German public opinion and Hitler's policies, 1933-1939.

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the nature and mechanics of public opinion in Nazi peacetime society. Its aim has been to break down the society of the Third Reich into its essential components, and through an investigation of its institutions, and more particularly of the individuals who composed them, to gain an insight into the action and interaction of the forces that created public opinion.

Special attention has been paid to the German Army, the Church, and the Diplomatic Service. Through representative cases of these three bodies an attempt has been made to create an informed picture of three important sections of the public mind.

Great stress has been laid on the contingency between Nazi controls, especially Hitler's propaganda techniques, and opinion-forming. The basic questions of how all sections of German society reacted to Hitler's policies, why, and with what consequences are answered.

A detailed interpretation has been made of the relationship between public opinion in the period and the mainstream of history in the Nazi era, and also to set this particular facet of Nazi history against the whole background of modern German history. In that interpretation

several fundamental philosophical questions of historical interpretation have been raised and a standpoint established.

The work is divided into nine main parts - beginning with a definition of the problems involved, including interpretive ones, followed by a prelude, dealing with the relevant aspects of the period leading up to the Nazi take-over in 1933. Then come five central chapters on the period 1933-1939, organised chronologically; the Epilogue makes a final analysis of public opinion, and the work is concluded with an index of the references used.

A.R. Wells.

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A.R.W.

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The idea of inscrutable continuity and a definition of the problem.

A great deal that has been written on modern German history has in the final analysis been pervaded by Aeschylean fatalism, and without exaggeration; an interpretation that sees the period, 1919-1939 in Germany as one of pre-destined evolution. This may stem from the error the historian may make in confusing or failing to delineate his method of interpretation, between one based on a concept of inscrutable continuity and that which evaluates from a viewpoint of an accomplished end or process in time, denying ultimately the basic idea of cause and effect, and a process of detailed analysis, merely fitting fact, as supporting matter into an already detailed framework of events. Inter-war Germany has been subjected to this latter treatment, appearing as it does to move along the straight road from Versailles to September, 1939. Causation plays but a minor role in the overall cast and although the intention may have been different the result is nonetheless an unbalanced appraisal. Empiricism as such seems to disappear in method.

Few would accept a concept of historical truth in the interpretation of the past. Each historian will inevitably give his picture, emphasizing factors he considers important. The essence, or totality

of any one event or period can never be recaptured in full, though each will try to recapture it, and as objectively as possible. This is true of much that has been written on Weimar and Nazi history, and in general most conclusions nowadays run on the same lines, with a few exceptions, but in terms of a complete interpretive picture of the phenomenon of the Third Reich verdicts vary, especially in terms of the whole complex of modern German history since 1870, into which the Nazi era has been appropriately slotted. "Inevitability" is a false image, and unhistorical, though the methods which have led several historians to adopt this standpoint have been quite conventional.

One of the outstanding features of any detailed study of twentieth century German history and indeed of all history is its inscrutability, and that it is far from being a clear-cut picture, despite the fact that some historians make it appear a simple process, some with overtones of "inevitability."

There is obviously continuity in history, but it is not a predictable one. History is a much better guide to the present than it ever can be to the future. History is itself the best proof of this. It can be a guide, giving a broad vision of how the future might evolve. In 1919 there was nothing predictable or inevitable about the course German history would follow in the next twenty years. In fact the danger of acting in the future on the basis of past events

is apparent. Appeasement itself was in part a reaction to pre-1919 policy, though nothing would have been more appropriate in the 1930s for Britain and her eventual allies than a system of collective security with rigid military obligations. Similarly in our own day it would be folly to make long-term decisions in the west vis-a-vis the communist world in south-east Asia on the basis of past and present developments there. This is not to deny that a lesson can be learnt from history: far from it. Perhaps what it does teach is the need for an attitude of humility and prudence in a world situation where events, which cannot be foreseen, can rapidly transform the total situation. Herein lies the danger of drastic decisions of whatever nature. Moreover it can indicate the general direction in which events, (of whatever dimension) will be moving in the world, and it is with this in mind that a private individual or statesman will act, but having in mind a knowledge of the "possible" within this impression of the drift of events.

In 1919 and even 1933 the future drift of events was in no way perceptible, though by 1945 and later many have been prepared to say that the course of German history was foreseeable long before Adolf Hitler came to power. This is the advantage the perspective of history gives to all, but to abuse it is pointless.

It is then within the ambit of this concept of a continuous but inscrutable process of historical change that any analysis of German public opinion in the 1930s should be made.

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Part of the problem is to disentangle the particular from the general, and to look at the evidence of opinion not within the concept of a "German problem," but solely within the terms of cause and effect. Is it true to say for example that the German people decided on revenge in 1930 as soon as prosperity ended, or, "the implacable logic of circumstances doomed to failure any attempt to arrest the advance of National Socialist totalitarianism"? These are but two random examples of thousands of comments written and uttered which are sweeping generalisations on a complex and important issue, one not to be answered lightly by such rhetorical generalisations.

There is a tendency to add moral reprobation and the idea of "guilt" to any study of pre-war German history, consciously or unconsciously, a pitfall that is not easy to avoid. None would question the diabolical evil that was Hitler and what he wrought, but it is totally invalid historically to add to any assessment the question of good or bad. The historian is not a judge, and certainly not a hanging judge.

1933 is a watershed in more ways than just the obvious; it is not merely the year in which Hitler came to power and began to perpetrate his Nazi revolution. From the point of view of analysing public opinion in the post 1933 period the picture can never be complete, even allowing for the fact that the totality of an event can never be fully recaptured, since the Third Reich was a brutal police state in which all conventional

outlets of public opinion were either controlled or stifled, and personal liberty was non-existent. A major task then is to examine the nature of the continuity of public opinion after 1933 as compared with the pre-1933 years, allowing for the suppressive nature of the Nazi state, and to see how, why, and with what consequences the drift of public opinion interacted with Nazi policies. The threads after 1933 do at times become tenuous, making the links before 1933 considerably important, since between 1919 and 1933 the German people were living in a relatively free society, (but one from which Hitler emerged), in which the forces at work were in part moulded by, yet also helped to create, public opinion. All was violently changed by the elections of 1933. Hitler was a product of these forces in pre-1933. To interpret accurately public opinion and Hitler's policies one must first understand the period 1919-1933, not so much in terms of German society's public attitude, but in terms of the forces which led to the situation of 1933, and what from 1919 to that date moulded public opinion in Germany.

The continuity between pre-1933 and post 1933 is a major question to be answered. Hitler came to power in 1933 as a result of a highly complex combination of factors. How German society reacted to him and his policies after 1933, when this complex was removed, and what remained was a totalitarian regime irrevocably installed, is a major question not lightly answered.

Opinion is to a certain extent in this context not an easily definable concept; it is not for example as directly tangible and

evident as what we usually mean by opinion, the circumstances in which it is invoked and the means by which it is expressed. Much of the evidence that will be examined will consist of conventional opinion as we ordinarily know it. But much of the material used will not spring from direct opinion sources, such as a newspaper editorial or a bishop's sermon or a speech or a demonstration, or a martyrdom, or a conspiracy, but from evidence which is not being directly expressed as opinion, but which nonetheless is relevent evidence of a form of opinion however intangible it may seem on the surface. This is particularly necessary as the amount of direct evidence was limited by the very nature of the Nazi regime - a police state, suppressing all forms of personal expression, and controlling all mass media, with the ever-present threat of removal, imprisonment, or extinction for anyone who differed. In gaining and keeping power and furthering his policies in Germany and Europe and the world in general Hitler relied on a propaganda machine. The truth was often distorted, and the aim, like all propaganda, being to form opinion for others. Certainly the early and later success of the Nazi regime rested in part on the ability to control mass opinion. Hitler himself, with his demagogic powers was the key link in the propaganda war. Through their control of mass media the Nazis were able to give out what they wanted and also prevent undesirables from challenging their views. Hitler often wavered. On occasions the public would get the goods well-wrapped in propaganda and deceitfully given out; on others he would totally

disregard the German public and give orders and make announcements which he knew might be unpopular, but knowing full well they could not be redressed. Much "opinion" then is often the views of the well propagandised mind, or of the newspaper which is toeing the party line for the good of its own health. Propaganda reduces the objectivity of much so-called opinion which was in any case limited through fear of reprisal. Hitler had a great capacity for deceiving people. He fooled a great many at home, but he also fooled a great many abroad too, not merely in his power-diplomacy, but also in the essence of his creed. How many people had read "Mein Kampf" before 1933? More to the point how many had read it by 1939? From the beginning then his propaganda held a trump card.

To date much has been written on the German opposition to Hitler, a forceful and obvious form of opinion. This has tended to take too prominent a place, and much of what has been written has been tainted by an element of self-justification. But many when examining opposition have failed to answer such basic questions as "opposition or change to what end" and to analyse the basic symptoms of opposition. Similarly much has been written in a moral vein, in part a revulsion for Nazism and what it did. The idea of "guilt" and tacit complicity is not relevant to any objective and historical assessment. The Nuremburg trials and a series of trials since have dealt with some of Nazism's worst offenders. Neither moral nor legal judgment enters into

the historian's brief. The problem is much more the uncovering of the motive factors in opinion-making, the dissection of that opinion in all its aspects, and the relationship to the mainstream of German history.

Prelude

The eras of Bismarck and Wilhelm had witnessed the rapid growth of German power in every sphere, but there had not developed parallel to this movement greater political liberty and freedom for political activity; the party system, essentially effective, had been carefully subdued by Bismarck and under Wilhelm this political straight-jacketedness was perpetuated. Alternatives did emerge but ones based on a hard "Realpolitik." A sense of national political responsibility never emerged. People grew to accept this system, one which did in any case raise the standard of living, provide social benefits, colonial and military expansion, and above all, national prestige. The reasons for this went back before Bismarck came to power. A liberal tradition qua British nineteenth-century liberalism never grew in Germany in the post 1830 period. When the Frankfurt Assembly met in 1848 few people in Germany understood the liberal as distinct from the nationalist aspect of the Assembly's aims, and the Assembly was afterwards criticised for having spent too much time in pursuit of free institutions instead of trying to achieve German unity by hook or by crook. This feeling

rendered Germany after 1870 a quasi-despotic power, but at the same time Bismarck could claim brilliant successes at home and abroad, and also administrative efficiency. Hence the Liberals saw no purpose in opposing Bismarck, and in fact rallied to his support, calling themselves the National Liberal Party.

However the National Liberals opposed all Bismarck's attempts to make himself financially independent of parliament. Bismarck's reliance on conservative groups during the 1880s accelerated the growth of social democracy, and it was with this force, which Liberals had always distrusted, that the future of parliamentary institutions lay in Germany at the end of the century.

But between 1914 and 1918 there came in Germany, as throughout the whole of Europe, disenchantment. The Reich collapsed on the Western front. Disillusionment was great. The German army, which in 1914 had seemed invincible, had been defeated. People in Germany could not break with the past, though the treaty of 1919 had aimed at creating a German situation which was widely different in form to the former monarchic state.

The constitution of the Weimar Republic was sound, but the attitude of the people was not. The chimerical parties were not up to the task and the voters had no heart for them. The desire to be led was still great. The new republic was the heir to the liberal tradition of 1848,

but German liberalism suffered from weaknesses in numbers and ideological strength. It was a republic without republicans. None of the parties were prepared for rule. The new republic was born of the momentary exhaustion of old energies, not from an upsurge of new ones; not of resistance to the foreigner, but of surrender to him.

There developed in Germany after 1918 the myth that Germany had never been defeated, (which in one sense she had not). Members of the German army General staff found it more important to preserve their own prestige. Many in fact perverted the truth and deliberately saddled the new state with the responsibility for defeat. Later this was carried to extremes: most German schools' history became twisted, so that not a single school text contained a true account of the defeat of 1918, and its lead-up. The German people never forgot the "war-guilt" lie and helped in re-kindling German nationalism, just as did the losses of Alsace-Lorraine, Danzig, the Polish corridor, the Saar coalfields, and Silesia, the demilitarisation of the Rhineland, and the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923.

As in the rest of Europe, Germany after 1919 was wilting under the pressure of excessive inflation and reparations, but there did exist a genuine desire for stability and peace. The Kapp Putsch collapsed partly because of the effectiveness of resistance offered by the German workers, notably in the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. But against this the German Nationalist Party and communists were undermining the foundations of the newly born republic. The

erosion of the Democratic Party proved fatal to the life of the Weimar republic because this party was the single reliable support of German republicanism for those who were neither socialist nor Catholic. The idea of a grand coalition, a union of Social Democrats, Democrats, Centrists and the Volkspartei in one majority government could not be realised in Germany.

A great many Germans welcomed the murder of Erzberger, unwilling to recognise his political wisdom, similarly with Wirth and Rathenau. Their careers reflect the German mood. Both were of the opinion that Germany was unable to improve its position by open resistence to the Entente, and that reparations had become a matter, not of politics, but of economics; both believed that Germany was honour-bound to keep her word, yet at the same time rightly realised that Germany should convince the allies of her inability to pay reparations in full. Rathenau, brutally murdered, was despised because of his supposed toadying to the allies and the conclusion of the Rapallo Treaty. The foreign minister's murder clearly demonstrated the existence and danger of destructive forces in the Reich. Public pressure was not brought to bear upon those responsible and the few trials that followed made it patently clear that an atmosphere of murder still hung over Germany.

In like manner the resignation of Wirth was not regarded as a

major political disaster. The Social Democratic Party refused to co-operate with the other parties, especially the Volkspartei.

It was in such conditions that pressure groups easily emerged and gained sway, and particularly in the south in Bavaria. The Bavarian government openly encouraged agitation and disloyalty against the Weimar government. In the early days of National Socialism nothing would have been easier for the Bavarian government than to kill off Nazism by deporting the Austrian Hitler.

In the wake of political dissatisfaction and inexperience came extremism. Propaganda based on criticism of the peace of Versailles and the Weimar republic found willing ears.

Germany's president, Ebert, was regarded with equal dissatisfaction by his people and his ministers. A great Social Democrat, he too suffered from bitter demagogic attacks. The tragic thing was that Ebert called in the Army to deal with the Left and so gave it power. The German people wanted a soldier to lead them. Hindenburg's election revealed all too clearly that there was only a minority of republicans in the German republic. When the German people were voting for Hindenburg they were voting to recall a time when they were happy, but they would not admit that it had passed away.

Certain aspects of German society, which had spent themselves in 1918 were re-kindled. The military appetite of the German people

was deliberately fed by the former German military leaders under General von Seeckt, dedicated to preserving the pre-war military caste as an autonomous arm of the state, completely independent of civil authority. Despite the Treaty of Versailles, rearmament went on, but outside of Germany, such as Heinkel and Junkers in Sweden and Russia, and Fokker in Holland. Nationalism and Pan-Germanism were re-awakened; some thirty million Germans lived outside the Reich and some twelve million Germans had been torn from it. Institutes, such as "Der Verein fur die Deutschen im Ausland" and the "Deutsche Schutzbund" were created to remind Germans of their national and ethnic rights, denied them by the Treaty of Versailles. Many Germans felt cheated; the allies themselves had demarcated Europe largely according to principles of self-determination, yet Germany had lost and failed to gain many of its own people.

Despite this the German nation between 1924 and 1929 underwent a period of rapid economic recovery and prosperity. There were very few strikes and the membership of the trade unions diminished rapidly. Thus when the Great Depression came in 1929 the tension, already high in Germany, increased even more. The political situation escalated. With six million people unemployed people became very susceptible to propaganda. Intellectualism, which had revived during the twenties, waned; in the place of pure scholarship and literature came a reaction which claimed to be mass culture. Many books gave nourishment to the superiority feeling of the Germans. Men like Spengler saw society in

terms of war and conflict, "a true international is only possible through the triumph of the idea of one race over all others." A body of young men, "the Revolutionary Conservatives" revolted against reason and yearned for heroism and self-sacrifice. They called for the "overcoming of the decomposing influence of the German spirit" and the purification of German life. Ernst Junger preached the gospel of heroic struggle and pan-destructionism. It must have seemed to some a far cry to Thomas Mann and Gerhard Hauptmann.

Many Germans came to believe that destiny had treated them badly, and in many ways they were right. The danger lay not so much directly in this but what followed in the wake of it, a failure to be aware of the true historical continuity between Germany's past and present; this was blotted out. The rise of Hitler had been interpreted in several lights. Many historians have failed to make the simple observation that his rise to power illustrates the intense pressures brought to bear upon the German people, and not just, as seen from another and quite different angle, the factors in German society which helped Hitler come to power and which he in turn was able to mould.

It is certainly true that in the pre-1933 period many of the feelings of the German people corresponded with those expressed by Hitler, but the basic and essential distinction is that Hitler was the manifestation of a deeper, more concrete fanaticism, developed over the years since his time in Vienna, and he was motivated completely

differently. Certainly his own great sense of the failure of his life corresponded with that of the German people at that time, but there is no consequential linkage here. Hitler was in no way a consummation of the German mind. Similarly there were no inherent tendencies of the German people which Hitler could exploit. It is not so much the content of his anti-semitism, racialism, and gutter politics that bears looking into, but the way in which he was able to convince millions of Germans of the rightness of his cause and that they belonged, like himself, to the Herrenmenschen. His real originality lay in that he created a mass movement based on his idea that the "psyche of the broad masses is accessible only to what is strong and uncompromising;" "the art of leadership" he wrote "consists of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up this attention." Hitler's great propagandist play upon him being the arch-enemy of bolshevism went down especially well with the leaders of the Church. His psychological insight and his great powers of demagogy and his ability to exploit the mood of discontent proved to be his greatest weapons as a politician. Nonetheless only a small percentage of fanatics were prepared to swallow the rubbish about nordic blood and the racial superiority of the Herrenvolk. Only the youth of Germany could be properly brainwashed into believing Nazi mysticism. Hitler never had any love of the German people for their own sake but merely as a political force. He made people amenable to Nazism and prepared

to accept, for example, his definition of a Socialist: "whoever is prepared to make the national cause his own to such an extent that he knows no higher ideal than the welfare of his nation; whoever has understood our great national anthem, 'Deutschland uber Alles,' to mean nothing in the world surpasses in his eyes this Germany, people and land, land and people, that man is a socialist."

Nazism only began to thrive in conditions of disorder and discontent, during the period of inflation and depression. During the period of more food, more money, and more jobs, that is more personal security, Hitler's and Goebbels' skill as agitators made little headway. But by September, 1930 official unemployment figures stood at 3,102,000, soon to be six millions. Hitler ruthlessly exploited these unemployed. His denunciation of the Jew-ridden system found an echo in the misery and despair of large classes of the German people. An organised conspiracy against the state was set in motion, but the point remains that if those in authority had been really determined to smash the Nazi movement they could have found the means. It began to satisfy those Germans who could not forget defeat and the German army. When the German Workers' Party was begun Roehm pushed in ex-Freikorps men and ex-servicemen to swell the ranks. The Nuremburg party days took on a new significance; the numbers in the Hitler Youth, the Nazi schoolchildren's Leagues, the students' Leagues, the Order of German Women and the Nazi teachers' association rose. Despite this, reason prevailed still in a large

section of German society, as analysis of the elections will show. The political situation was such that Hitler did not need a majority to gain power by legal means. The Weimar republic had been so undermined that constitutional resistance was impossible. Hitler's success in 1933 indicates not so much the strength of his own cause but the weakness of others - the divisions among democrats, not least of all, between communists and Social Democrats.

Even before 1933 Hitler began to use terror tactics, (a foretaste of what was to come), and this, allied to his demagogy, his organisation, and his use of the new mass media, led in part to his success. But it is also true that between 1928 and 1933 the views of German government groups were really concerned to achieve the same ends as Hitler; to many Germans their methods looked as less promising than his. Later he was to solve the unemployment problem, a feather in his cap as far as millions of Germans were concerned. Within the ranks of the more influential sectors of German society there were many who saw Hitler as a good thing, the industrialists and politicians and soldiers who realised they could benefit from a Nazi government, yet, at the same time, and more relevant, thought they could definitely handle Hitler.

The socio-economic basis of Nazism pre-1933 with reference to the German elections of 1928-1933.

The percentage of total votes received by various German parties, 1928-1933, and the percentage of the 1928 vote retained in the last free election, 1932.

Party	Percentage total vote			Ratio of 1928 vote to second 1932 vote as a percentage		
	1928	1930	1932	1932	1933	
Conservative Party						
D.N.V.P.	14.2	7.0	5.9	6.5	8.0	60%
Middle class parties.						
D.V.P. (right Liberals).	8.7	4.85	1.2	1.8	1.1	21%
D.D.P. (left Liberals).	4.8	3.48	1.00	.95	.8	20%
Wirtschaftspartei (small business)	4.5	3.9	.4	.3	0	7%
Others	9.5	10.1	2.6	2.8	.6	29%
Total percentage of middle class votes maintained						21%
Centre (Roman Catholic).	15.4	17.6	16.7	16.2	15	105%
Workers' parties.						
S.D.P. (Socialists).	19.8	24.5	21.6	20.4	18.3	69%
K.P.D. (Communists).	10.6	13.1	14.3	16.85	12.3	159%
Total percentage of working class vote maintained						92%
Fascist Party N.S.D.A.P.	2.6	18.3	37.3	33.1	43.9 (1)	127%

An examination of the figures shows that the Nazis gained most heavily from amongst the Liberal middle class parties; the Wirtschafte-partie, which represented primarily small businessmen and artisans.

(1) Samuel Pratt: The Social Basis of Nazism and Communism in Urban Germany. (M.A. thesis, Dept. of Sociology, Michigan State University, 1948, P.29, P.30); Karl D. Bracher: Die Auflosung der Weimarer Republik, (Stuttgart und Dusseldorf: Ring Verlag, 1954), Pp. 86-106.

lost very heavily. The social affiliations of Nazi voters in pre-1933 Germany were certainly those of the Liberals rather than those of the Conservatives. As the Nazi party grew the Liberal bourgeois centre parties declined, but the right wing nationalist opponent of Weimar, the German National People's Party, (D.N.V.P.), was the only one of the non-Marxist and non-Catholic parties to retain over half of its 1928 percentage of its total vote. To find what happened to the people who comprised this group in the period 1933-1939 is an important task.

Between 1928 and 1932 the liberal parties lost 80% of their votes and their proportion of the total votes dropped from a quarter to less than three per cent. The only centre party which maintained its proportionate support was the Roman Catholic centre Party whose support was reinforced by religious allegiance. The Marxist parties, the socialists and the communists, lost about one tenth of their percentage support, although their total vote only dropped slightly. The proportionate support of the conservatives dropped about forty per cent, much less than that of the more liberal middle class parties.

The conservatives lost support to the Nazis in areas where nationalism would be the greatest cry, such as those areas fringing on the Polish corridor and Schleswig-Holstein. This is certainly proved in the researches of Rudolf Heberle,(1). His voting figures for 1932 prove

(1) Rudolf Heberle, "From Democracy to Nazism," Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1945.

conclusively that the conservatives were weakest where the Nazis were strongest and the Nazis were relatively weak where the conservatives were strong. His and other recent research on figures reveals other significant facts; the Nazis were never as successful in the large cities as is sometimes assumed. In July, 1932 in Berlin for example the Nazis received less than 25% of votes cast, a fact which challenges the idea that the growth of large modern industrial societies with their supposed lack of spirituality, provided a seedbed for Nazism. The evidence suggests that the opposite is more the case; the federalists, or regional autonomy parties, tended to support Nazism because of its antagonism to the forces of industrial urban society, and in general Nazism appealed to those elements in German society, (whatever their geographical location) who resented the power and culture of the large cities; this is in part reflected in the success the Nazis had in small communities. Linked with this is the fact that German big business, with admittedly the exception of a few individuals, gave the Nazis very little financial support or even encouragement until it had risen to the status of a major party. The Nazis did begin to pick up financial backing in 1932, but in the main this support was the result of the general policy of many of the leading businesses of giving money to all of the major parties, except of course the communists, in order to be in their good graces. This is substantiated by all the recent studies dealing with the five year period 1928-1933. Research has also revealed that this

group remained loyal, in their personal and direct political affiliations, to the conservative parties, and indeed many gave no money whatsoever to the Nazis until after the party had won power. However by the time of the second election of 1932 Hitler was receiving considerable financial support from big business. There is certainly a close link between the money the Nazis were now receiving and the election rigging that occurred. Like so many others in the early days, many large industrialists thought that Hitler was very sound, suppressing the trade unions and wisely using his funds to fix the election against the communists, and also thought that they would easily be able to manage Hitler. Little did they and others see the other side of the coin, that this would in itself strengthen Hitler's hand, and that eventually the industrialists would have no say whatsoever.

The question now arises why did such a large proportion of the German Liberal-voting class change its allegiance, for there is no doubt that this did change. The American sociologists, Charles Loomis and J.A. Beegle have proved that the middle classes in general gave increasingly larger votes to the Nazis as the social and economic crisis worsened in Germany in the late twenties, sure evidence of the socio-economic basis of political ties. The basic reasons proffered may seem hypothetical, for one has before one what appears to be the unholy alliance of fascism and liberalism, an unusual state of affairs to say the least. Any logical explanation must rest then in the common elements of the two wedded to a particular social and economic climate. But similarities

are in no way direct. Fascist thinking is patently anti-liberal in its glorification of the state, but they are very similar in terms of their opposition to certain aspects of German society - big business, trade unionism, the concept of a socialist state, and a dislike for all forms of traditionalism, especially that manifested in the church. The vital point is that their opposition sprang from totally different reasons.

