

BOOK V

FIREBIRD

AQUALUNG

*The broad mass of a nation ...
will more easily fall victim to a big lie
than to a small one.*

Adolf Hitler "Mein Kampf", Vol. I, Ch. 10

One single will is necessary.

Maximilien Robespierre, in a letter

Captain Mayr was impressed with the talents of his new protégé Adolf Hitler, in particular with his ability to connect with soldiers, workers and simple men, something no nationalist politician had been able to do in the Second Reich. After the defeat of Toller's, Levien's and Levine's Soviet Republics, the executive power which was nominally wielded by Hoffmann's SPD government in Bamberg, had been taken over by the army - Gruko 4 - on Mai 11, 1919, and it was soon made clear that no socialist activities were to be tolerated. KPD and USPD were strictly forbidden, as were even liberal newspapers. Gruko 4 understood its mission as counterrevolutionary, and Bavaria became a stronghold of the right: monarchists, reactionaries, nationalists, most of them anti-Semitic as well; the army protected them all. The Bavarian element was reinforced by refugees from the east, mainly the Baltic States, who reported horror stories of Bolshevik atrocities.

Alfred Rosenberg was born in Tallinn (Reval), Estonia, in 1893, and had studied engineering and architecture in Riga and Moscow. He fled the Bolshevik Revolution and emigrated first to Paris, then to Munich. (1) He was a fanatic pro-German, anti-Soviet, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic theorist from a small-bourgeois background comparable to Hitler's. It was his opinion that the Russian October Revolution was the result of a Jewish-Capitalist-Bolshevik conspiracy, and did his best to convince the burghers of Munich of the imminent danger. Upon making his nightly rounds in the pubs, cafés and tavern of the town, he heard about an author and poet who was believed to share many of his dreams and prejudices. Rosenberg strove to make his acquaintance.

This man was Dietrich Eckart, a sanguine beer-garden and coffee-house philosopher, who often sat in taverns drinking for hours while reciting poems in Attic Greek. He came from a family of some means in the Upper Palatinate, former court-counselors and civil servants, and although his early years as poet and playwright in Leipzig, Berlin and Regensburg were less successful than he wished, the contacts of his family made him, on the occasion of his return to Munich in 1915, a bit of the pet poet of the aristocracy. His easy access to the salons of the nobility would later come in handy for Hitler. He was a multi-faceted man; on the one side he was a morphine addict and had spent time in a few mental institutions, on the other side, his new translation of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" was given at the Royal Theatre in Berlin and became his great artistic success, considered as the standard for many years to come.(2) He was a nonconforming anti-Semite and Pan-Germanist, and published his own weekly political magazine AUF GUT DEUTSCH ["In True German", ¶] since December 1918. At its heights, the paper had a respectable circulation of about 30,000 copies, which made it one of the most influential anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic and Pan-German newsletters in Bavaria. One day in the summer of 1919, he received a visitor.

Rosenberg appeared, without introduction, at Eckart's apartment. The poet was impressed by what he saw in the doorway; an intense, dead-serious young man. Rosenberg's first words were: "Can you use a fighter against Jerusalem?" Eckart laughed. "Certainly!" Had he written anything? Rosenberg produced an article on the destructive forces of Judaism and Bolshevism on Russia.

It was the beginning of a relationship that would affect the career of Adolf Hitler. Eckart accepted Rosenberg as a "co-warrior against Jerusalem" and soon his articles on Russia began appearing not only in Eckart's paper but in another Munich weekly, DEUTSCHE REPUBLIK ["German Republic", ¶]. The theme of these articles was that the Jew stood behind the world's evils: the Zionists had planned the Great War as well as the Red Revolution and were presently plotting with the Masons to take over the world. (3)

But even Rosenberg's aid could not surpass the real problem that Eckart as well as other nationalists, anti-Semites and Pan-Germanists in Munich and Germany shared, the fact that the right-wing was hopelessly atomized in a multitude of little parties, clubs and fraternities; again, the lack of someone able to address the broad masses was felt most critically. One of these tiny political groups in Munich was a fellowship formed by a man called Anton Drexler.

Anton Drexler was one of those rather simple-minded workmen who believe that the poor, the exploited, and the oppressed will always be vindicated in the end. His father was a Social Democrat, and he remembered vividly being taken on May Day to a Social Democrat outing in the woods near Munich when he was a child.

In those days the names of Ferdinand Lassalle and August Bebel were still revered by German workingmen, who remembered that it was the Social Democrats who had wrested from Bismarck the highly developed social legislation that was the envy of workingmen all over the world. Drexler came out of the soil of Social Democracy as a plant grows out of the earth. He belonged to the working class, and it would never have occurred to him that there was any other class worth belonging to. (4)

After his journeyman years, he returned to Munich and was employed in October 1902 by the Royal Bavarian Central Railway Repair Works as a blacksmith and toolmaker. He volunteered for the Bavarian army in August 1914, but the railroad office refused to release him for service. The war awakened his political conscience, and on March 7, 1918, he founded a "WORKER'S COUNCIL FOR A GOOD PEACE". (5) In the fall of the same year, Drexler met Karl Harrer, a sport reporter of the MÜNCHEN-AUGSBURGER ABENDZEITUNG, a local newspaper. The two decided on the foundation of another little club, the "POLITICAL WORKERS' CIRCLE", which met once or twice a week to discuss solutions for the world's major issues. Harrer, politically better connected than Drexler through his membership in the Thule Society, insisted that the topics of their weekly discussions were duly recorded for posterity, including the names of the attendees. The protocol for December 1918 to January 1919 read:

Meeting on 12/05/1918, Topic: "Newspapers as the Tools of Politics", Speaker: Harrer. 12/11/1918, Topic: "The Jew, Germany's greatest Enemy", Speaker: Harrer. 12/17/1918, Topic: "Why the War Happened", Speaker: Harrer (Harrer, Drexler, Lotter, v.Heimburg, Girisch, Kufner). 12/30/1918, Topic: "Who Bears the Guilt for the War?" Speaker: Harrer (Harrer, Drexler, Girisch, Brummer, Sauer, Kufner). 01/16/1919, Topic: "Why we had to Win the War", Speaker: Harrer (Harrer, Drexler, Girisch, Kufner, Brunner). 01/22/1919, Topic: "Were we able to Win the War?", Speaker: Harrer (Harrer, Drexler, Girisch, Kufner). 01/30/1919, Topic: "Why was the War Lost?", Speaker: Harrer (Harrer, Drexler, Girisch, Brummer). (6)

Drexler quickly realized that Harrer's omnipresence, so to say, and his penchant for intimate audiences was not very likely to awaken the workers' interest in the circle's political agenda. He resolved that a regular party must be founded.

"One week before Christmas 1918, I explained during a circle meeting that the salvation of Germany was unlikely to be found within such a small circle as we were; that we needed a new party, a 'German Socialist Workers' Party,' without Jews Thus it came to the decision to go public and form a new party (German Socialist Workers' Party). The word 'socialist' was then dropped. The bylaws and guidelines of the 'German Workers Party' were written by me." (7)

Thus it came to pass that on Sunday, January 5, 1919, Drexler and Michael Lotter, the circle's record keeper, founded the "GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY" in a room of the Munich tavern "Fürstenfelder Hof". Drexler brought twenty-four prospective members, chiefly colleagues from the railway repair shop, to the constitutive session and was elected steward of the new party's Munich chapter. Karl Harrer was appointed - perhaps in his absence, the sources contradict each other - national chairman of the fledgling organization, and the assembly unanimously voted for the adoption of the party statutes as composed by Drexler. The same then gave the new party's inaugural address, which showed his humanitarian impulses: the party should strive to end the divisive class warfare and internationalism promoted by the Bolsheviks in favour of a national and patriotic socialism. Details would follow.

There had been a bit of a problem regarding the christening of the new party; the original proposal of "German National Socialist Party" was popular, but another party with similar teachings had chosen exactly this name a few months earlier in Bohemia, and, incidentally, the Bohemians' emblem featured a swastika. Hence "national" and "socialist" were dropped, and the name "Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei" (DAP, German Workers' Party, ¶) adopted. Drexler explained his liking for the name as an integrative statement: himself a slightly higher educated member of the working class, he proposed that skilled workers should not be considered simple workmen anymore but should have a legal right to be counted among the aspiring middle classes. The middle classes themselves should be enlarged, at the cost of the "capitalists". Drexler was an incurable romantic.

Although Drexler and many of his work colleagues were anti-Semitic, the only reference in the statutes and bylaws that pointed in this direction was a declaration that "religious teachings contrary to the moral and ethical laws of Germany should not be supported by the state." (8) This was, comparatively, rather tame. In the wake of the foundation, Drexler wrote a small pamphlet summarizing his political thought, called MEIN POLITISCHES ERWACHEN - My Political Awakening - which he distributed at party meetings and among his colleagues in the railway repair shop.

For a time, Harrer's original circle remained in existence, although an executive council was established which acted simultaneously as the new party's presidium. Still, the attractiveness of the party to Munich's workers remained modest -- a report of the general meeting of July 12, 1919, lists twenty-one persons present, the one of August 14 thirty-eight. The meetings of the circle continued in the intimacy of the usual five or six participants. (9)

It is not entirely clear, however, how Captain Mayr's unit I b/P came into the possession of a typewritten invitation, dating of September 3, to a meeting of the DAP on September 12, 1919, 7:30 pm, to be held at the "Sterneckerbräu" tavern near the Isartor, one of Munich's old town landmarks. The flyer announced that Engineer Gottfried Feder, our old acquaintance from the university lectures, would speak on his favourite theme of the breaking of the interest slavery, in particular of "How and by which means can we eliminate Capitalism?"

