was unwilling to do so, von Schleicher resigned on January 28.<sup>394</sup> American and British journalists had no warning that any of this had taken place and that Hitler was about to become chancellor.

On January 27, the *Times* reported what it referred to as a sensational rumor. Hitler had informed von Hindenburg that a presidential cabinet was no longer necessary for Nazi participation, though the position of chancellor still had to go to the Nazi leader.<sup>395</sup> The insinuation that Hitler would be willing to join a more restrictive cabinet without unlimited presidential authority was made to von Hindenburg as von Schleicher's situation deteriorated. Reports explained that several powerful nationalist leaders, such as von Papen and Alfred Hugenberg, the leader of the German National People's party, were seeking the chancellor's downfall and replacement by Hitler.<sup>396</sup> The information proved reliable once von Schleicher resigned. The British and American press reported that von Schleicher

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<sup>394</sup> Hauner, 88; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 413-421; Broszat, 129-146.

<sup>395</sup> "A Hitler Rumor," *The Times* 27 January 1933, 11g.

<sup>396</sup> Hauner, 88; "Hitler-Hugenberg Conspiracy," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 27 January 1933, 65; "New Tension in Germany; Intrigues Against Chancellor; Nationalists Aims," *The Times* 28 January 1933, 10c.

had asked von Hindenburg for his support against the *Reichstag* but was rebuffed. Upon von Hindenburg's refusal, von Schleicher tendered his resignation, and the president accepted.<sup>397</sup> Following von Schleicher's resignation, Hitler went to the president to discuss the possibility of forming a new government.<sup>398</sup> On January 31, American and British newspapers announced that Hitler had been chosen by von Hindenburg the new chancellor of Germany.

The news that the Nazis held control of the government for the first time was greeted with apprehension by the Western press. While expressing fears about potential Nazi radicalism, most assumed that Hitler would have little leeway given the makeup of his cabinet, which von Papen had handpicked. Only two other Nazis were included. Wilhelm Frick became the federal minister of the interior, while Hermann Goering assumed the title of minister without portfolio and gained control of the Prussian interior department. Von Papen received the post of vice-chancellor. The *New York Times* declared that he had maneuvered Hitler into the cabinet, implying that von Papen would be the real figure exercising power. American journalist Guido Enderis wrote: "The composition of the cabinet leaves Herr Hitler with no scope for gratification of any dictatorial ambition."<sup>399</sup> Indeed von Papen and Hugenberg, who became the minister of the economy, believed they now controlled Hitler.<sup>400</sup> *The Times* assured its readers that von Hindenburg had not granted Hitler any special authority, yet noted that a

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<sup>397</sup> "Hitler Looming as Chancellor; Schleicher Out," *Washington Post* 29 January 1933, 1; Guido Enderis, "Schleicher Quits; Hindenburg Seeks coalition Cabinet," *New York Times* 29 January 1933, 1.

<sup>398</sup> "Hitler Will Visit Hindenburg Today," *New York Times* 30 January 1933, 5.

<sup>399</sup> Guido Enderis, "Group Formed by Papen," *New York Times* 31 January 1933, 1; "Herr Hitler Appointed Chancellor; Reichstag Dissolved," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 3 February 1933, 84.

<sup>400</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 421-422.

Nazi plan was being developed to grant the Nazi leader an enabling act through the *Reichstag* that would give him unlimited power for six months.<sup>401</sup> Despite such information, most Western journalists felt confident that the Nazis had been harnessed by von Papen's construction of the new cabinet.

In Great Britain the press was unsure what the new government would mean for the future. Both the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* and *The Times* assumed that the Nazis would suppress the socialists and communists since the national and Prussian police forces fell now under Nazi influence. The *Guardian* called the election a triumph for Hugenberg because most of the cabinet was nationalist, which should give him a large amount of authority. *The Times* noted that while most of the cabinet was nationalist, von Hindenburg had given in to Hitler in his demand for control of the police. Both newspapers took a "wait-and-see" attitude on the new government, though neither was optimistic. The *Guardian* stated that with a government containing Hitler and Hugenberg anything was possible, while *The Times* noted that if Hitler found a *Reichstag* majority difficult to obtain, he might do away with parliamentary government altogether. *The Times* stated that the issue of rearmament would be watched closely in Great Britain and France, as the experiment of a Nazi government went forward.<sup>402</sup>

Also, newspapers in the United States also believed for the most part that Hitler would have little room to implement his radical policies. The *Washington Post* asserted that Hitler was surrounded by a cabinet of "strong men." The paper

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<sup>401</sup> "Herr Hitler; Chancellor of the Reich; 'National' Cabinet," *The Times* 31 January 1933, 10d.