The basic reason for the alliance lies in the political, social, and economic change that Germany experienced from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. As a result of this the relative position of the middle class changed. It resented what was happening, the antithesis of what was represented in liberal ideology, notably its support for the individual and his rights, especially those comprising the middle class. The latter grew to hate the new large bureaucratic state in which the small middle class liberal was swallowed up.

Moreover liberalism as such was a spent force. It was out on a limb, for it had been overtaken, unable to adapt with the quickening pace of change. In this context their political power waned. The liberals in Germany and throughout Europe in the early twentieth century found it increasingly difficult to oppose effectively what they had opposed from the early nineteenth century onwards. In their desire to re-establish themselves and in order to satisfy the needs which the conventional liberal parties had failed to, the liberals gave their allegiance to an

extreme movement like the Nazis thus turning them from a revolutionary party into a reactionary one. They saw that Nazism proposed indirectly to solve their problem for them, by gaining control of the state and running it in such a way that the economic security and high social standing of the middle classes would be restored, and simultaneously reducing the power of those elements in society which were anathema to the middle class liberals, especially big business and large scale labour. Samuel A. Pratt's work has substantiated all this and he shows conclusively that of the two elements of the middle class the upper seemed to be the more thoroughly pro-Nazi.

At the opposite pole to the middle class liberals were the Marxists, for whom Nazism represented the last stage of capitalism - the winning of power in order to maintain capitalism's tottering structure. Only the communists and Social Democrats were to offer, disunitedly, anything like fighting opposition to Hitler in the Reichstag.

As the figures show Hitler never succeeded in gaining more than 37% of votes in a free election. This is a key figure; some sociologists, such as Geiger and Bendix claim that the Nazi vote increased because of a decline in voting, but the work of Loomis and Beegle proves them totally wrong. The fact remains though that if the remaining 63% of the German people had been united in their opposition to Hitler he could never have hoped to become chancellor by legal means. But by the time of the election of 5th March Hitler had all under control; after the Reichstag fire the communists were crushed and meetings of the Social Democrats

were either banned or crushed. Despite this terror the Nazis only made an increase of five and a half millions, 44% of the total vote. With the Nationalists' 52 seats and the Nazis 288 seats Hitler had a majority of 16, not enough for the two thirds majority necessary to pull off the Nazi revolution by legal means.

But even by 1930 the writing was on the wall; Bruning had found it impossible to secure a stable majority in the Reichstag or at the elections. Even allowing for political disharmony Hitler's own organisation, his methods, and his own personal weapons as mass orator and agitator were equally contributory to his rise. He was everyone's friend, "all things to all men", and his policy based on contradictory principles could only have succeeded in a society which had lost its unity. Germany was a state of contrasts; in one sense it was united - nationalistic, in another not at all - split into sections by divergent forces. It was the latter which Hitler successfully played upon for his own ends - divide and rule. Each section of society was isolated and unrelated to the other. This is shown mostly in the very nature of the German constitution. The army for example was separate, a force on its own. It did not fit into a fixed system of government because one did not exist. Men like von Blomberg, Raeder, and Fritsch were laws unto themselves. As a result they pursued but one interest.

The voting figures show how little relationship there was between the individual vote and the right and power it expressed and moral sanction it implied, and the political system actually created, a sad reflection on the amount of power the electorate supposedly possessed.

The tragedy too was that there was no real constitutional brake that could stop Hitler. Once in power he was able to perpetrate his Nazi revolution. But there was nothing unusual in this when all the factors involved, and the historical context in which they operated, are examined. These particular circumstances were unique but they were in no way a German phenomenon. They reveal the inability of the Germans at that time to control their political fates. From 1933 onwards the fate of every German was to be controlled. There was nothing psychologically abnormal about the Germans. What happened in 1933 was the result of a complex culture pattern. Since 1945 this pattern has changed. Germans are far more aware now of their place in history and strong parties have evolved although very small right-wing extremist groups remain, but this is common to several European countries.

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From 1933 onwards until the death of Adolf Hitler and the fall of the Third Reich the German people were to live in a menacing world. On August 2nd, 1934 Hindenburg died, marking the end of an era. Hitler became head of state, and one which did not hide its identity, a personal dictatorship based on force. Every citizen was compelled to swear an oath of allegiance to him. From that time free speech as commonly conceived disappeared. Public opinion never had time to react to such that in any normal society would have been brought before it for its perusal. The tone was set from the beginning; Hindenburg's will, which

called for a return to constitutional monarchy, was never disclosed to the public. Anyone who appealed to the police against the Nazi terrorists, notably in Prussia, soon discovered that Goring had made sure that the police force was well Nazified.

All aspects of German society were Nazified. No one person or institution was to escape surveillance. The provincial Diets were dissolved (often by force, as in Bavaria), and Nazi governments set up in their place. The whole state was therefore defederalised and made a centralised Nazi unit. On 23rd March the Enabling Act came before the Reichstag and was passed. On 2nd May all trade union buildings were occupied and the unions suppressed. On 14th July the Nazi Party was declared the only party in the Reich. Hitler now had supreme power. From the very beginning the press was to be controlled; on 4th October, 1933 the Reich Press Laws were passed. The Nazis took over education, the judiciary, and attempted to Nazify the church. All fell under the anvil. Instruments for perpetuating the machine were created - Goebbels' propaganda ministry, and worst of all, the Gestapo, established by Goering, assisted by Heydrich and Himmler. Repression, intimidation, corruption, and violence were to characterise the Nazi state. Leaving aside for a moment wider implications and deeper motives Germany was being brought to heel by trickery and the most vicious brutality, but at the same time it looks on the surface as if Germans had no one to blame but themselves. Hitler appeared to be the champion of a national cause.

On 23rd March only Otto Wels, leader of the Social Democrats, defied Hitler: "We German Social Democrats pledge ourselves solemnly in this historic hour to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No Enabling Act can give you the power to destroy ideas which are eternal and indestructible." The Reichstag accepted the Act by 441 votes to 84, (all of which were Social Democrats). The Social Democrats were rapidly suppressed. The Catholic Bavarian People's Party and the Centre Party capitulated of their own choice. The National Party was given equally short shrift. The aged Hindenburg shortly before his death grasped the way in which the tide was flowing; Papen, encouraged by Hindenburg, spoke out against Hitler on 17th June, 1934 at the University of Marburg, but Goebbels soon crushed the spread of news of the speech; copies of the Frankfurter Zeitung were seized. Hitler, in characteristic style, appeased Hindenburg, who was threatening to hand the state over to the Army. The Rohm purge was the result. On Hindenburg's death Hitler assumed total power. On 19th August a plebiscite was held; 95% of registered voters went to the polls; 90% of them gave Hitler their favour; 4½ million Germans had said "no".

Chapter One

The First Years of Power, 1933-1935

National Socialism destroyed the German concepts of 'Heimat', 'Vaterland', and 'Volk', though nothing was more strengthening to the Nazi cause than these emotional attachments, a dedication to the vaterland and its people and a belief in the mystical power of Germany. But Hitler had not pulled off a dynamic coup. A.J.P. Taylor was right when he wrote that, "30th January, 1933 was not a seizure of power, despite National Socialist boastings. Hitler was appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg in a strictly constitutional way and for solely democratic reasons. He was not made Chancellor because he would help the German capitalists to destroy the trades unions, or because he would give the German generals a great army, still less a great war. He was appointed because he and his Nationalist allies could provide a majority in the Reichstag and thus end the anomalous four years of government by presidential decree." It was from this basis of constitutional legality that Hitler was able to harness the latent powers of German society and to reduce it to universal obedience. Whatever the motives of individual pressure groups pre-1933 and the fears of certain individuals Hitler was seen by the majority as the constitutional leader committed to the national cause. It would be totally unfair to say the German people should have been aware in 1933 of Hitler's geopolitical machinations, or his methods. Even some of his closest friends did not know; L.B. Namier sustains this when speaking of Hitler's relations with Mussolini in "Europe in Decay": "Hitler had feelings of comradeship

for Mussolini but no political regard, and the axis partner was no better informed about his schemes and intentions than were his opponents." In any case there were no signs as yet to the contrary. His 'Peace' speech of May 17, 1933 fooled everyone, and W.L. Shirer recalls in detail how the majority of Germans did not seem to feel cowed by the system in 1933-1934.

A quiet, but ceaseless revolution took place in German society from 1933 to 1935. For the German people it was an Indian summer. Everyone in power was reasonably happy with Hitler, who found success was coming easily. He was to succeed as Bismarck had because of similar circumstances, but with different means and ends. The pressures of the Nazi state were imposed very early on. It was at this point that the individual German was faced with his predicament as never before; he had a choice - to accept the regime, as the vast majority did, (many perhaps unaware in any case that a decision confronted them), or to stand against the flood, to reject the demands of the organised totality of social controls. The latter would have required an extraordinary degree of heroic self-determination, and more; it would have required a sense of total commitment to some alternative system of values, which to one so committed, could claim precedence over those values of personal and national survival. But Hitler himself was careful not to overstep the mark too much. For instance he was able to pull off the obviously rigged Van der Lubbe trial, deliberately branding the communists with the Reichstag fire although

sections of the public were aroused, yet found he had to openly denounce the assassins of President Dolfuss of Austria because of public pressure.

The established orders in Germany, especially the armed forces and the civil service, are of particular interest, since it was these strongly institutionalised bodies that would be effected most of all by Nazism in its early years of power. It was the members of these bodies too that reflect most the interaction of certain socio-economic groups in German society with Nazism, since traditionally they were the ruling classes of Germany, and therefore were likely to clash with a totalitarian regime which might oppose their interests.

The German civil service, and more especially the upper echelons of it, is an interesting phenomenon. It was generally indifferent to all questions of forms of government as long as it did not interfere with the efficient exercise of its own bureaucratic power. It knew full well it was indispensable. The civil service was made up of experienced specialists, invaluable to the Nazis who had no one to replace them. This was most apparent in the German foreign office; when the Nazis tried their hands at diplomacy they were positively unsuccessful; Alfred Rosemberg, Robert Ley, Reinhard Heydrich, and Theodor Habricht were all miserable failures. Paul Otto Schmidt wrote: "governments came and went, foreign ministers changed, but for German diplomatists such events signified no change in their fundamental task: to represent the Reich abroad."(1) Many realised by staying they could in any case maintain

(1) 'Memoirs', P 560.

control of events. Some looked to Italy and Russia for comparisons; in the former the civil servants had stayed and managed to ward off the "onslaught" of Fascist radicals; in the latter they had left and the Bolsheviks had found diplomats from their own ranks. In 1933 Bruning had advised State Secretary Bulow and others not to resign: "remain in office and urge these others to do likewise, for they ..... together with moderate leaders in the Reichswehr, alone would be in a position to frustrate any aggressive foreign or military policies of Hitler."

One thing is certain, the German civil service was very powerful. Despite the revolution in staffing in 1919, by 1929 it had reverted to the pre-1919 system, selecting key career civil servants from the aristocracy. This was mainly due to the weakness of the republic, and the delegation of emergency powers by the Reichstag to the Bruning, Schleicher, and von Papen cabinets after 1930 vastly increased the political power of the entrenched civil service.

Bureaucratic institutions may exercise, overtly or covertly, wide discretionary powers in making public policy. Another key factor governing the German civil service was that it was certainly not non-political. The concept of "neutrality" is certainly conflicting; there is a difference between the formal legal notion of neutrality for a civil service and "neutrality" implied in a political sense. The theory is that higher civil servants will make decisions in the "public and national interest" in a "disinterested" way. The question remains, how

disinterested can a bureaucracy be? Bureaucracies have institutionalised political biases, thereby identifying national interests with the particular interests of that bureaucracy itself. Defence departments may be similarly disposed. Armies will normally justify their continued existence or enlargement regardless of whether an objective need for their maintenance is demonstrable. There is always the possibility within any institution with a deep-rooted esprit de corps to espouse specific policies regardless of objective merits. Added to this was the peculiar position of the German civil service; after the collapse of the Empire in 1918 and the establishment of the Republic, German officialdom had come to view its chief function as that of arbiter between the organised party and class interests of a divided "pluralistic" society. As Carl Schmitt wrote it could no longer stand above society as Hegel envisaged the Prussian civil service should, but only stand between the classes of society.(2) The Nazi era brought a radical change: the civil servant could have a new role in a society in which state, bureaucracy, and people were one, given the assumption that each civil servant would agree to be part of the harmony between party and the state bureaucracy. It was the Civil Service Law of 1937 which gave legal expression to Carl Schmitt's theory of the redeemed bureaucracy. It finally destroyed the concept of political neutrality. The civil servant's relation to the party was legally recognised to affect his qualifications to assume or remain in office. Materially the status of the German civil servant was unaffected by the laws. In fact he acquired

(2)
Carl Schmitt, "Staat, Bewegung, Volk." P 31.

more power, since he had the authority of a totaliterian regime behind him. Privileges were his for the taking if he toed the party line.

Each German government department had a tradition, mores, ways of conducting business. Several of them, especially the Foreign Office, were closed shops, despite the politicians who turned their hands to bureaucracy and diplomacy. Other European and American foreign offices were not dissimilar to that in Germany. The French, British and American foreign offices all had their own esprit de corps. Harold Nicholson wrote of Lord Curzon: "last of that unbroken line of Foreign Secretaries ..... born with the privileges of a territorial aristocracy and nurtured on the traditions of a governing class."(1) In Great Britain permanent officials were undermined as they were in Germany. Lord Vansittart said that as Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the government he only saw Chamberlain three times in three years in that capacity.(2) Sumner Welles also said some equally scathing things about President Roosevelt on the same topic.(3)

All institutions tend to become watertight - to fend off attacks. The German Foreign Office was the extreme of this; socially isolated and exclusive, it assumed the attitude of 'moral relativism' to changing regimes, and, initially agreed with much of its policy even if its ideology was

(1) H. Nicholson, "Curzon," P 48-49.

(2) Sir R. Vansittart, "The Decline of Diplomacy," Foreign Affairs, January, 1950, P 186.

(3) Sumner Welles, "Seven Decisions that shaped the History," P 215-216.

distrustful. The main question is how far did these institutions react to a change in the nature of the state? There is no doubt that the top German government departments thought they could be "a state within a state," and that the Nazi state itself tried to counterattack by bringing the disintegration of administrative procedure. The Nazis made sure they controlled all, and where this was difficult, as in the case of German diplomacy, they duplicated much. Their methods are described in detail in Franz Neumann's "Behemoth" and Hannah Arendt's "Origins of Totalitarianism." Nazism destroyed the philosophical basis of the authoritarian German civil service and rendered it powerless. There is no doubt either that in the early years the careerists in the German civil service thought they could continue unimpeded. The basic instinct of the German civil service was to survive. For those who disagreed there were two alternatives, to oppose or to resign. For the vast majority who stayed they became tools between the high policy-makers and those who were perpetrating the base deeds of the Nazi state.

Before 1933 the German army too was a political force in its own right. The Officers Corps, reorganised by Seeckt, was an elite. But as the Nazi party grew, Nazi-indoctrinated youths permeated the lower ranks of the Officers Corps. These infiltrations and the example of the Nazi-minded senior officers, such as Reichenau, divided the Corps internally and weakened the hand of Fritsch and other exemplars of the old tradition. The result was that the Officers Corps became leaderless and disunited. Much of its professional competence had been retained, though the quality

was certainly uneven. In terms of social consciousness the Corps had retrogressed. Most of the elders had learned nothing since the Kaiser's abdication, and many of the juniors had succumbed to the lure of Nazism. Faced with times which were sadly out of joint the Officers Corps had neither skill nor will to mend them.

The Wehrmacht was as equally dedicated to the overthrow of the Versailles settlement as Hitler. Clandestine rearmament had been planned and executed during the Republic. It supported the Treaty of Rapallo since Russia was prepared to help Germany secretly rearm. The Army would support politicians who furthered their ends. Bruning was put into power through Army support, countenanced by Hitler. Large sections of the Reichswehr pre-1933 supported Hitler, and therefore made it difficult for Bruning to dissolve the S.A. At Nuremburg and in apologies since 1945 several generals say they were forestalled and that all efforts were futile. The basic truth remains that the generals were weak through lack of leadership. Hossbach reveals this in his book, "Zwischen Wehrmacht and Hitler," as does Hans B. Gisevius in his "To the Bitter End," - "the generals did not want to do anything."(1) The Nuremberg evidence shows how men like Generaloberst Hans Reinhardt and General Siegfried Westphal agreed with Hitler pre-1939, and how von Blomberg and Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz gave no real opposition before the war began. They were handled, used, played off, and honoured by Hitler, (he made von Blomberg a Feldmarschall in April, 1936). None

(1)
H.B. Gisevius: "To the Bitter End," P 179.

of the generals were his favourites and none of them really cared much for Hitler. But there were, despite their temerity, some first class military minds amongst them.

Two of the strongest institutions within German society were the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches. They are important for this study insofar as they were in a position to employ their full range of institutional controls in the interests of the state if need be, and because they held great sway over the minds and actions of a very large section of the German population. The Church, ostensibly an independent body, was in a position to counter the total regimentation of thought and action made possible by the nation-state's mastery over the channels of information and communication.

Firstly it is important to understand the reaction of the German Churches to Nazism, typifying as they do the very difficult position such an institution found itself in under a totaliterian regime. Certainly the hierarchies of the German Churches were not blind or naive to the nature of Nazism, and in fact had more access to information through contact with the outside world. But one must accept that any effort to rally German Christians of whatever denomination in opposition to Hitler's programme would have evoked a response of merciless reprisal. The call for opposition was to encourage martyrdom, plus the fact the Roman Catholic Church felt, (and rightly so in terms of its own ideology) that it must preach the word in season and out of season, and that to

precipitate its own destruction by overt condemnation would be grossly imprudent, yet at the same time not abandoning the legitimate and altogether, even though this might entail certain risks and hardships. Basically the leaders of opinion were faced with two choices: to kow-tow to the Nazis or face the almost certain prospect of being silenced.

The argument of the German Churches that they were supporting 'Volk' and 'Heimat' and not Hitler is a somewhat specious one, certainly in a logical sense. Could a German Christian legitimately support a regime which it knew to be the antithesis of Christianity? The fact that German Christians did support the regime is startling testimony of the crucial importance of nationalism as a force controlling human behaviour. It also shows that the religious institution too found itself forced to act as an agency of social control exerted on behalf of the totalitarian secular power, since that by recognising the Nazi regime as legitimate authority in Germany, the Churches placed their members under a moral obligation to render civil obedience to that regime. At this point it is important to note that the religious value system does specifically and intentionally support the secular value system. All the evidence is to be found in the Bible. St. Paul instructs the early Christians to be subject to the powers placed over them, just as Christ himself does in the Gospel narrative. All Churches have baptised in a real sense secular rights. But again the point remains that the Christian is left with the discretionary power to decide whether a secular order is operating within a Christian value system or not.

The Christian individual in Germany was therefore placed in an invidious position, caught between two sets of values and loyalties - as a citizen of the Nazi political community and as a communicant of the Church, and there is no doubt that whatever the leaders of the Church decided its members were obliged to follow. One can argue that since the vast majority of German Christians appear to have supported Hitler's regime this is prima facie evidence that they were convinced that his regime was legitimate in every sense, although all the evidence since indicates that the majority of German Christians were fully aware of the barren and pagan nature of Nazism. Certainly many who tacitly accepted the regime and later participated in the war were prepared to compromise with an immoral situation, since the alternative was certain imprisonment or death. There is one additional factor operating here - the considerable effectiveness of propaganda to effect the value judgments of German Christians. It appealed directly to the ideas of 'Vaterland, Volk, and Heimat,' reinforced as this was by German culture - the romantic idea of sacrifice for the common good, which pervaded German military culture especially - the ideas of 'Ehrentod' (death with honour) and 'Heldentod' (hero-death).

During these early years of power then push-pull forces were working upon the average German. Hitler was giving the German people many of the things and type of leadership which they had felt so lacking in the Weimar era; dynamic leadership in the councils of Europe, which Hitler was openly spurning, and a reassertion of Germany's claims for

a redress of the Versailles settlement. There was reasonable industrial growth and prosperity and the employment situation had altered for the good. By 1936 Germany was to enjoy full employment, but at the cost of a heavy rearmament programme. At the same time the ordinary German not fervently committed to the Nazi cause realised that German culture in the widest sense was being destroyed; as has been seen it was becoming increasingly difficult for an upright Christian to maintain that he was an upright German, at least in the Nazi sense.

The institutional forces binding the German were very strong. Some were pro-, some anti-Nazi, but as will be proved the overall effect was for the former to conspire to control the people in the interests of Nazism. Take for example the power of big business, controlling indirectly millions of lives; if it gave Nazism its support the worker had no power left whatsoever. Many of the great industrialists realised very quickly they stood to gain from supporting the new regime; not only were the Nazis anti-unions, anti-communist, and anti-democracy, but their policy of revision, especially of the Versailles settlement pleased the leading industrialists. It could mean personal gain and power. At a meeting on 20th February, 1933 certain industrialists agreed to support the establishment of a dictatorship - I.G. Farben alone gave 400,000 RM to Hitler for him to fight the elections. It realised that Hitler's proposed rearmament programme would mean vast orders for synthetic rubber and petrol and all manner of chemical products. The strong Nazis of the military staff of the Ministry of War were brought in on this too: men such as Keitel and Jodl. But not so longer afterwards the element

of fear was to creep in. Many felt they had to make sure they were in the Nazis' good books - they were afraid lest they should be boycotted and their trade decline.

It is true to say that the majority of Germans welcomed a strong, nationalistically orientated political climate. Even the traditionally conservative sectors of society were prepared to put up with the violent aspects of Nazism if it meant an alternative to the despised Weimar governments. An examination of two of the most influential groups in Germany will reveal these points - the Foreign Office and the Army, two deeply entrenched institutions in German life.

Despite the loss of power for many, the Foreign Office was pleased with certain aspects of Nazi policy. Bulow, Neurath and Weizsacker revelled in the denunciation of Versailles and the withdrawal from the League of Nations and Disarmament conference. But what surprised them most was that Hitler was so successful. The new alignments - the London Naval agreement, the anti-comintern pact and the Italian rapprochement pleased many. Few were pro-Nazi, but at the same time few were anti-Nazi. This non-committal approach worried the Nazi authorities. In early 1938 not one leading diplomat was a member of the SS. In the autumn of 1944 Gauleiter Bohle complained to Hitler that among 690 high officials in the Foreign Office more than 600 of them did not yet possess the right faith. Woermann and Weizsacker were given SS ranks on Ribbentrop's initiative, though at his trial the former claimed he could never have become a convinced Nazi. This stand was taken by many diplomats after World War II, claiming that during the Nazi era they supported neither

Hitler nor Nazism, but the "Fatherland". For example, Weizsacker said at his trial: "as a civil servant one does not serve a constitution, but the Fatherland. One serves whichever Government and constitution is given the country by the people."(1) Other permanent officials claimed they viewed Ribbentrop with contempt. There is much evidence to show where Foreign Office officials disagreed with Hitler's and Ribbentrop's policies, usually over means though rather than ends. There was much personal animosity, especially when people felt they were not being consulted, and worst of all, from the point of view of men such as Dirksen and Hassell, once Nazi policy was proven successful they had no influence whatsoever. Munich certainly finished their role in the drama. For example, after the Nazi occupation of Prague in March, 1939, Dirksen's warning from London that the era of appeasement was over in Britain made no impression on Ribbentrop.

There were many clashes on policy, but few resigned and few were dismissed. Hitler needed the Foreign Office personnel and he knew it. In 1933 only a handful of the old diplomatic elite were dismissed:- the ambassador to the United States, von Prittwitz und Gaffron, the New York consul, Paul Schwarz, and the Chicago consul-general, Otto Kiep, (he was executed in 1944). Some were retired: the State Secretary Karl von Schubert, Hugo Simon, a former consul-general in Chicago, and the Minister to Mexico, Walter Zechlin. All were precise about their views on Nazism. Hitler knew full well in any case that he could break the traditional power

(1)
Nuremburg Trials, Case 11, P 75-95.

of the Foreign Office. He established two Nazi organisations in an attempt to subdue the Wilhelmstrasse: the Auslandsorganisation der N.S.D.A.P., headed by Rudolf Hess, which dealt with all Germans abroad, and the Aussenpolitisches Amt der N.S.D.A.P., headed by the incompetent Rosenberg. Hitler made sure too that the Foreign Office was being used less for diplomatic purposes. More was done by Hitler himself. This is borne out by the fact that by 1937 the Foreign Office was one of the least expensive ministries, caused by drastic cuts. Ribbentrop also decided to fill the Foreign Office with active Nazis, creating a Ribbentrop generation to supplant the career officials, and academic bureaucracy. Furthermore Hitler ordered on 30th June, 1933 that all the press and propaganda work of the Foreign Office be transferred to the Propaganda Ministry. Hitler also passed several civil service laws to Nazify the various government departments: on 7th April, 1933 the Law for the re-establishment of the Professional civil service was introduced, supplemented on 20th July, 1933 and 24th September, 1935. These purged the civil service of all anti-Nazi elements, and let down the barriers to deserving party elements. The civil service became therefore an expression of the Nazi leadership. By 1939 the Nazi party had triumphed decisively over the non-political principles once so cherished by the German foreign service. As far as the upper echelons of the foreign service were concerned Ribbentrop had some success at Nazification. By 1940 of the entire 120 staff above the rank of legation secretary 71 were party members, and of these 50 were career officials who had been in the foreign service before 1933; 22 of

the 120 were not party members, but 11 of these had already applied for party membership and had been rejected by the party itself.

