

BETWEEN *GLEICHSCHALTUNG* AND REVOLUTION



In the summer of 1935, as part of the Germany-wide “Reich Athletic Competition,” citizens in the state of Schleswig-Holstein witnessed the following spectacle:

On the first Sunday of August propaganda performances and maneuvers took place in a number of cities. They are supposed to reawaken the old mood of the “time of struggle.” In Kiel, SA men drove through the streets in trucks bearing ... inscriptions against the Jews ... and the Reaction. One [truck] carried a straw puppet hanging on a gallows, accompanied by a placard with the motto: “The gallows for Jews and the Reaction, wherever you hide we’ll soon find you.”⁶⁰⁷

Other trucks bore slogans such as “Whether black or red, death to all enemies,” and “We are fighting against Jewry and Rome.”⁶⁰⁸ Bizarre tableau were enacted in the streets of towns around Germany. “In Schmiedeberg (in Silesia),” reported informants of the Social Democratic exile organization, the Sopade, “something completely out of the ordinary was presented on Sunday, 18 August.” A notice appeared in the town paper a week earlier with the announcement: “Reich competition of the SA. On Sunday at 11 a.m. in front of the Rathaus, *Sturm 4 R 48 Schmiedeberg* passes judgment on a criminal against the state.” On the appointed day, a large crowd gathered to watch the spectacle. The Sopade agent gave the setup: “A Nazi newspaper seller has been attacked by a Marxist mob. In the ensuing melee, the Marxists set up a barricade. The SA has the task of restoring order.” The action unfolded as follows: “The barricades were set up on the

lead car [of the parade]. The SA drove up in a truck. The barricades were stormed with flags flying. ... One of the Marxist criminals was seized and immediately condemned.”⁶⁰⁹ A procession was staged in Hamburg in front of the house of a long-arrested Communist: “The criminal (a straw puppet) was hanged and then drawn up to the roof. An SA man then appeared in the window and cut the rope, so that the puppet fell to the pavement. The ‘condemned’ was then bound to the radiator of a truck and driven around the city and surrounding areas.” Afterward, an SA leader gave a speech praising the stormtroopers for the splendid way in which they had done their duty, noting that their demonstration had shown that “the old fighting spirit of the SA” was still alive and well. Scenes like these were repeated all over Germany during the days of the “Reich Competition.” “Barricades” were stormed in a number of cities.⁶¹⁰ In the Neukölln district of Berlin, “a truck full of SA men dressed as Communists drove through the streets. The SA-Communists sang the *Internationale* and at intervals shouted ‘Red Front!’ Fifty yards behind them came another truck full of SA men with swastika flags. This procession was supposed to demonstrate to the population how it was before, and how it is now.”⁶¹¹ In at least one instance, living victims were employed in these bizarre charades. “On Sunday, 25 August,” noted a Sopade report,

the Lausitz SA arranged a “propaganda parade” through town and country. One of the trucks carried a cage containing a Jew and a Marxist through the streets. Behind the Marxist and the Jew stood an SA man holding a revolver in firing position. A second vehicle full of SA men explained the meaning of the procession via megaphone. Fortunately, the majority of the population turned away from this atrocious display.⁶¹²

Such was the way in which National Socialism chose to represent its version of the revolution, choreographing the living bodies of its followers (and in at least one case, its victims) into a dance of meaning designed to channel revolutionary energies into purely formal spectacle. The ideological content of the competition materials reinforces the point. Correct orientation was “not just a matter of book knowledge” but of “inner and outer attitude. ... Our inner attitude is to be understood as: comradeship, reliability, and willingness for self-sacrifice. Our outer attitude [is to be displayed in] the appearance of our formations, our readiness for action, and order in our private and public life.” The set of questions published for stormtroopers preparing for the ideological competition reveals the extent to which the Nazis attempted to place the cult of the *Führer* above everything else. Questions for consideration—all fifty-seven of which contained the word “*Führer*”—included: “When was the *Führer* born?” “Where was the *Führer* born?” “What was the occupation of the *Führer*’s father?” “Which blow of fate hit the *Führer* the hardest?” “Why did the *Führer* not become an artist?”⁶¹³ The caricature of the “National Socialist revolution” presented in the *Reichswettkampf* mythologized the activism of the *Kampfzeit* (time of struggle), portraying a victorious fight against the left that, as Gerhard Paul has pointed out, did not actually take place until after 1933, when the NSDAP had all the powers of the state at its disposal.⁶¹⁴ More importantly, it presented the revolution as a defensive struggle

against internal enemies, eliding the social aspirations that had been a part of National Socialism's appeal. If this fictive version of the National Socialist revolution suggests that the meaning of the revolution had been controlled, the real version of the revolution was much more complicated; indeed, it saw the debates of the Weimar Republic—about nationalism, socialism, and revolution—continue to be played out.

“The NSDAP has seized the entire initiative”

Like other National Socialist euphemisms, the term *Gleichschaltung* (“coordination” or “synchronization”) bears a heavy weight of meaning.⁶¹⁵ On a practical level it refers to Nazism's assault on the centers of political and administrative independence in Germany during the opening phase of the regime—the destruction of the Weimar party system, the purge of the civil service, the centralization of state authority at the expense of the *Länder*, and the co-optation of the trade unions. More broadly, *Gleichschaltung* represented the attempted Nazification of all aspects of German culture and society. The journalist Ernst Erich Noth, a keen observer of the process, dubbed these two aspects of *Gleichschaltung* the “organizational-technical” and the “ideological-mythical.”⁶¹⁶ The first, accomplished by a combination of legal measures, intimidation, and violence, went largely unchallenged; the second presented somewhat greater difficulties. Noth employed the metaphor of “digestion” to describe the process; he argued that the difficulties of the NSDAP—more profound than the stage-managed totalism of its propaganda let on—were a result of its excessive appetite: the more National Socialism succeeded in swallowing up its opponents of both left and right, the more it enfolded within itself elements inclined to criticism and rebellion.⁶¹⁷ *Gleichschaltung*, for Noth, entailed the destruction of those revolutionary elements that had stood in the zone of conflict between the extremes of left and right, by which he meant those that had resisted incorporation into the totalizing performances of Communism and National Socialism, but this is only partially correct; the process was not merely one of destruction but of subsumation, in which the distinctive radicalism of these elements flowed into and helped fuel the dynamism of National Socialism.⁶¹⁸ It was not just those who opposed National Socialism who presented the problem—not merely the “Black Marxists” with whom, as will be seen, the regime was obsessed—but those who, excited by the idea of the National Socialist revolution, had their own ideas about what it meant.

Where Nazism's opponents and fellow travelers were concerned, *Gleichschaltung* resembled nothing more than a massive “Flucht nach vorn”—a “flight to the front” in German military parlance—aimed at winning temporary safety and gaining tactical initiative. From the *Völkisch* splinter groups to the large paramilitary *Wehrverbände*; from the *Bündisch* youth to the National Revolutionaries; from the followers of Otto Strasser to the underground activists of the KPD; all who had opposed the Weimar Republic while resisting or holding themselves

aloof from National Socialism now found themselves forced to react to National Socialism's totalizing demands. "The NSDAP," as *Bündisch* leader Eberhard Koebel resignedly put it, "has seized the entire initiative."⁶¹⁹ Difficult decisions now had to be made about the extent to which it was desirable or possible to work around or within the mass organizations of National Socialism. The decision to work from within—one, as we have seen, already made by Communists and others before 30 January 1933—was justified in part by the belief in the ephemeral nature of the Nazi regime. It was not just the notoriously myopic KPD that saw the "Nazi revolution" as a passing phase; the belief that Hitler would make a quick exit was general. This is one reason why, during the early phase of the regime, Communists and others could, despite the atmosphere of violence and intimidation, continue to work toward the goals they had pursued before 30 January 1933. The period up to the so-called Night of the Long Knives of 30 June–2 July 1934, if not for some time afterward, represented not just the consolidation phase of the Third Reich but the end phase of a "Long Weimar Republic" in which the battle over meaning characteristic of the Weimar continued. The playing field was no longer level, however, for what Hitler received alongside his chancellorship was not just access to the levers of power in Germany but also the opportunity to settle, once and for all, the questions—about the meaning of "socialism," of "revolution," and of the relationship of these two to the "nation"—that had characterized radical politics in the Weimar Republic and that, initially at least, seemed to remain open. One of the most fascinating, if little examined, aspects of *Gleichschaltung* is that its peculiar dynamism came not just from those who welcomed National Socialism but from those who opposed it. Indeed, the hopes of many Nazis for a "second revolution"—a demand associated especially with the SA—dovetailed with the revolutionary aspirations of those, such as the Communists, who believed that "Nazi Germany" was but a prelude to "Soviet Germany," and many activists of the Youth Movement, who came to believe that their ideal of a *Volkgemeinschaft* combining nationalism and socialism might yet be realized through the pressure of the ranks in the National Socialist mass organizations.⁶²⁰