<sup>402</sup> "Hitler," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 3 February 1933, 82; "Herr Hitler in Office," *The Times* 31 January 1933, 11b.

admitted that his appointment as chancellor would keep tensions in Europe high, especially over the issue of territorial disputes, most importantly the Polish Corridor. Nevertheless, the *Post*'s editors believed it was a good idea to allow Hitler the opportunity to govern since any lasting peace in Germany was not possible until the Nazis were given such a trial.<sup>403</sup> The *New York Times* assumed also that the conservative cabinet could keep Hitler in check. It listed other factors expected to oppose the Nazis should they attempt any radical policies. The paper argued that German labor movements were ready to strike in order to force Hitler out if need be. The supposed stalwart of the republic, von Hindenburg, would also block Nazi extremism because he could remove Hitler at any time. Therefore, the situation was not cause for "immediate alarm;" readers were told that Great Britain and France would follow the new government intently. The paper's editors closed their analysis of the situation with the hope that the German people themselves would be the most important barrier to the Third Reich:

"But anxiety will not be relaxed nor vigilance abated so long as it is uncertain whether the new Chancellor of Germany is going to urge and seek to compel the German people to take a leap into the dark. The step already taken is undeniably critical, and every subsequent one will be closely watched in the hope that the dominant German instinct for order, and the determination which Germans have repeatedly shown to stand by and defend and preserve their republic, may again triumph over every danger suddenly rising in their path."<sup>404</sup>

For the Western press, 1932 had been a year of widespread political confusion in Germany that held serious consequences for the rest of the world.

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<sup>403</sup> "Chancellor Hitler," *Washington Post* 31 January 1932, 6.

<sup>404</sup> "Germany Ventures," *New York Times* 31 January 1933, 16.

Despite the major triumph of the Nazis in the July *Reichstag* election, the year was not a success for the movement. It was rather a defeat for German political leaders who could find no way to bridge their ideological divides or suppress personal ambitions. The inability to build a coalition resulted in von Hindenburg handing power to Hitler in January 1933. American and British journalists thus witnessed the final victory of the Nazi party in assuming control of the German government, even though newspaper and magazine correspondents believed Hitler's power would be limited. Despite the brutality and harsh proclamations made by Hitler and his subordinates during the previous decade, the Western press hoped that his chancellorship would lead to stability and peace for Germany and Europe. Western commentators believed that German democracy still functioned to some extent, and that the NSDAP would be unable to destroy it. German democracy had been dead for some time, though, and the Nazis wasted little time in imposing their control.

American and British writers did not proclaim that the Nazis were going to rebuild a German military machine and begin a series of wars, and the press had little reason to expect this. Given the political instability in Germany, Hitler's time in office was not expected to last long because the terms of his three predecessors had become progressively shorter. The journalists had noted for the previous three years that the Nazis had little in the way of a real reformist program. The writers had degraded Hitler's leadership continually, stating that he had few of the capabilities possessed by Lenin and Mussolini. Considering the odds against the party, the Western press had no reason to raise alarms. What it

did not take into account, however, was Hitler's ability to control and manipulate his own rapidly growing party, which the press admitted was composed of a wide variety of supporters. The press never reported on the inner workings of the Nazi movement and how Hitler subordinated all threats to his position while expanding the party's influence effectively in the 1920s and early 1930s. That was a major oversight in its reporting and hence analysis. Moreover, once in power, he and his closest supporters manipulated Germany's long lasting economic and political crisis to create a dictatorship in a relatively short time. Of this too, the Western press gave no inclination that it expected such an outcome following Hitler's accession to the chancellorship.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

The February 8, 1933 edition of *The Nation* included an article describing how the new German cabinet would work. Hitler was not considered the real head of the government; Franz von Papen, it was assumed, would exercise true authority. The other leaders included in the cabinet were believed to have effective restraints on any excesses Hitler might attempt. Just like the German leaders who maneuvered to form the Hitler-led government, *The Nation* expected that those around the Nazi leader would hem in his decision-making capabilities.<sup>405</sup> Less than two months later, the situation had changed. Hitler had created "...a Germany in which freedom and democracy dare not ever ask to live." The magazine reported widespread oppression and violence against Jews and communists, including some who had been placed in concentration camps. The Nazis had begun taking decisive measures to bar Jews from certain professions and the civil service. Many were reported to be fleeing the country, and the imminent German physicist Albert Einstein declared that he would not return to Germany as long as the political situation remained so hostile.<sup>406</sup> Many of the terrible policies that the Nazis had long stood for and which the Western press had reported emerged quickly in the nascent Third Reich.

Nevertheless, Deborah Lipstadt noted that following the party's takeover in 1933, such early terrorism of the German Jewish community was rarely ever

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<sup>405</sup> "Hitler in Power," *The Nation* February 8, 1933, 137-138.