Hitler was shrewd enough too to realise that the professionals could be used as shock-absorbers for the outside world, conveniently placed between the foreign powers and the grim realities of the Nazi state. Where the professional disagreed there was little he could therefore do. He was blocked in all directions. In 1937 for example ambassador Trautmann in Nanking voiced grave reservations about the likely consequence of abandoning Nationalist China to support the claims of Japan.(1) He was recalled. At the time of the German-Italian rapprochement the ambassador in Rome, Hassell, counselled against this. No notice was taken. Weizsacker agreed with Hitler's Czech policy, but feared the means to be used, especially force while Czechoslovakia' integrity was still guaranteed by the western powers. Ribbentrop and he disagreed as to whether "England would go to war as a result of another German agression."(2) This is borne out by further evidence, especially Weizsacker's memoirs and the Nuremburg records.(3) Weizsacker preferred a "chemical" instead of a "mechanical" solution to the Czech problem.(4) No notice whatsoever was taken of his views. When they did try to counter Nazi moves through

(1)D.G.F.P., Series D, Vol. 1, chapter iv.

(2)Nuremburg Document No. 3605, affidavit by Erich Kordt.

(3)Weizsacker, "Memoirs", Pp 193 and 165, and Nuremburg Document No. 3716 - Weizsacker - Memorandum of talk with Foreign Minister, 21st July, 1938.

(4)D.G.F.P. Series D, Vol, 1, Weizsacker to Trautmann (Nanking) 30th May, 1938, P 864.

diplomatic channels, it was pretty ineffective and in a sense merely further served Nazi interests. For instance at the time of the Rohm Purge the French embassador, Andre Francois-Poncet, was implicated. The Wilhelmstrasse covered up for Nazi trickery by informing the Quay D'Orsay that the Nazis' accusations were unfounded. The question remains why it was that men such as Weizsacker had allowed themselves to get into such a position, where they had no knowledge of the course and mechanics of high diplomacy, and where the ethics of international diplomacy were being blatantly contravened.

The army had been a state unto itself in Germany. It had dreams of perpetuating this under the Nazis. The leadership had remained relatively aloof from the radical elements of the party, though many welcomed en bloc virtually all of Hitler's early policies - especially rearmament, compulsory military service in 1935, the reoccupation of the Rhineland and limited military activity in Spain in 1936. The only real anti-Nazi was Groner and with his fall on 13th May, 1933 (engineered by Schleicher) any effective opposition to the Nazis and the SA disappeared. It was shortly after this too that Hindenburg dismissed Bruning, and with his fall the struggle to maintain constitutional government ended. In retrospect the position of the Army at this point was important, for they were the only body within Germany which could have successfully opposed the Nazis since they had the physical means to do so. Shortly after Papen took office the decree suppressing the SA was dropped, and the struggle for office, between June, 1932 and January, 1933 began.

The Corps made no move at all on the fall of Schleicher and the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor on 30th January, 1933.

The evidence shows that a large part of the Corps was ridden with overt or latent pro-Nazi sympathy and the many "neutrals" were prepared to take a "wait and see" attitude. None of the old school element who were repelled by Nazism were prepared to make a stand. There was certainly a firebrand element within the Reichswehr that was impressed by Nazism' nationalistic policies. Certainly many former Reichswehr members had already filled posts within the SA and party itself, but of the senior members of the officer corps only a few ever joined the Nazi party. Similarly the officer corps generally hated the Hitler Youth Movement, but many former Reichswehr members had swelled its ranks in the pre-1933 years. Blomberg joined the party, but after all he was War Minister, and so did the aged Field Marshal Mackensen and a few ranking generals.

On Hindenburg's death on 2nd August, 1934 the Army again could have asserted itself, but failed to insist on a constitutional decision for Hindenburg's successor. Instead they swore an oath of fealty to Hitler. The explanation is perhaps simple: they identified Hitler with Hindenburg, a man who had backed the Army's policies pre-1933, and a symbol too of the old Empire and the military elite - the spirit of Moltke. Hitler of course, with consummate skill, played off the Army: at Hindenburg's funeral he called for a rebirth of military glory and regeneration in the great tradition of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau - a shrewd move. Shortly afterwards, on 20th August, 1934, he exacted the oath. No one objected.

The Army felt its position was strong, and Hitler's policies were in any case very laudable, and did the Army in any case care very much for liberty and democracy? Moreover the Army thought it was invaluable to Hitler and that they could handle him. The evidence for all this lies above all else in the Rohm purge of 30th June, 1934, in fact before Hindenburg's death. It was a simple deal: the Army was to recognise Hitler as Hindenburg's successor provided the Army and Navy were recognised as superior to the SA. Hitler had the political nerve and unscrupulousness to get rid of the SA. The Army had indirectly sanctioned terrorism. It had completely undermined its own integrity. Moreover it shows that the Reichswehr was more interested in maintaining its own power and influence than opposing. Although not actively involved in the brutality, the Army was an accessory after the fact. Only eighty-five years old von Mackensen and General von Hammerstein protested. But what the Army did not realise was that by dismembering the SA it was merely nurturning its own future rival, the SS.

By the solemn oath the Army irrevocably associated itself with Nazism. The crucial point remains that the Army was pleased with Nazi policy. This was never more obvious than during the period after the formal denunciation of the Peace of Versailles by Hitler on 16th March, 1935. It was coupled not only with a proclamation reintroducing compulsory military service, but a programme was announced for the enlargement of the Army to 36 divisions grouped in 12 Corps. Later on 21st May, 1935, a secret Reich's Defence Law completed the reorganisation of the Reichswehr, with a wholesale and

public renaming of the top military positions. This meant promotion for the top stratum of the Corps, and the chance for a career for thousands of would-be soldiers. By the end of 1935 the average age of the officers was back to that of 1914. Moreover many who had been reserved previously about Nazism now publicly showed their allegiance.

Neither the Lutheran nor Roman Catholic Churches ever openly denounced Nazism. Luther was still a great personal figure in Germany and his anti-semitic doctrines and his ideal of complete submissiveness to political organisations tended to weaken the position of the stronger of the Lutheran pastorate. By 1937 some 807 pastors had been arrested or imprisoned. This was a relatively small percentage of the total number. Some writers have suggested that the Protestant commitment to Nazism was more enthusiastic than the Catholic. This was certainly true of the Muller wing of the dominant Evangelical Lutheran Church. But the institutional power and influence of the Catholic Church was more strongge. The Roman Catholic Church never asked, in medieval phrase, for Catholics to abjure their loyalty to the state. It never became a question of the cross versus the swastika. Neither Church attacked the system in its essential characteristics, with its totaliterian claims, its complete disregard for the sanctity of human life, and its complete mockery of the most elementary conceptions of human law. Amazingly no one group of powerful Churchmen ever attacked Nazism in its early days for being anti-Christian, in fact re-interpreting the Christian faith on the basis of racial dogma, deifying Hitler, and exalting the blood community of the chosen German people. At

no time was the German Catholic population released from its moral obligation to obey the legitimate authority of the National Socialist rulers under which Catholics were placed by the 1933 directives of their spiritual leaders; at no time was the individual German Catholic led to believe that the regime was an evil unworthy of his support. By its original act of recognising and supporting the new Nazi regime as the repository of legitimate authority, the hierarchy bound the individual German Catholic to obey that authority or, at the very least, to give it the benefit of the doubt in any apparent conflict of values.

There were procrastinations on certain issues, but the degree of effectiveness is equivocal. The point remains, how could moderate attacks on a totalitarian regime expect to alter the nature or policy of that regime? At the Fulda conference in June, 1934, the bishops did attack the "positive" Christianity of Nazism, but they made a distinction between the Nazi movement itself and the aberrations of certain etchelons, such as Rosenburg and his "Mythus". One year later at Fulda, (August, 1935) the bishops again protested against Nazism's association with neopagan writing.(1) But what of the Catholic laity? The average German was certainly prepared to be loyal to the state if he could maintain in tact his Catholic faith; moreover this was at a time when the Gestapo was beginning its terror-tactics, reporting and filing on the recalcitrant. The population, especially the

(1) "Denkschrift der Deutschen Bischofe an Hitler," August 20, 1935, and in Muller, "Kirche und Nationalsozialismus," Pp 367-376, at 391-393, and the Joint Pastoral Letter, "Stehet Fest in Glauben," August 20th, 1935.

devout Christian, went from now on in fear of arrest. This could have fateful repercussions for entire families.(1) One can only surmise that the laity were given a somewhat distorted picture. The German bishops did not deny the validity of 'blood and race' and the necessity of the German to defend their racial stock, but at the same time questioned the anti-Christian pagan aspects that went with it.(2) Bishop Grober for one was quite vocal on Germany's need for honour and lebensraum.(3)

It is certainly revealing to compare the views of the two organisations with one another. The N.S.D.P. saw the Roman Catholic Church with its totaliterian claims in the spiritual field as challenging the totaliterian claims of itself in the political arena.(4) The Catholic Church obviously saw the Nazi order in terms of a somewhat unsophisticated political perspective - the Nazi regime was just another political order evoked by man, another authoritarian, anti-communist state. But certainly the Catholic hierarchy were in an unenviable position - many feared that if the laity were put to the test, Nazism would win. Was it to be 'God or man'? To demand an all-out fight was therefore impossible. But to compromise meant a total loss of all integrity: none was more aware of

(1) Bernhard Vollmer, ed. "Volksopposition im Polizeistaat," Stuttgart, 1957. He prints Gestapo reports. See p. 128-129 - report of 5th December, 1934, and a report of 5th July, 1935, p 251.

(2) See Bishop Grober, an article, "Rasse" in "Handbuch der religiosen Gegenwartsfragen," Freiburg, Br., 1937, p 536-537, and Cardinal Faulhaber in "Munchener Kardinalspredigten," first series, Munich, 1936, p 11.

(3) See Bishop Grober in article, "Volkerfriede," in "Handbuch der religiosen Gegenwartsfragen," Freiburg Br., 1937, p 631.

this than the Jesuit priest Max Pribilla, SJ, - "there are moments when, without any tangible utility, something has to be said for no other reason but that it is true. If it is not said, the moral order of the world suffers a blow that is harder to overcome than its violation by brute force."(5) The numerous conciliatory acts merely cut the ground away from those, such as Pribilla, who were prepared to be critical of the Nazis. It is possible to deduce that the failure of the Roman Catholic Church to penetrate the myth of the Nazis' patriotic and noble intentions, even in later years, suggests that the misunderstanding of the essence of Nazism in 1933 was based more than on Hitler's deceptive words. The bishops, in concert at least, found no harm in Hitler's one-party system. It is the mechanics of that compromise with Nazism that must now be examined in detail.

The major concessions were made from the word go. On 28th March, 1933 the Fulda bishops withdrew earlier prohibitions against membership in the Nazi party, and admonished the faithful to be loyal and obedient to the new regime. It should be noted that this was preceded by Hitler's very conciliatory speech of 23rd March in the new Reichstag, prior to the passing of the Enabling Act. Hitler had also just assured himself of Centre party support - "a fitting close to the shabby policy of compromise with the Nazis which the Centre party had followed since the summer of 1933."(6)

(4) "Der politische Katholizismus," - no date, but apparently for year 1937: the original is in the National Archives in Washington, DC; micro-film - T-175, roll 281, frames 2774908-912. Copy in Institute for Contemporary History, Munich.

(5) Max Pribilla, in "Charakter," in "Stimmen der Zeit," cxxviii, 1935, p. 305.

(6) Alan Bullock, "Hitler: a Study in Tyranny," p. 245.

This dramatic step by the Catholic episcopate had been preceded by several concessions: in February, 1933 Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich had asked Dr. Emil Muhler to resign. He was a violent anti-Nazi and made this clear, - he was head of "Catholic Action" in Munich. Faulhaber also began to press for the release of the Vatican's ban on Abbot Schlachtleiter, a pro-Nazi priest.(1) Many well-reputed Catholic scholars gave intellectual support: these included Professor Michael Schmaus, Professor of Dogmatic Theology in Munster University,(2) Karl Adam of Tubingen, Professor Theodor Brauer of Cologne, and Karl Eschweiler of Braunsberg. Two prominent Catholic magazines, "Zeit und Volk" and "Deutschee Volk," urged Catholics to be loyal to the new regime.

But the coup de grace came on 20th July, 1933, when the Concordat was signed between Rome and the Nazis. It was a supreme diplomatic triumph for Hitler. The course of events shows how brilliant Hitler was at gauging the views of the various groups involved and how to control and play them off in his own interests. The Centre party, strongly Roman Catholic, was pushed onto one side - most of all by the Catholic hierarchy. Archbishop Grober said shortly before his visit to Rome that a positive attitude to the state was essential. The leaders of the Centre party took this to mean

(1) Bayerischee Geheimes Stattsarchiv, Munich.

(2) Begegnungen zwischen Katholischen Christentum und Nationalsozialischer Weltanschauung, 2nd edition, Munster, 1934, p 7,23,42.

that they were not to be recalcitrant. Also, even if the German Catholics and their leaders had been hesitant, what Rome expected of the leaders of German Catholicism was indeed unmistakable. There was no question of disobeying. The successful conclusion of the concordat with Mussolini had strengthened the view in the Vatican that a concordat was a far better way of dealing with Hitler than relying on Catholic political parties, (which with every other party in Germany had lost all powers with the emasculation of the Reichstag by the Enabling Act). The signing of the concordat increased Hitler's standing enormously in Germany and in the world. For the Roman Catholic German it meant that he now had to accept the regime, but at the same time the Papacy felt that the German Roman Catholic Church now had a document which could be used to support itself against any encroachments by the Nazi regime. This was very sound, in theory. The Church was using the concordat as a deterrent, and as a means for friendly relations, if the German National Socialist state was prepared to treat the Church as Mussolini's fascist government did in Italy. What Cardinal Bertram, Monsignor Kaas, and Cardinal Pacelli, (the Papal Secretary, later Pius xii) did not realise was that this was the first of a series of steps to undermine totally the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany - a totaliterian state knew no bounds, least of all legal ones.

The significance for the German Catholic and indeed for the entire German population was enormous; opinion in Germany was now standardised, to fall into line with the Roman agreement. To step out of line was to err

in the Church's eyes, and to be marked down in the Nazis' records. Hitler could now go ahead with whatever underhand deeds he liked, and he had a piece of paper to show he had the blessing of the Church, and needless to say he was very adroit at using coercion against the Church, switching it on and off according to political expediency. The negotiations that took place from April to July witnessed the final decline of influence of two important parties - the Bavarian People's party dissolved itself on 4th July, and the Centre party published its decree of dissolution in the late evening of 5th July. However, one can argue that the latter had engineered its own destruction, by its affirmative vote to the Enabling Act, which in itself made them accessories to all that followed. But there is no doubt that the concordat broke the back of any latent Catholic resistance to the Hitler regime before it could develop.

It was in these initial years of power that one of the key-notes of Nazism began to be asserted, namely anti-semitism. Its propagation is indicative above all else of the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda, and how the Nazis were able to exploit certain aspects of the German cultural tradition. It is that tradition which must be examined before the reaction to Nazi anti-semitism can be assessed and interpreted. The Jew-hate of the 1930s in Germany was the zenith of anti-semitism - viewing the semite as a virus in the body of the state to be totally exterminated.

There was certainly nothing new in anti-semitism in Europe. It had existed in Great Britain and France, and in the U.S.A. too. However, it was social, political, and religious opposition, not racialist. Anti-semitism

in Germany was undoubtedly linked with Darwinism. Several scholars applied Darwin's concepts to the human setting, claiming that human destiny and political life were biologically conditioned to a certain degree and that certain human races were stronger than others. Men such as Wilhelm Schallmeyer, Alfred Ploetz, Otto Amman, Alexander Tille, and John Berry Haycroft were the predecessors of fanatics such as Hitler and Himmler, asserting as they did that weak blood leads to a weak nation. In the pre-1933 years the movement was basically an Austrian one. It was after this date that it became noticably a German movement, and although imperialism was the dominant theme in German politics pre-1914, it slowly became associated with the idea of a greater Germany. The two movements were ramified by the publication of "L'Ayean, son role social," by a Frenchman, Georgis Vacher de Lapeugea, (1899), in which the idea of Lebensraum was first enunciated, and of Ludwig Waltmann's "Politische Anthropologie," (1903), and further supported by the writings of Oswald Spengler, August Winnig, and Ernst Junger. It needed a Hitler, ruthless and perverted, to give all these views the devilish twist that turned them from at least genuinely conceived academic ideas to a fiendish plot to eradicate the Jews from Europe. In fact it has been proved that the early National Socialist movement had no racialist views until Hitler took over the party.

The Nazi assault took place in a climate of opinion that was conditioned for such an outrage. In Germany there had always been very powerful Christian hostility to the Jewish religion and people. It is accurate to say that without Christian anti-Judaism in the centuries before, Nazi anti-semitism would not have been possible. Even in the 1930s themselves

there took place certain anti-semitic outrages that were neither inspired by Nazi personnel nor resulted from indoctrination. On 30th September, 1937 every Jew in the Bavarian township of Deggendorf was massacred because a Jew had supposedly stolen a wafer. This was proven to be no more than the instantaneous reaction of a small and very strong Roman Catholic community with a record of hate for the Jewish minority in the town. The fact that the Church authorities took no action over this is indication enough of its highly ambivalent attitude.

The purely theological position of the Church did not help the Jews either. It stood firm on the question of the Old Testament, but this intellectual stand proved to be of no consequence for contemporary problems. In 1934 Faulhaber's personal secretary recorded, "in his Advent sermons of the previous year he defends the Old Testament of the Children of Israel but had not taken a position with regard to the Jewish problem of to-day."(1) This emphasis came out in many other sources. In an article in "Klerusblatt," the organ of the Bavarian priests association, Father J. Schern wrote, "the greatest miracle of the Bible is that the true religion could hold its own and maintain itself against the voice of the semite blood."(2) Throughout the whole hierarchy of the Church there is evidence of anti-semitic writings: Karl Adam wrote, "the myth of the German, his culture and history, are decisively shaped by blood."(3)

(1) Amtsblatt, Munich, 15th November, 1934, Supplement.

(2) J. Schern, "Der Alttestamentliche Bibelunterricht Planungen und Wegweisungen," in "Klerusblatt," xx, 1939, p 225.

(3) K. Adam, "Theologische Quartalschrift," cxiv, 1933, p 60-62.

This is most marked when the difference in reaction to the Jewish question between the German episcopate and those of Belgium, Holland and France are compared. The latter group publicly denounced every aspect of anti-semitism and openly called upon the laity to repel it. All one can conclude is that the German Church never took a firm enough stand, as they did for example over the euthanasia controversy. The direct effect this had upon public opinion was considerable, and the results were never more patent than when the Nuremburg Laws were promulgated in 1935.

The Nuremburg Laws aimed at enhancing Nazi Aryan concepts and cutting the Jews out of all forms of public service. Besides debarring non-Aryans from state offices, they forbade racially mixed marriages. The Church's complicity in this was sought by the Nazis, since the former was the only institution which could supply information to the state on the racial stock of people as they were the only body to have birth registers dating from 1874, which would enable the religious affiliations of parents and grandparents to be traced, (religion being the main criterion used for determining racial ancestry). Despite the pressures put upon the Church it did its best to protect 'Catholic' non-Aryans in many ways, by refusing to give statistics on the number of Jews converted to Christianity for example, and by refusing to allow diocesan files on mixed marriages to be scrutinised. But there was never a formal denunciation of the policy. There were some elements within the Church that actually welcomed the Laws, although they were clearly against Catholic conceptions of natural law, and in any case those within the hierarchy who were strongly anti were not prepared to voice their views

openly. This again left the laity in a leaderless position, one which naturally led to full acceptance of them, since there was no viable alternative.

The degree to which united pressure could undermine Nazi authority is seen especially in the case of Nazi eugenic principles. The Church reacted openly against the Sterilisation Law of 1st January, 1934, a law aimed at those with hereditary diseases and the mentally sick. In January, 1934 the faithful of the Catholic Church in Germany were told not to abide by the law. However, the Church did reconcile itself to the fact that many Catholics were helping to enforce the sterilisation law and as a result no hard and fast rules were laid down for priests to follow when hearing confessions. But the Euthenasia Law of 1st September, 1939 met with a solid wall of opposition. When the German people and Church got to know what was happening they reacted with mutual horror. The German bishops knew they had the public behind them, (especially when it was made known wounded soldiers might be done away with), and on 3rd August, 1941 Hitler had no alternative but to stop the Euthenasia programme.

It would seem that all of Hitler's policies would destroy Catholicism. However much we now know this to be true the leaders of the Church were perhaps blinded by their belief in the virtues of certain aspects of Nazi policy, not least of all the anti-Bolshevik crusade which Hitler claimed he was leading. Hitler reiterated enough times this theme, though his real motives were left for his confidents - "I have got to keep the Versailles powers in line by holding aloft the bogy of Bolshevism ..... make them believe that a Nazi Germany is the last bulwark against the Red flood.

That's the only way to come through the danger period, to get rid of Versailles and re-arm. I can talk peace and mean war."(1) The German episcopacy as a whole was anti-Bolshevik. Bishop Landersdorfer on his inauguration as Bishop of Passau on 21st October, 1936 praised Hitler's anti-Bolshevik crusade,(2) and in a pastoral letter of 3rd January, 1937 Cardinal Faulhaber called for co-operation with the Fuhrer in overcoming the Bolshevik menace. The episcopate was pretty vocal in general in supporting Nazi foreign policy. In a joint pastoral letter at Fulda on 19th August, 1936 they extensively praised Hitler's foreign policy, (though still reiterating their amazement at the Nazi persecution of the Church). One can but deduce from this that the episcopate saw no reason why it should not be happy with a National Socialist regime, provided it was shorn of certain anti-Catholic side-effects. It is some of the more important side-effects which must now be examined, since these went parallel with much that was very acceptable to the German Catholics, and although the former eventually forced the Papacy into open opposition with the Papal encyclical, "Mit Brennender Sorge" in 1937, the latter was to be victorious.

One of the greatest strengths of Catholicism was the Catholic press. This came under very heavy fire from the Nazis. In early 1934 there were 435 Catholic-orientated dailies. By July, 1941 there were only 21, and these were mainly professional journals. By 1943 this was down to 7. The methods

(1) A private conversation pre-1933, recorded in "I knew Hitler," Kurt Ludecke, London, 1938, p 422.

(2) Passauer Bistumsblatt, no. 19, 1st November, 1936, p 2.

Hitler used were simple; the Schriftleitzerergesetz of 4th October, 1933 - the law concerning editors - got rid of all vocal anti-Nazi echelons, and Goebbels' Reichspressekammer (National Chamber of the Press) in the Ministry of Propaganda issued a stultifying ordinance of 24th April, 1935, which stated that no Roman Catholic paper was to print articles in the future of a religious nature. Goebbels also forbade the publication of pastoral letters in Roman Catholic newspapers. The bishops did make a stand - rather than submit to controls they decided to cease publication - this came on 12th January, 1937 at the Fulda conference.

The Nazis were also quick to gain control of Catholic newspapers for propaganda purposes. A good example of this was the "Martinus Blatt", the official weekly of the diocese of Mainz. It had half a million readers, and there is little doubt that many of them were confirmed in their support of the Hitler regime by receiving guidance from a paper published under official Church auspices of the Propaganda Ministry. The "Passauer Bistumsblatt" is another excellent example. Perhaps the chief reason why such propaganda was so successful and why few of the laity were prepared to query the anti-Catholic actions of the Nazis was that in the early years of the regime many of the leading Catholic dailies gave strong support to the regime. When newspapers such as the Augsburger Postzeitung, the Badischer Beobachter, the Germania, (Berlin) and the Katholischer Pressverein fur Bayern openly supported Nazism the Church was merely burning its boats should it ever wish to reverse its policy.