When Hitler was named Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933, at the head of a conservative coalition of "national concentration," he was only one in a series of (apparently temporary) chancellors appointed by the aging president Paul von Hindenburg. Only two Nazis held cabinet posts: Wilhelm Frick (Minister of the Interior) and Hermann Göring (initially Minister without Portfolio, subsequently acting Prussian Minister of the Interior);⁶²¹ Hitler ruled at Hindenburg's pleasure, and his powers were far from absolute. Franz von Papen's famous quip regarding Hitler—"we have hired him"—expressed well the mistaken optimism of the conservatives. The steps by which National Socialism gained its ascendancy—among them the state of emergency in the wake of the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933, and the Enabling Act following the Reichstag elections of 5 March; the intimidation of opponents both external and internal culminating in the Night of the Long Knives; and, after the death of Hindenburg in Au-

gust of that year, Hitler's assumption of the combined powers of president and chancellor—are well known. Yet Nazism's success in clearing space for the "National Socialist Revolution" left open the question of what type of revolution this would be. Hitler's appointment released the dammed-up forces of Nazi radicalism, which expressed themselves in an orgy of violence against enemies real and perceived. The chief targets of this violence were the Marxist parties, above all the KPD. "No Red Front man who had ever beaten or made fun of an SA man during the 'time of struggle,' observed Rudolf Diels, first head of the Gestapo, "now escaped the personal vengeance of the victorious 'Browns.'"⁶²² Special brutality was reserved for stormtroopers who had defected to the KPD before 1933.⁶²³ The wave of terror escalated dramatically in the wake of the *Reichstag* Fire of 27 February 1933. Four thousand Communists and other alleged opponents of the regime were arrested over the night of 27–28 February 1933, when Communist premises were raided and the party's presses closed.⁶²⁴ President Hindenburg signed an emergency decree on the 28th granting extensive powers of repression to the new state. Now with the complete backing of the state authorities, the stormtroopers unleashed a reign of terror against Communists, Social Democrats, and other perceived enemies, settling old scores and giving free reign to their pent-up rage and frustration. Impromptu jails were set up where SA men beat and tortured their victims. There were at least 150 of these so-called wild SA concentration camps in Berlin alone.⁶²⁵

The violent wave of the first months of 1933 was only the tip of the iceberg of a spontaneous outburst of popular radicalism.⁶²⁶ Aimed in the first instance against the organizations and institutions of the working class (and targeting, where regionally appropriate, Catholic organizations and youth groups), this uprising was, simultaneously, fueled by a fascist rank and file motivated by a vaguely defined but powerful concept of a revolutionary "national socialism," the content of which was both unclear and evolving. The widespread nature of the revolutionary hopes invested in National Socialism was noted by a number of contemporaries. Ernst Erich Noth emphasized it,⁶²⁷ as did the KPD's propaganda expert, Willi Münzenberg, who argued that the Nazis had been forced to emphasize their social-revolutionary intentions by pressure from below.⁶²⁸ Herbert Crüger, one of the followers of Otto Strasser who went over to the KPD in 1931, spent the early months of the regime in a National Socialist student home in Berlin, where he was greatly impressed by the atmosphere of revolutionary excitement. The students there, members of the National Socialist German Student Association (NSDStB), some of whom Crüger knew from his Hitler Youth days, were obsessed, he wrote, "with ideas of an egalitarian *Volksgemeinschaft*, ... a socialism in which the concept 'German' occupied a central position."⁶²⁹ The French anarcho-Marxist Daniel Guérin, traveling in Germany during the early months of the regime, detected the same attitudes. Struck by the extent to which everyday Germans he met—on the road, in the youth hostels, at meetings—invested social revolutionary hopes in the NSDAP, Guérin was shocked and frustrated by the way in which left-wing demands had become intertwined with the ethnic

nationalism of the Nazis. He cites the example of a young worker, a Communist with a deep emotional attachment to Ernst Thälmann, who complained bitterly to him of the “betrayal” of the two working-class parties in the Weimar Republic. They “should have forged unity in action,” he said, “[but they] didn’t want to.” He went on: “We’ll have to make our revolution alone. While waiting for the International to exist, we have to think about the present. First of all, to liberate ourselves from the *Diktat* of Versailles, to free our oppressed comrades in Silesia, in the Saarland, in Austria, in the Sudetenland, in Memel and Danzig ... to found a German workers’ state!”⁶³⁰ Another young worker announced to Guérin that he had quit the NSDAP, explaining:

I’m not satisfied. It’s no longer a revolutionary party; it hasn’t got any teeth. I want *real socialism*. For fourteen years, the Social Democratic party had the chance to build it, but what did it do about it? I’m not a Communist, because I’m a German first and I don’t want to be treated like a Russian *moujik*, but I respect the Communists and feel closer to them than the rest. ... So long as they all betray socialism, I will remain without a party.⁶³¹

“There are thousands like him,” wrote Guérin, “mixing up their confused demands for socialism with a fanatical sentiment born of national humiliation. And it is more so among the youth than the adults.” A speech witnessed by Guérin in a working-class dance hall in Leipzig was particularly revealing. “Our Revolution, *Volksgenossen*, has only begun,” proclaimed a local party activist. “We haven’t yet attained any of our goals. There’s talk of a national government, of a national awakening. ... What’s all that about? It’s the *Socialist* part of our program that matters. ... We have now but one enemy to vanquish: the bourgeoisie.”⁶³²

Hopes and expectations like these rather quickly began to be referred to under the rubric of the Second Revolution, a term that “came to stand for the deeply ingrained feelings in the party of anticapitalism, anticonservatism, and general radicalism.”⁶³³ These hopes carried with them the potential for great disappointment, a potential increased by the transformation of National Socialism into a mass movement.⁶³⁴ Charges about the embourgeoisement of the movement, which had been current before 1933, became even more pronounced as bandwagon jumpers—derisively labeled *Märzgefallene* by Joseph Goebbels—crowded into the NSDAP. Simultaneously, the rise of what Ernst Erich Noth called a “new type of *Bonzen*”—even harder and more ubiquitous than the old—gave rise to a growing anger.⁶³⁵ The picture of creeping discontent sketched out by Noth is confirmed by reports from the intelligence services of the underground KPD, the exiled SPD, and the NSDAP itself. Characteristic was the comment of an SS *Sturmführer* at a meeting in Krefeld in June 1934, recorded by a Communist agent: “Hitler must call for struggle against the *Bonzen*, then we will be with him. If he doesn’t do it, then he’ll be buried together with the other *Bonzen*. We must conquer the old Communists for our side; they are guys that you can really start something with. The washerwomen who are coming over to us now aren’t worth a penny.” He concluded by calling for Germany to follow the example of the Soviet Union: “In Russia it is good. Everything there goes from the bottom up, not

the way it is here where everything comes down from the *Bonzen*. In Germany we have to get rid of the *Bonzen* and create a Reich that will really show Russia something.”⁶³⁶ An SA man in Cologne announced to a group of SA and SS men, “We were promised that twenty-four hours after we were in power, there would be no more department stores or banks. Now you don’t hear anything about it.”⁶³⁷ Another threatened, “It’s not going to last much longer, then the whole splendor is going to be over. My comrades say it, too; we’ve been swindled. Hitler doesn’t attack capital like he promised; therefore we will have to move against him.”⁶³⁸ Attitudes like these prompted a Communist spy to note in April 1934: “The expectations that the SA men had attached to the seizure of power, and which have not been fulfilled, have allowed a very violent mood of opposition to come out among the old SA men.”⁶³⁹ Agents of the SA’s own intelligence service detected similar attitudes. Typical were the comments of one SA man who said, “Now as before, the capitalists have the power, and people such as Thyssen, Krupp, and so on, remain war profiteers, even if they join the NSDAP en masse. In one and a half years, the *Verbonzung* [bigwigification] in the party and in the government has taken on the same form that it had in the Weimar state.” Of Göring and other Nazi leaders he concluded, “I would take part in a Communist uprising myself, just to be able to do away with [these] people.”⁶⁴⁰

This picture of simmering discontent is confirmed by the reports of the *Sopade*, the intelligence agency of the exiled SPD. “The proletarian SA men ...,” noted a report in early summer 1934, “really believed that with the carrying out of the Second Revolution, the large banks and the princes of the stock exchange, heavy industry and the department stores, would be nationalized.”⁶⁴¹ Other reports emphasized the role played by such attitudes in ongoing SA violence. Noted one:

The revolt of the SA on May 1 [1934] in Bremen, the fight ... against the police and the eventual occupation of the Brown House ... was accompanied by great tumult on the streets. Between seven and eight o’clock in the evening, the rebellious SA formations moved through the streets and stormed the ... department store Karstadt. Several large display windows were smashed, [and] the SA men raised fifteen giant swastika and black, white, and red flags ... from the roof. ... The police advanced against the Nazi revolutionaries [and] there was much brawling and many arrests.⁶⁴²

Assaults like this on “capital” were accompanied by violence against reactionaries accused of watering down the movement. Earlier on the day of the Bremen Karstadt attack, SA and SS men became involved in a raging battle with members of the *Stahlhelm*, the *Wehrwolf*, and the *Jungdo*, leading to thirty arrests.⁶⁴³ A few weeks later, members of the Hitler Youth attacked the motorcade of Hitler’s labor minister, Franz Seldte of the *Stahlhelm*. A British journalist described the incident:

A regiment of Hitler Youth lads yesterday ambushed Major Seldte, leader of the German Steel Helmets, and Minister of Labour in the Nazi cabinet, attacked him with sticks, fired

revolvers, and reluctantly let him escape with his life. This extraordinary incident is the climax of months of hostility between the Nazi Storm troops and Hitler Youths—who consider the Nazi revolution has by no means gone far enough—and their former allies, the Steel Helmets, who are hated as reactionaries, monarchists, and Junkers. . . . The seriousness of the affair is evident from the fact that all news of it is withheld from the public. Major Seldte was returning from a meeting which he had addressed near Magdeburg when his car was held up by a Hitler Youth regiment 200 strong. Insults were shouted at him . . . and furious young Nazis rushed at him with upraised sticks.