On the evening of September 12, 1919, Adolf Hitler set out to visit a meeting of the recently formed DAP. What turn would history have taken had Hitler visited, on this day, to a different group on Mayr's list, perhaps the "Society of Communist Socialists" or the "Block of Revolutionary Students"? No one knows. But it was to the Sterneckerbräu that Hitler directed his steps. The tavern was one of the smaller beer halls in Munich, and the room, in which the meetings took place, the "Leiberzimmer", could seat perhaps fifty or sixty people. The protocol of September 12 lists twenty-five party members and eighteen guests present, one of them Adolf Hitler. The scheduled speaker of the day had been Dietrich Eckart, who fell ill, and had to be replaced by Gottfried Feder. Hitler and most likely everybody else in the room knew Feder's lecture from earlier occasions. Drexler recalled:

"Dietrich Eckart fell ill and our meeting had to be postponed. Then Gottfried Feder spoke, and subsequently Professor Baumann, a guest. Baumann was a democrat. ... Baumann said that Tyrolia should unite with Bavaria, but not with Germany!

To this Hitler responded sharply, and gave a short but intense reply in favour of a Greater Germany, which excited me and all of us so much that I thanked him very much for his contribution and asked him to take home a copy of my pamphlet 'Mein Politisches Erwachen', to read it ... and, if he agreed with it, to come back in a week and work with us, because we could dearly use people like him." (10)

Famous became Drexler's line "This Austrian's got a job! We need him!" Hitler's depiction of the evening, characteristically, does not reflect on Feder's or, for that matter, Baumann's theories; enraptured, Hitler noted that "... I realized that I could speak!" (11) He claimed that he remembered only two scenes from his visit: that Baumann left the room like a wet poodle and that he still had no big impressions of the party. But then he presents a meticulous description in MEIN KAMPF of the events that presumably happened early the next morning. Lying on his barracks cot, he watches mice hunting for the crumbs of bread that he threw on the floor.



THE "STERNECKERBRÄU" WAS AN OLD MUNICH INN THAT HAD A SOLID BEER HALL AND A FEW SMALLER ROOMS WHICH CATERED TO PARTIES OR TO CLUBS. THE "LEIBERZIMMER" BELOW - FORMER MEETING PLACE OF THE OFFICERS OF THE KING'S OWN REGIMENT - HAD ITS OWN DOOR AND WAS THUS ACCESSIBLE DIRECTLY FROM THE STREET [THE ROOM DECORATIONS ARE POST-1933].



[Hitler] had gotten into the habit of passing the hours before dawn "watching the droll little beasts chasing around after these choice morsels. I had known so much poverty in my life that I was well able to imagine the hunger, and hence also the pleasure, of the little creatures."

At about five that morning he was still awake on his cot following the antics of the mice, when he remembered the pamphlet that Drexler had forced upon him. Hitler was surprised to find himself enthralled from the first page. "Involuntary I saw my own development come to life before my eyes." The ideas and phrases of the little book kept intruding into his thoughts the following day. He was struck by the phrases "National Socialism" and "new world order", as well as the prediction that a new political party would capture the disillusioned and disinherited among not only the workers but civil servants and the solid lower middle class.

But his interest waned quickly and he was surprised to receive a postcard informing him that he had been accepted as a member of the German Workers Party. He was requested to attend a committee meeting the following Wednesday. He had no intention of joining a ready-made party since he wanted to found his own and he was about to send off an indignant refusal when "curiosity won out" and he decided to have another look at the queer little group. (12)

It is intriguing, and a bit ridiculous, how Hitler describes his initial unwillingness and lack of interest, only to submit, as he suggests, to providence; it was Germany's destiny that made him return. He also goes through some pain to point out that, unlike Drexler's, his political views were not founded upon a worker's perspective of the world: he, Hitler, was an artist, a member of the highest class.

The date and place of the committee meeting that saw Hitler's second visit and presumed party entry is usually given as September 17, 1919, in the "Altes Rosenbad", although Drexler later dated it to November 16 in the "Helenen-Bad" inn. (13) Since this was a meeting of the party's venerable 'Executive Committee', and not of the whole party, Hitler was perhaps not too surprised to find only four people sitting on a table in the corner. Drexler enthusiastically welcomed Hitler and explained that the chairman, Karl Harrer, was to arrive any minute.

After His Excellency appeared, an evening transpired typical of every small club: the minutes of the previous meeting in the Sterneckerbräu were recited, and the assembled honoraries accepted a report from the treasurer declaring that the present wealth of the party, in cash at hand, amounted to seven marks and fifty penning. Letters from like-minded groups were read and discussed, and replies composed.

Hitler was shocked. He wrote: "Terrible! Terrible! This was club life of the worst manner and sort. Was I to join this organization?" (14)

After the formal part of the evening had passed, Hitler asked a few questions, specifically how the party planned to acquire new members. Was there a program? Did the party print leaflets? Did it advertise? The answer to all these inquiries was a timid negative. No organization existed, no stationary, not a single rubber stamp; but a lot of good intentions. Hitler wrote that he left uncommitted - perhaps - and went pregnant for two days pondering the all-important question whether to join or not.

He clearly perceived the DAP for what it was, a pathetic club of middle-aged men caressing their intolerances and nursing their prejudices; it had no similarity to the efficiently organized political machine of the future. But practical aspects recommended the German Workers Party, for some of its weaknesses might as well turn out blessings in disguise: the total absence of form and structure allowed Hitler to forge his imprint upon the nascent movement with ease; the very fact of the party's incompleteness guaranteed him the necessary malleability.

The smallness of the party was its charm, Hitler finally decided. The DAP was only one of many groups attempting to amalgamate nationalism with socialism, but Hitler quickly realized that persons like Drexler and Harrer weren't fighters, unable to oppose a determined attempt at a takeover. If he were able to attract new members, the old guard could be outvoted and retired, and the party could be shaped according to his own image.

Reports about the DAP resounded well not only with Captain Mayr and I b/P, but were read with interest everywhere Mayr passed them along: the unofficial camarilla of high-ranking nationalist officers, members of the nobility, and notables of industry and commerce. This readership had to admit, grudgingly, that effective political representation in a republic could only be brought about by voters, i.e. the support of the common folk - much to their horror - and they began to realize that, perhaps, this Austrian corporal could help them to acquire a quantum of popular support. According to Mayr, nobody less than General (ret.) von Ludendorff, idolized war hero and eminence grise of German nationalism, showed up one fine day in his office and demanded that Corporal Hitler be exempted from the prohibition banning soldiers from joining political organizations, and be allowed, nay, ordered, to join the DAP. For expenses, Hitler received twenty gold marks in advance from Mayr's slush funds, with the understanding that further funds were to be forthcoming soon. Hitler was to deliver regular reports, and Mayr later recalled that he had been in daily contact with his protégé for fifteen months, from June 1919 to September 1920. (15)

A few discussions materialized in later years regarding Hitler's exact seniority in the party: for a long time Hitler and his paladins insisted that he was Member # 7, thereby alluring to both a low and lucky number. His actual Mitgliedskarte ['Membership Card', ¶], however, issued on January 1, 1920, has him as number 555. A second card, which indeed bore the number "7", fluctuated through several press releases in the 1930s, but this "7" was, supposedly, his number in the DAP's "Executive Committee". Drexler and Lotter simply listed Hitler as councilman # 7, although no formal vote ever elevated him to this position. Lotter later lifted the lid off the membership card conundrum:

"A membership card with the number 'seven' existed neither in the DAP, founded on January 5, 1919, nor in the NSDAP, after the change of name on February 1, 1920. From January 1, 1920 on, new members were alphabetically sorted, and this method was also used for the existing members. Hence the Führer had No. 555, Anton Drexler, as the eldest National Socialist, had No. 526, and I myself had No. 700. The listing began with the number 501." (16)

One of the earliest members of the DAP with card # 623 was a friend of Mayr, Captain Ernst Röhm, a war hero, who had founded in the spring of 1920, with a few like-minded comrades, the political group Eiserne Faust ["Iron Fist", ¶], whose philosophy was well represented in its name. Röhm was not exactly a theorist.

"My politics are radically nationalistic", Röhm once wrote, "I am ambitious, yes, I want to play a decisive part in the struggle ... I am a political soldier, too, consciously, and with inner conviction ... the strengthening of the National Socialist movement appeared to me an important source of power for the patriotic forces ... I hardly ever missed a meeting and always brought friends, mostly from the Reichswehr, to introduce them to the party." (17)

In the early years of the party, the military's protection proved indispensable for its survival. Wehrkreiskommando 7 [HQ of the Bavarian part of the army, ¶] reported to the Reichswehr Ministry in Berlin on December 7, 1920: "We want to call attention specifically to the ardent activities of the national-socialist Workers Party, which industriously and most effectively works for the patriotic cause." (18) That the army's applause was somewhat undeserved at that time Hitler knew best. At the moment, the DAP was a rather good-natured forum for small-bourgeois debate, not the political spectacle Hitler envisioned.