This ambivalence of the Catholic hierarchy, and its results mentioned above, was never more obvious than when the Nazis dissolved the Roman Catholic

educational institutions, and Associations, in 1936, and the spring of 1937 respectively. Only then did it finally become clear to many Church leaders that the essence of Nazi totalitarianism was to eliminate from public life entirely the influence of the Churches, save for when certain sections of them could be used for political purposes - the Catholic Youth Associations are an excellent example of this - organisations which the Nazis were able to put to good use; when they were no longer of use they were dissolved, in February, 1938. The Bavarian bishops issued a pastoral letter denouncing this, but to no avail. That the Roman Catholic community found itself in this position stemmed from a grave mistake made in the initial period of Nazi rule - many Catholics, especially Church leaders, wanted to be Nazis, yet still wanted to keep their independent associations. What they had a hard time learning was that the Nazis would not admit them to their ranks except on terms that ruled out the perpetuation of denominational characteristics and organisational loyalties and that demanded the acceptance of the Nazis' monopoly of indoctrination. Before the Nazis gained complete control the bishops time and time again indicated that they would permit organised Catholicism to become a closely related part of the Nazi movement if only the regime would halt its anti-Catholic agitation. In principle they had no objection to the monopoly of the Nazi movement in state and society - a contradiction in itself, for they were saying that they wanted Catholics to be part of the Nazi state and movement, while at the same time they wished to maintain the Church's organisations in order to perpetuate religious values and to counteract the Nazis' teaching of "positive" Christianity. In this contradiction, or compromise as the Roman Catholic Church then saw it, lay total weakness. There was a small minority of bishops who saw through Nazism

from very early on and advocated more forthright measures, but, as will be seen later, this point of view never gained ground. Relatively early on no opposition was shown to blatant attacks on the personnel of Catholic authority. At the time of the purge of 30th June, 1934 several eminent Catholics were removed, such as Dr. Erich Klausener, head of Catholic Action in Berlin, Adelbert Probst, a Catholic Youth leader, Dr. Fritz Gerlich, a former editor of "Der Gerade Weg," and Dr. Fritz Beck, a well-known leader of Catholic students. There was a general feeling of revulsion against this action from the laity, but there was no protest from any of the German bishops. Their silence was bitterly condemned from Switzerland by Waldemar Gurian.(1) What he argued so cogently was that silence would be interpreted to mean only one thing by the laity - agreement. Even if there were sound reasons for silence he said one could not expect the broad mass of the population to think these out for themselves. Gurian was also later highly critical of the episcopate's attitude to the Nazi concentration camps and the confusion the Roman Catholic laity were in since the bishops were keeping quiet.(2) There was never any formal opposition from the bishops on this point. The Provost of Berlin, Bernhard Lichtenberg, is the only known German Churchman to have protested.(3)

In a totaliterian society with rigid controls opinion (whatever the value

(1) Waldemar Gurian, "St. Ambrosius und die deutsche Bischofe," Lucerne, 1934.

(2) Waldemar Gurian, "Deutsche Briefe," no. 46, August 16th, 1935, p 5, and his "Hitler and the Christians", p 162.

(3) Alfons Erb, "Bernhard Lichtenberg: Domprobst von St. Hedwig zu Berlin", Berlin, 1949, p 41.

of unpublicised personal opinions, loyalties, and sympathies) will only be effective when it has real authority, and it was to authorities such as the Roman Catholic Church that the people of Germany looked for guidance in the early years of Hitler's rule, since they themselves were powerless. In such a political context the leadership of a few can be of monumental significance. But to assume that there existed in Germany liberal groups who could firstly be capable of providing such leadership and who secondly might be willing to give this is to idealise the situation, just as to interpret these early years of Nazism in terms of present-day English liberal-socialist political philosophy is pointless. Germany had a tradition of authoritarianism. Nazism, although an extreme, fitted that mould. Those sectors which one might consider to-day should have given leadership, depended on that authoritarianism - they were oligarchic machines, with a distrust if anything for the people, rather than having a desire to lead them. Public opinion was certainly corrupted, in the interests of individual groups, and also supposedly in the furtherance of nationalist interests. But at the same time one must ultimately ask how far the mass of German people had the government they deserved, and may in any case have wanted?

Causation in history is a problematical phenomenon. One of the greatest problems is to decide how much weight will be attached to the individual, or to groups, or to so-called forces in any historical context, particularly one with a very wide brief. But one must take a society as a whole, and not separate the individual from a society and treat him in a vacuum. Even the extreme is a product of his society - the rebel or the far-seeing genius - perhaps only the solitary island recluse can justly claim to be free of

social influences. The historian's brief does not extend to the "non-social" animal of Aristotelian fame or the "noble savage" of Rousseau. The problems of German society during the years of Nazi rule must be treated between these terms - through individuals, (especially important ones) and their actions, as well as large groups of Germans - the particular and the general. Some will be representative of social forces within Germany, and others, a minority, will be both this and the creators of change in that society, both products and agents of change. The latter is of special importance for this period, since the degree of regimentation and social control in the Nazi state was great, tending to define more clearly than in democratic societies the historical continuum in the broad vista of society, yet rendering the individual (that is one who is not merely representative of a large segment of society, but who has 'historical significance' besides his general role in society) extremely important. The 'individual', whatever his effects upon the course of German history and/or significance in terms of 'opinion', stands out against a very well-defined backcloth of Nazi rule. But this is not to diminish the significance of the broad mass of Germans. One cannot know and use historically the standpoint of every German, but the totality of all average Germans, or large, fairly well-defined groups of Germans is very important - the multitude is highly significant. Public opinion can only be treated within the terms of these canons of historical method.

During the early years of the regime many Germans were plainly taking a "wait and see" attitude. Not only were Hitler's policies having considerable success, but many of the western states, especially Great Britain, seemed to

be accepting him, and in fact encouraging his plans. Many of those who were sceptical in Germany and abroad still thought that Hitler might change his spots. If Hitler had been removed at the end of 1935 it is difficult to tell how this would have been received. But one thing is for sure - the majority would not have welcomed it. His basic plans, especially territorial acquisition, and the foreign alignments that went with this, were very acceptable. His mission, as laid down, in "Mein Kampf", was very much traditional German policy. The acquisition of territory in Europe, particularly in the East, and the resolving of the conflict with France, especially over the position of Alsace - Lorraine, were also very much in the German blood. To the average German it looked as if Great Britain was beginning to understand her more - that Germany was not interested in colonies overseas, but territory in Europe, and moreover, the re-acquisition of lost territory. The German people sanctioned the latter, just as the British people were concerned in building up and defending an Empire. The individual, or group, which was in opposition was certainly in the minority. The communists formed cells against Hitler, but met with no response from the populace, and like other parties, were in any case hamstrung by the Enabling Act. At the opposite pole there was the Hitler Youth, who put their faith for Germany's future in Nazism. At one extreme of the social spectrum there were the Junker and industrialist classes, (whom Hitler dare not break up) - content with Nazi authoritarianism, and at the other, the working classes and the peasantry, to whom Hitler made many wild promises, most of which were never fulfilled, and despite the fact that the average

wage of the German worker was slowly falling under the Nazis, (as much through full employment as anything else), and that the state had full control of the labour force, (no trade unions, and in June, 1935, the state employment offices were given exclusive control of employment - they were to determine who was to be employed for what and where), there was no real sign of discontent. The services were happy, especially the Navy and Luftwaffe, which were more imbued with Nazism than the Army. Both had been given very large sums of money and were allowed separate identities. In 1934-1935 alone Admiral Raeder was given RM830m to spend on his Navy, a half of which was used for new ships and new arms. On the intellectual front Nazification was intense, and successful. The universities were Nazified; most academics tacitly accepted Hitler - only 2,800 were dismissed during the first five years of the regime. One thing is certain - a majority of university teachers had been very much anti the Weimar regime. Certainly in 1932-1933 the majority of students appeared to be in favour of Hitler. During the period 1933-1939 roughly one quarter of students did not join the National Socialists Students' League, although to refrain might have made it impossible for them to remain at the university, besides endangering their future careers. Here lay the seed for considerable opposition later on.

Internationally Germany had made a tremendous come-back and every German was very conscious of this. Despite the recalcitrance of certain professional diplomats the Polish non-aggression Pact of January 26th, 1934 went down very well throughout Germany. Although its long-term implications could not be perceived, its immediate advantage was applauded - of seperating

Russia and France more geographically, and of preventing Poland's alliance with those powers. Most of the professionals approved entirely in principle, although it was felt by some in the Wilhelmstrasse, by nationalist diplomats such as Baron Nadolny, that it would merely drive the Soviet Union to stronger re-alignment with France. There was definitely some truth in this, as was shown by the Franco-Russian mutual assistance treaty and the Czech treaty of March, 1935, but Hitler was not worried - and nor were the German people, especially as on 16th March, 1935 Hitler officially denounced to the world the Treaty of Versailles, satisfying every German, and later in the year, in May, Ribbentrop signed the London Naval Agreement - restricting Germany's Navy to one third that of Britain's, (which amounted to sufficient warships to inflict considerable damage on Great Britain in the event of war - as in fact Nazi Germany did in the first three years of war), which was not so much a limitation on German rearmament as an encouragement to expand it in naval arm, as rapidly as Germany could find the means to do so. This pleased all concerned - the British were only too happy to make this goodwill gesture towards the Reich, "The Times" not least of all being very complimentary to the British government on its diplomatic success, even though it was a flagrant violation of Versailles, and that Great Britain never informed the League of Nations she was making the agreement, and that it was done behind the backs of her allies of the Stresa front. Mussolini for one took note of Britain's perfidy - he regarded Britain's cynical attitude of disregarding the Versailles treaty as a green light for flouting the Covenant of the League of Nations. In October, 1935 his forces invaded Abyssinia.

In every state in the world where Hitler was represented the Nazis were

pursuing propagandist policies and subversion, especially in central and western Europe, not least of all in Austria, where infiltration, corruption, and treachery culminated in President Dolfuss' murder in 1934. Some were shocked, as they were by the Nuremburg Laws of 1935, but these were only isolated incidents in what appeared to be a generally very rosy picture for most people in the Third Reich. Every government makes mistakes, and most were prepared to allow the Nazis this luxury, unknowing as they were that these shortcomings were very much in the Nazi scheme of things.

Certainly the Germans' conviction that their country's policies stemmed from a position of moral right seemed to lure many within the Reich into thinking that Hitler's policy-execution followed a normal diplomatic path by "just means", rather than the brutal "realpolitik" we now know was underneath all his actions. For example, no one could associate Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference on 14th October, 1933 with anything seditious, and needless to say everyone supported his move in the plebiscite which followed on 12th November, 1933. Archbishop Grober called upon his people to support Hitler's decisions,(1) and he and the other bishops reflected public opinion, though on this score their opinions made little difference - the German people had resolved to support Hitler. Similarly in March, 1935, with the denunciation of the Versailles settlement.

Probably the one event in this early period which shows the variety of opinion, and clashes of interests, and how they evolved, was the Saar plebiscite of 1935. This piece of territory had been under a League of Nations' Commission

(1) Amtsblatt, Freiburg, Br., no. 18, 9th November, 1933, p. 133.

since 1920 and a plebiscite was due fifteen years later. Three courses were open - either the maintenance of the status quo, or return to France, or return to Germany. It was felt internationally that the German nationals of the Saar had a natural right to return to the Reich if they so wished.

From 1933 to 1935 the Nazis began a campaign of minor terror in the Saar. The great German bishops of the Saar, bishop Bornewasser of Trier, and bishop Sebastian of Speyer, under whose spiritual jurisdiction the Saar was, publicly said the Saar must return to the Reich, (although they were genuinely worried about the future of the Roman Catholic Church, for they knew what was going on inside Germany). At the same time though the bishops appeared to be toeing the Nazi line, insofar as they issued, on 12th November, an order forbidding the clergy of the dioceses to speak in public at political meetings held in the Saar.(1) Perhaps in one sense this was a reasonable standpoint, for the clergy not to get involved in politics, but this was equivocal, especially as Hitler was worried lest the clergy should influence a wrong verdict in the plebiscite, and there was evidence enough to substantiate this. Despite the activities of the Nazi propaganda organ in the Saar, the "Deutsche Front", many of the clergy stood out for the status quo in a new paper, "Deutscher Volksbund fur Christlich-soziale Gemeinschaft", which had seventy priests among its founders in 1934. Another influential newspaper, also an advocate of the status quo, was the "Generalanzeiger", which openly criticised the Nazis, and the Saar bishops. In one of its issues it called the two bishops "agents of Goebbels".(2) These later two papers and the

(1) Ecclesiastica, xv, 1935, p. 215.

(2) Generalanzeiger, 4th December, 1934.

"Deutsche Front" fought a running battle with each other before the plebiscite was held.

However, as the bishops were quick to point out to the clergy, they were going against the political inclinations of the laity, most of whom would vote in favour of returning to the Reich. Bornewasser made this clear in a letter to the Deans of the Saar on 5th December, 1934.(1) This had the desired effect, for the twelve Deans of the Saar published a letter in the Saarbrucker Landes-zeitung denouncing the "Volksbund" and encouraging all to support Hitler and return to the Saar.(2) The "Neue Saar Post" was quick to counter-attack - "The only way to serve Germany is to block the return of the Saar to the un-German National Socialist dictatorship!"(3) Nothing could have been more definitive than this. In the midst of all this the Vatican remained neutral, although the Plebiscite Commission of the League complained in public of the pro-German activities of the two bishops, but these were no exception to the prevailing attitude in the Saar.

As a result of the plebiscite 90% declared in favour of union with Germany. The vote for Germany did not fall below 83% in any single voting district.(4) Undoubtedly the populace were ardently keen to rejoin the Reich; whether they were keen on Nazism itself is another matter. Strong individual patriotism was the guiding motive, whether the Nazis were in power

(1) Diocesan recorders, Trier; photostat in Institute for Contemporary History, Munich.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Neue Saar Post, 4th January, 1935.

(4) Sarah Wambaugh: The Saar Plebiscite, Cambridge, Mass., 1940, pp. 469-472.

or not. This most certainly entered into the reasoning of the episcopate which supported it, plus the fact that they may have thought that a patriotic stand would strengthen the Church in the eyes of the Nazis and would pave the way for a settlement of all outstanding difficulties.

But what now of some of the individual men who were influential during these early years, and were held in esteem by German society. The aim though is not to treat these men in isolation, or to pass judgments upon them, least of all moral ones. The important thing is that they be valued within the framework of institutions, events, and policies, and see them as part of the process of history of this period. That some of them were instrumental in the furtherance of Nazism is very true, and for this they cannot be made the scapegoats for a society of which they were very much an integral part.

The top stratum of the military administration was very much concerned with its own personal position, as well as its professional one. These interests were often to clash when interacting with Nazi policy. The opinions and careers of Generals Beck and von Blomberg show this most markedly.

General Beck, along with Fritsch, had disliked Nazism from the beginning. He was later to become the leader of an anti-Nazi group in the Corps, and eventually to sacrifice his life in the unsuccessful putsch of 20th July, 1942. Despite this basic disdain for the essence of Nazism he had nonetheless openly supported the main elements of Nazi foreign policy, especially after the denunciation of Versailles. At the opening of the Kriegsakademie on 18th October, 1935, he said: "the hour of death of our magnificent army on

July 28th, 1919 ..... led to the new life of the young Reichswehr." Throughout his speech there was a strong element of identification with the revived non-Nazi elements that would make Germany strong again. Beck has been seen by some as a martyr. This is not wholly true. He knew full well in his own mind that his own personal aspirations were impossible without the present framework. His own biographer makes no bones that Beck welcomed the seizure of power by Hitler in 1933 as an augury of restoration of German power. It was not until after the crisis of 1938, to be dealt with later, that he really began to see the writing on the wall. One thing must never be forgotten - that was the personal struggle for power in the Wehrmacht, and Hitler always held a trump card in these stakes. Beck, and the other ranking generals, realised this. But it is true too that men such as he and Fritsch, were loyal to a "general cause", even if void of personal devotion to the Nazi creed and its Fuhrer. Friedrich Hossbach describes in detail the motives and struggles involved in his book.(1)

General von Blomberg, the Reich's Minister of Defence, was another of the Senior ranking generals who was taken in completely by the Nazis. The best indication of this are his own memoirs. Despite his dismissal later on, his awakening came so late that it can hardly be counted to his credit. Although later he did not concur with Hitler's military plans for the East, (revealed on 5th November, 1937), he himself had issued, on the 24th January preceding, major plans for the German armed forces - directives "red" and "green", and "special case Otto" for Austria. However,

(1) F. Hossbach: Zwischen Wehrmacht und Hitler; see pp. 9 & 107 in particular.

like many staff officers, he feared that an escapade in the east would drive the Russians into opposition: he was all for a Russian alliance, and very averse to the Italian alliance.

On succeeding Hammerstein (who was dismissed when Hitler became Chancellor) he became the outstanding military protagonist of collaboration with Hitler. Although not a direct Nazi nominee, there is ample evidence that his selection was not unwelcome to the Nazis, and, in view of his predecessors open anti-Nazism it is highly probable that Hitler welcomed Blomberg's appointment to guard against a Reichswehr coup d'etat. Blomberg was definitely backed by the Prussian Chief-of-Staff, von Reichenau, who was violently pro-Nazi, even suggesting at one point to his colleagues that the SA should become auxiliary troops of the Reichswehr. There is no doubt that von Blomberg was prepared to play the role allotted to him, and it was only much later, when Hitler's plans seemed to be against all his professional military instincts that he felt he could no longer serve.

But von Blomberg was no weaker in his appraisal of the regime than anyone else, especially when strong personal interests were at stake. Gustav Krupp, the industriel magnate, for instance, fell in wholeheartedly with the march of dictatorship - he became chairman of the Association of German industry. Krupp took a gamble on Hitler, and it paid off handsomely; what is more important is that millions of others were dependent upon him for their livelihoods. His armament factories were highly geared to a massive war policy. As the Nuremberg evidence revealed Krupp weapons used by the Nazis from 1939 onwards were in fact being designed and produced before Hitler's advent, during the Weimar era. Krupp submarines for

example were being built pre-1933 in Finland. Hitler's rise to power meant business as usual, but on a much greater scale.

However, there were those who gambled on Hitler and lost. One such man was von Papen. Despite his condemnatory speech against the Nazi regime at Marburg on 17th June, 1934, he did not refuse the post of German Minister to Vienna, shortly after Dolfuss' murder. He had plans and they boomeranged on him. In the so-called "cabinet of national concentration" eight bourgeois-national ministers faced only three Nazi ministers, one of them Hitler himself. Papen had on his mind that this voting relationship within the cabinet when he arranged for Hitler's nomination as Chancellor. His plan was to make use of the political energies and power of the Nazis, yet keep in his own hands the decision about the course to be taken. He soon realised how he had miscalculated. He was to be removed from his ambassadorial position in Vienna in the shake-up of 4th February, 1938. Another member of the old school, who was to come under the same axe, and who thought he could have a hand in controlling Germany's destiny, was the Foreign Minister, Constantin von Neurath, whose career will be examined later.

Ribbentrop, who replaced von Neurath as Foreign Minister, and who before February 1938 was ambassador to the Court of St. James, was an interesting phenomenon. He was an upstart in more ways than one. He did not even join the party until 1933. As late as 1935 his name was conspicuously absent from the party's quasi-official "Who's Who", the "Deutscher Fuhrerlexicon". There is no doubt that he was never a Nazi ideologist, yet he became the evil genius of Nazi foreign policy. Von

Neurath had opposed his rise in all directions, but not because of his policy views, which were merely a reflection of Hitler's. When Bulow died von Neurath refused to sanction Ribbentrop as his successor in the State Secretaryship. He was given the London Embassy as a consolation prize. From very early on he was a loyal devotee of Hitler, and he was viewed with contempt for this by the permanent officials of the Wilhelmstrasse, pursuing as he did policy outside of the official channels, (mainly because it meant more personal control, and also because he felt the normal channels were not reliable, particularly for this type of policy). Ribbentrop, like the other parvenus who rocketed to stardom, ambitious as they were, realised that their own personal success was contingent upon the espousal of Hitler's views.

With Hitler's money Ribbentrop set up his own small Foreign Office and attempted, whenever possible, to do without the libraries and files of the "Hamburger Institut fur Auswertige Politik", and sidetracked the assistance of two extremely reliable institutions, the "Deutsche Hochschule fur Politik" in Berlin, and Munich's "Geopolitisches Institut". However, he was sufficiently shrewd enough to realise he could not do without the Foreign Office and made several concessions to the career bureaucracy, but not major policy ones. He also feared party appointments might create rivals to him.(1) On becoming Foreign Minister he let von Neurath's six division chiefs and five of their deputies continue in their posts.

He was determined to cut a career at all costs, and Hitler was quick to realise he could be very useful. It was Ribbentrop who negotiated the

(1) Kordt: Nicht aus den Akten, p. 199.

London Naval Agreement of 1935, and in 1936 it was he who represented the Reich at the League Council meetings after Germany's invasion of the Rhineland. In other words, despite his London position Ribbentrop spent more time on non Anglo-German business. The Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936 was handled by him in Berlin, and without the participation of the Foreign Office. His career and motives do exemplify those of thousands of others who followed similar paths, but on a diminutive scale.

There were many who were in several ways the antithesis of Ribbentrop, yet who nonetheless followed the Nazi line. One such man was Ernst von Weizsacker, State Secretary in the Foreign Office. He was no Nazi in spirit - only joining the party and SS in 1938. He came from a minor Protestant Swabian family: his grandfathers had been academics and his father had been a leading politician. On leaving the German Navy in 1920 he joined the Foreign Office, and served successively in Basel, Copenhagen, on the Disarmament Conference, (where he learnt of the weakness of the League), in Norway, and as ambassador to Switzerland. In 1936 he was recalled. In February, 1938 he became State Secretary. (In the spring of 1943 he was appointed ambassador to the Vatican: he was tried by the Americans and imprisoned, and began writing his "Memoirs".)

Von Weizsacker was a patriot in the old imperial sense. He also claimed strong Christian beliefs, (he was later to state that he protected the German Church, and the Italian Church and Vatican during the German occupation of Italy). He was respected in the embassies of Europe, and for this reason was an excellent "front man" for the Nazis. His hand in real policy-making was very slender: he was allowed a free hand only when

Hitler and Ribbentrop were not interested. In spite of what his "Memoirs" say the evidence amassed against him was substantial. His complicity is self-evident. He said he accepted power for the "effective good" he could do, and always worked for peace. He said he went to the Vatican in 1943 to pursue this; there is some truth in this, as Ribbentrop did try to make peace moves through it. That he hated war is true - he lost two sons in World War Two, and a brother in World War One. But he also hated Versailles, "the stab in the back", and here lies the link with Nazism. Moreover he was concerned for the preservation of the autonomy and power, and kudos, of the German Foreign Ministry. He thought it could exist within the Nazi framework - the Nazis would allow it to regain its pre-1914 role. He was to learn very quickly that his role was to merely carry out policy. Sometimes he would rephrase directives to embassies to shroud Hitler's aggressive intentions. For example he worked like fury in September, 1938 to serve Hitler's ends by peaceful means. He produced an economic programme in the first week, and the actual Munich agreement in the last. His guiding motive was that Germany should get its expansionist end without coming into conflict with the mighty British Empire. His ends were essentially synonymous with Hitler's, the means differed. Von Weizsacker always followed a policy of "evolution" towards Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, but when Hitler took over things became brutal. He severely criticised many facets of Nazism in his "Memoirs", but his record in action was poor. He hated the Kulturkampf, but did little to help those who suffered under the Nazi regime. He did little to help those in Norway from his Oslo days. He played both the dove and the hawk, and this will emerge more fully later in the diplomatic evidence.

After the War von Weizsacker insisted, like so many, that his "voluntary" acceptance of party membership was indispensable, not only for the survival of the older bureaucrats, but also for the retention of power against the more "radical" elements which Ribbentrop brought with him into the Foreign Office.(1) If this was the case then it was unrealistic, insofar as effective power was shifted from the bureaucrats to a small, powerful clique. One ultimate question remains - how far was von Weizsacker's criticism of the regime merely a professional one - attacking the means of Nazi policy, and how far was it a question of principle, an aversion for the content of Nazism? Strong personal interests were always paramount, and although there was always a good deal of "disdain" in von Weizsacker's approach, he never followed the only honourable course of action for someone who finds he cannot compromise or comply, that is to resign.

Ernst von Weizsacker was no exception - he was one of many - men whose objectives blurred their vision to the realities of the methods employed, that distorted principle, and changed professional acumen into criminal complicity. Above all else they failed to see that the ends were wrong in themselves. He was no worse, or better, than say Woermann, charge d'affeire in London, until he became chief of the Wilhelmstrasse's secretariat on Ribbentrop's accession. Woermann said at his trial too that he could never have become a convinced Nazi, and merely accepted SS rank as a tactful gesture. It was not that these men were "good" or "bad" - this is neither important nor relevant - super-historical standards usually

(1)
Ernst von Weizsacker: Memoirs, p. 153.

and in dogmatism, but that they were sadly out of joint, almost schizophrenic, caught in a dichotomy of their own creation - and one which they were not prepared to recognise - this is where the real valuation of these men lies - in relation to themselves and their society, not to some absolute standard, which was eventually set for many of them at Nuremberg. There were divisions, between the Himmlers and Goebbels on one side, and on the other - a few stars out of a large galaxy - von der Schulenberg, Eric Kordt, Dieckhoff, von Dirksen, Eisenlohr, von Hassell, or General Halder, or General von Witzleben, or Fritz Thyssen - familiar dramatis personae - all caught in the whirlpool of reality in the Nazi era. These, and many millions more, preferred not to know what was happening. But so did the British and the French, the Poles too along with the Russians and the Italians - all went their individual ways.