The cause of this event, he continued, was anger over Seldte's reference

to the Nazi revolution as a "phenomenon of puberty." Since then the youth of Germany have been after Major Seldte's blood. Their publicity chief, Herr Staebe, has been rushing from one end of the country to the other, addressing mass meetings of Hitler Youth and calling for vengeance. "Strike the reactionaries wherever you find them," he cried yesterday, in a speech at Hannover. The Hitler Youth shouted with applause and carried Staebe triumphantly on their shoulders through the streets.⁶⁴⁴

Such events were by no means isolated. The Sopade noted in June 1934: "There exist reports from various parts of the country about fighting between SA men, between the SA and the SS, between the SA and the *Stahlhelm*, between the SA and the Labor Service, the SA and the army, etc., etc."⁶⁴⁵ A French journalist estimated in June 1934 that there had been at least sixty SA revolts in the preceding three months.⁶⁴⁶

"Our socialism...is the exact opposite of Marxism"

Nazi authorities were understandably nervous about the Pandora's box of radicalism they had helped open. Dangerous expressions of radicalism were blamed on the influence of "Black Marxists" working within the NSDAP, a problem exacerbated by the integration of the working classes into the mass organizations of the regime. Officials in Hannover noted in April 1934 that the

indiscriminate admission of workers into the NSBO and SA as well as other organizations has made the agitation of the KPD . . . easier, and the (work) of official agencies more difficult. Not only can Communist slogans be brought directly [into the organizations] under the pretense of membership in the NSBO and the SA, but the Communists have even succeeded occasionally in influencing entire NSBO staffs so that Communist demands come—unknowingly or purposefully—to be supported by the NSBO functionaries.

Factory owners were complaining, the report went on, that

functionaries of the NSBO or members of the SA not only demand special rights that disrupt the factory, but some of them make demands that can presumably be traced back to Communist influence. In very many cases office holders [in the factory councils] are

confirmed who only a year ago were still fanatical opponents of the present system. These are exactly the people who have become ... extraordinarily arrogant ... and ... demand a revolutionary renewal, or they are, after the Communist slogan "red on the inside, brown on the outside," the best pioneers for the KPD.⁶⁴⁷

Worries like these were based partly on imagination, partly on essentializing ideas about the permanence of class convictions.⁶⁴⁸ But they were also based, as we have seen, on a recognition of the potential for a dovetailing of Nazi and anti-Nazi radicalism.

Such fears were fueled especially by the dramatic growth of the SA, which expanded from a number of some 400,000 in 1932 to more than 2 million in the first few months of 1933.⁶⁴⁹ The doors to SA membership were more or less thrown open in June 1933, and the SA increased further in size with the incorporation of the *Stahlhelm* into SA Reserve I in November.⁶⁵⁰ By the beginning of 1934 there were some 2,950,000 men enrolled in the SA.⁶⁵¹ Nazi authorities took a number of measures to police the radicalism of the rank and file. At the beginning of 1933 Hitler prescribed "sharpest surveillance, cool treatment" for those "radical elements [in the SA] that because of their social origins are easily inclined to Marxism." Hitler's order further stipulated that nonproletarian SA men were to be protected from comrades still under the influence of Marxism, if necessary by shipping the latter off to work programs in the countryside.⁶⁵² The head of the Berlin SA, Karl Ernst, established a sort of secret police within the SA, "Department IE," which had the task not only of undertaking special missions against Jewish intellectuals and others targeted for revenge or extortion but also of catching Communist infiltrators among the stormtroopers.⁶⁵³ The SA also established throughout the Reich its own *Feldpolizei* (field police), which had the task of surveilling both SA and party members.⁶⁵⁴ Worry about the orientation of new SA men was reflected in orders stipulating a six-month probationary period for new recruits established in the summer of 1933.⁶⁵⁵ A few months later, Hitler ordered local SA leaders to conduct house searches of all stormtroopers who joined the SA after 30 January 1933.⁶⁵⁶

At the beginning of 1934, the Gestapo began to observe and collect material on the SA. Observing the SA was one of the first tasks accorded to the SS security service, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD). The man responsible for the reorganization of the SD in southern Germany, Dr. Werner Best, oversaw the creation of a special department within the SD for this purpose.⁶⁵⁷ The overall effect of these controls was limited, and they were far outweighed in their effect by the massive growth of the SA.⁶⁵⁸ Best later argued, in justifying the strike against the SA leadership in June 1934, that "the admission of millions of former Marxists, the unclear proclamation of 'socialist' goals, [and] the phrases of the 'Second Revolution'" could have given rise to a sort of "Brown Bolshevism."⁶⁵⁹ Best made these comments in postwar West Germany, where they would have resonated with official anti-Communism. Yet there seems little reason to doubt that they accurately reflect the concerns of the time. Röhm warned that the revolution would be car-

ried through with the *Spiesser*, “or if needs be, against them,” and as we have seen, there is much evidence that his demands for a Second Revolution—understood as a call for a necessary “socialist” revolution to follow the national revolution of early 1933—resonated with those of the rank and file.⁶⁶⁰ Even during the wave of terror against the left in the first months of 1933, stormtroopers in Breslau had to be reminded by their commanding officer that they were forbidden to debate with Marxists. The stormtroopers were urged rather to convince them that “Marxism is played out in Germany.”⁶⁶¹

Röhm’s murder in the Night of the Long Knives was, in the first instance, a product of institutional-political power struggles, and above all a product of Hitler’s fear of alienating the army leadership threatened by Ernst Röhm’s demands to use the SA as the basis of a revolutionary army. It was also, however, the product of real fears brought on by the success of *Gleichschaltung*, of the knowledge that enemies really were at work, that Hitler supporters expected promises to be fulfilled, and that as a result, enemy agitators had something substantial to work with. Above all, as Gerhard Paul has argued, it was a product of the need to control meaning.⁶⁶² The Night of the Long Knives was important because it cleared the way for the Nazis to define the National Socialist revolution. Just as the party used violence against the left to eliminate leftist voices, it used violence against its own movement to eliminate those voices. Violence and performance were two sides of the same coin. It was only after the Night of the Long Knives, as Gerhard Paul has argued, that National Socialism could present its “theater spectacle” without interruption. The continued radicalism of National Socialist militants, especially violent disturbances involving the SA, were a threat to the creation of this performance, and it was to eliminate this threat, Paul argues, that the SA was tamed by the regime. June 30, in other words, cleared the way so that the bodies of National Socialism’s followers could be choreographed into spectacles such as the propaganda parades of the *Reichswettkampf* with which we began this chapter.

Police measures aimed at controlling indiscipline that threatened the propaganda spectacle of National Socialism were, however, only a small part of the disciplinary project associated with *Gleichschaltung*. Alongside these now came an emphasis on aspects of Nazi ideology that had remained more or less in the background during the *Kampfzeit*.⁶⁶³ Nazi leaders called for discipline repeatedly over the course of 1933–34, and each of these calls was subtly linked with attempts to direct the activism of the stormtroopers. Especially important was the attempt to link SA radicalism with the goals of the state, to decrease the impetus of action from below and reinforce the importance of central direction from above. On 10 May, during the SA’s reign of terror against Nazi enemies in the wake of the Reichstag fire, Hitler expressed his concern in a speech to the SA and SS. “The national government has executive power in its hands,” he noted, and “the further carrying out of the National Revolution must therefore be systematic and directed from above.” Leaving no uncertainty about the direction the revolution must take, Hitler continued, “You must, my comrades, take care that the National Revolution of 1933 will not go down in history as something com-

parable to the Revolution of the ... Spartacists in the year 1918. Don't let yourselves ... be torn away from our slogan! It is: The destruction of Marxism." Hitler warned of "conscience-less individuals, principally Communist spies, [who] are attempting through individual actions to compromise" the position of the party. "In particular," he continued,

attempts are being made, by molesting visitors in cars with foreign pennants, to bring the party, and by extension Germany, into conflict with foreign countries. SA and SS men! You must yourselves immediately regulate such individuals and call them to account. You must ... immediately give them over to the police, no matter who they say they are.⁶⁶⁴

Joseph Goebbels employed a similar tactic in a speech to the SA in Leipzig on 15 May. Referring to the SA as the "battalions of discipline," Goebbels tried to lay the problems not on the Communists but on the bourgeois latecomers to the movement. Playing on the SA's hatred of the bourgeoisie by blaming the so-called *Märzgefallene*, Goebbels noted that the radicalism of people who had been in the movement for only two or three months was not the radicalism of true revolutionaries but of "overexcited *Spiessbürger*." Making sure that he was not misunderstood, Goebbels continued: "We know very well the distinction between party comrades who came to us before 30 January, and those who came to us after 30 January. To come to us beforehand was difficult; to stay away from us afterward was also difficult."⁶⁶⁵

Like Hitler's attempt to blame excessive SA activism on Communist infiltrators, Goebbels's attack on the *Spiesser* entering the movement was aimed at strengthening the connection between the SA and the party by blaming sources of tension on outsiders. Simultaneously, it represented an attempt to direct the anger of the SA into a dead end. The goal of enforcing discipline in the SA, of which this strategy was a part, was linked, at the same time, with the attempt to define the revolution in ways that both served a useful political purpose and reinforced the authority of the Nazi leadership. The connection between public order and the carrying forward of the revolution was explicitly drawn by Goebbels in his speech before the Leipzig SA. "The legality that we are practicing today," he noted, "is something completely different than the legality of Müller and Stremmann and Brüning. We are revolutionary legalists, or put another way, legal revolutionaries."⁶⁶⁶ By emphasizing Nazism's break with the democratic past and drawing an explicit connection between seemingly antagonistic aims ("revolution" and "legality"), Goebbels attempted to reinforce the revolutionary credibility of the NSDAP while simultaneously urging restraint on the party's militants.