"Our small community which in reality consisted of seven heads and represented the entire party was nothing more than the head of a small skat club," recalled an amused Hitler in a serialized newspaper story of these first days. "1919 in Munich was a sad time. Little light, lots of dirt, unrest, poorly dressed people, impoverished soldiers, in short, the picture resulting from four years of war and the scandal of the revolution."

The light at their meeting in the back room of the Rosenbad was a single gas flame that burned poorly. "When we were assembled ... how did we look? Forbidding. Military pants, dyed coats, hats of indefinable shapes but shiny from wear, our feet in remodelled war boots, and a thick cudgel in our hands as a 'walking stick'." In those days it was a sign of distinction, a proof that one belonged to the people.

"We were always the same faces. First we received the brotherly greetings, and we were informed that the 'seeds' had been planted in respective places, or even established, and we were asked if we could make such a report also, and the necessity was stressed to act as a unit." The treasury was usually about five marks and once it reached the high point of seventeen.

Hitler finally persuaded the committee to increase membership by holding larger meetings. At the barracks he personally typed out on the company typewriter some of the invitations to the first public meeting, others he wrote by hand. On the night of the first meeting the committee of seven waited "for the masses that were expected to appear." An hour passed but no one came. "We were again seven men, the old seven."

Hitler changed his tactics. The next invitations were mimeographed and this time a few came. The number rose slowly from eleven to thirteen and finally to thirty-four. The pittance collected from these meetings was invested in an advertisement in the MÜNCHENER BEOBSACHTER [the "Munich Observer", ¶], a völkisch, anti-Semitic newspaper, for a mass meeting in the cellar room of the Hofbräuhaus on October 16. (19)¹

The DAP's beginnings were modest indeed, but Hitler's influence showed soon when, on a meeting on November 26, 1919, national chairman Harrer announced the composition of a political program and the start of a correct party organization: copies of the statutes and bylaws as well as membership cards were to be passed out soon. (20) Hitler quickly realized that Harrer presented the changes only half-heartedly; privately he wanted to continue in the cosy atmosphere of his small circle. Hitler thus correctly identified Harrer as an obstruction to the party's growth and began to expound to Drexler, and soon to convince him, that the future lay in addressing the skilled workers, mechanics, artisans and small shopkeepers of the nation; Aqualung, the lesser men.

The second and decisive ally Hitler won was Dietrich Eckart, who would provide most of the fodder for Hitler's early political aspirations. Himself a frequent speaker for the circle and the party, he became the younger man's mentor, attempted to shape this uncut diamond and broaden his education: he gave him lists of books to read, taught him social manners, and introduced him to nobility and high society. Eckart's own political dabbling went in the direction of messianic prophecy; he was not the sole writer to predict the appearance of a ruler who was to lead Germany out of her present troubles into a deservedly glorious future. Eckart described the agent of the Fatherland's redemption in detail, sometimes in verse: the saviour would be a common soldier, unknown to anyone, a nameless stranger with "burning eyes". For tactical reasons, Eckart allowed in private conversation, the redeemer should also be a bachelor - to attract the female vote.

When Eckart first met Hitler, he immediately realized that here was material he could work with. His literary descriptions of the future leader strangely met Hitler's peculiarities and when he schlepped him through the salons of Munich's better society he invariably introduced Hitler as the "long-promised leader" - he was a great mythologist.

Thus the triad of Drexler, Eckart and Mayr allowed Hitler to break out of his social limbo: Drexler introduced him to his colleagues in the railway yards and trade unions, Eckart unbolted the doors of the noble salons and Mayr and Röhm presented him to the generals of the new Reichswehr. Clearly, Hitler was the coming man of Bavaria's right-wing extremists, and with Drexler's help, he convinced the more reclusive Harrer to approve the public gathering in the Hofbräukeller; a concession that marks Hitler's first success in steering the party his own way. It was Hitler's idea to levy an entry fee of 1 Reichsmark, an unheard-of brazenness that caused public astonishment: no other party dared to charge admission fees. Harrer, upon hearing of the fee, declared Hitler insane.

A small but undeniable improvement in the number of visitors was visible on this evening: according to the minutes, 131 persons had followed the invitation.² After an initial lecture by one Dr. Erich Kühn, Hitler mounted the improvised rostrum and delivered his first public address to an audience of strangers. His earlier speeches had been held in front of people he was familiar with, to a degree: occupants of the Männerheim in Vienna or fellow soldiers during his

¹The author of the quote is not the first victim of confusing the HOFBRÄUHAUS Inn, at the city centre's "Platzl" square, with the HOFBRÄUKELLER Inn on Vienna Street on the right bank of the Isar river; more confusingly, "Keller" means cellar: hence a meeting in the HOFBRÄUKELLER becomes misconstrued as a meeting in the "Keller", i.e. cellar, of the Hofbräuhaus.

²In MEIN KAMPF Hitler gives a figure of 111 attendees.

"political enlightenment" lessons. This October 16, however, was a true baptism of fire, and his relief and excitement in discovering that his oratorical abilities worked in a public environment resounded even five years later, when he rejoiced, while composing *Mein Kampf* in the prison cell at Landsberg, in the realization that he "could speak!"

He filled half an hour with flattery and hate, threats and promises, cynicism and parody, but these plain elements of political oration were immensely magnified by his intensity, his passion, and the fact that it was obvious to everyone that he believed in what he said. He soon gave up on the few notes he had prepared; words blurted from his mouth as if he were possessed, and, in a sense, he was: when he sat down, bathed in sweat, he had for the first time tasted the elixir that henceforth became his drug, the applause, the adoration, yes, the love of the masses. It was the beginning of his apotheosis, yet, unbeknownst to anyone, it was on this October 16, 1919, that the final battle of the First World War was concluded. In the wee hours of October 17, Adolf Hitler began to prepare for the next war, his war.

He had, as politicians do, asked for donations to the cause, and his appeal was successful. Together with the entry fees - which Drexler thought suicidal - the party took in an unprecedented three hundred marks. Now more leaflets could be printed, posters posted and meetings held. Four weeks later, Hitler spoke to about 130 people at the Eberlbraü Inn.

More than 130 men (mostly students, shopkeepers and army officers) paid an admission fee of fifty pfennigs, something new in local politics, to hear four speakers. The main attraction was Hitler. In the middle of his speech hecklers began to shout out but he had alerted his military friends and within minutes the agitators flew down the stairs with gashed heads."

The interruption only spurred Hitler to greater rhetorical heights as he closed with an exhortation to stand up and resist. "The misery of Germany must be broken by Germany's steel. That time must come."

Once more he carried the audience with him. He spoke with a primitive force and unabashed emotion that set him apart from the intellectuals who appealed to reason. A police observer, after describing Hitler as a merchant, reported that he had "held forth in an outstanding manner" and was destined to become "a professional propaganda speaker".

His appeals were visceral - love of country and hatred of Jews for bringing about the defeat of 1918. By his manner and use of language of the streets and the trenches, war veterans recognized that he had shared the democracy of the machine gun, barbed wire and muck and thus represented the sacred comradeship of the front lines. (21)

The word went around town and the audiences grew. On November 26, in the Eberlbraü, and on December 12, in the tavern "Zum Deutschen Reich", Hitler spoke to about three hundred attendees. On January 16, Feder entertained four hundred visitors with his theory of "Bankruptcy of the State - The Salvation", and on February 5, 1920, Dietrich Eckart addressed an audience of two hundred fifty souls with a lecture on "German Communism", at the "Zum Deutschen Reich" once more. (22)

Around this time internal strife began to manifest itself, pushed on by Hitler. Many of the old party hands instinctively mistrusted what they could not understand - Hitler's mercurial quickness and rash flamboyance - and feared the party's ruin. Especially disliked was the influx and the resulting influence of Hitler's military friends; the hostility partially derived from the workers' historic distrust of the military which, on the orders of the German princes, had murdered so many of their number in 1848, and partially it was that many workers remembered all too well how their friends and co-workers had suffered under the Free Corps terror only months ago. Drexler supported Hitler, whose appetite was only whetted by the recent meetings and whose impatience quickened. How was he to follow his obligations as chief of the (nonexistent) propaganda section, Hitler asked, when the party didn't even have an office? What about typewriters, rubber stamps and filing cabinets, these classic paraphernalia of bureaucracies? Without equipment and an office, Hitler argued, not even a party as small as theirs could be properly administered.

Plotting ahead, Hitler worked on solutions for the four major changes he thought necessary to turn the DAP from a debating club to a political force: the replacement of Karl Harrer as chairman by himself, the neutralization of Drexler by

his removal to the decorative but impotent post of Honorary Founding Chairman, the reform of the party structure into a vertical hierarchy and the creation of party statutes and bylaws that were to cement his absolute authority over the party.

With energy unrivalled by anyone else, and the advantage of having no day job - which allowed him to speak in 1920 thirty-one times in Munich alone (23) - Hitler set out to effect the changes he envisioned. He discovered a small, unused room in the Sterneckerbräu, which could be rented for little money and became the first party office; he had electricity and a telephone installed, brought in a table, a few chairs, desks and bookcases. Everything was paid for by the so recently improved party funds, which also seem to have benefitted by contributions from Captain Mayr's reptile funds. Hitler also hired the first party employee, a former sergeant of the List Regiment, who worked full time as the party's business manager; when Drexler heard about it, he diagnosed Hitler with megalomania.