Hitler was indeed a European phenomenon - the manifestation of a deep-rooted malaise. Original Sin was not the freehold of the German people. That the Germany of 1935 was the product of a complex of factors there is no doubt, but, whatever position Hitler is assigned in this, he still stands out, the dominating figure of the new Nazi generation. Hitler was surely a creature of his time, a product of an historical process; he was also a very unique phenomenon - a political genius, but totally barren in his philosophy, and a diseased man. By 1935 he was certainly no pawn in the hands of pressure groups - he was fully in control. But he still needed the support of his people - later they would have to conquer Czechoslovakia and Poland and march into France and Russia. Three and a half million of them were to die in the Reich's armed forces. Hitler's rise was certainly no unfortunate accident either - he needed

support, and not of "vast impersonal forces", but the flesh and blood of very real Germans. The relationship of German society to Hitler and his State has now been delineated, and the opinions of certain sections of society examined. It must not now be forgotten that by the end of 1935 the idea of the "end" of the Nazi state and Hitler, and least of all of Germany's defeat, was never envisaged. Hitler had come to stay. Moreover he was being successful.

One key point has emerged so far - that most were prepared to accept Hitler, not perhaps wholeheartedly, but sufficiently to succumb to his controls, for they agreed with the broad trends of his policies. One of the chief sources of discontent and opposition later will be seen to be not so much opposition to the intrinsic nihilism of Nazism, but to Hitler's supposed incompetence, bungling, and above all his rashness and over-opportunism in pursuing certain main policies, especially foreign and military policies.

As far as most Germans were concerned Hitler's system was a very relative one - they were not pre-occupied with political ethics, general morality, or the "good life", although many of Germany's sub-societies possessed very strong value-systems, as has been seen already. The latter compromised, just as much as Great Britain did at Munich, as the Russians did in the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the Poles in the seizure of part of the deserted Czechoslovakia.

In one sense Hitler had fitted the political mould - the Great Chain of German Being - "realpolitik", "militarism", "authoritarianism", "nationalism", "the supreme power of the state" and "the acceptance and

obsession with physical force"; in another sense he had not - because the German people only half knew what they really wanted. The "little" man could step into the job vacated by the Jew, and the intellectual felt Hitler's plea for "justice" for Germany to be a fair one. The majority found that they were able to rationalise their own little worlds, whatever its dimensions, and whatever misgivings they might have had about Hitler they found he had driven out pessimism and had created a new order. The old bastions of the establishment were being torn down, and this pleased many - unaware of the subtle exploitation of the German social system that Hitler was working, just as many were blind in believing that Hitler would become more "responsible" once he gained experience. But this was not solely a German failing - public opinion in Great Britain, even amongst the Chiefs-of-Staff, showed no disapproval for instance of German re-armament - this could be easily rationalised, since many in Britain, and in its leadership sympathised with Germany and Hitler by late 1935. Moreover his army could become an effective check to Russia. This was the pattern of thinking, and it came from objective, honest men, whose motives were wholly sound.

However, in Germany by the end of 1935 the people were faced with certain stark realities - it was not a question any more of not knowing the right devil - he was very much in their midst. At the same time the majority were not in a position to make a choice, for Hitler was now firmly seated in total power. Every German was now waiting for Hitler's next move - indeed the ball was always in his court.

CHAPTER TWO

Watershed - 1936

The year 1936 was the year in which the tide began to turn in European affairs. For Hitler it was a year of challenge and of seeing what reactions would be evoked by his foreign policy. By the end of the year Germany was a force to be reckoned with, and had become the centre of the European, and indeed world balance. Major action by her might precipitate a complete re-alignment of world alliances, or perhaps a strengthening of old ones. By the autumn Hitler was to become aware that Britain was directing all her efforts towards the appeasement of Germany. As we now know Britain had no contingency plans for resistance to Germany, either through the cementing of alliances, or through actual military preparations. Parallel to this Hitler was quickly learning the art of treachery and deceit at the international level - his re-occupation of the Rhineland was accompanied by promises of non-aggression pacts and Germany's return to the League of Nations, at the same time as he was rejecting the system of mutual guarantees for western Europe set up at Locarno. Simultaneously Hitler was planning further aggression. The British government and Foreign Office were planning how best to appease Hitler. The British Cabinet and Foreign Office never intended to oppose Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland, as is shown by the documents recently released and now available in the Public Record Office. The Foreign Office was all for a "co-operative"spirit. Ramsay MacDonald was rather bitterly attacked by the senior Foreign Office officials for his rather mild arguments against appeasement, as was Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador in Berlin, who described Nazism as "cancerous". By the

end of the year the Foreign Office was to have learned its mistake. It soon became alarmed by Hitler's behaviour - and was regularly criticising the Cabinet for refusing to take a tougher line with him.

British policy had considerable effect upon the German people - it was seen to be approving of Hitler and his policies. Many in Germany even expected an Anglo-German alliance during 1936. Throughout the early thirties Great Britain had shown considerable friendship towards Germany, especially from the time of the Lausanne Conference in 1932, when reparations were practically ended, and the Disarmament Conference of 11th December of that year, when Germany in principle was granted equal rights on the question of armaments.

The German people were very conscious that their star was rising - the majority approved. The Olympic games were held in Berlin in August of that year. They seemed to symbolise the dominent position of Germany. It was a wonderful chance to impress the world with Nazi achievements - the Propaganda Ministry worked at full pressure. The Nazis laid on lavish entertainments. Despite these W.L. Shirer noted "a degrading transformation of German life", which he said "seemed overlooked by most Germans or accepted by them with startling passivity." Shirer was violently attacked in the German press and on the radio, and threatened with expulsion for having written a dispatch saying that some of the anti-semitic signs were being removed for the duration of the Olympic Games.

However, Hitler was gambling. He had to be successful. Otherwise his own position in the eyes of the German people could easily have been jeopardised. The Wilhelmstrasse was very pleased with Hitler's success,

yet it had not been prepared to advise Hitler to take steps it considered to be too risky. But Hitler was fully aware that the dice were loaded very much in his favour. W.L. Shirer gives a vivid account of these times.(1) In the plebiscite which followed the re-occupation, (held on 29th March, 1936) he recalled some irregularities and the fear on the part of some Germans that a "no" vote would be discovered by the Gestapo, but that the general mood was one of ardent support - "the junking of Versailles and the appearance of German soldiers marching again into what was, after all, German territory, were things that almost all Germans naturally approved."

What other major decisions did Hitler take in 1936? He strengthened Italian relations with the Rome-Berlin Axis; he entered the Spanish civil war, and in November concluded the anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, in full consonance with the ideological affinity between a militarist Japan and Nazi Germany. He was quickly learning of the weakness of others and his own strength. He sent what was equivalent to £43 in aid to the fascist leader in Spain, General Franco. Through German businessmen in Spain the latter had appealed to Hitler. At the same time Hitler was pursuing a successful policy of delaying tactics in London over a policy of non-intervention in the hope that there would be a decisive victory in Spain.

The re-occupation of the Rhineland brought signs of approval from the Catholic hierarchy. Cardinal Schulte of Cologne sent a telegram to General von Blomberg welcoming the Wehrmacht. Similarly Bishop Galen of Munster

(1) W.L. Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, New York, 1962. Pp. 391 - 399.

cabled von Fritsch,[1] and Bishop Sebastian of Speyer greeted the Army in an interview with the "Frankfurter Zeitung".[2] The bishops in general approved wholeheartedly of the move and many instructed their flock to show their open support in the ensuing plebiscite. What most were afraid of was that their support for certain specific actions such as this would be interpreted as a general sign of support for Nazism, and therefore of Nazi policy towards the Church. This was the dilemma. Whether the laity were influenced greatly by the Church or not is difficult to estimate. According to the Nazis, 99% of those entitled to vote went to the polls, and of these 98.8% approved of Hitler's move. From all over Germany the Gestapo reported that the Church authorities had been most co-operative and that the Catholic population had shown full patriotic zeal. The Church hierarchy was indeed pursuing a very conservative policy. Those who were beginning to show signs of resistance were no more representative of the Church than say Goerdeler was to be of the German bureaucracy or General Beck was to become of the military. The Roman Catholic Church made no formal signs of opposition to the thousands, and indeed millions as it was to become, who were being ground down by the Nazi regime - the attitude of the Church was that it was no more hostile to Nazism than any other political form. Certainly Roman Catholic teaching has changed since the Middle Ages and Reformation on the question of resistance to tyranny. Suarez, Mariana, and Acquinas in his day, taught the justice of killing a tyrant. But with the changed

(1) Amtsblatt Munster, no. 7, 12th March, 1936, p. 44.

(2) Klerusblatt, xvii, 1936, p. 194.

political position of the Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Roman Catholic Church became neutral towards political institutions. The Church hoped to steer a flexible course adaptable to the ebb and flow of the tide of circumstances. But one can argue that the Nazis were, by 1936, openly violating the Law of Christ and threatening the institutions of the Church and therefore should have been resisted. That they did not has, in part, been explained already, and will be elaborated upon later. Two writers since the war have described the lives of those who did resist in the Roman Catholic Church, and they do show above all else how small that resistance movement was.(1)

One fact often goes unnoticed in discussions of Hitler's coup of March, 1936 - that it was achieved in the face of strong military advice not to invade the Rhineland, for fear of joint French and British reprisals, (and as we now know a token sign of resistance to Hitler could have had considerable consequences - Hitler may well have withdrawn, and his internal position have been irreparably weakened). His success surely pleased the Chiefs-of-Staff - Hitler had shown tremendous nerve and power of decision - this impressed them and gave them confidence. This decisive victory over Versailles stabilised Hitler's position in the eyes of the Wehrmacht, as indeed in the whole of the Reich. Moreover, Hitler was able to put forward what appeared to all reasonable men everywhere fair arguments - that Germany had never "voluntarily" accepted the demilitarisation of the Rhineland at Versailles, and that its incorporation in the Locarno Pact was

(1) Franz Kloidt: Verräter oder Märtyrer, Dusseldorf, 1962, and Walter Adolf: Im Schatten des Galgens, Berlin, 1953.

typical of the international attitude towards Germany, shown above all else by the occupation of the Ruhr. He also said that President Wilson's fourteen points, on the basis of which Germany had conducted the Armistice, did not contemplate any limitation of German sovereignty in the Rhineland. It was this sort of lead which so encouraged all elements within the Wehrmacht, most of whom were only too pleased to take the chance to test their strength in the relatively uncommitted atmosphere of the Spanish Civil War.

It was in this highly charged atmosphere of success that any opposition to the trends of the times had to operate. The chances of an opposition movement having any success were indeed very slender. Shirer, on writing of the German "resistance" movement, has asserted that, "it remained from the beginning to the end a small and feeble thing, led, to be sure, by a handful of courageous and decent men, but lacking followers."(1) This dictum certainly holds good for 1936. At the centre of power and influence in German society there were few signs of opposition, either overt or covert. There were minor Foreign Office intrigues throughout this period, led predominantly by Eric and Theo Kordt, but there is no evidence that any of the permanent officials ever tried to sabotage Hitler's major policies, despite the claims of Weizsacker. Even if these had been true there is little doubt that they would have been unsuccessful, since Hitler's regime was too strong. But let it be said too that the opportunities presented for any form of opposition were few and far between. Hitler made sure all important tasks were performed by trusted Nazi advisers, yet was sufficiently shrewd to realise that people such as Weizsacker could perform a useful task.

(1) W.L. Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 455.

The recalcitrant soon found themselves out in the cold. Even after 1939 the handful of Foreign Office officials who worked with the German underground was very meagre.

The career of one man exemplifies perhaps the position of many respected members of German society, namely Cardinal Faulhaber. He was situated at the centre of Nazism - in Munich, the capital of Germany's most heavily populated Roman Catholic state, Bavaria. He had, from very early on, opposed racialism and the persecution of the Jews, and had rigorously defended the "Old Testament" in the face of Nazi efforts to "de-Judaize" the Christian religion, and had become the leader of opposition to Nazi euthanasia practices. From 1933 onwards he had tried to spread the message of peace and disarmament, (though later he never offered any actual anti-war leadership). Faulhaber recognised the Nazi regime as legitimate authority, and this is clearly evidenced, and since he was revered and respected as the spiritual leader of Bavarian Roman Catholics, this guaranteed Hitler the loyalty of Bavarian Roman Catholics to his state. Faulhaber did remain firm though on certain Nazi issues - where feasibly possible he worked against the Nazis. For example, he refused to sanction the appointment of a Nazi to the Chair of Church Law at Munich University. On the other hand Faulhaber had always been staunchly anti-communist, and he may well have seen Nazism in terms of the lesser of evils. Paradoxically he was very much pro the German war effort, probably because of the latter point, despite his genuine desire for international peace, and eventually came to see the "justice" of World War Two in terms of the "injustice" of World War One. It was this degree of equivocation which naturally weakened the effect of any of his other protests. Similarly it weakened the position of all of his fellow Churchmen. Bishop

Neuhausler for example had the ground cut from underneath him through lack of solidarity in the ranks of the Church. This eminent author of "Kreuz and Hakenkreuz", which criticised certain aspects of Nazi policy, especially those affecting the Church, found that the publishers and readers of his work were severely punished by the Nazis; this included priests who read it from the pulpits. But this was merely one protest, and there were very few. It would be an exaggeration to regard it as a formal condemnation of the Nazi regime by which German Catholics were released from their obligations of obedience to it as "legitimate authority". In fact the contrary is more likely. The Archbishop of Freiburg-in-Breisgau, Conrad Grober, was dubbed the "brown bishop" because of his sympathy for the Nazi regime. He claimed in 1945 that way back in 1933 he had thought Hitler the ideal man to pull Germany together.(1) In 1935 Grober committed himself, and he felt the Church should commit itself too, to a fixed official position in the event of war - that the Church should decide whether a war was at all "justified", on the basis of the relative "justice" or "injustice" of the position.(2) He was therefore authorising the Church to decide, presumably for the whole of the laity, whether or not any war action by the state was to be supported or not. With his pro-Nazi leanings any decisions by Grober would presumably be a foregone conclusion. For others this may not have been so. The key question is how effective or strong was the right to make that decision, and how far could such

(1) Amtsblatt Fur die Erzdiozese Freiburg, no. 8, 17th August, 1945, p. 42.
(2) Kirche, Vaterland, und Vaterlandsliebe, Freiburg, 1935, p. 108.

a decision be implemented. On the former point there is no doubt that in the reality of the Nazi state it had no substance, though in effect it was to work in the interests of Hitler, since the Church was to come firmly down in favour of a "just" war when the shadow of September, 1939 crept over Europe.

There were those who were already offering opposition in the German Church. Pastor Niemoller for example of the Confessional Church was to be arrested in the following year, 1937, in part for daring to criticise the Reichsbishop, Muller. There is the story of Niemoller asking, from behind the bars of a concentration camp, whether he could resume voluntarily his World War One Submarine duties. Needless to say he was refused.(1) On the other hand thousands were leaving the fold of the Church. It is impossible to gauge the vast interplay of motives, but one must naturally deduce that many must have felt that their loyalty to Nazism came first, and that this was challenged by the pressures of membership of the Roman Catholic Church. Needless to say there must have been many cases where undue persuasion had been brought to bear. Although as a percentage of the total Roman Catholic population the number is a relatively small one, they are nonetheless highly significant figures insofar as they show the extent to which the ties and conventions of German society were eroded, for Roman Catholicism was deeply ingrained in the German character. Any reduction was important. The figures are as follows:-

1933	31,987
1934	26,376

(1) Dietmar Schmidt, "Pastor Niemoller," translated by Lawrence Smith, New York, Doubleday and Co. 1959, pp. 120-121.

1935	34,347
1936	45,687
1937	108,654
1938	88,715
1939	88,335(1)

To oppose the Third Reich was to risk disappearing into a concentration camp. Thousands had already escaped this - scholars, poets, politicians, and Jews - by fleeing to other parts of Europe and the New World. By 1936 the emigre from Germany was already a familiar sight in Europe. The SS was swift to break up any opposition to the regime. By 1936 the terror of the concentration camps was well known. One of the first victims of the camps was the poet, Erich Muhsam, who was murdered at Oranienburg, near Berlin, in 1934.

1936 was the turning point because the initiative in Europe had passed increasingly to the dictators, though the other European powers were still hoping to come to agreement with the fascist powers. The authority of the League of Nations was gone. By exploiting the duel between Italy and the League, and by material assistance to Mussolini, he had converted Italy to his political aims. Similarly the Spanish Civil War had proved a great testing ground of alliances, institutions and military strength. Hitler was now ready to begin his real challenge to the European system, a challenge he had issued many years before:-

"In the first place our people must be delivered from the hopeless

(1) From "Report of the Zentralstelle fur kirchliche Statistik," Cologne, issued on 8th August, 1944. Diocesan archives, Passau.

confusion of international convictions and educated consciously and systematically to fanatical Nationalism ... Second, insofar as we educate the people to fight against the delirium of democracy and bring it again to the recognition of the necessity of authority and leadership, we tear it away from the nonsense of parliamentarianism. Third, insofar as we deliver the people from the atmosphere of pitiable belief in possibilities which lie outside the bounds of one's own strength - such as the belief in reconciliation, understanding, world power, the League of Nations, and international solidarity - we destroy these ideas. There is only one right in the world and that right is one's own strength."(1)

)1) Excerpt from one of Hitler's speeches, 1928.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PACE QUICKENS, 1937-1938.

Point One of the Nazi programme, announced on 24th February, 1920 stated: "We demand the union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples, to form a Great Germany". This was accompanied by an official party commentary which stated: "All men and women of German blood, whether they are living to-day under Danish, Polish, Italian, or French rule, must be united in a German Reich. We shall not renounce a single German in the Sudetenland, in Alsace-Lorraine, in Poland, in the League of Nations' colony of Austria, or in the successor states of the old Austrian Empire." It was towards the furtherance of these aims that Hitler dedicated himself in the three years before war broke out. On 6th November, 1937 Mussolini signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, declaring too that he was no longer concerned for the maintenance of an independent Austria. The road was now clear to Vienna; on 13th March, 1938 the Anschluss was accomplished. On 28th September, 1938, at Munich, President Benes of Czechoslovakia was sold down the river by the western allies. The whole of Czechoslovakia was soon to fall into Hitler's possession. The Munich agreement was to be followed by a great pogrom against the Jews, the "Reichskristallnacht". Without the desire for peace among the western powers, still very much afraid of another world war, Hitler may well have not been able to achieve what he did; above all else the Soviet Union was to draw its own conclusions from the dealings of 1938, and was to pursue its own isolationist policy.

During these crucial years the German propaganda machine worked at

full pressure to convince the German people of the rightness of Hitler's mission. Never before was the press used to such an extent to control opinion. Any newspaper which showed signs of recalcitrance was quickly closed, as the "Berliner Tageblatt" was in 1937, in full accord with the 1933 Reich Press Law, which had already taken a fearful toll of eminent German newspapers, such as the "Vossische Zeitung", closed on 1st April, 1934. Certain newspapers were kept going so as to impress the outside world, very much instruments of Nazi propaganda. Such a newspaper was the "Frankfurter Zeitung," though the Nazi party had its own press, the Eher Verlag, headed by Max Amann. Any form of publication in the Reich was rigorously sifted by the Ministry of Propaganda. The latter worked increasingly in 1938 to eulogise Hitler and his policy. At the time of the May crisis the German press, through the Propaganda Ministry, made the most of the Eger incident, when two Sudeten Germans had been found dead. This was the prelude to German troop concentrations and partial mobilisation. The German press accused the Czechs of being an outpost of the Russian Army.

Despite the intense propaganda the feelings of many Germans were still mixed. The propaganda was only partially convincing - people were still starkly aware that events might take a course for the worst and Germans find themselves plunged into a situation which they could not handle. William Shirer recalls how, on many occasions, the crowds of Berlin had viewed with icy coldness the numerous military parades, especially of the new panzer divisions, held before Munich. Many were undoubtedly horrified at the type of war such forces seemed to augur, just as they were horrified with the pogrom of 9th November, 1938. Shirer recalled how distastefully the latter was received. He also

recorded how, in August and September before Munich, many people in Berlin would have supported the Army if they had overthrown Hitler. However, when Hitler pulled off the Munich agreement the people in general were in raptures over it, for Hitler had gained all, and more important, had avoided war.

The key instrument, ultimately vital for the conclusion of Hitler's policies, was the Army. Without its co-operation Hitler could do nothing. Throughout 1937 Hitler paved the way for his announcements to the Chiefs-of-Staff on 5th November, whose deliberations were recorded in the "Hossbach Memorandum". The latter document was regarded by Hitler as his "last will and testament", in which he enumerated his basic principles and policies, formed after "four and a half years of power and deliberation", not least of all his idea of "space" and how and when it could be acquired, and what variables were present. Besides Hitler there were present von Blomberg, the Minister of War, von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, Admiral Raeder, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Goring, the Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, von Neurath, the Foreign Minister, and Colonel Hossbach. What is apparent is that none of those present were concerned with the intrinsic nature of the policy Hitler had laid down, but were totally shocked by the magnitude of what was involved, insofar as they had so little time in which to prepare. Hitler's plans were beyond the wildest dreams of the Chiefs-of-Staff. After this meeting military objectives and planning were radically changed; furthermore opportunities, or excuses, now had to be sought to seize Austria and Czechoslovakia. It was indeed ironical that shortly after this meeting Lord Halifax arrived in Germany, on 19th November, to discuss territorial

readjustments based on "justice", hoping that the "alterations should come by peaceful evolution". This was the final green light Hitler needed.

Those who had offered signs of opposition to Hitler at the meeting of 5th November, 1937 - Blomberg, Fritsch, and Neurath, were to be removed in the purge of 4th February, 1938. This was to have far-reaching consequences for the Wehrmacht. It showed that the general staff was not prepared to fight to save the positions of its two seniors. Its failure to act on their behalf cannot be solely attributed to ineptitude. It must surely indicate that the community of interest between Hitler and the Wehrmacht was so strong that even a blow such as this failed to shatter it. What Blomberg's and Fritsch's removal meant was the disintegration of the power of the officers' corps, leaving it leaderless and divided. By the end of 1938 Generals Beck and Adam were to be removed similarly. Hitler assumed supreme command of the Wehrmacht; the Reichskriegsministerium was changed to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, and there followed in the wake of this, promotions, transfers, and retirements for almost everyone. The purge of 4th February merely covered up a brutal struggle for military power in the Wehrmacht. By identifying its interests with Hitler's policies the Wehrmacht had lost all controlling power. The Wehrmacht was very much a social institution, based on Prussianism, with its own particular brand of education and indoctrination. February, 1938 certainly witnessed the ideological defeat of that institution by Nazism - above all by SS neo-paganism. Himmler had battled against Fritsch for the allegiance of German youth since the compulsory military service edict of 1935, and had now won the day.

Following this it was not surprising that Hitler received no opposition to the military implications of the Anschluss. Several generals claimed later that it was over so quickly that they never had time to stop and think, but there is little doubt that the sentiment in favour of it was overwhelming throughout the Wehrmacht. But it must be added too that all British official policy and negotiations inclined towards the Anschluss. After the removal of Eden Chamberlain had a free hand to negotiate. On 3rd March, 1938 Chamberlain approached Hitler via Henderson for a settlement.(1) This, and other evidence, was the final piece of encouragement Hitler needed.(2) After the deed was done, (on 13th March) Halifax's speech in the House of Lords reiterated the tone of British diplomacy by saying that since 1918 successive British governments had not expected the "status quo" of Austria to remain stable. All that Chamberlain objected to in the Anschluss were the "means", not the "ends".

In the post-Anschluss period Hitler and the leaders of the Wehrmacht began to re-assess the position of Czechoslovakia, and more specifically, earlier military directives, of May, 1935, June, 1936, and June, 1937, all the creation of the now deposed General von Blomberg. In his last directive even the cautious Blomberg had used the words "possible war", "since Germany need not fear an attack from the western Allies as they are too complacent." In defence it can be heavily argued that any general staff has obviously to prepare "defensive plans" and that in fact this often means

(1) Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. 1, no. 138.

(2) Ibid. nos. 148, 149, 150, and 151.

that attack plans have to be evolved. However, whatever the motives of von Blomberg might have been those of his successors remain apparent. On 21st April, 1938 Generals Keitel and Jodl submitted "Case Green" to Hitler, dealing with the state of the Wehrmacht and all possible factors arising in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia. They stated openly that if France and Great Britain were presented with a fait accompli in Czechoslovakia they would be so demoralised that they would be incapable of effective action. This fitted in well with Hitler's own scheme of things - he made his intentions clear to his senior officers. To keep certain quarters happy he intended to bring in Poland and Hungary to share the booty. His methods were clear - he wanted a "timed" incident, using diplomatic manoeuvres so that intervention would appear justified; above all else he did not want mobilisation in a tensed situation. But Hitler was fully aware of, and indeed in command of, the diplomatic situation, and now realised that he might be able to gain all without a general war. His assessment was perfect: Chamberlain was wavering. In a notable document Halifax instructed the British Ambassador in Paris, Phipps, to inform the French government that Great Britain could not really do anything for Czechoslovakia, and Britain could only send two divisions to help France if the need arose.(1) In other words Chamberlain was hoping that France could be persuaded to drop the idea of guaranteeing Czechoslovakia, otherwise Great Britain would be dragged into the conflict, and a general war would ensue.(2) Chamberlain though was not totally unmindful of Czechoslovakia's

(1) Documents on British Foreign Policy, Third Series, Vol. 1, nos. 106, 107, 108.