A key component of the Nazi effort to shape and define the revolution was the ideological offensive against Marxism. Nazism, and not Marxism, was to be sold as the legitimate vehicle of the German revolution. In his very first public speech as Reich Chancellor, Hitler blamed Marxism for all the negative developments that had afflicted the German people since 1918. Promising to never deviate in his struggle to eradicate the parties and ideology of the class struggle, he posed the choice in stark terms: "Either Marxism or the German people."⁶⁶⁷ In a pro-

lamation for the 1 May 1933, proclaimed by the Nazis as the Day of German Labor, Goebbels pronounced the death of Marxism: “Marxism lies smashed on the ground. The organizations of the class struggle are beaten. We have not led the fight against the culture-threatening danger of Bolshevism for reactionary, antipopular, or antiworker reasons. German Marxism must die, so that a path toward freedom can be opened up for German labor.”⁶⁶⁸

Before an assembly of the Berlin NSBO on 21 May, Goebbels argued that Nazism, not Marxism, was the bearer of working-class militancy in Germany, noting that the Nazi revolution was, in the truest sense of the word, a workers’ revolution. Alluding to the fact that enemy forces were operating within the movement, and linking their defeat to the carrying out of the “real revolution,” Goebbels continued: “Don’t let the movement be adulterated! Don’t allow a camouflaged Commune or a hidden bourgeoisie to enter the movement. The movement is revolutionary and must remain revolutionary!”⁶⁶⁹ The character of this revolution was still in doubt, but now the Nazi leadership was in a position to monopolize the way in which it was defined. Socialism was to be created not by Marxist class war, not by undisciplined radicalism flying off in every direction, but by top down, centrally directed leadership.

Speaking before an assembly of the “Young People for German Socialism” in December 1933, Goebbels assured his audience that Nazism had not simply used “socialism” as a catchphrase in order to achieve power: “Socialism is not just an over-and-done-with affair, not just a ... parade horse that we rode while fighting for power, and from which we are now going to dismount because we’ve come into power. Socialism is a conviction that the people have to fulfill, that doesn’t have anything to do with bourgeois prejudices.” Making sure that his young audience did not misunderstand the form that Nazi socialism was going to take, Goebbels continued: “Our socialism, as we understand it, is the best of our Prussian inheritance. We inherit it from the Prussian army, from the Prussian civil service.” He went on to link Nazism with the greatness of the German past: “It is the socialism that enabled the great Frederick and his army to withstand seven years of war. It is the socialism that gave a starved and exhausted Prussia, after this seven years of war, the strength to rebuild not only its old but also its new provinces.” This was a socialism, Goebbels continued, that had “something soldierly ... about it.” Drawing a connection between socialism, militarism, and the needs of Germany as a nation, Goebbels stated, “What socialism is within the nation, nationalism is to the outside world. The distinction is no longer between classes ... but between values.” Goebbels summed up his argument as follows: “Our socialism ... is the exact opposite of Marxism.”⁶⁷⁰

In his very first public speech as Reich Chancellor, Hitler spoke of the “restoration of cleanliness” in German culture as a prerequisite to German national rebirth.⁶⁷¹ But the rebirth of culture narrowly defined was only a small part of Hitler’s vision. In a speech to SA leaders a few months later, Hitler spelled out his vision of the far-reaching implications of the Nazi revolution. In the words of the correspondent from the *Vossische Zeitung*, Hitler began by outlining for the

assembled stormtroopers his view of the nature of revolution. Revolution was not an end in itself but “a means to a higher goal.” There were, Hitler continued, “two types of revolution known to history: that of the idea, and that of pure violence.” The higher form, the “revolution of the idea” (*weltanschaulichen Revolution*), must have as its goal the “the education and forming of man” to correspond to “the ideal which gave this revolution its meaning.” This would amount to nothing less than the creation of a “new man,” and the task of the SA leadership would be to contribute to the birth of this “new man” by bringing up the people in the spirit of National Socialism. The revolution was not to be socioeconomic but cultural, biological, and above all racial. The race problem was the key: “The question of leadership, of socialism, of authority, etc., all go back to the same root: blood and cultural identity.” For Hitler, the true meaning of the “socialism” in National Socialism, and, by extension, of the Nazi revolution itself, was drawn not from Marx but from Darwin: “Socialism is nothing other than the natural order of a people according to its inherent capabilities.”⁶⁷²

“I wear the brown uniform only for appearances”

In Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the 1934 Nuremberg party rally, *Triumph of the Will*, the NSDAP’s socialism is depicted as a function of the masses coordinated under the will of one man, with workers, peasants, and soldiers willingly submitting themselves to the greater good of Germany. When Ernst Röhm’s replacement as SA chief of staff, Victor Lutze, says in the film, “We SA workers will always be true only to the *Führer*,” he is not only affirming the allegiance of the SA to Hitler in the wake of the Röhm purge but also setting the final seal on the definition of socialism achieved by the regime.⁶⁷³ Yet the battle over the meaning of socialism continued, and ferment within the National Socialist mass organizations gave hope to those who hoped to still capitalize on the atmosphere of revolutionary change. It is fitting that the first film produced under National Socialism, *Hitler Youth Quex* (1933), took as its subject the death of Herbert Norkus, the Berlin Hitler Youth killed by Communists and renegade National Socialists under the command of Walther Stennes.⁶⁷⁴ In the film, Stennes’s stormtroopers are absent; in their place are bloodthirsty Communists. Joseph Goebbels considered this distinction important enough to return to in a major speech almost two years after the release of the film: “When Norkus, who was a member of the Hitler Youth, was stabbed by some communist brutes the *Rote Fahne* barefacedly declared that Norkus was killed by a Nazi spy; so that the Nazis were alleged to have murdered a seventeen-year-old member of their own party.”⁶⁷⁵ In reconfiguring the death of Norkus into a pure act of Communist aggression, eliding the participation of self-styled National Socialists, not to mention the NSDAP’s cooperation with the Communists in the BVG strike later that same year, the film aimed not only to erase uncomfortable memories but also to further a cult of martyred youth so important in National Socialism.

In this sense, it was part of the NSDAP's broader attempt to take over the mantle of the youth movement.⁶⁷⁶ The fate of this movement under National Socialism is indicative, for in many ways, it willingly submitted to *Gleichschaltung*. Before 1933 there were about one hundred thousand of both sexes in *Bündisch* groups. The majority of these went more or less voluntarily into National Socialist organizations. The phenomenal growth of the Hitler Youth would otherwise have been impossible. At the end of 1932, the Hitler Youth had 108,000 members. A year later the figure was 2.3 million, and after another year, more than 3.5 million. As with other sectors of society, there was a wave of opportunistic joinings of the NSDAP from the *Bündische Jugend*. These joinings ran in parallel with attempts to preserve autonomy. The *Freischar Schill* disbanded itself, enthusiastic about 1933 but also worried about the threat posed by the Hitler Youth.⁶⁷⁷ In late March 1933 a *Großdeutscher Bund* was formed, encompassing some seventy thousand members of various *Bünde*. The leaders of these groups hoped to incorporate themselves into the National Socialist movement while preserving "bündisch living space."⁶⁷⁸ The *Bund* was outlawed by Baldur von Schirach, the new Nazi national youth leader, on the day he took office (17 June 1933). But as Mathias von Hellfeld has pointed out, von Schirach lacked any real authority within the regime at this time, making his prohibition of the *Bund* more symbolic than real.⁶⁷⁹ The ambiguous attitude of the *Bündische* toward the Nazi revolution was captured well by Eberhard Koebel. While challenging the idea that the mass *Webrverband* offered a more "militarily effective" model than the small elite *Bündisch* group, Koebel concluded that in the end, both the *Großdeutscher Bund* and the Hitler Youth were so thoroughly infiltrated by the personnel and spirit of the *Bündische Jugend* that the distinction between them hardly mattered. "To dispute the complete victory of the NSDAP," he wrote, "to diminish it, to take advantage of the potential for reaction against it, leads from the real world away into a world of illusion, into a naive private world. The *Bünde* will disappear. We won't shed any tears for them."⁶⁸⁰

The Reich Youth leadership wanted to bring as many people as possible into its mass organizations, yet simultaneously worried about the possible effects of success.⁶⁸¹ "The leaders of the *Bünde* ... are today still to an extent active in the old sense," complained the authorities; "a portion of them have let themselves be taken into the Hitler Youth and there attempted to build cells."⁶⁸² The attempt of *Bündisch* figures such as Eberhard Koebel and Karl Paetel to seek influence in the Hitler Youth represented a special source of concern.⁶⁸³ Koebel joined the Hitler Youth in Berlin in order to continue his *Bündisch* activities, prompting Hitler Youth leaders to warn of attempts by his supporters to infiltrate the Hitler Youth and *Deutsche Jungvolk*.⁶⁸⁴ They cited, for emphasis, the example of a local group of the *Deutsche Jungvolk* in Erfurt, which held "tea evenings" and sat on pillows "like Indians or Chinese." No brown shirts were worn, all the works of Tusk were on hand, and a d.j.1.11 flag hung on a wall. In Magdeburg, an activist reported that a "strong Communist attitude" ruled in the local Hitler Youth.⁶⁸⁵ During the initial period of the regime, older loyalties ran in parallel with new. A follower of

Tusk in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg remembers that he could still publicly appear in the uniform of the *Bündische* as late as 1934.⁶⁸⁶ The last of Koebel's Red-Gray Garrisons, in Danzig, survived until 1939.⁶⁸⁷ Hitler Youth and *Deutsche Jungvolk* leaders continued to worry about the influence of the *Bündische* well into the mid-1930s.⁶⁸⁸ But under the illusion that they could continue to pursue their radical ends inside what they saw as a revolutionary movement, *Bündisch* activists were already contributing to their own *Gleichschaltung* and adding the force of their aspirations and energy to National Socialism. They did this because in some ways they had little choice, but also because they believed in broad goals that—as in the case of Eberhard Koebel and many others—might be pursued first on the left, now on the right, and because they were not at all unused to marching, drill, commands, flags, and songs. In this way, the integration of the *Bündische* was the end result of the process of self-militarization that had taken place in the Weimar Republic. In the end, as Ernst Erich Noth wrote, the youth of his generation “returned to the barracks almost willingly.”⁶⁸⁹