Most of the elder party members were, like Harrer, instinctively suspicious about the flurry of new and unfamiliar activities and prone to oppose the changes. They did not understand, nor care, that Hitler's vision was one of growth by propaganda; they would have been content to remain another anonymous political fellowship, drowning their frustrations and hedging their animosities in regular rounds of beer-consuming tristesse, pathetic and impotent.

They did not understand the necessity of programs, statutes and bylaws, and remained unaware that Hitler created these instruments to disenfranchise them, as it did happen in late July 1921. But we're not there yet. On January 5, 1920, Harrer resigned his chairmanship, which was taken over by Drexler. One of Hitler's first moves, in January 1920, was the renaming of the party, which should in no unclear terms avoid any confusion with the existing "German Socialist Party". On February 1, 1920, the DAP was renamed "National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei" [NSDAP, National Socialist German Workers Party, ¶], and, in his thirty-first year of age, Adolf Hitler had finally found his place in life.

He now knew that he could do something no one else could. He also knew, at least in domestic politics, exactly what he wanted; and he could not fail to notice that none of the other far more prominent politicians of the Right-wing scene, where he now became a figure, really knew what they wanted.

The two discoveries together were bound to give him a sense of uniqueness to which he had always, even as a failure and an 'unrecognized genius', and perhaps especially then, inclined. From this gradually arose what was probably the greatest and most revolutionary decision in his political life - the decision to become Der Führer. (24)

In February 1920, Hitler and Drexler spent a few long days and nights in the latter's apartment at Burghausenerstrasse 6, composing the program. (25)

Drexler had become "a radical anti-Semite and anti-Marxist." He lived in the pleasant Nymphenburg district and Hitler would travel there by trolley car. They would become so involved in work that Frau Drexler usually had to call them to supper several times. "My little girl used to climb up on Hitler's knee," remembered Drexler, "she knew she was always welcome." He was Uncle Adolf to her. One evening in the last days of 1919³ Hitler arrived at the Drexlers "armed with a sheaf of manuscript" on which he had roughly sketched out the official party program. They worked for hours "boiling it down" to make it as pithy as possible. "We cracked our brains over it, I can tell you!" recalled Drexler. By the time they finished it was morning. Then Hitler sprang up and banged his fist on the table. "These points of ours," he exclaimed. "are going to rival Luther's placard on the doors of Wittenberg!" (26)

In this respect Hitler erred. The program shared the fate that befell MEIN KAMPF in later days; it was widely ignored, in particular by its addressees, i.e. Jewry, landowners and capitalists, whereas Hitler's followers had no interest at all in political theory.

May the reader use this opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions.

³The sources disagree on the date of the program's composition, which most likely took longer than a single day. Drexler dates the finishing and printing of the manuscript to Sunday, February 22, 1920, in the offices of party member Ferdinand Wiegand at Sonnenstraße 6. (27)

Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party

The program of the German Workers Party is an epochal program. The leaders reject the idea of setting up new goals after those included in the program have been achieved, merely in order to make possible the further existence of the Party by artificially inducing discontent among the masses.

1. We demand the union of all Germans in a Great Germany based on the basis of the principle of self-determination of all people.
2. We demand that the German people have rights equal to those of other nations, and that the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain shall be abrogated.
3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the maintenance of our people and the settlement of our surplus population.
4. Only those who are our fellow countryman can become citizens. Only those who have German blood, regardless of creed, can be our countrymen. Hence no Jew can be our countryman.
5. Those who are not citizens must live in Germany as foreigners and must be subject to the Law of Aliens.
6. The right to choose the government and determine the laws of the State shall belong only to citizens. We therefore demand that no public office, of whatever nature, whether in the central government, the province, or the municipality, shall be held by anyone who is not a citizen. We wage war against the corrupt parliamentary administration whereby men are appointed to posts by favour of the party without regard to character and fitness.
7. We demand that the State shall above all undertake to ensure that every citizen shall have the possibility of living decently and earning a livelihood. If it should not be possible to feed the whole population, then aliens (non-citizens) must be expelled from the Reich.
8. Any further immigration of non-Germans must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who have entered the Reich since August 2, 1914, shall be compelled to leave the Reich immediately.
9. All citizens must possess equal rights and duties.
10. The first duty of every citizen must be to work mentally or physically. No individual shall do any work that offends against the interest of the community to the benefit of all.
11. That all unearned income, and all income that does not arise from work, be abolished.

Breaking the Bondage of Interest

12. Since every war imposes on the people fearsome sacrifices in blood and treasure, all personal profits arising from the war must be regarded as treason to the people. We therefore demand the confiscation of all war profits.
13. We demand the nationalization of all trusts.
14. We demand profit-sharing in large industries.
15. We demand a generous increase in old-age pensions.
16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a sound middle-class, the immediate communalization of large department stores which will be rented cheaply to small trades' people, and the strongest consideration must be given to ensure that small traders deliver the supplies needed by the state, the provinces and municipalities.

17. We demand an agrarian reform in accordance with our national requirements, and the enactment of a law to expropriate the owners without compensation of any land needed for the common purpose. The abolition of ground rents and the prohibition of all speculation in land.
18. We demand that ruthless war be waged against those who work to the injury of the common welfare. Traitors, usurers, profiteers, etc., are to be punished with death, regardless of creed or race.
19. We demand that Roman law, which serves a materialist order of the world, be replaced by German common law.
20. In order to make it possible for every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education, and thus the opportunity to reach into positions of leadership, the State must assume the responsibility of organizing thoroughly the entire cultural system of the people. The curricula of all educational establishments shall be adapted to practical life. The conception of the State Idea (science of citizenship) must be taught in school from the very beginning. We demand that specially talented children of poor parents, whatever their station or occupation, be educated at the expense of the state.
21. The State has the duty to help raise the standard of national health by providing maternity welfare centres, by prohibiting juvenile labour, by increasing physical fitness through the introduction of compulsory games, and by the greatest possible encouragement of associations concerned with the physical education of the young.
22. We demand the abolition of the regular army and the creation of a national (folk) army.
23. We demand that there be a legal campaign against those who propagate deliberate political lies and disseminate them through the press. In order to make possible the creation of a German press, we demand:
 - (a) All editors and their assistants on newspapers published in the German language shall be German citizens.
 - (b) Non-German newspapers shall only be published with the express permission of the State. They must not be published in the German language.
 - (c) All financial interests in or in any way affecting German newspapers shall be forbidden to non-Germans by law, and we demand that the punishment for transgressing this law be the immediate suppression of the newspaper and the expulsion of the non-Germans from the Reich. Newspapers transgressing against the common welfare shall be suppressed. We demand legal action against those tendencies in art and literature that have a disruptive influence upon the life of our folk, and that any organization that offends against the foregoing demands shall be dissolved.
24. We demand freedom for all religious faiths in the State, insofar as they do not endanger its existence or offend the moral and ethical sense of the Germanic race. The Party as such represents the point of view of a positive Christianity without binding itself to any one particular confession. It fights against the Jewish materialist spirit within and without, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our folk can only come about from within on the principle:

COMMON GOOD BEFORE INDIVIDUAL GOOD

25. In order to carry out this program we demand: the creation of a strong central authority in the State, the unconditional authority by the political central parliament of the whole State and all its organizations. The formation of professional committees and of committees representing the several estates of the realm, to ensure that the laws promulgated by the central authority shall be carried out by the federal states.

The leaders of the Party undertake to promote the execution of the foregoing points at all cost, if necessary at the sacrifice of their own lives. (28)

This program is the earliest document mentioning the new name of the party. Its strange mixture of simplicity and Byzantine casuistry has been frequently ridiculed, and few people took it upon themselves to take notice of the clear aims of the party or to read between the lines. Pundits mocked its bizarre style and the small-bourgeois mindset that appears, for example, in the clause against the department stores. Alas, the critics forgot that simple people and small shopkeepers also have votes. The eccentric diction of the document was taken as proof of its inconsequentiality, but this was to mistake the form for the content.

A closer look reveals that, in particular in the first five points, Hitler brazenly discloses his destructive orientations. The points One and Two were nothing but a veiled declaration of war against the peace treaties, turning Wilson's idea of the self-determination of peoples around and against him: if the Germans were allowed to exercise this precious right, Germany would grow, not shrink. It would get Austria, Southern Tyrolia, Alsace, Lorraine, Danzig, and the Sudetenland back into its borders. Clearly, this was not to happen, and Wilson's "right of self-determination" was exposed as the impracticable ideal it was.

Point Three introduces the "Lebensraum" issue, the demand to be entitled to as much earthly space as a burgeoning German population might conceivably need. The favourable disposition of other countries to relinquish the land Germany required was not considered. Points Four and Five enshrined the anti-Semitic and xenophobe character of the new state-to-be, while Point Eight dispels of the aliens of recent residence. In its creators' fantasies, the new State was empowered to confiscate (Point Twelve), nationalize (Point Thirteen) and redistribute (Point Seventeen) assets, land and properties without compensation. Point Twenty-Three describes Hitler's sentiments about the freedom of the press.

His personal touch probably appears clearest in the incessant use of the phrase "We demand!", a ritualistic element comparable to the "Amen" of Christianity. He knew about the attractiveness of rites since the days of his youth in Lambach and built his speeches upon a ritualistic formula: a languid beginning, the sibylline drawing in of the audience's mood, the ritardando and crescendo of demands which add the tension of a countdown, the suspense of promises, and, in the end, the redemption of a public orgasm. No wonder that hubris lingered all too near.