(2) Ibid. Vol. 2, no. 104.

position. He felt above all else that Great Britain must guard France and Belgium, according to Locarno, and that other treaties with Portugal, Iraq, and Egypt must be guaranteed. He agreed too that under Clause 16 of the League Covenant Great Britain had an obligation to Czechoslovakia, but that since the League was not strong, this was hardly a viable proposition. Moreover he contended that a guarantee to Czechoslovakia would give her power to decide whether Britain should go to war or not. Britain's interest in Czechoslovakia was not the same as in the Rhineland and Belgium.(1) This was Chamberlain's implacable resolve. The attitude of the German General staff cannot be seen outside of this diplomatic context.

All concerned were virtually in agreement with Hitler's plans. At Nuremberg several of the generals tried to cover up. List and Leeb said that they did not know of the plan until the last minute, and Brauchitsch went so far as to assert that "no plan existed" for the occupation of Czechoslovakia.(2) General Adam had had one minor reservation, recorded in Jodl's diary: after Hitler had issued a Czech directive to him on 30th May he indicated his opposition to the "timing" of military action. The only real opponent of Hitler's Czech policy was General Beck, who feared an Anglo-French coalition. He felt the Wehrmacht was not sufficiently prepared. In letters to Brauchitsch on 5th May and 3rd June, 1938 the voice of dissent was heard. His views were given official force in a memorandum of 16th July, 1938. His appeal to Brauchitsch had certainly fallen on deaf ears, as Brauchitsch was a strong Nazi supporter in league

(1) Ibid. Vol. 1, no. 114.

(2) Trial of the Major War Criminals, Vol. xx, pp. 568-569.

with Hitler. But Beck's opposition was based solely on military grounds. He received no support, and Hitler, who had never trusted him, gradually phased him out. On 18th August, 1938 Beck resigned as Chief of the General Staff. The only senior staff officer now remaining who was even mildly opposed to Hitler's military plans was General Wilhelm Adam, commander of the Wehrmacht in the west; he was attempting to convince Hitler of the weakness of Germany's western defences. He had no hope of succeeding.

Munich spelt the end of the officers corps as an effective political instrument. Those of the old elite remaining were ineffectual, men such as Rundstedt, Beck, and Leeb, who could do nothing to pull the Army's leadership out of the morass into which Hitler, Goring, and Himmler had plunged it. Two men who might have been able to do something, Kluge and Witzleben, were not prepared to take the lead, having been involved already in Halder's abortive plot before Munich. But it is true to say that the Wehrmacht was dazzled by Hitler's ability - his total command of the situation, and his skill in manoeuvring the western powers. In this context it is inaccurate to speak of the weakness and disunity of the Wehrmacht, since it was quite in accord with what was happening. The point remains though that should the Wehrmacht have wished to reverse its position it no longer had the strength to do so.

The German Foreign Ministry was little affected by the purge of February, 1938. In fact there was no real need, since Hitler had it firmly under his control. The removal of von Neurath, and the installation of von Ribbentrop ensured this. The only other major change was the recalling of three leading ambassadors, von Papen from Vienna, von Dirksen from

Tokyo, and von Hassell from Rome. All had failed to tow the party line fully enough. What became apparent was how little the opinions of the permanent officials counted. The Foreign Office hardly participated in the Anschluss, and strangely Ribbentrop played no part either. It was solely the work of Hitler, Goring, von Papen and Seyss-Inquart. To a much lesser extent this was in part true at the time of Munich. One of the great sources of information for the views of officials is other foreign diplomats' records. At the time of Munich for example, Henderson reported to Halifax of the intense feeling and disrespect for Ribbentrop and his policy: "To some of my colleagues their language about him was violent to the point of danger to themselves,"(1) and he reported too that, " ... some of them talked a lot of treason to my colleagues. Weizsaecker was ... blackly pessimistic."(2) Despite such reports as these what is clear is that most were mesmerised by Hitler's superb skill in handling the situation. He had all of his pawns carefully positioned and ready to manoeuvre. In the presence of such audacity and brilliance the professionals, whatever their proclivities, could not act. Similarly the German people as a whole were passive bystanders to a well-played game of diplomatic chess with fateful stakes in the balance. Power was totally in the hands of a few.

Henlein, Hitler's fifth-columnist in Czechoslovakia, toiled to create an exploitable situation, but not one that might have international repercussions. This is what Hitler played upon - of convincing the German people and the other powers that he was a man of peace seeking

(1) D.B.F.P. Series Three, vol. 2, Henderson to Halifax, 12th September, 1938, p. 297.

(2) Ibid., Appendix 1, 13th September, 1938, p. 654.

legitimate ends. On his visit to Britain Henlein created a tremendous impression. Ashton Gwatkin was very impressed by him, Henlein having convinced him that his cause was just, and that no one would suffer, least of all the Czechs.(1) At the time of the May crisis Vansittart sent a message to Henlein (on 26th May) to encourage his negotiations.(2) Halifax quickly gained the impression from Henlein via Newton, (British Ambassador in Prague) that the Czechs were in the wrong.(3) It was this prejudicial background that was to lead up to the Runciman mission and the final nemesis at Munich. Hitler knew the British position well. His Charge d'Affaires, Woermann, summed up the British attitude to Czechoslovakia in a series of memoranda.(4) Hitler felt his way very carefully with France and Italy too, that his action in Czechoslovakia must appear to be provoked and that it must be "lightning action after an incident", rather than following diplomatic discussions, convincing all that intervention would be hopeless.(5) Welczeck, the German ambassador in Paris, reported faithfully France's position, especially that if played carefully France's responsibilities to Czechoslovakia could be diminished. Welczeck was skilful in convincing Bonnet of Germany's cause.(6) With Italy Hitler had some explaining to do; the answer was to suggest a deal -

(1) Ibid., p. 669.

(2) D.B.F.P. Series Three, vol. 1, pp. 416 and 418.

(3) Ibid., p. 418.

(4) D.G.F.P., Series D, Vol. I, nos. 104, 106, 107 and 109.

(5) See D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 2, no. 221, and the directive to the Luftwaffe, no. 225.

(6) See Ibid., vol. 1, nos. 120 and 144.

possible German support for Italy in North Africa, in return for Italian military assistance against France and Great Britain if need be after the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Hitler hoped Italy would draw troops from the Maginot line, and also hoped that the Italian Navy would engage the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean.(1) Mussolini was not prepared to go along completely with Hitler, and on this, and other points, the career diplomats and senior officers of the High Command became worried, since military planning was passed the first stage and now into the phase of minute planning, to the extent that Hitler would now have to gear all his diplomatic manoeuvres to fit military scheme. Here lay considerable danger - of the situation escalating beyond Hitler's control. It was at this point that Hitler took a very finely calculated risk, but he was absolutely convinced he was right. There were the moments of doubt, when the Royal Navy mobilised on 27th September, of the harrassing visit from Admiral Raeder and the murmurs from the High Command, and the awareness that public opinion in Germany was definitely against war. There was the half-fear that he might have to climb down. The final outcome has been related many times - of how Chamberlain rose to Hitler's bait. This was the touch of genius.

After Munich the final liquidation of Czechoslovakia was to be executed with the same meticulous skill. Again there was to be the same careful political handling backed by resolute military directives. On 11th November Goring called for care, as did Consul Druffel in Pressburg on 15th November

(1) See Ibid., no. 132.

to Woermann in Berlin,(1) and a military directive of 17th December called for 'peaceful liquidation'.(2) Hitler had no worries. His calculations and methods had all proved themselves. Germany applauded him, but many had been worried lest the western allies had stood their ground. This period shows how completely shrouded in power Hitler was and how vast was the gap of communication with his people, despite the propaganda and the active participation of thousands; this phenomenon was to realise itself more so in the following year and during war, of how Hitler was completely separate from his people in terms of a community of spirit, yet holding the power of life and death over them, and still able to convince them by every specious means possible of the rightness of his policies. There was this very marked psychological gap between his major policies, Germany's problems, and Hitler the fanatical Nazi, the contagious, malignant evil-doer. Perhaps unconsciously many Germans had made a personal decision on the question of 'means' and 'ends', and their ethical relationship. The fanatical Nazi supporters, the regular attenders at the Nuremberg autumn rallies made no such decision. For millions though Hitler was precariously balanced in a system of the 'lesser of evils'. Among many there was emerging the tragic spectre of fatalism, of a destiny beyond their control, and of subordination to it. This was the high-water mark of German fascism. By October, 1938 Hitler had already made his preparations, not only for the final dismemberment of Slovakia, but also for Poland, Memel and the Corridor. The flank had to be secured

(1) See Ibid. vol. 2, no. 119.

(2) See Ibid. no. 152.

before the road to Warsaw was open. The average German had to accept this fearful lot without question.

On 14th March, 1937 Pope Pius xi issued his encyclical, "Mit Brennender Sorge", an open condemnation of Nazi philosophy and methods. It came too late to effectively redeem the position of the German Roman Catholic Church. Moreover it did not go far enough to carry real force. It never attacked the nature of totaliterianism or the basis of Nazi authority. In other words it never questioned the legitimacy of Nazi rule, nor did it issue any specific directives to the German laity. It could never have been interpreted as a call for defiance, and despite the fact that it came from the head of the Roman Catholic Church the German hierarchy remained singularly unmoved. Events bore this out. At the time of the Anschluss the Nazis demanded that the Church support the state in the plebiscite that was to follow. There was no sign of opposition to this from the priesthood; in the plebiscite of 10th April, 1938, 99.08% are supposed to have concurred. In the pre- and post-Munich period it is true to say that in general the Roman Catholic Church pursued a very patriotic line. The Church was certainly joyous with everyone else that war had been averted and that the Sudeten Germans had been returned to the Reich - there were Te Deums and special prayers throughout Germany. The three German Cardinals congratulated Hitler on his achievement. The words of many of the hierarchy were loaded with extreme nationalism.(1) The occupation of the Memel region of Lithuania on 23rd March, 1939, following hard upon the entry of German troops into

(1) See Cardinal Bertram in Bayerische Katholische Kirchenzeitung.

the remainder of Czechoslovakia on 15th March, 1939 was greeted similarly by the German Church. In February, 1939 a new Roman Catholic newspaper, "Der Neue Wille", produced in Frankfurt-am-Main, praised Hitler and what he had achieved, and also supported a closer relationship between the Reich and the Catholic bishops. Although the Roman Catholic Church had no such policy it did act, nonetheless, as a unifying force during this period of expansion, of drawing together the scattered lands of the Reich.

At the time of the pogroms of 9th November, 1938, (following the assassination of a Nazi Embassy official in Paris by a seventeen year old Jewish boy) none of the Church leaders spoke out at once against them. Only Provost Lichtenberg in Berlin publicly denounced the sadism and iconoclasm of the pogroms in a well-known sermon.(1) From the security of the U.S.A. Dietrich Bonhoeffer denounced them too. In the service of the Confessing Church he was to return to his homeland on the outbreak of war to work for the political opposition to Hitler. Few could have been more forceful than he: "Hitler is the Anti-Christ. We must accordingly proceed with our work and eradicate him, no matter whether he is successful or no." In 1945 Bonhoeffer was to die at the hands of the hangman in a Gestapo prison at Flossenburg for doing that which he knew to be right. This is in marked contrast with several members of the hierarchy. Bishop Berning of Osnabruck took great pride in his official rank of Prussian Staatsrat and Senator of the German Akademie. He was balanced up by the famous leaders of the German Church resistance movement,

(1) Alfons Erb: Bernhard Lichtenberg: Domprobst von St. Hedwig zu Berlin, Berlin, 1949, p. 43.

and the hundreds of priests and laymen who suffered and died in Dachau and the other concentration camps.

The power of the Church in the Nazi state is unmeasurable. That the Nazis realised how effectively it could be used is indicative enough of its hold over the German laity. This was to emerge very starkly as the shadow of war crept over the German people. The Roman Catholic Military Bishop, Franz Josef Rarkowski, overtly pro-Nazi, used indoctrination in the guise of religion to convince any sceptical German soldier. All of his chaplains, carefully screened, towed the same line. Any soldier who had misgivings about the moral implications of Nazi aggression would soon find that his problem was swept away in a torrent of nationalistic outpourings. His letter, of 27th February, 1938, to all chaplains and Roman Catholic soldiers in the Reich army read: "The soldierly calling is distinguished from all other professions and tasks in this: that once the oath of allegiance has been sworn, it demands the heroic dedication to a conscious and inflexible principle. Thus the military training programme to which you have been called at the will of the Supreme Commander represents the highest service to "Volk" and "Vaterland"."

The position of individual Germans tightened under the pressure of direct international action by Hitler. For the majority the point of no return had now been reached. In tracing the actions of selected individuals the forces operating, and the opinions they in part helped to shape will emerge. One major point which must be considered is the degree to which individuals were by now being swept along by the tide of events created by the Nazi Juggernaut. Undoubtedly, personal reactions and opinions were tending to move from expedient to expedient, rather than following from

fixed preconceptions. For many it was very much a policy of drift, tempered by a degree of caution in the face of possible rash action by Hitler which might precipitate an untenable position for the Reich. Only those who were now making a clear-cut stand against Hitler can, in this sense, be regarded as having a fixed viewpoint of the Nazi state.

The position of four leading German ambassadors shows how men who were essentially non-Nazis clung to office in the greater interest of Germany rather than loyalty to the regime; Dieckhoff in Washington, von Dirksen in Tokyo, and then London, von der Schulenberg in Moscow, and von Hassell in Rome. Personal interest was a strong element, but based on a professionalism and integrity of background that was the antithesis of Nazism. This was the seemingly irreconcilable paradox of their position. The ultimate question is how far, in fact, was their position paradoxical?

Dieckhoff in Washington stressed to Berlin, throughout the latter part of 1937 and the whole of 1938, the need for caution, and warned that indifference to American opinion could be fatal, especially as she would follow the British line.(1) On 22nd March, 1938, using a speech made shortly before by the new American ambassador to the United Kingdom, Kennedy, he argued that while the isolationists were vocal still and the government seemed determined to keep its hands free, America would come into a conflict if Great Britain were involved. After the Anschluss he repeated this, on 22nd March, and added that anti-German feeling was

(1) See D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, for December, 1937.

growing in the U.S.A. Dieckhoff knew his business - he detected well in advance all the pitfalls of Nazi diplomacy and wished to forestall them through sound professional advice. His motives were certainly honourable. He was of the old school, yet found he could only keep his position by working for the Nazis in every sense. Similarly with the others. From Moscow von der Schulenberg used all his skills to faithfully relay to the Wilhelmstrasse the Russian picture. On 27th November, 1937 he considered that the U.S.S.R. was dominated by the fear of Germany and that this was the basis for the Soviet pacts with France and Czechoslovakia, and the increased armament expenditure. He said that the years of terror had greatly weakened her and that she was heading, economically and politically, for a depression.(1) On 16th May, 1938 he stated that Litvinov's vague speech on Abyssinia was further evidence of the weak position of the Soviet Union in international affairs resulting from the bloody domestic events, and in a memorandum of 5th July, 1938 he said the speech showed disillusionment over the co-operation of the Soviet Union with the democratic countries and the League of Nations, and marked the end of close collaboration with France and Britain.(2) He too was serving his political masters with all the weapons in his armoury. One though who was not absolutely professionally loyal to Hitler was von Hassell in Rome. He was removed in the shake-up of 4th February, 1938. Ciano was certainly pleased with his removal. The latter considered him

(1) See ibid, for November, 1937.

(2) See ibid, for May and July, 1938.

a "Junker" and anti-fascist and anti-Nazi.(1) He was very much against the creed, but this had not prevented him from doing a very thorough job. On 15th January, 1937 he advocated to Berlin that with reference to the Spanish Civil War position that a dilatory attitude to Great Britain should be shown, possibly a note should be sent suggesting the delay of joint intervention, so that Franco would have enough men and arms, so that should intervention take place it would make no difference to the final outcome.(2) On 8th October, 1937 he informed the Foreign Office that Ciano was well-pleased with Mussolini's visit to Berlin, and on 21st December that the Duce was worried with the Fuhrer negotiating with France and Britain lest the new dynamism of the Axis be jeopardised.(3) He was as skilful, perceptive and faithful in his accuracy of reporting as any, but despite this he still detested Nazism. He was to become "foreign adviser" to the resistance movement. Von Dirksen was very much akin to von Hassell, though was never so overtly anti-Nazi. After Tokyo he was posted to London, stepping into Ribbentrop's shoes. Here again the same competence is seen. The information he forwarded was invaluable to Hitler in his calculations. In July, 1938 he repeatedly informed the Foreign Ministry that the Anschluss had stirred up Great Britain and strengthened the Entente. However, he said Chamberlain was nonetheless ready and able to make a settlement, unless Germany used force in Czechoslovakia, in which case war would be certain.(4)

(1) Ciano's Diary, for 29th February, 1938.

(2) See D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, for January, 1937.

(3) See ibid., for October-December, 1937.

(4) See D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, for July, 1938.

Constantin von Neurath, a strong opponent of the policy contained in the Hoesbach Memorandum, not surprisingly was removed from office in the February shake-up. He was of the Hindenburg generation, and very much a child of it. He had a secret detestation for all things Nazi, but not sufficient for him to leave the Wilhelmstrasse before he was dismissed. But whatever von Neurath's sentiments his dismissal was highly probable in any case. His character and professional competence came under fire on several occasions, even from his fellow career diplomats. Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador in Berlin said he was "wanting in moral courage", Weizsacker noted that he was anything "but dynamic", and Dirksen recorded that he "did not possess any great zeal for work." Nonetheless the documents speak for themselves - of his participation in the collection, and analysing of information, and in recommending policy, and in the final execution of policy decided upon by Hitler. He was very much involved in the pre-Anschluss policy towards Austria, building up to the duplicity that came in March of 1938. On 21st November, 1936 he and Guido Schmidt had signed the German-Austrian protocol in Berlin. In addition to a common policy towards communism and towards the coalition of Danubian states, detailed provision was made for the execution of the agreement of 11th July, 1936, (the German-Austrian gentlemen's agreement).(1) In February, 1937 he visited Austria, putting gentle pressure on its government, warning them in particular against a restoration of the Habsburgs. By the autumn von Neurath was preparing in detail the diplomatic build-up against Austria.

(1) D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, November, 1936.

On 20th September, 1937 in a conference with Mackensen and von Papen he agreed that, while Mussolini was in Berlin, Italian non-interference in Austria had to be secured. On 30th September he communicated to all embassies that Mussolini's visit to Berlin had been successful insofar as Germany's and Italy's mutual had been defined and guaranteed. That he shuddered at the thought of what was contained in the Hossbach Memorandum in no way covers up his considerable complicity in the formulation of policy that preceded, and the entertaining of the awesome plans detailed in November, 1937 by Hitler. His dismissal was in part because of his dislike of things Nazi and potential disloyalty, but also because of his wavering and lack of real calibre and competence to handle what was envisaged. Von Ribbentrop seemed much more suitable. The question does remain of whether von Neurath would have resigned later whatever the odds. His career to February, 1938 speaks of one who followed to the best of his abilities his master's wishes, yet without the taint of being a lip-servant. His own personal self-interest and regard for his country's position guided his opinion towards an uneasy, but workable compromise with Nazism.

Similarly with von Papen: again no Nazi-lover, he placed Germany's interests above his own political affiliations. Yet like von Neurath his own personal interest in holding office and the power it brought prevented him making what at times was the only tangible decision - namely to resign. His policy in Austria was blatantly geared to the furtherance of Hitler's policy. In January, 1937 he decried the Austrian legitimists and clericals as enemies of Germany, and advocated political and economic infiltration into Austria, founded he thought on an institution such as

the Central European Institute in Vienna. He also reminded Berlin that Italy, once she had finished with Spain, might not like German encroachment in Austria.(1) In May of the same year he began to bully Schmidt, who had just returned much encouraged from London and Paris, saying that Austria must radically change her policy towards the western allies, and that Germany would not tolerate British interference in Central Europe.(2) However, in comparison with his political superiors he was moderation personified. Once he realised which way the wind was blowing for Austria he urged a more reasonable approach, showing disapproval of increasing Nazi infiltration, indoctrination, and subversive political activity. On 1st July, 1937 he concluded that the agreement of July, 1936 was essential for the success of German foreign policy in Austria, and that, to ensure continuance of it, Austrian fears of annexation would have to be removed.(3) In the New Year of 1938 he described incidents which justified the charge that Germany was interfering in Austrian domestic affairs,(4) and on 27th January, 1938 he informed von Neurath that plans for a Nazi putsch had been seized in a raid on the Austrian Nazi H.Q. and this had convinced Schuschnigg that the present situation could not be allowed to continue.(5) This was the dichotomy von Papen and others faced, of attempting to direct a policy they inevitably had no control over, and of being used by the Nazi leaders. Von Papen's personal view

(1) ibid., for January, 1937.

(2) ibid., for May, 1937.

(3) D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, for July, 1937.

(4) Ibid., for 1st July, 1938.

(5) Ibid., for January, 1938.

of seeking honourable means to legitimate ends, some of which came very much within the Nazi orbit, were besmirched he considered by unethical acts of political behaviour. His recall released him from an impossible situation, but one which he had taken a long time to rationalise. In the Nazi regime he is in marked contrast with the von Ribbentrops, for whom there were no subtlties of emphasis, or searching of conscious. Ribbentrop and his kind found their position clear-cut; any sense of caution was totally absent - he pursued rigorously a policy to which he was personally dedicated, irrespective of considerations others found of paramount importance. By the end of 1937 Ribbentrop was convinced that any hope of an Anglo-German alliance was futile, and he sent a memorandum to this effect to Hitler. He confirmed this in another memorandum of 2nd January, 1938. He added in this that the Reich should wait until Great Britain had severed her connections with Japan and Italy so that she would have to give in or face the possibility of destruction of the British Empire in Europe and the Far East.(1) Here was the stark reality of the arch-Nazi professional diplomat, totally loyal to his leader and his cause.

There were many others of von Ribbentrop's ilk, less important in status, but of the same dispositions. When Charge d'Affaires in London Woermann showed remarkable alacrity in tracing the changing climate of opinion and significance of British political events with the skill and intensity of one loyal to the Nazi cause. On 5th October, 1937 he reported that the British government had severely reprimanded Herbert Morrison for

(1) Ibid., for January, 1938.

his inflamatory letter against Hitler,(1) and reported in detail, with his own views, Eden's attack in the Commons on Germany and Italy.(2) On 14th January, 1938 Sir Robert Vansittart was appointed Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the British Government. Woermann informed von Neurath that his removal from the Foreign Office resulted from the fact that he was considered too pro-French, though a definite change in British foreign policy was unlikely since Cadogan's views seemed largely to coincide with Eden's. He fathomed out any significant shift in British feeling. On 22nd April, 1938 he reported that Under-Secretary R.A. Butler stressed his own desire, and the desire of the British government for an understanding with Germany, and, referring to Czechoslovakia, had said the manner in which Germany achieved her national aims would be decisive for the attitude of Britain.(3) Later in 1938, after Munich, as Chief of the Wilhelmstrasse's Secretariat, he sent a memorandum to Hitler on the Czechoslovakian question. He said an independant Czechoslovakia could be easily penetrated. He suggested steps should be taken to influence leading persons in Slovakia to help gain control, and that the old Henlein techniques be used, with the usual strong claims of pseudo moral force, especially of self-determination.(4) Here was the mind and inclinations of a professional who had tasted the successes of Nazism and who now committed himself totally to its next project.

One man who has appeared to be more enigmatic than most of the upper

(1) Ibid., for 5th October, 1937.

(2) Ibid., for November, 1937.

(3) D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. 2, 2nd April, 1938.

(4) Ibid., 7th October, 1938, no. 45.

echelons in the Nazi state in the dealings of 1938 was State Secretary von Weizsacker. In some respects there seems to be little consistency in his approach to Germany's international position, yet here perhaps lies the answer. He was surely an empiricist and a pragmatist, who skilfully threaded his way through circumstances as they changed. His great fear was that Hitler's fanatical adherence to certain goals without due consideration to the mechanics of how they could be attained, would precipitate Germany into a war she could not handle. But he was, in many ways, as equally hypnotised by Hitler's successes as the next man. His opinions changed as Germany's fortunes changed. In November, 1937, in a memorandum, he advocated Anglo-German co-operation, for instance on the disclosure of armaments,(1) and on 20th December, 1937, he indicated that he was in favour of an agreement with Great Britain, and failure to do so might drive her to support France and the Little Entente Alliance.(2) However by New Year, 1938, with a change of circumstances, he is stating that the only concession Germany can make to Great Britain was an armament limitation,(3) and in a minute of 20th January, 1938 Weizsacker recalled how von Neurath wished no reply to be made to the British enquiry concerning the abolition of bombing plans.(4) Later Weizsacker delved deeply into the implications of Eden's resignation for Germany.(5) At the time of the Munich agreement he wanted Great Britain to stand firm over Czechoslovakia: he went so far as to send a message to the British Foreign

(1) D.G.F.P. Series D, vol. 1, 10th November, 1937.