* * *

Whereas many of the *Bündisch* groups were largely interested merely in protecting the autonomy they had sacrificed in joining or being integrated into the mass organizations of National Socialism, the Communists and some of the various National Bolshevik or National Socialist splinter groups still hoped for revolution.⁶⁹⁰ The KPD was without a doubt the greatest victim of the early phase of the Nazi *Machtergreifung*. The party was officially banned on 6 March 1933. By the end of the year, some sixty to one hundred thousand Communists had been arrested or sent to concentration camps.⁶⁹¹ Although the Politburo of the KPD escaped immediate arrest, much of the middle-level leadership was wiped out in the repression. Communists who were not arrested fled or went into hiding. The KPD estimated that the party lost two-thirds of its membership in the first ten months of 1933.⁶⁹² Nevertheless, the party was able to rebuild its organization in many parts of Germany in the first few years, and many party members managed to remain active even at the height of the repression. In March 1933 one official of the *M-Apparat* in Berlin still maintained contact with Communist district leaders in Berlin-Brandenburg, Hannover, Hamburg, Halle-Merseburg, Leipzig, Thuringia, Middle-Rheinland, and Danzig.⁶⁹³ Authorities in Düsseldorf noted that Communist activity remained lively in September 1933.⁶⁹⁴ The KPD in Kassel began to be rebuilt in October 1933, the district leadership bringing out its own paper, *Der Kämpfer*.⁶⁹⁵ In Hamburg and surrounding districts, the Communist Party organization was reconstructed from the end of 1934.⁶⁹⁶ In Düsseldorf the party organization under the leadership of Hugo Paul was able to distribute fliers denouncing Nazi outrages against the workers, like the raid on the working-class suburb of Gerresheim on 5 May 1933.⁶⁹⁷

Zersetzungsblätter for the SA and police continued to be produced during the Spring of 1933 and into 1934–35.⁶⁹⁸ In Cologne the KPD published *Der SA Kamerad* (see Figure 5.3). In Essen Communist operatives were able to create and

distribute a number of different leaflets; one operative arrested by the Gestapo in late 1933 was found to have examples of fifteen different pieces in his apartment. Among these were fliers designed specifically for the SA and SS. One of them, the aforementioned “*SA-Mann Erwache!*” contained calls for stormtroopers to organize opposition cells in every *Sturm*, to renounce acts of terror against the workers, to demand the right to criticism of the party leadership, and to fight with the workers for real socialism. The leaflet, designed to look as if it was created within the SA, was signed, “The leadership of the opposition group in the Ruhr.”⁶⁹⁹ In Franconia, where a revolt of the SA under Walter Stegmann had only recently been contained, the KPD released a flier titled “SA Proletarians! Open Your Eyes! Finish the Job!” It sought to convince the stormtroopers that they had nothing to gain by following anti-Nazi rebels but must take their revolt to its logical conclusion by joining the KPD.⁷⁰⁰ In Berlin *Der SA Sturmbanner* (“Organ of the Mutinous Berlin SA”) tried to dampen the enthusiasm of SA men for the new Nazi government by noting the government’s inclusion of conservatives such as von Papen and criticizing Hitler’s failure to immediately improve the economic situation.⁷⁰¹

The official party press, now operating underground, continued to publicize the activity of the “SA Opposition.” “We reproduce here a call by rebellious SA [men],” read an article in *Der Kämpfer*, “to which we have added nothing.”

SA and SS comrades! National Socialists! More than thirty SA and SS comrades have been taken to the Papestraße concentration camp. Why? Because they demanded the carrying out of the socialist revolution. Our *Sturm 4* was dissolved, because it mutinied over Hitler’s betrayal of socialism. Three of our comrades were shot during this action by SS men who had been incited [by their leaders].

Two other *Sturms* had been dissolved, the flier continued,

because they refused to take action against Communist workers until Hitler carries out the socialist revolution. In the tavern at Kulmannstraße 17, SA men, with Hitler’s betrayal before their eyes, sang the Internationale. ... We revolutionary SA men ... in agreement with our Communist comrades, with whom we’ve been discussing things, say the following: We won’t give our weapons up. We will remain in the SA and build cells there. Long live the socialist revolution, the Red Front! The Communist cell in *Sturm 4*.⁷⁰²

In cities where the KPD had been strong before January 1933, surviving Communist functionaries were able to rebuild some of the party organization and continue their activity under cover.⁷⁰³ To an even greater extent than before 1933, the KPD continued to focus on its strategy of infiltration.⁷⁰⁴ The size of the Communist presence in the SA, SS, NSBO, and other Nazi organizations has, for obvious reasons, been difficult to quantify. As far as the SA is concerned, a significant portion of new recruits is known to have previously belonged to the KPD.⁷⁰⁵ Rudolf Diels, the first head of the Gestapo, estimated that in Berlin, 70 percent of new SA recruits after 30 January were former Communists. In some cases,



Zur Beerdigung der neun Opfer der Polizeischüsse in Dresdener „Kopierheim“ war der größte Teil der damaligen Werktätigen zu einer ungeheuer wichtigen Demonstration erschienen. Die verschiedenen Organisationen der Klassenbewußten Arbeiterchaft griffen die Taten zum Anlass. Aber die Einheitsfront, die an den Sargen der Gefallenen fest geschlossen wurde, muß nun auch geschlossen zum Schutz der Lebenden und ihrer Rechte aufmarschieren.

Rechts: Auch die Köhler Arbeiter versammelten sich, um den drei von Polizei erschossenen Kameraden das letzte Geleit zu geben. Eine Demonstration wurde selbst innerhalb des Reichs mit allen Mitteln unterdrückt. Nur die Fahrendelegationen durften an den Frähen Gräbern vorbeizuschieren.



In Ranscheid fand die niederländische Bezirksleitung des Kampfbundes gegen den Faschismus statt. Die Diskussion gab der einstigen Übergang Ausdruck, daß der Kampf gegen den Faschismus in hervorragendem Maße in den Betrieben und von den Betrieben aus geführt werden muß. Die Tatsache, daß etwa die Hälfte der Delegierten Betriebsarbeiter waren, beweist, daß auf diesem Wege erreicht wird. Ein Vertreter der SA-Delegation (links) bekannte sich zum Sozialismus. Ein Reichsbannerdelegierter (Mitte) ruht zum Kampf in der roten Einheitsfront auf. Der gewählte Führer der stalinischen Delegierten der Kampfbundskommission Düsseldorf (rechts) bringt die Grüße der kämpfenden Kollegen. — Einheitsfront in Betrieb und Gewerkschaft! Einheitsfront unter den roten Führern des Kampfbundes! Keine Einheitsfront gegen Diktator und Terror der Faschisten! Wer dafür ist, der reihe sich ein!

Gegen Reaktion — für Arbeit, Brot und Freiheit am 5. März für die Liste der Kommunisten!

Figure 5.2 An SA man proclaims his allegiance to Communism. A Reichsbanner man declares his support for the antifascist front. *AIZ* Nr. 7, February 1933. Bundesarchiv.

wrote Diels, entire units of the RFB went over to the SA en masse.⁷⁰⁶ Peter Longrich has questioned Diels's frequently cited 70 percent figure as exaggerated, and although he must certainly be right that the figure is too high, he appears himself to have erred in the other direction.⁷⁰⁷ According to Diels's subordinate Gisevius, at least a third of the post-1933 SA was made up of former Communists for

28 67
61 23
v.

DER SA. KAMERAD

Das Urteil von Beuthen

1. Jahrgang | Mitteilungen der Opposition in der SA, SS, NSDAP Köln August 1932

Die Säulen des 3. Reiches

Der schwule Sturm 24/III/16

"Neue Gesittung wächst nur aus den Wurzeln nationalen Volkstums."
 "...ein neues Land, das auf den Säulen des Dritten Reiches aufsteigen wird über der Fäulnis der Welt."
 (Westd. Beobachter 27/28.8.)

So eine Klappe riskieren sie und wenn man sich die "Säulen des Dritten Reiches" näher ansieht, steht man nicht vor den Säulen sondern vor den Säulen des Dritten Reiches!
 Und wir wollen sie, Kameraden der SA, in dieser Nummer ganz gründlich besehen.

Tatsachen-SAMänner-Tatsachen:

Den Sturm 24/III nennt man offen in der Stadt den "schwulen Sturm". Er liegt in Lindenthal und der Sturmführer heisst

Graf von der Schulenburg.

Es fehlt ihm ein Buchstabe. Er ist nämlich Graf von der Schulenburg! In Lindenthal wohnt auch der Leiter des Nachrichtendienstes Walter Frielingsdorf und sein Liebster, der Geschäftsführer der Lindenthaler Ortsgruppe, Riemann. Sie sind ständige Gäste in der Schwulenkneipe "Traube". Wir können uns nicht allzulange mit ihnen beschäftigen, es gibt wichtigere Dinge. Aber: Was haben SA-Arbeiter mit diesem schwulen Gesocks zu tun?

Wieso kämen wir dazu, uns von diesem verkommnen und degenerierten Gelichter führen zu lassen? Wohin kann uns sowas schon führen?

Solcher und ähnlicher Mist schlägt auch über den Köpfen unserer Oberführer zusammen. Bei den Appellen, an den Sturm- und Truppbänden warnt man uns vor den "Zersetzungsversuchen" der Kommune. Was heisst hier Kommune? Wir fragen: Wahr oder nicht wahr!

SA!ran - an die Wahrheit!

Der SA Kamerad spricht die Wahrheit.