Hitler was aware of the old adage that all politics are local and personal, and the little attention the program received after its introduction is best described by the fact that it was never altered. Much more important to Hitler than theory was to get rid of the dead-weights in the party, the old comrades around Drexler, and the way to power lay in the drawing in of new members by effective propaganda.

From the beginning Hitler demonstrated a quite astonishing cold-bloodedness in his propaganda. It was a subject of endless fascination to him, and he studied it minutely, dispassionate, scientifically, like a surgeon dissecting a corpse. He studied the beer halls for their acoustics, their colours, the best places from which to speak, the entrances and exits.

He studied the nature of audiences, observing how some were more responsive to shock treatment than others and how the larger the audience the more easy it was to manipulate. He learned the advantage of arriving late; keeping the audience in suspense for so long that their wits were dulled and they were therefore more receptive to savage emotional appeals. He would appear from some totally unexpected direction and then march across the hall with a fixed and frozen expression on his face with a wedge of bodyguards in front of him and another behind him, like an army. (29)

The most undervalued factor in the development of Hitler's oratorical successes was the odium of violence surrounding him, which attracted him to the female attendees. The crass and demonstrative use of bodyguards underpinned the romantic notion of an endangered lover, and Hitler's fondness to carry and display guns and whips nurtured adventurous female fantasies. The well documented relation between physical violence and sexual fantasy - and desire - played, to employ the obvious innuendo, the "dominating" part in Hitler's attractiveness to female voters. Not only did the Nazis in due time mobilize a far higher percentage of the female franchise than any other party had done before, hundreds of

thousands of letters and postcards, with or without poems, clogged the party office mailboxes, and diary notes by the hundreds were dedicated to the most private fancies of enchanted women.

For the men, the highest party duty was to fight.

[Hitler's] NSDAP possessed an uncanny dynamism from the start. It obeyed only one dominating will (Hitler's ability to tame or eliminate almost effortlessly rivals and opponents within the party was also a trait which attentive observers should have noticed as early as the twenties), and it was, down to the smallest units, full of fighting spirit, a hissing and pounding steam-engine of an electoral machine, a kind previously unknown in Germany. (30)

By the dawn of the New Year, Hitler's takeover plans had taken shape and proceeded. A mass meeting should draw in unprecedented numbers of attendees and form the basis for his assumption of the party leadership by public acclamation. The outward purpose of the meeting would be the public proclamation of the so recently fabricated program. The important event was scheduled for February 24, 1920, in the great hall of the Hofbräuhaus, a place which could well seat three thousand people. Party funds were plundered to the last pfennig to pay for blood-red posters dispersed over the town, and leaflets were handed out on train stations, main street corners and trolley stops.

Hitler was aware of the inherent risk of a coup d'état. It was one thing to speak to a couple of dozen men whose sentiments, even if unconsciously, ran parallel to his own, but quite another to test one's mettle against a potentially hostile crowd. Could he sway their emotions? Much depended on the impression the keynote speaker, the physician Dr. Johannes Dingfelder, would make. He was a respected lecturer on the folkish club circuit and was to speak on this February 24 about "What We Need", but he was not exactly known for prompting enthusiastic exultation. Hitler's name did not appear on the posters - neither was the introduction of the party program announced - and hence the enterprise was far from a guaranteed success. (31)

Hitler attended to the details. The hall was decorated in the Royal Bavarian and Imperial colours, a brass band played, beer and sausages were for sale. Since Hitler planned for a maximum of psychological impact, he hoped that the audience would be seasoned with a sprinkle of socialists - delivering catcalls, hoots and boos - and thus adding spice to the performance. Hitler was well aware of the catalytic effect of political violence on the masses: if his speech resulted in a fracas, so much for the better. A few men under the command of Ernst Röhm doubled as bodyguards and would be happy to join in a brawl.

Violence would leave an imprint not only on those present; it guaranteed newspaper reports and the spread of gossip and rumours: additional propaganda at no cost. Blood, Hitler knew, attracts sharks and men the same. Whether the news was good or bad was of secondary importance; the prime directive was to spread the word.

[Hitler] had discovered that the most effective propaganda employed pounding repetition. A man is most impressionable when he is frightened, and so Hitler conjured up visions of the degradation and horror in which Germany found herself, before he launched into the vision of a resurgent Germany free of Jews, no longer at the mercy of the international finance capital, cleansed of guilt, powerful among the nations in the world. (32)

About 2,000 visitors were in attendance on this evening of February 24, and while they could not fill the great hall completely, the meeting's success was never in doubt. To Hitler's delight, the extreme Left, communists and independent socialists, were present in large numbers, perhaps a few hundred each.

The opening address was given by Marc Sesselmann, a veteran of the Thule Society and DAP. He welcomed the audience and introduced the main speaker of the day. Dr. Dingfelder had written a book about agrarian reform under his nom de plume "Germanus Agricola", which was Latin for "German Farmer". The work's central thesis was that only a complete redistribution of agrarian land could put an end to the catastrophic manipulations of the bread price undertaken by Jews and Communists. If his call was ignored, the end of the world would be near, and locusts and floods would destroy what the Jews had left over. All this was not entirely new to the audience which applauded politely if hushed. "Work alone,

Dingfelder claimed, "creates real value. The salvation of the Fatherland lies in order, work, and sacrifice. Complete socialization is against the law of nature. Wars are brought about by rejection of religion and the natural law." (33) The lecture was overall the same oration the good Doctor had distributed times and again on the lecture circuit and half of the audience probably knew it backwards. Even the communists were bored.

About what happened next, we have Hitler's own report in *Mein Kampf* but reports of journalists and police observers as well, and a comparison is of interest. According to Hitler, one of the great moments in human history occurred. When he got to his feet to replace Dingfelder, the atmosphere in the hall was relaxed. Hitler took to the rostrum.

He looked anything but an orator in his worn, old-fashioned blue suit. He opened quietly, without emphasis, outlining the history of the past ten years. But as he told of the post-war revolutions that swept through Germany, passion crept into his voice; he began to gesture, his eyes flashed. Angry shouts came from all parts of the large hall. Beer mugs flew through the air.

*Hitler's army supporters - "swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel" - eagerly went into battle armed with rubber truncheons and riding whips. Troublemakers were hustled outside. At last some degree of order was restored and Hitler resumed speaking, undismayed by the continuing chorus of derisive shouts. His experiences in the *Männerheim* had accustomed him to such disturbances and he seemed to draw energy from them.*

The audience warmed to his spirit as well as his words and applause began to drown out the heckling. He spoke achingly of the tons of paper money being printed and how the corrupt Social Democrat government only prosecuted petty hoarders. "What can such a hoarder do if his name is Hummelberger and not Isidor Bach?" This anti-Semitic jibe was followed by as much protest as approval but once he directed his attacks at the Jews from the East, applause drowned out the hecklers. ...

A twenty-year-old law student named Hans Frank was struck by his [Hitler's] obvious sincerity. "The first thing you felt that there was a man who spoke honestly about how he felt and was not trying to put something across of which he himself was not absolutely convinced." After the polished phrases of the first speaker his words had an explosive effect. They were often crude, always expressive. And even these who had come to hoot him were compelled to listen.

He spoke simply and so clearly that those on the farthest tables could hear. What particularly impressed young Frank was that he "made things understandable even to the foggiest brain and went to the core of things." (34)

After finishing the historical review, Hitler turned to the introduction of the program, the "25 Points". The list's blatant populism made sure that everybody could find something appealing in it, and the audience applauded it unambiguously. It was a conservative German's wet dream in twenty-five chapters addressing the interests of all classes: the union of all Germans, colonies and 'living space' for the expected population surplus, rearmament and the abolition of the detested peace treaties, law and order, profit-sharing, expropriation of the Junkers' *latifundiae*, socialization of department stores - the dream of the small merchants - and the enhancement of health and pension benefits: every German could find a few points that appealed to him and, most important, they would be achieved at the cost of the Bolsheviks and Jews - good riddance. Hitler read out the demands and made it a point to ask the multitude for their approval of each request, which was given in exaltation of all present but the opposing socialists who were defeated and thrown out in the resulting free-for-all. The crowd roared out, as Hitler had calculated, their appreciation of the violence, and Hitler was pleased with the commotion.

At the very end of the first volume of *MEIN KAMPF* he describes the tumultuous scene as though it were the conclusion of the first act of a great drama. "The screaming and the shouting were slowly drowned out by the applause," he wrote. "To ever increasing jubilation," he read out the Twenty-five Points, and at the end the hall was filled with "people united by a new conviction, a new faith, a new will." He saw himself as a new Siegfried. "Side by side with the

coming resurrection, I sensed that the goddess of inexorable vengeance was striding forth to avenge the perjured deed of November 9, 1918. The hall slowly began to empty. The movement took its course." (35)

The newspaper VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER [the former MÜNCHNER BEOBACHTER, renamed, ¶] reported, somewhat more soberly, the following:

"German Workers Party. On Tuesday, February 24, the German Workers Party held its first public meeting. As a guest of the DAP, Dr. Johannes Dingfelder spoke in the well-filled Great Hall of the Hofbräuhaus on the issue "What We Need". From his point of view as physician and altruist, giving an abridgement of the recent social upheavals in plain language, he led the audience to the causes of the present emergency...