<sup>406</sup> "Terrorism Rules Germany," *The Nation* March 29, 1933, 332-333.

the primary or sole focus of American press reports.<sup>407</sup> The same had been true of most articles dealing with Nazi anti-Semitism printed from 1922 to 1933. Though a handful of reporters recognized the intrinsic hatred of the Nazis towards the Jewish community, such views were exhibited infrequently. When they did appear, it was generally not on the front page, where stories concerned with the political activities of the party were far more numerous. In fact, only the *New York Times* consistently reported this aspect of NSDAP ideology over the course of the decade. The paper was alone in relating several early Nazi threats of violence against the German Jewish community, but even it did not devote regular or prominent attention to what was the core of Hitler's belief system before 1930. After the Nazi electoral victory that year, information on Nazi policy towards Jews was still uncommon. The *New York Times* did make a point of reporting the fears of some within the American Jewish community of the dangers posed by such a violent party that now had a good deal of stature within the German political system.

The focus by the *New York Times* was one of the ways in which American coverage differed from the British press. At times, American journalists were more interested in the ideological underpinnings of the National Socialists movement. This was evident in the *New York Times*, but also in the magazine coverage of the *The Nation* and other American periodicals. Also, the American press made a point to relate the various violent attacks or street fights carried out by Nazi storm troopers against their enemies as well as the overall aggressiveness of the movement. The British press was concerned with the Nazis' political

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<sup>407</sup> Lipstadt, 13-15.

involvement and its effect on German affairs of state. *The Times* in particular focused on German politics, likely because of the impact it might have on the on the agreements on reparations created with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. *The Manchester Guardian Weekly* echoed such sentiments, debating the role of reparations in the wake of the Nazis' first major political victory in September 1930. For the most part, the American and British press reported many of the same events. How such stories were presented, however, were influenced on occasion by the fact that Great Britain played a more active role in European politics, while the United States had a much more detached policy.

One aspect of the Nazi movement that the press from 1922 to 1933 made adequately clear to its audience was the inherent violence of the movement. In November 1923, the Nazis displayed their violent methods in the Beer Hall *Putsch*, and such practices never ceased. Even though Hitler claimed later that he would pursue only legal methods, the press was never fooled as the SA ran rampant through the country, helping push it into a virtual civil war. By the early 1930s, though, the press began to believe that the SA, and possibly the violence it represented, was unwanted by Hitler. While Hitler started to experience problems controlling parts of his movement by 1933, he never discarded a belief in the virtue of conflict, aggression, and war. Some of his subordinates, such as Gregor Strasser, expressed the necessity of war in the Nazi philosophy explicitly, and such reports made it clear that the Nazis would seek out a war to expand German territory. No one pointed this out more clearly than American journalist Nicholas

Fairweather, who noted after a reading of *Mein Kampf* that Hitler dreamed of conquering lands to the east.

Despite its perception of the movement's ingrained violent and racist attitudes, the Western press did not appreciate the true threat a Nazi government presented. Rather, it associated the National Socialist movement largely with chaos and instability. Most journalists believed that when the Nazis came to power, they would fail to impose any systematic program and likely lead the country into a civil war and further suffering. While Hitler's organizational and oratorical skills were described as impressive, American and British journalists had little respect for what they perceived was his lack of real political experience. Journalists described him as a pale imitator of Mussolini or Lenin who would be unable to harness the German government to his radical ends.

What the Western press failed to realize was that Hitler had been able to forge and maintain the Nazi party despite a diverse membership. He and his closest advisors suppressed any internal threats and capitalized on every opportunity to increase his prominence in the movement. Once in power, the Nazi leadership utilized a combination of force and opportunism to establish its effective control over Germany within a matter of months. The Anglo-American press had described the party platform and its violent intentions adequately, but it did not pay sufficient attention to the inner party struggles and the party's structure that were forced on Germany after January 1933. The concept of obeying authority, of submitting absolutely to one's superiors, was inculcated in German society, as was the almost religious reverence held by many Nazis for

Hitler. In just a few years, Germany became a belligerent and dangerous nation that would attempt to fulfill the Nazis' aggressive, territorial, and racist ambitions. Western journalists understood that Nazi policies were outlandish and barbaric, but they believed that such policies were impossible to implement within a republican framework. American and British papers put too much faith in the very figures in the government who helped hand power to Hitler, officials who had no love of the democratic system itself.

Overall, the Western press before 1933 presented an accurate picture of what the NSDAP stood for. It characterized the movement at times as violent, racist, chauvinist, and bent on renewing a strong German state. The Nazis were not seen as a singular threat, however, but as part of a larger problem in the German political situation, which included the specter of communism. American and British journalists believed that most Germans wanted to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles; they understood and even sympathized with this, but hoped that Germans would choose a rational and moderate path of negotiation to do so. In this they were wrong, and considering the Nazis' outlandish demands and policies, most writers believed Hitler and his followers did not have the ability to govern effectively. In this regard, the Western press's foresight was poor.



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