Vor etwa 14 Tagen wurden uns grossartige Ehrenerklärungen für den Lumpen Palm und für seinen ganzen Stab vorgetragen. Es wurde gesagt, dass sich diese Leute des Vertrauens und der Wertschätzung der Obersten SA-Führung und des Führers erfreuen. Die Oberste SA-Führung wird auch danach sein. In der vorigen Woche, am 22. August musste nämlich in einem Rundschreiben der Gauleitung das uns von einem Kreisleiter, der zur Opposition gehört, zur Verfügung gestellt wurde, folgendes bekanntgegeben werden:

"Gegen die Pgg. Palm, Baur u. Klotsch mussten erneut Gau-Usschla-Verfahren eingeleitet werden, während der Dauer der Untersuchungen sind die genannten Pgg. von jedem Parteidienst beurlaubt."

Was heisst das, SA-Kamerad? Das heisst, dass wir Euch die Wahrheit sagten und dass die ganze Gauleitung und der ganze Stab der Standarte 16 und der Untergruppe Köln-Aachen eine verlogene Bande sind!

Wir schrieben in der zweiten Nummer des "SA-Kamerad", dass Palm und Baur Standartengelder unterschlagen haben. Wir sagten, dass sie die Beitragsgroschen der SA-Männer noch neben ihrem Gehalt von 600 Mark im Monat verpulvern!

das sind Tatsachen,

die nun heute auch von den "Säulen des Dritten Reiches" zugegeben werden müssen! Sie stehen nun ganz klein und erbärmlich da.

Nur die Einheitsfront aller Werktätigen vernichtet das Ausbeutertum!

Figure 5.3 Der SA Kamerad. Mitteilungen der Opposition in der SA, SS, NSDAP. August 1932, Cologne. Bundesarchiv.

whom “the popular phrase ... was ‘Beefsteak Nazis’—Brown on the outside, red inside.”⁷⁰⁸ A leading functionary in the KPD’s Red Sport organization gave a figure of 20 percent.⁷⁰⁹ The SA itself gave a figure of 55 percent.⁷¹⁰ Internal SA memoranda, the surviving files of the Gestapo, and reports from the KPD’s own intelligence apparatus all contain evidence of a significant Communist presence in the SA.⁷¹¹ Reports from individual SA units in the spring and summer of 1933 even listed the names of individual Communists.⁷¹² One activist retained membership in the KPD while serving as an agent in the SA intelligence service.⁷¹³ In a number of cases Communists occupied mid-level leadership positions in the SA and SS. In an SS intelligence platoon in the Altona district of Hamburg, thirty to thirty-five out of fifty members were former Communists, including the unit commander’s right-hand man. A Communist functionary in contact with members of the unit noted: “The comrades report unanimously that the tone of the SS men is ‘rosy,’ and each one assumes the other is a ‘Beefsteak’ (brown on the outside, red on the inside).”⁷¹⁴ The presence of former Communists in the SA was sufficiently taken for granted that Rudolf Hess could write to Ernst Röhm in September looking for stormtroopers willing to testify against their former comrades in the Reichstag fire trial.⁷¹⁵

The idea of the Second Revolution supplied a ready myth for a continuation of the United Front from Below of the Weimar years.⁷¹⁶ Herbert Crüger, a former Strasser supporter who had gone over to the KPD before 1933, was recruited by the KPD’s *M-Apparat* to agitate on behalf of the KPD in a succession of National Socialist student homes to which he belonged. Crüger joined in frequent debates about the nature of the coming Second Revolution, in which he urged his fellows to “a critical posture toward the Nazi leadership, which in its practical politics had backed away from much of what it had up until then promised.”⁷¹⁷ Crüger distributed papers designed for the SA with the help of some of the SA men in the home.⁷¹⁸ The articles in these papers, wrote Crüger, “picked up on current opinion in the SA, ... asked what the goals of the second wave of National Socialist revolution must be, and demanded to know who the real enemy was, the Communist workers, or the big capitalists.”⁷¹⁹ Another Communist, a member of an SA *Sturm* in Berlin, reported in April 1934:

A few weeks ago I was sitting in the afternoon with a few comrades in the *Sturmlokal*. ... After a while two SA men from the *Sturm* came in and told us that they had received the [*Zersetzungsschrift*] *Rote Standarte* in the mail. ... One said: “The Commune is right about a lot of things. ...” Four others also came in and read the paper. The son of an official said: “The Commune is baiting us again. You must give the paper to the *Stuf* [*Sturmführer*] and don’t let everyone read it.” I am of the opinion that the others took pleasure in the content.⁷²⁰

Even after the purge of 30 June 1934, some KPD leaders were hopeful. As during the Stennes Revolt of 1931, unrest in the SA was interpreted in terms of impending revolution. “In the SA ... ,” wrote one Communist official, “revolutionary,

antifascist, and Communist propaganda is more and more widely noticeable. The entire SA seems to be contaminated.”⁷²¹

Even the purge of the SA that began on 30 June was interpreted as a hopeful sign. The KPD distributed a flier titled “The Revolutionary SA Man,” which read: “SA Comrades! The SA has been sent on leave because it is no longer needed, the SA leadership hit from behind. We revolutionary SA men had nothing in common with Röhm, but we don’t want to have anything in common with Hitler and Göring, either. Hitler has betrayed the SA and delivered it to its enemies.”⁷²² Some in the KPD appear to have deluded themselves into believing that the party’s agitation had caused the events of 30 June. “Under the pressure of our revolutionary work among the masses before the 30th of June,” argued the *Reichsleitung*, “the disintegration in the SA has grown. ... In recent weeks there have been new examples every day where SA men and NSBO members, together with our comrades, have taken up the fight against their employers and been fired; a portion have been sent to concentration camps.” In order to take advantage of the situation, the party was to intensify its efforts at building cells and producing *Zersetzungsblätter*. A list of demands for revolutionary SA men were drawn up and subsequently published in an “SA opposition sheet.” They included:

1. Revenge against the comrade-killers Hitler and Göring.
2. [The SA opposition] does not recognize the dictatorially appointed commissars and leaders.
3. The SA opposition demands the free election of SA leaders from *Truppenführer* to *Stabchef*.
4. We demand the disbanding of the Field Police, the Department Ie, that is, the spy-formation in the SA and patrol duty.
5. We demand the suspension of arrests, persecution, torture, and murder of oppositional SA men and revolutionary antifascist fighters.
6. We demand the release of all SA men and revolutionary worker-comrades arrested because of their revolutionary opinions.
7. We refuse to allow ourselves to be used against the workers and working people.
8. We demand the free supply of uniforms [and] footwear.
9. We demand free expression of opinion, freedom of discussion in the *Stürms*, control over the use of contributions, and the right of SA men to publish their own *Sturm* newspapers.⁷²³

Guidelines advised Communists on how to calm the fears of prospective recruits in the SA in the event of the coming Communist takeover [!]. In an article titled “SA-man Schulze asks, we answer him,” propaganda guidelines were provided in the form of a hypothetical conversation between a Communist and an SA man. “SA man Schulze,” whose hunger has given him second thoughts about the Nazi regime, says:

I realize that you Communists have turned out to be right, that the working class, including the SA, [has been hoodwinked]. My comrades know that as well. But we are afraid of the day that you Communists come to power, because then you will make a bloody reckoning with us, because it was [through the work of SA men] that Communists were murdered. Give me an answer to the question: What would you do with us SA men who haven’t beaten or murdered any Communists?⁷²⁴

The KPD's belief that Hitler was temporary and revolution imminent was shared by Strasser's Black Front.⁷²⁵ "Hitler is only a transition," argued Strasser; "after Hitler comes not Bolshevism but German Socialism."⁷²⁶ Strasser emphasized the importance of infiltrating the SA to carry on revolutionary work from within.⁷²⁷ Black Front propaganda guidelines urged activists to collect enemy addresses for direct-mail campaigns, a tactic actively pursued by both the Black Front and the KPD, and one that reflected the united front tactic: "Especially desirable are the addresses of SA, NSBO, and *Stahlhelm* members, as well as those of decent former Marxists." As the emphasis on address collecting suggests, the chief focus of Black Front activity in the NSDAP was intelligence gathering and the distribution of propaganda. Both were supported by the forging of personal contacts and the attempted building of cells.⁷²⁸ The interrogation records of Black Front activists captured and tried for treason provide a view into this work. Wilhelm Zander belonged briefly to the NSDAP in 1932, before quitting to join the *Revolutionäre Freheitsbewegung* led by the former Hitler Youth leader Wilhelm Kayser, which affiliated itself with the Strasser movement in December 1932. Zander seems to have felt, as his codefendant Hans Bauer put it, that the NSDAP was "not adequately utilizing the socialist momentum" of Nazism and would, "in the event of an eventual seizure of power, [sell out] to big business."⁷²⁹

In April 1933 Zander joined the SA in hopes of "strengthen[ing its] fighting spirit." As *Wehrsportreferant* for *Sturmabteilung I/240* in Cologne, he was responsible for training some eighty junior officers of the unit. According to the Gestapo, "Zander reported regularly to ... Kayser and other members of the Cologne group of the Black Front about events in the SA, the SS, the *Stahlhelm*, and other organizations of the National Socialist state." He was able "repeatedly to give ... Kayser SA *Gruppenbefehle* that had to do with the affairs of the SA and its relationship with other organizations, as well as disagreements within these organizations."⁷³⁰ Material gained in this way was used in the creation of a series of propaganda fliers produced between June 1933 and July 1935. The fliers created from this material were duplicated for the most part in Zander's apartment on a hectograph machine that he obtained for use in his SA service. Kayser, Zander, and the others produced ten to twelve different propaganda fliers. These included multiple issues of the *Antifaschistischer Rundbrief*, as well as titles like "Differences between Chief of Staff Röhm and Hitler," "Against alarmists and fault-finders!?" and *Der Sozialistische Stoßtrupp*. Each flier was produced in an edition of five hundred and mailed to addresses in Cologne, Elberfeld, Remscheid, Solingen, Düsseldorf, Duisberg, and Essen.⁷³¹ In addition to producing fliers, the group around Kayser compiled its own intelligence reports, which were dutifully smuggled to Strasser in exile abroad. Information from these reports were used in Strasser's publications, which were sent into Germany, passed hand to hand among activists, and then distributed as propaganda.⁷³²