(2) Ibid., 20th December, 1937.

(3) Ibid., 17th January, 1938.

(4) Ibid., 20th January, 1938.

(5) Ibid., 21st February, 1938.

Office advising a frank British statement hoping war would be prevented, and that the Nazi regime could not possibly survive such a diplomatic defeat. Together with former Reich's Chancellor Joseph Wirth he had opened up a channel of communications from Switzerland to England. On 5th September, 1938 the message went via the British legation in Switzerland to London, urging the Prime Minister to take a firm stand against Hitler,(1) - "the declaration we suggest cannot be too unequivocal and firm enough for the purpose in question ..... German patriots see no other way out of the dilemma except in close co-operation with the British government in order to prevent the great crime of war." When Henderson in Berlin received the message he never knew that the idea of a stiff note came from von Weizsaecker, and had the serious backing of Sir Horace Wilson and the British Foreign Office. Henderson in fact declined to deliver it, thinking that it would only anger Hitler.

How is his action to be interpreted? It cannot be seen outside of the general context, not least of all his own record. Let it be said firstly that what Weizsacker was doing here, perhaps in a somewhat irregular way, was his job - he knew he should do what he did, but not necessarily because he thought the overall policy of Nazism was inherently bad, but because this particular piece of policy-execution was absurd; moreover, as he saw it, was also very dangerous. This point was to be used by Weizsacker later as a great face-saver. A larger proportion of his actions indicated complicity. In all his dealings with Henderson he

(1) D.B.F.P. Third Series, vol. 2, Sir G. Warner, Berne, to Halifax, 5th September, 1938, no. 242.

had exploited the British Ambassador's desire for peace to suit his master's purposes, and his conduct when Chairman of the International Commission dealing with Czechoslovakia in October, 1938 was notorious, (although he claimed later that von Ribbentrop reprimanded him for being too lenient). Certainly back in July, 1937 his handling of the German-Austrian talks over difficulties in the July agreement was no better, though this was more excusable insofar as it was consistent with his own views on the desirability of an Austrian Anschluss. With many of his colleagues, such as Eisenlohr, he saw the Runciman mission as the golden opportunity to solve all problems - whatever the merits and demerits of it he could not help but approve of the purposes it would serve for the Reich. His later dealings bear this heavy stamp of political self-interest and amorality, whatever the scruple of it. On 10th October, 1938 he indicated that he wanted friendship with Prague, but went on to support various claims against the Czechs. His views towards Poland and Hungary were the same - friendly external relations, and underneath, subversive action.(1) On 17th April, 1939 in a memorandum on German-Soviet relations he said there were no reasons why there should be ideological differences between Russia and Germany, (Ambassador Merekalov had just visited him).(2) Economic talks followed this, between von der Schulenberg and Molotov in Moscow.(3) In accord with Hitler's own intentions, he wrote, in a memorandum of 25th May, 1939, that he was uncertain of the state of Anglo-Soviet talks, but that Germany must try to break them up. He did not want

(1) D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. 2, no. 50.

(2) Ibid., no. 215.

(3) Ibid., 2nd May, 1939, no. 424.

Germany to be played off in Moscow.(1) This was part of the diplomatic prelude to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August, 1939. Weizsaecker, and all those who worked with him, despite his antipathy to his master's ideology, nonetheless worked unhesitatingly to champion the German cause. The ties of common interest and agreement were too strong to digress.

Many of the non-Nazis who held important posts felt that they must cling to office to prevent being superseded by a Nazi, and also because the feeling of not being indispensible was strong - another careerist was always there to step into a vacant seat. How far too would a resignation materially affect the cause of events? There was no guarantee at all others would do the same. This was the question many asked themselves. At the same time it was more easy to create reasons why one should stay in office - this often meant finding scapegoats. Many claimed later their personal predicaments were fragile in the extreme. At Nuremburg General von Witzleben (who had eventually opposed Hitler) claimed that Chamberlain let the Army down in September, 1938, a line adopted by Eric Kordt in the German Foreign Office, and General Halder, who willingly had succeeded Beck as Chief of the General Staff, a great break that it was with the traditions of the officer corps, he a Bavarian and a Roman Catholic, with no Prussian roots at all. The Army offered no effective opposition before war because, (as von Fritsch said in a letter to von Hassell) it felt, for good or evil, that Hitler was Germany's destiny. Men such as von Fritsch, who had wished to maintain the Army's independence of action, constituted a minority in the extreme.

(1) Ibid., no. 437.

The rift in the German psyche was wide - it was bridged by the common policy of Adolf Hitler. The German Army could therefore exist in a state in which powerful men, such as Himmler, (who hated the Army) existed. Almost every section of society felt its position threatened, even the arch Nazis such as Himmler. Hitler could unite all these discrepant elements through his omnipotence and the loyalty he demanded to his person and his policies. All types of loyal Nazis could exist alongside one another in his state, even if they could not co-exist. Those who were sadistic and cruel in the party marched with those who were not. Most fervent Nazis were extraordinarily ignorant and naive. To the fanatic the S.S. symbolised the pure aryan truth. Nazi laboratories laboured to isolate pure aryan blood, and a minority of fanatics doted on the uninterpreted scripts of the Norsemen of the Dark Ages. The perverted, the irrational, the most extreme of the fanatical most often had a background of psychic disorder, a disquietening social background, of little or no education, and of economic and political experiences engendering prejudice and mental sickness divorced from any objective, human appraisal of the individual and national lot. This was the seed-bed for propaganda. It was the extremists who gained positions of local power, particularly in the police system. It was these too who gloried in the Russian campaign later, with its supposed potential for spreading aryanism, despite the strategic objections of the General Staff. It is a false view that speaks of national fanaticism and cruelty. But most Germans were certainly affected by propaganda. In the most liberal, civilised community people can easily be influenced, not least of all by press campaigns, against institutions, and individuals, not least of all politicians. Self-evident facts and objectivity can easily give way

to distribe. Most Germans had only a vague idea of what they wanted, and it was on this that Hitler played so effectively with his Nazi jargon, clothing his naked and total power in the clothes of legitimate nationalism. Above all he realised he had to create good reasons for everything - this meant lies. The bigger the lie the better Hitler calculated. Repeat a lie enough times and people will begin to believe it is the truth. Hitler did not fool completely, but sufficiently. The tragedy was that too many people closed their ears and eyes to certain stark realities they could not face. But that there was no viable alternative but outward rejection must not be forgotten. The implications of this were fearful for the individual. The individual must be separated from the lunatic fringe - from the Himmlers and Heydrichs of the Nazi state. The former was so incredibly immersed in his fanaticism, and so patently deranged by 1945, that he actually regarded himself as a fit negotiator to meet the allies on defeat, and even expected to be continued in office after defeat.

CHAPTER FOUR

The German People and the Shadow of War - 1939.

Paradoxically 1939 was to be the one year in the period of pre-war Nazism that Hitler was able to control opinion in Germany most successfully. Elsewhere in Europe though Hitler was to witness a growing front against him. When German troops occupied the rest of Bohemia on 15th March, 1939, the western powers realised at last that the expansionist programme announced in "Mein Kampf" must be taken seriously. For Hitler his successful annexation of Czechoslovakia served merely to convince him that might was the answer to all of Germany's problems. As a result he also tended to treat the Anglo-Polish agreement of 31st March, 1939 with ominous contempt. This approach tended to rub off on many Germans, who had seen Hitler so successfully gain all he wanted at Munich without war, and his recent coup seemed to support this. No opposition had been offered and needless to say formal denunications by the western governments were not given publicly in Germany.

For the minority of well-informed and intelligent Germans it was at this point that the Nazi credibility gap began to widen. The possibility of a general war and all the implications became very stark. But still Hitler was able to control the larger sector of the public mind. In his speech of 28th April, 1939 to the Reichstag his oratory was at its best - in replying to President Roosevelt's overtures for a European settlement, (on terms anathema to Hitler's long-term plans) he fooled every reasonable German. Few others in Europe were now fooled by him. But to the most

uninformed German it appeared obvious that, whatever the other European powers might do, Hitler was in fact set on a major confrontation - all efforts were becoming increasingly geared to this. By early 1939 the German economy was totally subservient to military preparations. Food rationing had been with the German people from 1936 onwards. Each individual had to submit his personal wealth to the benefit of the Reich, and industrial production ran at full capacity to quicken the pace of mobilisation. Parallel to this, freedom of speech by 1939 was very much a thing of the past, and all facets of Nazi party organisation had engulfed every part of the German community, and the extreme fascist elements of Hitler's regime, notably Heinrich Himmler's SS, gained terrifying powers.

As late as August, 1939 the majority of the German people thought Hitler would get what he wanted without war, and he was certainly to show his mastery of diplomacy, and what appeared to every patriotic German to be his ability to control the destiny of Europe, on 25th August, 1939, when the Nazi-Soviet Pact shook the world. Moreover his case against the west and Poland, appeared watertight. Hitler uttered lies to the German people on the radio and in the press that he had offered every conceivable peace proposition to Poland, but that this had been rejected. On 10th August, 1939 Goebbels turned his propaganda machine on full blast to inflame German opinion against the Poles, and to fall in with Hitler's well-planned sequence of events. Hitler's views on a casus belli for Poland demanded the well-conceived lie: "I shall give a propagandist cause ..... never mind whether it be plausible or not. The victor is never called upon to vindicate his actions. The question is not one of the justice of our cause, but exclusively of achieving victory." In many ways it was a

somewhat incredulous Germany that found itself at war on 3rd September, 1939, reflecting as it did Hitler's miscalculation - that the western powers would not honour their treaty obligations to Poland. Hitler and most Germans had expected to deal with Poland as he had successfully dealt with Czechoslovakia.

The Polish campaign's success depended on the support of the general staff. Despite what General Halder said at Nuremburg it would appear all agreed with "case white". There is no evidence of any determined efforts by the generals, individually or collectively, to prevent the consummation of white. As far as is known there was no opposition to this at the secret conference on the Polish invasion held on 23rd May, 1939, and later at the military conference of 14th August, 1939, and at the military meeting at the Ober Salzburg on 22nd August the conspiratorial generals on the General Staff still offered no resistance to Hitler. As in the Wilhelmstrasse all were very pleased with what they heard: in both departments of war and diplomacy the only criticism offered was one of timing. The generals considered the conquest of Polish territory to be rightfully theirs; furthermore they welcomed Hitler's pact with Stalin, and this fact, added to the increased strength of the Wehrmacht, convinced the generals that France could now be held on the western front. Unlike the over-running of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March, which had been welcomed by most of the generals for strategic reasons, the recovery of Pomeranian and Silesian lands transferred to Poland under the Versailles Treaty, touched much deeper chords. Some of the Junker officers had been born there. It is to the credit of some of the senior officers of the Wehrmacht that they were very much disgusted with the brutality of the SS in Poland, and

forcibly put down some barbarities. However this was not sufficient to stop the vast number of ruthless shootings that preceded and were to follow the Battle of Warsaw, and their military allegiance was not affected by their leaders views of the Poles - subhuman, whose only function was to serve the master race. The Wehrmacht, and even more so the Luftwaffe were used to destroy great parts of Warsaw when the Polish capital continued to resist.

As the clouds of war gathered the laity of the Roman Catholic Church who had not been completely taken in by Nazism looked to the leaders of German Catholicism for guidance. In analysing the statements of the principal dramatis personae against their backgrounds and the nature of their personalities one sees evolving a pattern of paradoxes that have characterised the position of the average German, the paradox of German society.

Clement von Galen, Bishop of Munster, is a sound witness to this case. He had denounced the Nazi euthanasia programme and Nazi interference in Church properties, and was one of the few German bishops who had reacted forthrightly to the closure of the Roman Catholic Associations. On 5th August, 1934 he had said: "not all, but very many German Catholics are to-day fully prepared to listen to the word of the Church and to obey it even at the cost of sacrifices."(1) In July and August 1941 he was to deliver some scathing sermons against the Nazis. However he was never directly connected with the German resistance movement, and even his sermons were limited to protests against specific Nazi aggression against the

(1) Passau Diocesan Archives.

Catholic Church and its teachings. He never publicly philisophised on the political content of Nazism. Galen's background bears comment: all of his letters, especially 1914-1920 show how very much pro the old order he was. He supported the Great War with gusto, denouncing Versailles and Weimar just as vehemently as Hitler did. It might appear ironical that Galen was the first German bishop to be sworn to the oath of allegiance presented under the terms of the Concordat, but knowing the man, it is not. Certainly too Galen may have seen the necessity of expediency in his public actions; for instance he was violently anti-communist, but there is no record of public protest on Galen's part when the Nazi-Soviet friendship did become an open and active partnership.

His public influence in the sphere of Germany's military involvment became paramount. It is important to realise that he never encouraged the German Roman Catholics to desist fighting: "of course we Christians make no revolution. We will continue to do our duty in obedience to God, out of love for our German 'volk' and 'vaterland'. Our soldiers will fight and die for Germany, but not for those who wound our hearts and bring shame upon the German race before God and before man by their cruel acts against their brothers and sisters of the religious orders. Bravely we continue to fight against the foreign foe; against the enemy in our midst who tortures and strikes us, we cannot fight with weapons. There is but one means available to us in this struggle, strong, obstinate, enduring perseverance."(1) Even in the last stages of the war Galen revered the German, Christian soldier, for behind this was the acceptance that Germany

(1) Max Bierbaum: Nicht Lob, Nicht Furcht. Das Leben des Cardinals von Galen. Verlag Regensburg, 1957. P.330.

was fighting a "just" war. He laboured much in all of his speeches to make what for him was a major distinction between the Nazi cause at home, and the German cause on the war front. This is undoubtedly how he felt and what he thought other German Catholics should feel too. His humanity in recognising the lot of the conscious-stricken German soldier and attempting to rationalise his position was great, but one cannot help but add the obvious, of which Galen must have been aware, that the glorious victories for the German volk and vaterland, to which he so often referred with pride, were actually an extension of Hitler's power, and Nazi programmes and policies to new lands. Moreover one must conclude too that, despite his anti-Nazism in some ways, his considerable public influence (of which he was aware), especially through his sermons, merely contributed to the social controls inducing German Catholic conformity to the German military cause.

When war came in 1939 Cardinal Faulhaber's sermons had the same edge as Galen's - he spoke a lot of Christian duty, heroism, and "Ehrentod" (death with honour). He meticulously avoided discussing the question of the morality of war in general, and of Hitler's wars in particular. The three Roman Catholic publications in Bavaria under his jurisdiction - the Munchener Katholische Kirchenzeitung, the Bayrische Katholische Kirchenzeitung, and the Klerusblatt - all supported the war. Faulhaber often made the observation that legitimate national needs could not be met without resorting to violence and war.

Ironically the "brown bishop", Conrad Graber, was to have the distinction of being the only bishop to give support to a German Catholic opposed to Hitler's wars, in the case of F. Max Joseph Metzger, later executed in 1943

for anti-Nazi propaganda. Graber made a written appeal to the court on his behalf.

As yet no evidence has been revealed of the opposition to the Hitler war effort by the German episcopate. It would also seem reasonable to suppose that their less ardent colleagues who did not distinguish themselves by their opposition to any of Hitler's policies would have shown at least an equal (possibly more) degree of enthusiasm for the national war effort.

The desire and necessity of finding a completely satisfactory compromise was great with the establishment of the Catholic Church. The evidence for this is seen most strikingly in the pastoral letter issued by the eight Bavarian bishops in the first Sunday in Lent in 1941 - the ideas of 'Vaterland' and 'Heimat' figure greatly in them. However, it was at the same time a 'resistance' document insofar as it clearly suggested to the faithful that all was not well in the area of Church-State relations so far as the enumerated rights were concerned. This theme of combined patriotism-with-protest is to be seen too in the pastoral letter issued by the German Catholic hierarchy at its annual Fulda conference in 1942. But let it be said that the Catholic priesthood was terribly aware of its awesome position of influence, that it had found itself in a position of no return with Nazism, yet still had to deal with the basic spiritual needs of the population, irrespective of time, place and contemporary political institutions. This theme was reiterated many times from 1939 until the fall of the Third Reich; in a pastoral of 8th October, 1939, Cardinal Bertram said: " ..... in times that demand of men the fullest dedication and ultimate surrender of self, the Catholic turns to spiritual strength and grace which surmount

more national powers and perfect the heroism of fighting men."(1) On 7th January, 1940 bishop Kumpfmuller of Augsburg issued a similar exhortation to the troops at the front.(2) In a similar vein Bishop Bornewasser of Trier stated that "..... what must be borne in days of trial is, for the Christian, not only a patriotic but also a religious obligation." He called for "sacrifice" and quoted St. Thomas Aquinas and Pope Leo xiii in support of his view.(3)

What is most apparent is that all of the bishops avoided the thorny question of a "just" war. The layman was therefore left in doubt as to the official position, but one can add that the episcopal emphasis on the harsh provision of the Treaty of Versailles and the appeals for a "Grossdeutschland" must have naturally led many loyal German Catholics to infer that the Roman Catholic bishops considered the war just.

In the midst of all this was the ordinary Catholic priest and the layman. In the Nazi state only the official line could be safely followed. Any Catholic who decided to refuse military service would have received no support from its spiritual leaders. The priests too had no option but to follow. Many feared the Gestapo for good reason, and several unwary priests were trapped. The life and work of Max Metzger well illustrate

(1) Munchener Katholischer Kirchenzeitung, vol. 32, no. 41, 8th October, 1939, p. 545.

(2) Ibid., vol. 33, no. 1, 7th January, 1940, p. 3.

(3) Ibid., vol. 33, no. 8, 25th February, 1940.

this.[1] The Nazi state was geared to make everyone support its programme. Its sanctions were hideous. The priest who opposed might find himself on a trumped-up charge of "treason" or "defeatism", or worst still of homosexuality, or a sordid moral offence. Such a trial would not only bring ruin and degradation, and often worse, it would affect family, friends, and relations.

The German opposition to Hitler throughout the nineteen thirties was not restricted to any specific geographical area, or to any particular social class or political group. The underlying motives were complex and varied. The ends of opposition were equally varied, and the means by which they were achieved were widely differing. One sees this very markedly in the south in Bavaria. Throughout there was the implication of the need to separate Bavaria from the contagion in the north, implying that there was no Nazism without Prussianism, ironical in the extreme, but still very much felt to be true by the Bavarians. Conservative Bavaria had always been a stronghold of monarchy; openly, and often violently, anti-Weimar, it had always worked for a more federal system. Many were against Hitler as much for his centralised system as anything else; the dissolution of the provincial diets drove many into overt opposition. Only small sectors of the Bavarian community actually committed themselves to joining opposition groups. The Bavarian legitimists were a potent force. In September, 1939 125 enemies of the Third Reich were arrested, accused of plotting to restore the Wittlesbach family to rule in

(1) See his collected "Gefangenschaftbriefe," Metitingen, Kyrios Verlag, 1948; also Lillian Stevenson, "Max Josef Metzger, Priest and Martyr," London, S.P.C.K., 1952.

Bavaria. Although the evidence was flimsy the loyalties of those concerned were not in doubt. The revolt of the Munich University academics and students was in a way much more fundamental. Those concerned attacked Nazism at its roots - its basic creed. For them a victory for Nazism was worse than a victory for Russian Bolshevism. The group was small, but very articulate and well organised. It had great success through its "White Rose" leaflets, but this was to be at great costs. Several were executed, including Professor Kurt Huber, a Professor of Philosophy at Munich.

Universities were ideal cells for revolt, but even within these Gestapo controls were great. Munich was an exception with its courageous opponents. Generally though opposition came from individuals or a small group, rather than a large group, since Nazism's institutional controls were too intense. The range within German society was great, from Count Albrecht Bernstorff, and Edward von Kleist, a gentleman farmer, to the former trade union leaders Julius Leber, Jacob Kaiser, and Wilhelm Leuscher, and the editor of a fearless Roman Catholic monthly - Freiherr Karl Ludwig von Guttenburg. There was the Kreisau Circle, led by Count Helmuth von Moltke, which helped defeat some of the worst aspects of Nazism's drive against all those who would not conform. Von Moltke was arrested in January, 1944 for having warned a member of the German Diplomatic Service, Consul General Kiep, that the Gestapo were looking for him.

There were those who abnegated their responsibilities to Nazism, but they were very much the exception. Dr. Schacht resigned from the Ministry of Economics in November, 1937, and the Prussian Minister of Finance,

Johannes Popitz, worked in secret against the Nazi interest. Carl Goerdeler, the Price Controller, broke with the Nazis in 1936, and journeyed to France, Great Britain, and the U.S.A. to warn those countries of the perils of Nazism. He was later to be captured on his return to Germany and executed. He said before his death: "I ask the world to accept our martyrdom as a penance for the German people." There are other examples too - the two Gestapo officials Arthur Nebe and Bernd Gisevius, who turned against their Nazi masters. Gisevius was to say at Nuremburg that in September, 1938 Chamberlain let down the opposition to Hitler, especially the Army, by his policy of appeasement. In contrast there were members of the opposition whose record against Nazism stretched back long before Hitler's advent to power - there was Ernst Niekisch, the former Social Democrat, and a young and determined lawyer, Fabian von Schlabrendorff, who as a student in the 1920s had risked death at the hands of roughnecks by speaking against the Nazis at mass meetings and challenging them to duels. After the attempt on Hitler's life in 1944 he was arrested and tortured, but managed to survive to record his deeds.

Certain characteristics emerge from the opposition movement. Its lack of unity is self evident, and as such could only have marginal and parochial effects. Certainly too it was a very small minority of the total population which participated. But above all its scope was limited by the deeply entrenched nature of the Nazi state. In fact opposition to Nazism was used as a convenient form of propaganda by Goebbels for further captivating the people. Opposition was in most cases a personal protest, one of conviction and conscience, rather than being aimed at political revolution. From the evidence available most were regarded as

courageous nonconformists rather than anything else. The conformity and regimentation of Nazi society were its keynotes; to deviate from this was regarded as abnormal and highly dangerous by the average German citizen. The influence the movement had in toto was therefore very restricted. There was never any public identification with any of the principal martyrs. What is important historically is how far the course of German history was affected by Nazism's internal enemies. At home the effect was negligible; abroad though the flood of German emigrants, especially of writers and intellectuals, such as Thomas Mann, was to have a profound effect in convincing foreigners of the nature and intentions of Nazism. The German opposition movement suffered from the same intrinsic problem as German society had in general since unification - of not knowing exactly what it wanted, because society had no coherence, or traditions in its political institutions. In this sense Nazism was certainly an expediency. Hitler's opponents wished to be rid of him and all that he stood for, but what exactly would replace him they were not too sure. From what point could they start? After the Second World War the creation and survival of the new West German Republic depended largely on the support of the Allied powers, especially of the USA and Great Britain, the latter being in a strong position to see objectively as a result of her own long political experiences what exactly the German problem was, and how it might be resolved. At the same time the experiences of the Nazi state and of the aftermath of total war were to engender a new political spirit in the new state whose constitution was the antithesis of authoritarianism. But this had to spring from a fundamental desire for radical political change. In this sense many of those who had opposed Hitler maintained a propensity within German society

for such change when the opportunity arose. Those who had been latent opponents and/or had accepted tacitly the regime were quick to respond to new leadership and the new phoenix that arose from the ashes of a dismembered Third Reich, one that was to have lasted for a thousand years.

Chapter five

The German People and Nazi Social Controls

One of the greatest controls that the Nazis were able to exert over all of German society was in the economic sphere, and the penetration of the economy was to have enormous effects upon the public mind and its opinions vis-a-vis Nazism. Economic factors had played a considerable part in the development of German fascism. The Depression itself, even if not a solely sufficient cause of fascism, was certainly necessary for its advent, and the rifts which existed within the various socio-economic levels of German society were skilfully exploited by Hitler. In this sense the class background of pre-1933 Germany must be understood fully to appreciate developments during the Nazi regime. In the sociological sphere the researches of the American Professor Geiger have been invaluable in discerning the various divides within Weimar society, with its three basic tiers of a capitalist class, a middle class, and large labour class. It is the historian's task to evaluate these in terms of their relationship with Nazism.

There was certainly as great a gulf in German society between the middle and upper classes as there was between these and the labouring classes. The lower middle classes were to become violently anti-capitalist, as the large-scale business concerns were tending to force them out of business. For this reason fascism seemed the only answer for small, middle class businessmen - protection from mammoth capitalism, the trade unions, and the effects of the Depression. They felt that Weimar Germany was not going to be able to help them, and therefore they had to protect themselves.

Hitler, with his tremendous skill for playing-off groups, exploited this situation, temporarily offering assurances, backed by propaganda, and thereby enabling him to gain the initial support he required. Once total power was gained promises could be thrown to the winds. The Nazis sanctified the small, rural peasant holding, and the business of the urban upper artisan class, and their anti-communist policy, playing on the idea of possible domination of organised labour, pleased the middle classes, as did Hitler's association of economic and political misery with the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler's demagoguey and propaganda paid off. He formulated a simple equation in people's minds, that democracy equals depression which equals decline of the middle classes; therefore vote fascist.