Herr Hitler (D.A.P.) developed a few poignant political depictions, that met thunderous applause, but also prompted objections from the many 'predisposed' attendees, and provided a condensation of the party's program, which, in the basics, resembles that of the German Socialist Party.⁴ The discussion was very lively but went polemic at the end. The meeting, however, left the impression that here is a movement that will prove victorious against all odds." (36)*

The police monitored the meeting as well and its observer reported that Herr Hitler "attacks the Reich government in Berlin by accusing it of being directly responsible for the monetary chaos of the inflation and the resulting widespread hunger in the country." The applause, the report notes, was especially loud at these remarks because every Bavarian believes that the government in Berlin is guilty of all these offenses, and many more. Then Herr Hitler attacks the Jews, the report observes, and also all the other parties, which causes an outbreak of frenzy. "Ungeheurer Tumult," wrote the police reporter into his notebook, "Fearful Uproar!" (37)

"Then Herr Hitler reads the '25 Points' slowly, stating his belief that in the future these twenty-five points will become the law of the land. After this, Herr Hitler attacks the Jews again, which leads the audience to jump on the chairs and tables." (38) After this, the police reporter stated, Herr Hitler sat down and faded into the background, the discussion being taken over by other speakers. This nameless Munich police reporter, however, perceived clearly what in the next thirteen years many journalists, ministers, nobles, generals and captains of industry would fail to notice, to catastrophic results; in the policeman's own, humble opinion, "Hitler is nothing but the leader of another Red Army." (39)

The other Munich newspapers hardly mentioned the meeting, but despite Hitler's self-glorification, the day had indeed changed the party's frame of reference. Money alone was one thing. The entry fee of fifty Pfennige had brought in over 1,000 marks, and, combined with about the same amount in donations, Treasurer Karl Riedl found himself of a sudden presiding over more than 2,000 marks of ready cash. The money was immediately reinvested in more meetings, whose organization was now much aided by Ernst Röhm, who was able to call at all times on soldier friends of his as bodyguards, couriers, or sandwich-board walkers.

Nobody could assert in good faith that Captain Röhm understood politics, much less economics or Marxism, other than to know how to break Marxist heads. But he was an exemplary officer, brave beyond the call of duty, and with a hand for that kind of military appropriation that in civil life is perilously close to being called larceny. Short and stocky, with closely cropped hair, a nose whose tip was lost in Belgium and an engaging smile, he was also a notorious homosexual and hence able to connect the party with the underground homosexual network that existed in the new Reichswehr as in every other large organization of males. He had been wounded several times in war, and perhaps it was the best measure of his soldierly qualities that he was commissioned at once into the newly diminished army, which could, exactly because of her diminutive size, afford to take only the very best. He was candid, easy-going and flamboyant; once he acknowledged: "Since I'm a wicked and immature man, war and unrest appeal to me more than the orderly life of your respectable burgher." (40)

They had met accidentally when Hitler visited a rally of Röhm's "Iron Fist". Like Eckart, Röhm was convinced from the first minute that Hitler was the man of the future. Röhm's many soldier friends rapidly swelled the ranks of the NSDAP

⁴ The German Socialist Party was another political splinter group and must not be confused with the SPD, the Social Democratic Party.

and the storm trooper detail Röhm quickly founded contributed enormously to the climate of political violence that engulfed Munich in these years.

Having gone through the war with the same experiences, the trenches, blood and filth, Ernst Röhm was one of the very few men Hitler ever allowed to use the friendly German address "Du". Recently, Röhm had been assigned to Mayr's unit I b/P and thus he was now technically Hitler's superior, a lucky circumstance which allowed Hitler as much free time as he needed.

What Erich Röhm lacked in political knowledge, Dietrich Eckart had in abundance. He became Hitler's closest friend for a while; the first volume of MEIN KAMPF ends with a posthumous dedication to him. He had a clear vision of the coming leader: it was necessary...

...that the new breed of political leader must be able to stand the noise of a machine gun. "I prefer a vain monkey who is able to give the Reds a salty reply, and doesn't run away when people begin swinging table legs, to a dozen learned professors." Moreover, their man had to be a bachelor. "Then we'll get the women!"

They had become friends, not merely political acquaintances, despite differences in age (twenty-one years) and background (Eckart was a university man of culture). Both were bohemians, both could speak the language of the gutter; both were nationalists and hated Jews. Eckart believed Jews who married German women should be jailed for three years and, if they repeated their crime, executed.

Eckart, a born romantic revolutionary, was a master of coffeehouse polemics. A sentimental cynic, a sincere charlatan, constantly on stage, lecturing brilliantly if given the slightest opportunity, be it at his own apartment, on the street or in a café. A drug addict and drunkard, his vulgarity was tempered by the vestiges of his social background. Hitler revelled in the company of this warm and voluble intellectual buccaneer who was playing Falstaff to Hitler's Prince Hal in Munich's ribald night world.

Eckart became the young man's mentor. He gave Hitler a trench coat, corrected his grammar, took him to better-class restaurants and cafés and introduced him to influential citizens ("This is the man who will one day liberate Germany.") The two spent hours discussing music, art and literature as well as politics and the association with the tempestuous writer left a lasting mark on Hitler. (41)

After the defeat of Eisner's, Toller's and Levine's socialist designs, army and Free Corps had radically cleared the town of leftist elements and Bavaria became the gathering fold for the nation's reactionary extreme Right. The biggest of the patriotic respectively nationalist movements was the DEUTSCHVÖLKISCHER SCHUTZ- AND TRUTZBUND [German Folkish Protection and Defense League, ¶], which in Bavaria alone counted about 100,000 members. (42) Hitler realized the potential of this huge accumulation of nationalist fervour and joined its meeting of January 7, 1920, as a guest speaker. The Trutzbund's propaganda relied on anti-Semitism far more than Hitler's early tirades, whose main nemeses were the "November Criminals" and the Treaty of Versailles. During the Trutzbund convention, Hitler realized that anti-Semitism excited the emotions of the Munichers much more than the shortcomings of Ebert's government in Berlin. It was an advertisement of the Trutzbund in the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER of February 18, 1920, which was to provide Nazism with one of its worst code words. The banner's headline demanded "To Establish Law and Order, put Jews into Protective Custody". When Hitler came to power in 1933, "Protective Custody" became the euphemism for deportation to a concentration camp. (43)

Bavaria's status as a Catholic and still mostly rural country resulted in a political landscape favouring the conservative and monarchist sentiments so pervasive in her peasantry: with the exception of a few poor urban precincts in Munich and Nuremberg, the country had never sent socialists to the Reichstag. It was Berlin that was the capital of German socialism but seat of the national government as well, and when revolutionary mayhem seemed to reappear there in the midst of January 1920, the consequences were potentially significant for the whole German Republic.

On December 6, 1919, the state of siege and martial law imposed in the days of the March rebellion had been lifted, but when the government of new chancellor Gustav Bauer introduced a law designed to wrest power from the still-existing councils in the manufacturing industry, the USPD called a strike and on January 13 a throng of protesting workers

closed in on the Reichstag. The building was guarded by Free Corps troops commanded, still, by General Lüttwitz, the slaughterer of Spartacists one year ago, and, in theory, supervised by Gustav Noske, now Minister of Defense. (44) The British correspondent Morgan Philips Price reported:

"I witnessed a number of serious collisions between workers and troops between the Bismarck Monument and the Reichstag steps. A number of Noske troops were disarmed by the crowds but I did not see any of them assaulted or injured at this stage.

About three o'clock the troops suddenly opened fire from the steps of the Reichstag and a terrible pandemonium followed. A large number of demonstrators fell, and isolated detachments of troops were set upon by the crowd and seriously handled. The tumult lasted some time, but the troops ultimately succeeded in driving the demonstrators away. The sitting of the Reichstag was suspended." (45)

The next morning's tally came to over forty dead and four hundred wounded, and, like a year earlier, the government of the Republic had taken sides with its enemies against its citizens. The bloodbath of January 1920 was added to the one of January 1919 in the workers' remembrance and remained unforgiven. It was the capital mistake, the original sin of the German Republic, and it did the utmost to steer the workers, who had remained loyal on the side of the SPD, i.e. reformism, for the longest time, to the dark promises of Marxism. What mattered more was that this led to a negative majority of anti-Republican parties in the Reichstag: from 1930 on Nazis and Communists occupied over 50% of the seats and hence no bourgeois government could secure a parliamentary majority. This was to lead to a presidential government by emergency decrees, which was to undermine the democratic legitimation of the Republic completely.

Then it seemed that finally the end had come for the Free Corps. On January 10, 1920, the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty became operative, among their prescriptions the reduction of the army from about 400,000 to 100,000 men and the disarming and dissolution of the Free Corps.

These were bitter pills indeed for the militarists, and many refused to swallow them. Some Freikorps were incorporated into the new Reichswehr, or into state police forces, others metamorphosed into sport clubs, shooting associations, detective agencies and labour gangs on large country estates, taking their "tools" with them. (46)

The government had no choice but to order the corps to disband, but their attempt to prosecute those Free Corps death squads for whose misdeeds evidence had been secured and witnesses were available, cost them what little respect the military had for their authority. Then the Allied Control Commission in Berlin gave direct orders to demobilize two further, the two most savage Free Corps units, the Ehrhardt Brigade of Naval Captain Hermann Ehrhardt and the Baltic Brigade under General Count von der Goltz, for the presence of such volatile troops in proximity of the capital the commission deemed too high a risk.