Another Strasser activist, Erwin Simon, had been a member of the KPD from December 1931 through May 1932. Attracted to Communism by the example of Richard Schering, Simon became disenchanted with the KPD and joined

the Black Front in November 1932. In April of the following year, he joined the SA, assuming the rank of *Rottenführer* in *Sturm* 52/36 in Halle. Simon reasoned that since every other party or group fighting for “German socialism” had been banned, the NSDAP was now the only party “out of which something could develop.” In a letter to a friend (used in evidence against him at his trial) Simon wrote: “The work continues underground. . . . Much has changed, but the goal remains the same. . . . The socialist longing lives, even in the SA. I can testify to that because I’m hiding right in the middle of it. The only thing that has changed is [the composition of] the boss-strata, the owners of the gravy train.” Explaining his decision to join the SA, he continued: “Everything is *Gleichgeschaltet*, including the socialists. [Therefore] everything today must be achieved through the SA, the SS, and the Labor Front. What counts today is alertness and personal connections, and in addition, attaining positions of leadership in the SA. Every revolutionary must become at least a *Sturmführer*.” Giving voice to a widely held view, Simon concluded: “The revolution will come from the inside out, from within the party.”⁷³³

Such assessments were not unique to the KPD and the Black Front. Ernst Niekisch, already in 1933, noted the discontent in the Nazi movement and attached great meaning to what he saw as the beginning of a mass exodus from the NSDAP.⁷³⁴ Even an informed observer such as Ernst Erich Noth, writing on the eve of the purge of the SA in June of the following year, saw the growing tension in the NSDAP as a sign that the “true fighters” were beginning their revolt, a revolt in which the KPD would “yet play a role.”⁷³⁵ Agents of the Sopade and *Neu Beginnen*, less prone to wishful thinking and revolutionary inflationism than the Communists and the Strasserites, were quick to point out the dangers of false hopes. A *Miles Bericht* from the spring of 1934 criticized what it called the “strong overestimation of the amount and worth of opposition voices . . . characteristic of Communist or Communist splinter groups and sects.” The Communists, it continued, are constantly speaking “of a ‘new beginning’ or a ‘revolutionary uprising’ in a moment where . . . more than 40 million people have been brought into line behind Hitler.”⁷³⁶ *Neu Beginnen* warned in particular of false hopes in the wake of the Night of the Long Knives: “It is not true that the Nazi Party no longer exists, as has been said. On the contrary, it is stronger than ever.”⁷³⁷

Yet the overly optimistic assessments criticized by Social Democratic agents were more than simple wishful thinking; they represented a continuation of the same beliefs about Nazi radicalism—the same superimposition of “socialism” (variously understood) over Nazi radicalism—that characterized the Weimar Republic. There was a widespread revolutionary feeling that the Communists, Strasserites, and members of the Youth Movement rightly identified, and it did have anticapitalist elements that the KPD could (mis)identify as “Bolshevistic.” Ironically, all of these groups tried to “coordinate” themselves so as to more effectively *resist* coordination, to operate as individuals within the mass. But “massification” had its own logic. As Hans Bernd Gisevius, a member of the Gestapo, put it, “everyone, whatever his name, whatever his nature, men and women, old

and young, lukewarm and enthusiasts, opportunists, defeated opponents, and rough-and-tough SA men—all were forged into a molten mass of human beings capable of reacting only as a mass.⁷³⁸

Some former members of the Marxist working-class organizations appear to have gotten into the spirit of the National Socialist revolution. This had sometimes been the case even before 1933. The Communist propagandist Willi Münzenberg wrote of meeting, in the fall of 1932, old Communists who had already gone over to the SA: “You Communists are taking too long,” they told him; “Adolf will do it faster. If he betrays us, we’ll hang him. We are the SA, and . . . we’ll be able to create the socialism Adolf promised us.”⁷³⁹ There were a variety of motives for defections after 1933. Many Communists joined the SA in order to avoid arrest. One of these was Peter Kramer, the former leader of the KPD Ortsgruppe in the Ruhr, who made the mistake of gloating to a Gestapo spy: “If they only knew who I was.”⁷⁴⁰ For every Communist or other previously anti-Nazi militant who kept the faith and continued to agitate for his old party after 1933—or, in contrast, embraced National Socialism—there were many others for whom old and new identities coexisted. As one SA man put it in 1935, in a moment of drunken candor that got him in a lot of trouble: “I’m no SA man; I’ve been a member of the Communist Party for thirteen years and I wear the brown uniform only for appearances.”⁷⁴¹ The daughter of a Berlin Communist recalled years later:

The desertion was unstoppable. Hitler had won. Everyone, the most unlikely and the most good-natured, was a potential informer. The only way to survive, to get a job, to keep a job, to keep out of prison and avoid being beaten up, was to leave the KPD and the SPD and to keep quiet. It was more sensible still to join the Nazi Party and pin a swastika on your lapel.⁷⁴²

She further recalled:

One defector from the KPD was Fritz Walter. . . . This pleasant, quite ordinary man of about thirty worked in a factory and had been a good member of the Communist Party. But even before Hitler took over, he had gone to my parents’ flat and “talked like a different man”; the next time, he turned up in a Nazi uniform. . . . The *Führer*, he insisted, was good for Germany and good for the German people. My parents were disgusted and afraid.⁷⁴³

The willingness of many Communists to join the Nazi movement is hardly surprising, as Conan Fischer has pointed out, given the ways in which the KPD purposefully attempted to blur the lines with the radical right in the final years of the Weimar Republic.⁷⁴⁴

Lines also became blurred when criminal elements from the SA and the Red Front converged under the cover of the National Socialist revolution. A landlord in Düsseldorf-Gerresheim experienced this fact personally in the summer of 1933, when he was confronted in his home by several dozen SA men demanding to conduct a house search. When he refused to let them in, he recounted, the stormtroopers broke down the door and ascended the stairs with drawn revolv-

ers. Once inside, they began to brutally beat the occupants, shouting, “We are the Commune, we are in power.” They smashed the apartment’s furnishings, roughed up all the occupants, and beat the landlord and his friend with fists, boots, cudgels, and rubber truncheons. This “action” only came to an end when a police official appeared more than an hour later and explained to the stormtroopers that independent initiative of this sort was no longer allowed. In his letter of complaint to the SA leadership, the landlord noted that the stormtroopers were frequent associates of some of his renters, “ill-tempered” men whom he knew to be Communists. “As far as I could find out,” he wrote, “the greater portion of the SA men who took part belonged as recently as 5 March to the KPD. For weeks a lively traffic between SA men and these renters has been noticeable.” Both the renters and the SA men were actively involved in party work, he added, noting indignantly that “an SA man in uniform even distributed fliers for the Communist Party.” These stormtroopers, the landlord concluded melodramatically, were “Communists in the truest sense of the word, and only crept into the SA in order ... to be able to continue carrying out their dark intrigues.”⁷⁴⁵

The anti-Communist hysteria and denunciatory self-policing of this account aside, there is little doubt that the lawless atmosphere of the spring and summer of 1933 allowed formerly competing conceptions of “revolution” to dovetail. An SA man in Duisberg-Hamborn, Adolf Hess, had formerly been a member of the KPD and the *Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus*. Hess joined the SA at the beginning of March 1933 with a number of other Communists from his neighborhood. Once in the brown uniform, according to the Gestapo, Hess and his comrades

repeatedly ... undertook independent actions [house searches] in the Josefskolonie [a working-class district] without having been ordered to do so by the party or anyone else. Through this terror [Hess] earned the hate of various Communists and had to flee. Since this time he has stayed far away from Hamborn. In the meantime he has been in the Saar where he ... took part in demonstrations of the Communist Party. Hess ... has not given up his Communist point of view, and it was probably his intention to advertise for the idea of the KPD within the SA.⁷⁴⁶

Despite his zealous persecution of his former comrades, Hess failed to win the trust of his fellow stormtroopers. “In the legal period,” another report noted, “Hess was the greatest agitator against the NSDAP, then [he] suddenly gives in to the NSDAP the day after the seizure of power, puts on the SA uniform, and behaves like the most zealous defender of the National Socialist idea.”⁷⁴⁷

Even principled Communists who joined the National Socialist organizations for purposes of infiltration were at risk. The so-called Scheringer groups, formed from members of the Berlin “Young Workers” organization for purposes of subversion of the SA, are a case in point. They possessed only weak connections to the KPD, and their activities were discouraged as too dangerous for young activists in any case.⁷⁴⁸ The police president in Hannover noted: “The KPD is attempting

by all possible means to penetrate the national socialist organizations, especially the SA. ... The party has shown success, however, in only a few individual cases, because the vast majority of people entrusted with this task take the ideals of the [Nazi formations] as their own and refuse any further activity for the KPD." The situation was so bad that young Communists entering the SA for purposes of subversion were charged with the task of not only winning over the stormtroopers but also winning back Communists who had preceded them into the SA. "Repeatedly this tactic has worked out to the detriment of the KPD," the police president continued, because the defecting agents passed their knowledge of KPD organization along to their new comrades.⁷⁴⁹ A Communist activist belonging to the SS in Hamburg complained that the connections he had painstakingly forged had been ignored by the Altona party organization, which, in his opinion, "placed no worth on a systematic cultivation of the enemy in his mass organizations." He added indignantly that a young Communist whom he had advised to follow him into the SS had accused him of "strengthening fascism." Nevertheless, the functionary continued, the local party possessed good and many-sided connections in the SA and SS, although most of these activists had joined these formations on their own accord.⁷⁵⁰ The party's unwillingness or inability to take advantage of the situation was especially frustrating, he noted, because "in almost every ... *Sturm* there are individual comrades I spoke to who are ready to work with and for us." Although this functionary maintained excellent connections within a recently formed SS intelligence platoon, which he estimated was made up of 60 to 70 percent former Communists, he was unable to turn the situation to advantage. His main contact, the "right-hand man" of the unit commander, kept in regular contact with him personally, because the party never used the reports it received. Acknowledging that activists like these could easily be lost to the KPD, he concluded revealingly: "I only uphold this contact so as to keep the people from 'swimming away.'"⁷⁵¹