The capitalist class of Germany were, as the researches of several historians have proved, together with direct Nuremburg evidence, very closely linked with Hitler's rise to power. But what is often forgotten is that long before Hitler gained power German industrialists and businessmen had wanted to establish an industrialist dictatorship under Hindenburg's control. Politically the upper classes undoubtedly felt that a strong government was necessary to break the economic restrictions of Versailles and to restore the dominance of Germany. In this sense the industrialists were as influential as the generals, and certainly had the opportunity to curb fascism if they had so desired. Instead the army, landowners and industrialists united in a common cause. An important question nonetheless remains, as to the exact degree to which the industrialists were prepared to become fascist, and the extent to which their opinions and actions interacted with other sections of German

society, especially the workers of industrial Germany. What is imperative to realise is that from early on the Nazis had to accept the capitalists as much as they had to accept the generals as part of the power structure of the state, and one can therefore argue that German large-scale business was assisted by the state in the early thirties rather than vice-versa, just as it is true to say that without von Papen's and von Schleicher's support the Nazis would not have been able to gain power. The fascist-directed intentions of industrial Germany were apparent from 1930 onwards. At the Harzburg conference in September, 1931, when the N.S.D.A.P. united with the German National Front, the D.N.V.P., certain big industrialists were very much present. In 1933 I.G. Farben gave 400,000 marks for N.S.D.A.P. election campaigns. Gustav Krupp, the leader of the Reich Association of German Industry, gave Hitler his support if he would alienate democracy and capitalism, and it was the Keppler circle of businessmen which bridged the wide gap between von Hindenburg and Hitler.

At the base of German society, and its main support, were the German workers. Before Hitler had come to power, their means of political influence, the trade unions, had lost power. The Weimar government had allowed employers to undermine collective bargaining agreements. Hitler's final destruction of them was therefore not such a bitter blow to them as is sometimes thought, particularly as Hitler was able to lure a majority of the German working class with promises of fuller employment and better wages, which in fact came true with the armament boom, though the government was to have total control of labour and wage levels, just as the industrialists accepted higher profits as compensation for Nazi

control. What has been described by some writers as a conspiracy of organised capital and party dictatorship is true. The political will of the Nazified masses was non-existent. The mass of German people were surely fooled. Once Hitler had gained full control of all aspects of German life which he needed to perpetuate his regime without even the faintest glimmer of a challenge from any direction being successful, this meant, ideologically, the end of the original mass movement of the Nazis, and in its place came rule by an oligarchy of Nazis, an elite clique. On the economic front the Nazis failed, as one American economic historian has so eruditely put it, "..... to live up to its slogan and to stabilise wage rates and price levels and enjoy a prosperity based upon increased production of goods."(1) The fixing of minimum price levels encouraged cartelisation and this tended to put price control more in the hands of the industrialists rather than the party itself. Prices rose alarmingly during the armament boom.

The destruction of the trade unions was in part at the instigation of a small group of highly influential and wealthy businessmen, the so-called Keppler circle. There was no protest to this from other sections of German industrial society. With the end of trade unionism the working man in Germany was in an unenviable position, particularly if he was not an active Nazi. Hitler was quick to build up the Labour Front, a huge organisation, designed to control all aspects of the workers' lives, including their free leisure time. It became responsible for investigating

(1) Arthur Schweitzer: Big Business in the Third Reich, p. 269.

the political reliability and the indoctrination of workers, invidious in the extreme. It controlled the job market too - which meant simply that the Labour Front could demand compulsory membership of the party and proof of political reliability as conditions for obtaining a job. In the factories and plants themselves were Nazi stewards and shock troops to keep an eye on things. The individual was trapped whatever his political inclinations. When one's livelihood was at stake, with possibly a wife and family to support, only one decision could be made, for the Labour Front was fully backed by the Gestapo.

One might argue that the presence of the Labour Front in the factories considerably restricted the powers of industrial management. In one way it did, but the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. Within the strict terms of the production of any particular works the authority of management was virtually unlimited, and in fact the Labour Front could be used if so desired to back up the management's authority. It was much preferred to the trade unions. Enormous profits could be made, particularly as a result of low Nazi wage levels and price control. Provided the industrialists kept to their business, success, measured in profits, was guaranteed, since the rearmament boom brought vast orders. However, many needed such orders to survive - it would not pay to alienate Nazi support. Hitler also made sure that he reserved the right to issue directives to private corporations if he so wished. Certainly the two Cartel Laws of 15th July, 1933 gave the Nazis great control over cartels. The German worker was most certainly betrayed, but he too carefully weighed the pros and cons of the position.

In the capturing of German society Hitler was outstandingly successful.

He played on each section's basic motivations and aspirations. He used anti-semitism to woo the lower middle class to his side, yet sacrificed these later, economically, to large-scale business, whose support was absolutely vital. The Nazi take-over of Jewish banks, wholesalers, stores, co-operatives, chain stores and so on pleased the small shopkeeper, and to be a party member in 1933 was an asset - one was given protection, trade, prices could be fixed, and one's Jewish competitors were ruined. But the small capitalist was to pay the penalty too by various Nazi legislative measures to favour large-scale concerns, who in turn had to accept control laws. Through state price supervision the lower middle class members of the guilds were prevented from introducing their own system of regulated prices, and the prices fixed by cartels both for large and small-scale concerns were recognised. Between 1936 and 1938 153,390 small businesses were squeezed out by Nazi action.(1) But the Nazis themselves never fully managed to control prices. The cost of living index was to rise out of all proportion. It was the great industrial concerns of Germany who were to benefit from the rearmament boom. The small middle class producer lost all round.

On the purely ideological front the middle class socialists failed too with the birth of the four-year plan for building up Germany's armoury. From 1936 onwards Hitler became obsessed with rearmament. In a memorandum to Schacht he wrote: "..... the accomplishment of the armament programme with speed and quantity is the problem of German politics, that everything else therefore should be subordinated to this

(1) Ibid, p. 232.

purpose is not imperiled by neglecting all other questions."(1) As a result of this step-up of armament production the small, Nazified business certainly lost out to the great cartels. Schacht's decree of November, 1936 permitted the cartels to have the sole right to regulate prices and markets. This meant doom for many small producers.

The rearmament boom had sweeping consequences for all Germans. The purely economic consequences are not the concern of this study, but the simple and basic fact that the German economy became directed solely for military power rather than economic welfare, with the complete undermining of consumer goods industries and foodstuffs imports, had wide implications for the German public, who were fully committed to it with no hope of redress, or escape. The mass of German workers were to suffer the most in every sphere. The relative scarcity of many food items increased the price of these goods and automatically led to a decline of real money wage rates. Foreign trade became completely subservient to re-armament, and there was no opposition to this from the industrialists. If the latter ever offered any opposition it was against their lower middle class Nazi competitors, who had visions of a guild regulated market, and the destruction of large-scale industry. As has been seen the Nazi leaders soon realised who had to be supported and acted accordingly.

Almost every section of German society from 1933 onwards, and indeed before that date in some cases, supported Hitler for economic reasons, and in most cases, for other reasons too. That many became disillusioned

(1) Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, III, p. 827-828.

is true, but within the framework of a totalitarian state it could find an expression. All individuals made personal decisions, though no individual alone was sufficiently strong to have a major influence on the course of events. There was collective agreement within groups, some conflicting with one another, and the degree of responsibility of each group or section of society must be seen in terms of their position in the power-structure of their state. The individual German worker, although his personal decisions are important, obviously cannot be set alongside the industrialist, though the collective strength of the German working class is important. There were great rifts and differences but the essential fact remains of adherence to Hitler and the future of his movement, in many cases not because of ideological affinities, but because of personal gain, or sheer expediency - this weighed heavily in the reasoning of many individual German workers who were not convinced party members. Hitler's analysis of basic wants was shrewd, and he cut very finely indeed the balancing of group ambitions. The cartel laws bound the industrial class more closely to the Nazis in power and profits. Both were quite happy. Hitler was clever enough to appear to be acknowledging that the industrialists, along with the generals and junkers, had power in the State - for example he rapidly dropped the idea of a great scheme for re-locating industry to rural areas to destroy. Hitler very idealistically hoped, the German proletariat, as a result of pressure from the leading capitalists; eventually having ingratiated himself with them, and having gained control of them, he was able to ignore them. His technique was overwhelmingly successful, but it stemmed from a basic willingness from all key sections of the German

public to initially go along with the schemes, whatever the nature of later developments.

Economic overlordship was a strong weapon of control for the Nazis, but its chief agent for influencing the minds of the German population, and in creating and controlling public opinion, was through the medium of propaganda. The control of the various media for disseminating was quickly appreciated by Hitler. He saw that through the press, radio, the cinema, mass meetings and pamphleteering he could capture German minds. Of all the media the Nazis realised that the German press covered a wider audience than any other, that through the press they could reach every literate German, irrespective of their politics. The Nazification of the press and its use as a control was greatly instrumental in the moulding of public opinion. The press itself was a vast industry, and Hitler was able to gain eventual domination over it only by forceful means. The non-Nazi press did make a stand for independence, cherishing as it did its right to print freely and uncensored, but against odds that were too great.

Hitler pursued a systematic policy for gaining control of the privately owned press and developing the existing Nazi press. The "Volkischer Beobachter," the party newspaper, had served pre-1933 as a combat organ and as the herald of the movement. The N.S.D.A.P. had bought it in December, 1920 for 120,000 DM. Under its editor-in-chief, Wilhelm Weiss, it tried to become an "acceptable" newspaper from 1933 onwards. It was printed by the Nazi press, the Eher Verlag, directed by Max Amann, the evil genius of Hitler's press policy. The Nazis did not stop there.

All gauleiters were instructed to develop a local Nazi press. Each gau had its own incorporated verlag, which owned and controlled all party official newspapers in the gau. The gauleiters used all means of persuasion to make people switch to a Nazi paper, especially public officials. In some areas gauleiters made the inhabitants state which newspaper they read so they could be then "persuaded" if they were unfavourable. Furthermore gauleiters had extensive powers under the press ordinances to control local publishing and newspaper firms. They also enforced the Editor's Law of 4th October, 1933. The press policy was centrally controlled through the Reich Press Chamber, (one of seven chambers of the Reich Chamber of Culture created by the Law of 22nd September, 1933). Through the gauleiters, assisted by the gestapo, all communist and socialist publishing properties and agencies were confiscated. This was the beginning of the totalitarianisation of the German free press. By the end of 1934 the press was still far from Nazified. Only 25% of all dailies were produced by Nazi-owned publishing houses.

Before a publisher could be admitted to the Reich Press Chamber individuals had to be certified as politically reliable. Those who failed the test were soon out of business. There is no definite evidence as to how many were ruined, as the relevant Nazi documents were destroyed. But it was in April, 1935 that Amann dealt his ace with his Ordinances, promulgated under paragraph 25 of the decree of the Reich Chamber of Culture. Amann was hitting directly at the great newspaper chains, the Catholic press, and in particular, the Generalanzeiger Chain, which indicated that the ordinances were nothing more than blatant

attacks against named individuals to rob them of their property and legal rights. No redress was granted. The gestapo vigilantly carried out the mechanics of implementation, and directed pressure in particular on the presses of the Confessional Church.

Amann and his agents took over several great combines, in some cases under camouflaged party control, such as the Phoenix Publishing Co. for example, which controlled a vast chain of newspapers in Cologne, Munster, Karlsruhe, Mainz, Paderborn, Wurzburg, and Worms. In the Ruhr-Rhineland area the Potz group of newspapers, Catholic owned and inclined, was hammered very heavily by the Nazis, especially as they out-competed the local gau newspapers. But the great catch was the Generalanzeiger press, which was made an Eher Verlag subsidiary, assuming the name of the Vera Verlagsanstalt. Its director, Max Winkler, gained control of some of the great German newspapers - the Wurzburger Generalanzeiger, the Rostocker Anzeiger, the Hanoverscher Anzeiger, the Leipziger Neueste Nachtrichten, and the Magdeburger Generalanzeiger - all put up a fight, but were suppressed, as were two other great newspapers, the Bremer Nachtrichten, and the Hamburger Fremdenblatt. This ruthless expropriation was typical of what went on throughout the German press, and of the communications in general in the Third Reich. At Nuremburg Max Amann tried to defend his policy as necessary acts of "cleansing and reform".

The key fact is that Amann's policy strengthened the hold of the party over the country and consolidated dictatorship - his work was done in close collaboration with Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda, and the propaganda agencies of other ministries; in 1936 for example "Die Wehrmacht" was launched as a means of popularising the armed forces

with the German people. But Goebbels and Hitler were to become tremendously worried by the outcome of the policy - millions of Germans gave up reading newspapers, simply because they were too politically biased and abusive, boring, and generally dull and stereotyped. Hitler had driven out the best journalists and publishers. His new staff were obviously lacking in creativity and originality as far as a large section of the German public was concerned. Both Goebbels and Hitler must have realised that their policy had in part failed, but Hitler never publicly articulated this for obvious reasons. Oddly the Editor's Law was to be tightened, worsening the Nazi press situation.

How far the Nazi and Nazified press affected public opinion one cannot gauge in hard terms. It evokes the more universal question of to what extent Nazi propaganda was successful overall. Certainly their press campaigns, with all their propaganda, was built round emotion and violence, stiffened with a large dose of intimidation and terror. The newspapers themselves are evidence enough. A Nazi who committed himself to the basic aims of the party would not necessarily be too concerned with the trimmings of party propaganda. But it is important to remember that Nazism did lack ideological content. This is surely why propaganda was so necessary. On looking at the evidence it would seem that the Nazi press control was almost negative propaganda, insofar as it forestalled independent or anti-Nazi opinion from being expressed, although its own efforts were somewhat spurned by the German reading public. If public opinion was to be controlled it had to be by other means as well. Hitler himself always relied on the spoken word, rather than the written one. He was very bad on paper. On the other hand one can argue that the

press did tend to reflect the opinion and moods of an entrenched Nazi state. But this is very hypothetical, and one certainly cannot impute to the Nazi press the ability to change public opinion by the reporting of straight fact. That so many newspapers resorted to panygyric and invective and overstatements on every subject may have convinced many of the valuelessness of reading Nazified newspapers. In any society the press can have tremendous effect upon public opinion, either positive or negative. On the scant evidence available it would seem that to a greater extent the advocacies of the Nazi press were rejected by the public mind, or they were not regarded as the best medium for communicating with Nazi ideas.

In the 1920s Hitler had developed his fundamental techniques of opinion capture and control, but not through the press, but through uniforms, insignias, ranks, decorations, and emotive cries - "Hail Hitler", "Sieg Hail", and also slogans and marches, such as the "Horst Wessellied" - their signature tune, and mass meetings, at which highly charged and sloganised points and themes were put across. The method lay in basic psychology, but the success of it was greatly contingent upon current developments within Germany and the world at large. In 1927 only 75,000 people paid subscriptions to the N.S.D.A.P. Hitler could never have expected to win over the public mind by truth and objectivity. In the early twenties Hitler was obviously working on the principle that he who holds the streets can win the state - he turned the streets into battlefields against the communists, and throughout the mid and late twenties every state in Germany with the exception of Bavaria outlawed him. In the late twenties and thirties he came to rely increasingly

upon speeches, meetings, and mass rallies, at which he put his main ideas across in black and white terms, heavily generalised - Hitler never intended or hoped to capture intellectual opinion, but mass opinion. In one year, 1928, party membership increased to 108,717. Hitler relied on the same, repetitive themes for his propaganda, notably those of anti-semitism and communism, and certainly for foreign propaganda he relied heavily on the idea of a "Bolshevik menace". At home the generation of an anti-communist psychosis was paramount to the success of Nazi propaganda. For these reasons the Nazi propagandists were to favour broadcasting far more than the press, and they were highly successful in this. The Saar broadcasting propaganda campaign proves this, and certainly the Olympic games in 1936 was a great propaganda success for the Nazis through the medium of broadcasting. Hitler was quick to have the small, cheap radio sets, the Volksempfanger, sold extensively throughout the Reich.

The Nazis were very much aware of public opinion, and they appreciated that it had to be carefully understood, before it could be mastered by the most suitable type of propaganda according to prevailing moods. The Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda was expert at this, both at home and abroad. Goebbels' ministry penetrated the Wilhelmstrasse, demanding information, and wanting to use its foreign agencies to launch his foreign propaganda campaigns. Ironically Ribbentrop and Goebbels had great difficulty in co-operating on this point. Von Neurath was evidently quite co-operative. The Nazis conducted quite a precise "audience research" campaign, finding out where resistance still existed and then attempting to eliminate them

via propaganda. For example Nazi propaganda was never quite so intense as it was in Austria from 1933 to 1938 - every available propaganda method was employed, including excessive violence. The Propaganda Ministry was incredibly skilful and successful in avoiding discredit for Hitler on the failure of the 1934 putsch in Austria and Dolfuss' murder. Most Germans genuinely believed that the Austrian branch of the N.S.D.A.P. was totally responsible for everything that had happened. This reveals a fundamental point - that in a totalitarian state the average man or woman will tend to accept the propaganda poured out provided it is well wrapped up; since no other opinion is allowed the individual mind is easily captured. There comes a point too when those creating propaganda begin to believe their own lies.

Of all the facets of Nazi propaganda there remains the powerful demagoguey of Hitler, a man who was able to control millions through mass emotion, and at times, hysteria. Cunningly too he used the Reichstag as a vehicle for addressing the world - that he was able to lie so convincingly made most Germans believe that he really did wish to co-operate with the western powers and be accepted by them. He always paid special attention to Great Britain, and a great many of his shams and lies fooled a large section of the British people. But the more blatant aspects of his propaganda failed miserably in Britain. The British press would have none of it.

Epilogue

Before a final appraisal of public opinion within peacetime Nazi Germany is made, it is important to delineate clearly the two general categories of people which have emerged in this study. Firstly there were those who were "independent", people who interacted with the Nazis, and who were free to interpret for themselves the facts of Nazism and Nazi Germany, and act according to their own free will, either because of the fortunes of a particular social and economic position, and/or because of superior intellectual qualities were able to analyse the predicament that faced them and Germany, and act upon this, or think upon it only, for better or for worse, but given that each individual was conditioned by his particular environment and predicament. Their actual action, or word, or thought is not at point at the moment. Secondly there was the much larger category of those who were acted upon, that is those who were most easily susceptible to propaganda for various reasons. It must also be agreed upon that the mechanics and prevailing facets of the "public mind" or "group opinion" at any point can only be successfully analysed by empirical study, though it would be reasonable for the psychologist to agree with the historian that certain suppositions can be made, for example that the mind of man is malleable and is ready to be moved. History is itself a manifestation of this. Propaganda admittedly is an extreme way in which men's minds can be controlled. Modern subliminal advertising has proved this - the advertising psychologist's method is in many ways similar to that adopted by Hitler - of finding out the main elements at work in the mind of the average citizen, and then adopting an appropriate technique for particular

circumstances and the ends that are in mind.

Essential also to any conclusions is the realisation of the nature of German society before 1933, which was delineated earlier in this work. Germany had not got a maturing democratic tradition. In a democracy "consent" is the key word. Persuasion is the art of the democratic politician - to convince an educated, open-minded, and free public. In an articulate democratic community public opinion cannot therefore be ignored. But in a totaliterian society the public is told. It is not a "competitive" society - there are no rival parties, and no free elections to be won. Germany in the twenties was an embrionic and struggling democracy, and one that was in part lured into fascism, yet one too that wanted to destroy Weimar democracy, though let it be said that between 1930 and 1933 could not have fully appreciated that Nazism would develop along the abominable lines that it did after 1933. Many, for sound reasons, were incredulous. Some thought that the leopard might change his spots, and others thought that Nazism could be kept in check. Therefore it is pointless to see Nazi society in the early thirties, comparatively, in terms of the relatively sophisticated democracy of the sixties. One cannot expect the Nazi public to act as "judge" and "jury" in the way that a reasonably enlightened and well-educated public does to-day, especially with the availability of independent mass media at its disposal. A democratic public will ask itself questions. No "approval" was being sought by the Nazis, not in the democratic sense. Through its propaganda Hitler was able to "answer" the questions the Nazis put in society's mind, many of which did in fact have sound enough bases. The controversy of the Treaty of Versailles

is an example. What was needed was sound direction. This was the responsibility of government and it was found wanting.

Above all else it is vital to realise that in evaluating public opinion within Nazi Germany, over a wide geographical, psychological, and socio-economic area, one is dealing with a totalitarian state where controls were great. In one sense the evidence may be clear, in another it may be lacking, simply because intimidation drove underground many who otherwise might have been more articulate. In the individual cases that have been examined great stress was placed on the totality of an individual's position and actions, since what normally would be conventional outlets for opinion in a democratic society were stifled in Nazi Germany. It was quintessential therefore to analyse individuals as closely as the evidence permitted.

Individuals from many and varied sections of German society have been investigated in this study, because public opinion is the aggregate of individual opinions. The individual makes up the group. At all levels individuals have been seen against their backgrounds, and one general and important point has emerged - that, as is perhaps common to any individual at any point in time, the individual in Nazi Germany was not necessarily showing "rational" judgment, in fact at the extreme of this view many people were adhering quite dogmatically to things which were patently untrue. But this was not necessarily a failing peculiar to Nazi society - in the Middle Ages people thought witches existed so they burnt them. It is axiomatic that people who know little are often intolerant of a point of view that is contrary to their own. Surely in Nazi Germany the personal attack superseded logic. This fact was

more prevalent in the Third Reich, not only because of propaganda, and totaliterian controls, but also because of unique historical conditions that allowed these to interact. This is the prime reason why in the first part of this work it was so important to examine the "a priori" judgments of the pre-Nazi era before an analysis of the post-1933 Germany could be made.

A climate of public opinion is always created by a process of action and interaction, or between the interaction of public opinion at any given point with the forces that help to make it and also change it. It is a continuum - dynamic in every sense. One has seen how this process worked in Nazi Germany, in marked contrast with that of a democratic society; in the former the opinions of pre-1933 German society were rendered static, and then worked upon by the Nazis. The normal process was frozen. The system became one-way. This is why what one can conventionally define as public opinion was to a greater extent non-existent in the Third Reich. This point is eminently clear when looking at the press, which when Nazified, never had to conform to generally accepted standards of what to publish. One cannot speak of "action" and "interaction", since a pre-Nazi, free consensus of public opinion was never permitted to fully interact. To a lesser extent they did interact, but this was virtually conspiratorial. Hitler was quick to discover what the stimuli were to which public opinion would respond most readily. This was at the root of his success - he manipulated some of the key motivational forces in German society, converting them to "public opinion". It is perhaps a philosophical and psychological question rather than an historical one which must ask

how far a people are responsible - how far, given all these factors, can one legitimately assess the degree to which the German people freely followed the Nazi creed.

Keeping to the strictly historical it has emerged how the individual German and the mass of Germans did become very closely related - and in the case of the broad mass of ordinary working-class Germans, and indeed other classes too, it was through the crowd that many individuals grew to express themselves according to their desires and without restraint. It was through the mass movement that the Nazis did standardise the habits of individuals, and Hitler was able to give for their actions and beliefs what they thought were logical reasons. In homogeneity the Nazi party member obviously found strength. In the case of the more recalcitrant it must also be remembered that to become a member was often a matter of dire expediency - a matter of survival. Moreover, the less strong-minded, the less independent, but nonetheless unsure, not fully committed individuals would always find the solitude of isolation from the N.S.A.P. unpleasant as well as dangerous. On the other hand the desire to be "accepted" into the movement must have been great with many Germans.

In the mass the individual German tended to lose his identity - to become subject to the passions and violence of the party, and above all to be susceptible to its leadership. For Hitler it would have been fatal to allow the individual to escape from the mass, and judge for himself. Hitler had to work the other way if he was to be successful; he intensified the mass movement and proscribed individualism. This

was the means to controlling public opinion. He brought homogeneity to a heterogeneous society and unity through a set of dogmas.

Institutions within any society will have a great effect upon the moulding of public opinion, and will also be reflections of it. In our society educational institutions, the press, the Church, broadcasting and television, the film industry all have considerable effect. On another plane other institutions have effect too - government itself, central and local, the civil service, the armed services, the legal system and service, the medical profession, the trade unions, and learned and professional bodies and institutions, to name but a few. Institutions - groups of people, all act and interact in the creation of public opinion. In the Nazi state there was institutional interaction too - several of these institutions, and exemplars of them have been examined. One of the chief results of these investigations showed how these institutions lost their propensity for changing public opinion, and how in the place of this came Nazi overlordship.

Peacetime Nazi society was one in which the individual could lose his identity. It created the stereotype. In the Nazi state any individual who spoke out against the Nazi mass, not necessarily criticising Nazi ideology, but on anything that detracted from the norm, was vilified and degraded - very reminiscent of the unfortunate Dr. Stockman in Ibsen's "Enemy of the People". The dominant conclusion of this work is that the Nazis succeeded in taking from German public opinion its moral and spiritual motives, and those sections of society which could have helped to retain these were either suppressed, forced

into acceptance, went into exile, or freely submitted. In any conventional sense German society lost its public conscience. It was a unique process, the like of which one hopes the world will never see again.

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