The anxiety proved well-grounded. When Lüttwitz, who refused to disband the Free Corps, was dismissed by Noske on evidence of a nationalist conspiracy and thus found his hand forced, he tried the coup d'état. On his orders, the Brigade Ehrhardt marched upon Berlin on the morning of March 13, battle-ready, and seized control of the capital for the moment. The legitimate government fled, first to Dresden, then to Stuttgart, while Lüttwitz and Ludendorff, who happened to be nearby, declared the Bauer administration deposed and informed a perplexed public that henceforth Germany would be governed, with dictatorial powers, by a new chancellor. "The full state power has devolved on Commissioner Dr. Kapp of Königsberg as Reich Chancellor and Minister-President of Prussia," they decreed. (47)

The good Dr. Kapp, invested by the gangsters' guns, took up the offices of head of state and head of government, received visitors and issued orders. There would be no more parliamentary control, no democratic laxity, but Prussian effectiveness, obedience and discipline. The problem was that nobody had ever heard of the good Doctor before: his highest achievement prior to his promotion to supreme leader on behalf of Ehrhardt and von der Goltz had been the position of a subordinate finance officer at the Agricultural Credit Institute somewhere in East Prussia.

Hence the echo to his proclamations was faint: the Allied Commission as well as the municipal government of Berlin refused to acknowledge his authority. To improve his political leverage, Kapp asked his daughter to compose a manifesto which he planned to have broadcasted via radio. The message, alas, was never sent, because his daughter was unable to find somebody who would lend her a typewriter nor could a radio station be found that would broadcast the sermon. Lüttwitz, Ludendorff and the Free Corps commanders did not really care whether anybody followed the new chancellor's orders for the moment because they made up their own ones on the go. Soon the nation would be ruled by the power of their guns.

Ebert and Bauer had initially appealed to the new Chief of the (illegal, since January 10) General Staff, General von Seeckt, for the suppression of the Free Corps through the regular troops, but Seeckt denied the request whose potentially conflicting loyalties he feared would tear the troops asunder. Ebert and Bauer thus used the sole weapon they still commanded and called a general strike. It was supported by the SPD, the USPD, the trade unions and even some liberals.

Although Berlin had surrendered to the Free Corps on March 13 without a shot being fired, theirs was a hollow victory. No one of stature would accept a position in "Chancellor" Kapp's Cabinet. From the beginning his hastily planned putsch was a fiasco and what brought it down was not a counterattack or acts of sabotage.

Berliners, joining the rest of the nation in a wave of anti-militarist feeling, had apparently concluded that another revolution was too much, and when a General Strike was called by the Ebert government the workers responded so wholeheartedly that it was impossible for the Kapp régime to function.

Electricity was shut off; trolley cars and subways stopped. There was no water; garbage rotted in the streets, shops and offices were closed. Only Berlin's nightlife went on unimpeded, in darkness or candlelight.

It was corruption out of an overdone movie with heavily rouged girl prostitutes of eleven competing with whip-toting Amazons in high lacquered boots. There were cafés for every taste and perversion - homosexuals, lesbians, exhibitionists, sadists, masochists. Nudity had become boring and art itself was plumbing the nadir of obscenity, disillusionment and cynicism.

Berlin was the centre of the Dadaist movement and one of his poets, Walter Mering, was giving Berliners a frightening look into the future in the form of a slangy, satirical verse:

*"C'mon, boys, let's all go
off to the pogrom with a ho-ho-ho,
pull in your bellies and throw out the Jews
with Swastika and poison gas
let's have a go at murder in the mass." (48)*

The news of the Kapp putsch hit Munich like a bomb. The Bavarian military had long since toyed with the idea to depose the hated socialist government and install an authoritarian, patriotic administration, and the apparent ease with which the capital had been seized impressed and tempted the officers in Munich. So...

...the military decided to assume power in Munich, and on the night of March 13 the Social Democrat government of Johannes Hoffmann was presented with an ultimatum. The new government, backed by the military, was headed by Ritter Gustav von Kahr, a reactionary monarchist and Protestant from a family of Protestants who had served the Catholic kings of Bavaria for generations. Kahr always wore a high collar and a black suit, and he moved and spoke with the abruptness of a man accustomed to handing down the orders of kings.

Like Dr. Kapp, Kahr was a creature of the army, which now rejoiced in the fact that Berlin and Munich were in army hands. The army decided to send a liaison officer to Berlin, in order to coordinate the two military revolts. The choice surprisingly fell on Hitler. With Dietrich Eckart as his companion, he flew in a military airplane to Berlin for discussions with Dr. Kapp. (49)

In a different version it was Hitler himself who, with prodding from Eckart, realized the potential of coordinating the military actions and volunteered, or, rather, begged to be sent to the capital. It is probably lost in the mists of history who pushed and who shoved: in the end they mounted the aeroplane and went off.

Captain Röhm, with his typical astuteness, had already cleared the mission with his superiors and "organized" the plane, complete with pilot, which would bring them to the capital. It was Hitler's first flight. The plane was an open sports plane, piloted by the young fighter ace Lieutenant Robert Ritter von Greim, a winner of Imperial Germany's highest military decoration, the *POUR LE MÉRITE*, which was known as the "Blue Max" for its distinctive shape and colour. Twenty-five years later, the passenger, Adolf Hitler, would promote the pilot, von Greim, to become the successor of Hermann Goering as the last commander of the *Luftwaffe*.

After some meteorological difficulties and an unscheduled stop, Hitler, Eckart and Greim arrived at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport, on the sixth day of Doctor Kapp's governance. With some luck they were able to flag down a taxicab, which brought the distinguished ambassadors to the chancellery.

Having arrived, they were escorted to the chancellor's office, where they were welcomed not by the office-holder but the "strange adventurer" (50) Trebitsch Lincoln. This odd and quirky marvel, a Hungarian Jew and thus not necessarily in Hitler's and Eckart's good graces, had been appointed, or appointed himself, as some said, to the post of Press Secretary to the Chancellor of Germany, Dr. Wolfgang Kapp.

Lincoln, "something of a rascal - he was arrested in New York as a spy for the Kaiser" (51), sombrely informed the Bavarian reinforcement that, unfortunately, His Excellency the Chancellor was not available. Exhausted by the travails of his office, the chancellor had just left for Tempelhof Airport to catch a plane to Sweden, where he would savour his well-earned retirement. The Kapp-Putsch had failed.

But the two stayed on in the capital to meet their hero, General Ludendorff, who was preparing to flee south in disguise, and to confer with a number of North Germans who shared their dreams: members of the STAHLHELM (Steel Helmet), a super nationalist group of veterans; and with leaders of völkisch organizations who were getting substantial financial backing from industrialists. Eckart also introduced his pupil to the salon of Helene Bechstein, wife of the piano manufacturer. She was instantly enthralled by "Germany's young Messiah" and promised to present him to others in her influential circle. (52)

Meanwhile, Captain Ehrhardt had thought it convenient to transplant his brigade to Bavaria, out of the reach of the Berlin government, on the invitation of a mainstay of the new authoritarian regime, Police Commissioner Ernst Pöhner. General Ludendorff had also found it advisable to move and was presented by his fans with a large villa on the fashionable southern rim of Munich. The socialist parties and the trade unions were so satisfied with their victory over the Free Corps that socialist workers' and soldiers' councils were swiftly reformed and took over the administration of a few big towns, such as Hamburg, Leipzig, or Chemnitz and the Ruhr area. In the latter, fifty thousand men of a quickly organized Red Army took on the local Free Corps and army forces, overcame them and soon controlled the whole industrial area.

The Reich government, back in Berlin, again chose the side of what they deemed law and order, and sent military reinforcements with the directive to eliminate the Reds. The hostilities, which were engaged, in particular by the Free Corps, in the utmost brutality, became large enough - killing more than a thousand workers and about two hundred and fifty soldiers and corps men - that France was able to invoke a clause of the peace treaty which forbade more than a token force of *Reichswehr* at the Ruhr and her troops went on to occupy parts of Germany's west for a few weeks. But the violence with which this last, rather small, Red uprising was extinguished left a bitter legacy for the new German Republic, "as formerly moderate Socialist workers were driven further to the left." (53)

When the first national elections for a new Reichstag were held on 6 June, the moderate parties of the centre suffered as the electorate swung to the right - the Majority Socialist SPD lost half of her seats and the liberal DDP lost three-fifths. (54) From this day on the Republic was left without truly stable government. No administration could find a dependable parliamentary majority, and the scattering of the electorate, which resulted in more and smaller parties, only amplified the difficulties of continuity and cohesion in the nation's government. Thus the stability, and with it the command, of the Federal executive was fatally weakening. In various places, as in Bavaria, they were left with practically no influence at all. In Munich, Adolf Hitler set his sights to overcome them, which he swore he would; as soon as he had obtained control over the German Workers' Party.