Ironically, the process of *Gleichschaltung* of former enemies proceeded apace with a precipitous decline in revolutionary élan. A growing mood of defeat comes out clearly in Social Democratic and Communist intelligence reports over 1934–35. A Communist report noted in April 1934: "In many SA formations ... there remain only about 1 percent 'old fighters,' above all people who joined after January [1933]. For the most part poor human material, unpolitical."⁷⁵² A Communist agent in an SA *Sturm* in the Neukölln district of Berlin noted: "Our *Sturm* is 175 men strong, two-thirds workers and one-third employees and sons of small tradesmen. The *Sturm* is made up of 80 percent *Märzgefallene*, and they have only joined either in order to maintain their position or to get a job. ... At the most only about 30 percent are convinced National Socialists, and they are the ones for whom it is going well financially."⁷⁵³ A Sopade agent in Bavaria similarly estimated that only 20 percent of the SA members there were fanatical Nazis.⁷⁵⁴ "The most noticeable thing to me," noted a Communist agent in Hamburg in the spring of 1934,

is that the streets are no longer ruled by the masses of Brownshirts like they were six months ago, and that the SA and SS men one sees are entirely new people. The “old” [activists] are hardly to be seen at important demonstrations. Some of them are now employed, leaders of work details, students in the indoctrination courses, or in the police; many have drawn back from active service.⁷⁵⁵

Even before 30 June 1934, there are indications that the morale of the SA was slackening. Disappointment with the course of the Nazi revolution, anger over the failure of the regime to improve their lot, and exhaustion stemming from the punishing regimen of drill and maneuvers had a negative effect on the élan of the SA, especially that of the “old fighters,” leading to discipline problems and loss of interest.⁷⁵⁶ Sopade linked this situation to an increased suicide rate among SA men, as noted in a report from the spring of 1934: “The number of suicides is growing alarmingly. In the last six weeks, eighteen men in the Berlin SA have killed themselves. Even SA men in well-paid positions commit suicide.”⁷⁵⁷ A *Sturmführer* in Berlin noted the disappointment and bitterness in his *Sturm* in November 1934: “I had to kick out twelve ‘old fighters,’ the [most experienced] people that I had. I was sorry about it, but they were so embittered and full of rage that they were simply no longer usable.” The *Sturmführer* expressed what was probably the opinion of many when he concluded: “We’ve become soldiers of the second rank. Now all I need is a good, steady job, and then I’ll leave the SA with an honorable discharge.”⁷⁵⁸ The same 1934 Sopade report noted: “Reports [from all over Germany], for example from Berlin, Schleswig-Holstein, and Saxony, agree ... that a change in mood is occurring in the SA and SS. Discipline is slackening and punishment must be increased.” The report also stated, “Morale in the SA is noticeably giving out. The men are furious about the countless limitations that are ever more being placed on them (most recently they have been prohibited from beating up pastors). They are [upset] with the stupid military drill and strenuous maneuvers, especially the night exercises.”⁷⁵⁹ One SA man in Munich, when asked why he was not participating in a march marking the fifteen-year anniversary of the Versailles treaty, answered: “I just don’t like it anymore. It’s always the same. That the peace treaty has been nullified I already know. But I’ve had enough of the eternal marching around for nothing.”⁷⁶⁰ The lack of meaningful activity, combined with the punishing routines of service, began to sap whatever ideological character the SA had possessed. Noted another Sopade agent: “A certain weariness produced by the harshness of service is becoming noticeable in the SA. That the SA discusses the problems of socialism can thus far not be observed.”⁷⁶¹ In the Rheinland, noted the Sopade,

the dissatisfaction in the lower ranks of the Nazi movement ... is taking ... serious forms. The SA in the West is practically in disintegration. ... For a long time now the SA men play hooky from inspections, curse the *Bonzen*, and criticize the system. They feel themselves betrayed, and today no longer stop at criticizing Hitler. ... In certain SA formations it has gone so far that when someone is greeted with “Heil Hitler,” the SA men put their heads together and whisper: “Lick my ...”⁷⁶²

Conclusion

The KPD continued in its revolutionary pipe dreams well into 1935 and beyond,⁷⁶³ as did the Black Front.⁷⁶⁴ The groups of the Youth Movement and the nationalist *Wehrverbände* were incorporated, some more quickly or willingly than others, but all nevertheless, into the mass organizations of National Socialism. It is a paradox that it was precisely this “self-*Gleichschaltung*,” and in particular the attempts to retain a space for autonomy (as with the Youth Movement) or to actively work toward subversion (like the KPD and the Black Front, and to an extent also the *Bündische*), that gave force to National Socialism. But in allowing themselves to be *gleichgeschaltet* into the Nazi organizations in order to resist *Gleichschaltung* on behalf of those activist forces that they sought to save for the coming revolution, they ultimately only helped the Nazis. Hans Bernd Gisevius rightly divined the interplay between this surge of the masses and the revolutionary aims of the leadership, noting that it was “this sudden, obscure pressure from below in the victorious movement that lent fresh courage to the new rulers, that strengthened their own drives and inspired them with the ultimate audacity they needed to go all out.”⁷⁶⁵ It was precisely the involvement of the masses that made it a revolution, however confused or varied the impulses behind their involvement:

Only [these] interacting impulses . . . , only the irrational turbulence in the souls of the people, can explain the total *Gleichschaltung* that took place in that summer of 1933. It was accomplished by vigorous thrusts from the Party, but it was also voluntary and spontaneous. People worked themselves up into a wholly unwonted revolutionary excitement, and in their irrational and malleable mood they helped to swell the power of the revolutionaries.⁷⁶⁶

The vague revolutionary hopes that motivated members of the SA and other Nazi organizations, which accounted in part for the willingness of people to “coordinate” themselves, to continue working inside like the Communists—the “from below”—did not come to pass. In their place came a revolution from above. The truth is that all the groups that embraced or hoped to profit from or control the Nazi revolution (including, ultimately, many Communists) believed in the same things—enough of the same things at any rate—to take any real force out of the opposition to Nazism. All of them later wanted to be seen as resisters against Hitler, from the KPD, to Richard Scheringer, to the various figures of the “National Revolution,” to the *Bündisch* youth groups, to the more-or-less anti-Nazi youth gangs of the Nazi period.⁷⁶⁷ Much worthwhile work has been done documenting this resistance, and the intention here is not to downplay the risks taken by those who, although they shared aspects of the Nazi worldview, refused to go along with the regime when the time came. The point here is not to assign blame for the catastrophe of Nazism but to point out that the extent to which Nazism as a mass movement drew on a widely shared world of ideas, and that the widely shared nature of these ideas is one of the things that gave National Socialism its force.

The other side of the coin of self-*Gleichschaltung* was the violence carried out by the regime. It was violence that gave National Socialism the opportunity to

establish the meaning of the 1933, to determine the content of terms such as “socialism,” “revolution,” and “*Volksgemeinschaft*.” The Marxist parties were driven underground, and figures who, in one way or another, had attempted to stand between the radical extremes accommodated themselves or faced exile, prison, or death. The significance of oppositional activity should thus not be overstated. It took place within mass organizations acting as means of social control, “caging” the various types of radicalism feeding into the regime. This control was supplemented by a system of police terror and denunciatory self-policing highlighted by recent scholarship.⁷⁶⁸ Walther Stennes fled the country after being released from Gestapo custody through the intervention of Hermann Göring. Those who tried to pursue Third Way politics after 1933, National Bolsheviks and figures of the Youth Movement such as Beppo Römer, Ernst Niekisch, Eberhard Koebel, Harro Schulze-Boyson, and others, faced exile, prison, or death. Various figures of the *Bündisch* and National Revolutionary camps either fled the country to continue their activity in exile or ended up in concentration camps.⁷⁶⁹ Eberhard Koebel was arrested on 18 January 1934, and beaten in Gestapo custody. He fled the country after his arrest.⁷⁷⁰ Richard Scheringer returned to the army, serving in the campaigns in Poland and Russia. Scheringer simultaneously maintained clandestine ties with Communists in Bavaria, while remaining close friends with his comrade from the Ulm trial, Hanns Ludin.⁷⁷¹ Ludin was executed as a war criminal in 1947 for his involvement, as German ambassador to the puppet Tiso regime in Slovakia, in the deportation and murder of Slovakian Jews.⁷⁷²

Much of the activity of resisting National Socialism revolved around trying to disrupt the performance staged by the new regime. But smuggled literature and leaflets strewn in public lavatories were no match for the mass media controlled by a modern state ruled with dictatorial powers. And many of the very people who most hoped to disrupt the performance, as we have seen, were often directly and enthusiastically involved in it. The monopoly of meaning, just as important as the monopoly of violence, allowed Hitler to set out on an ambitious agenda, beginning with a reversal of the outcome of 1918 and moving on to complete the racialization of the revolution, which had only been latent before 1933. George Mosse was quite correct in noting how the Nazis “modified ... the social aims of the Youth Movement”—which, as we have seen, were similar to those of many Nazis—“by directing the revolution against the ‘enemy within’ rather than against the existing class structure.”⁷⁷³ It was the success of the Nazis in doing this that finally rendered meaningless the activities of opponents and fellow travelers.