THE RIGHT, 1918 - 1923



MAJOR GENERAL RITTER VON EPP, ERICH LUDENDORFF, GENERAL OTTO VON LOSSOW



GUSTAV VON KAHR, DR. FRIEDRICH WEBER, HERMANN KRIEBEL



MAX ERWIN VON SCHEUBNER-RICHTER, WILHELM WEIß, ALFRED HOFFMANN

AUT CAESAR AUT NIHIL

*He doth bestride the narrow world
like a Colossus, and we petty men
walk under his huge legs and peep about
to find ourselves dishonourable graves.*

William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar", Act 2, Scene 2

*I am Alpha and Omega,
the beginning and the end,
the first and the last.*

The Revelation of St. John [22:13]

Who were the opponents the NSDAP was to meet in the political arena? Harold J. Gordon presents a summary:

Basically, political life in pre-war Germany was based on class or on the Catholic religion, and Catholicism had some characteristics of a social class made up of sub-classes, just as does the Negro community in the United States or as did the Jewish community in Germany. Furthermore, the pre-war political had practically all been founded as defensive groups to protect special interests which had come under attack from one quarter or another.

The conservatives saw themselves as defending their just interests against liberals and Marxists. Liberals saw themselves as defending their interests first against conservatives and later against both conservatives and Marxists, and on occasion against the Catholic Church. The Marxists saw themselves as being on the defensive against the vicious machinations of all the others.

Each political party represented a clearly defined "in-group" which was essentially interested in serving the interests of that group rather than the community as a whole - and this was true in theory as well as fact. There was no national German party with broad appeal to all Germans. There were only parties representing and perpetuating the division of Germany into mutually antagonistic groups. (1)

The war changed much, and the resulting political parties and pressure groups in post-war Bavaria shall be introduced briefly:

The MIDDLE PARTY (Mittelpartei) was a special Bavarian creation. It was really a more or less permanent alliance of the two most conservative parties on the national scene: THE GERMAN NATIONALIST PEOPLE'S PARTY (DNVP) and the GERMAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (DVP), the DNVP being by far the stronger partner. The Middle Party was monarchist and authoritarian in attitude, and it made no attempt to hide these views....

The BAVARIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (BVP), the most powerful party in Bavaria, with 64 out of 129 seats in the Landtag,¹ was an essentially conservative party, but here its similarity to the Middle Party ends. Where the latter was Protestant, secular, and nationalistic, the BVP was Catholic, clerical, and a strong defender of states' rights. ...

The CENTRE PARTY played a very minor role in Bavaria, depending on the Palatinate (Bavaria left of the Rhine) for its support. Even here, though, it did not garner enough votes to make it a serious power. The same is true of the [liberal, ¶] GERMAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, particularly after it dropped out of the government coalition in 1922. In general, the Democrats sided with the Reich in its quarrels with Bavaria, and this posture further weakened them. In domestic matters, however, they could be counted to support the Bavarian government against the extremists of both Right and Left, despite their opposition to much of the regime's program. ...

In general, the PEASANTS AND MITTELSTAND LEAGUE was preoccupied with the specific economic interests of the peasantry, especially as taxes were increased and the effects of the economic crisis became heavier. However, aside from the possibility of a "taxpayers' strike," the League was not a direct threat to the security of the government and indeed, sided with the authorities against the NSDAP and other groups that wished to introduce brute force into politics....

The left-wing parties had quite a different outlook on the world, on the Reich, and on Bavaria than did the non-Marxist parties. Despite their bitter grievances against one another they had a number of positions in common, and at times cooperated against the Right, at least at the local level. The most important of these common positions were their common theoretical goal of the proletarian state, their dislike and distrust of the Bavarian government, and their hate of rightists of all shades and types, especially monarchists and right radicals. The result of these common attitudes was the adoption of similar programs and the use of similar tactics at least some instances, which in turn led many persons of other and classes to minimize the differences among the parties of the Left, which were actually deep and broad.

The largest of the Marxist parties was THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY. The SPD was also the most moderate of the Marxist parties, with its insistence on the achievement of a classless society by democratic and peaceful means. However, in Bavaria, even this party had been affected by the trend towards violence and militarism in politics to the extent of indulging in guerrilla warfare with its rightist opponents. It was further plagued by the same divisions into left, right, and moderate factions that caused the party so much grief at the national level. (2)

What was this important party's relation to the Bavarian Government? Johann Vogel, MP, and influential functionary in Northern Bavaria called it out: "We Social Democrats have only two foes: the French in the Ruhr and the royal Bavarian government in München. The German Republic is only endangered by Bavaria." (3)

Since the USPD had shrunk in the elections to microscopic status (in the Landtag Election of 1924 she pulled only 2393 votes countrywide) (4), she ceased to be a political alternative. More important, on the military left, was the German Communist Party (KPD), which had absorbed both the USPD and the Spartacists. It was...

... a fairly healthy, if extremely unpopular, party. During the course of the year (1923, ¶) it apparently grew still more, largely at the expense of the SPD, because of the ever-deepening economic crisis. Despite increasingly repressive measures on the part of the authorities, the party was very active during the period leading up to the Beer Hall Putsch.

The ban on the party's paramilitary organisations and press in the fall of the year weakened it somewhat, since these bans were rigidly enforced by the police. In the north, however, where contact with the rampant Communist organisation of Saxony and Thuringia was possible - and where asylum across the border was easy to reach - the party continued its open defiance of the authorities. (5)

¹The Bavarian Diet

All these parties maintained extracurricular pressure groups and the failure of the Kapp Putsch drove especially the Rightist non-parliamentary pressure groups in droves to Bavaria, where they found protection.

The emergence of Bavaria as the attractor of all German right-wing cliques, whether of *völkisch*, monarchist, authoritarian or simply nostalgic origin and character gave Hitler an opportunity to draw from a far bigger quantity of possible followers than it had been without the failure of the Kapp Putsch. In short, his demonic oratory became an article increasingly attractive, and pulling in new members for the outfit he was to try to make his own thus only profited from the setback in Berlin. Little though the DAP had fulfilled his expectations at first glance, it was of a size which made it ideal for his purposes. There were many nationalist groups in Munich, but none else possessed a demagogue of his class and, on top of it, they had a fatal proclivity to internecine rivalry. Hitler was quite willing to take anyone on board, an idea which horrified the secretive cliques of the Elitist Right. Harold Gordon put it this way:

The NSDAP was something completely new in German history. It was the first political party to seek to appeal to the entire German people regardless of class, religion, or region - and to date it has been the only party to avoid these self-imposed barriers to growth. The National Socialists invited every German to join them, excluding only the half million German Jews - and this exclusion was made on the basis of the National Socialist belief that they were not Germans.

Catholic or Protestant, rich or poor, worker or employer, Bavarian or Prussian, all were welcome if they accepted the doctrines of the party and the authority of its leader. Such a party had great natural appeal in a nation welded together against the hostile foreigner by war and defeat, and this appeal was naturally greatest among those whose entire politically-conscious life had been spent in the post-Bismarckian, post-particularist atmosphere of the war and post-war years.

Here was a party that looked to the future, that ignored or denounced all those barriers that had long separated German from German, a party that promised to unite all Germans and lead them into a new and better world, where they would regain what they had lost in the old world and force their enemies to recognize the German place in the sun.

It is not surprising that, faced with traditional parties preaching the same divisive doctrines that they had preached in pre-war days and concentrating on quarrels that had lost their meaning for many Germans, a new party, led by young men and concentrating on problems arising out of the war and post-war world, proved irresistible to large numbers of youths. At the same time, many older men who had changed their outlook during and after the war were also attracted, although they, more cynical and more dubious of easy solutions, did not come to the party in such numbers or with such enthusiasm as did the young men of all classes. (6)

And it was enthusiasm that urged the party inexorably forward - for it suborned reason to emotion - as best seen in the Führer's personality itself. His...

...own character pushed him forward. A man like Stalin was undoubtedly sincere in his devotion to the doctrines he espoused and preached, but Stalin was essentially a cold man of reason, a man whom Macchiavelli would have understood, though probably not have loved.

However, Savonarola was a leader who would have understood Hitler and who shared his characteristics. Hitler was a man of keen if untrained intelligence - as most men who came into close contact with him have admitted, including, surprisingly, Arnold Toynbee - but one who consciously subordinated his intelligence to his emotions.

Whereas Stalin placed his emotions at the service of reason (within his own context), Hitler placed his reason at the service of his emotions, which provided the direction as well as the motive power for his career. Had reason been pleading against emotion, it would not have gotten far with Hitler, but when, as in the question

of a Putsch, reason and desire worked together, Hitler was driven inexorably in the direction in which they pointed him.

Here we see him, perhaps for the first time, launching one of those headlong expeditions that characterized his political life, where he was whipped along by his emotions like a ship scudding before the hurricane. He was determined to act; all that remained to be set was the date and the conditions. (7)

Who, then, made up the membership of the NSDAP in these early days before the Putsch? Depending through the various political glasses used in the analysis of this problem...

...it has long been an article of faith among many of those who talk or write about the early National Socialists German Workers' Party that this party was essentially a lower middle-class party, manned by persons driven off the edge into "classlessness" by economic pressures.

*Moreover, the contemporary statements of such politically engaged observers of the National Socialists as the editors of the *Münchner Post*, who saw the movement through specifically Marxist glasses, albeit slightly corrected to meet revisionist standards, support the general tendency. A typical statement of this type and vintage is that of an editor of that paper, Heymann, who asserted that the National Socialists drew their recruits "from the déclassé, many former officers, and from the dregs of the proletariat."*

Although questioning this myth may be regarded as heretical, it seems to rest on no better a factual foundation than the allied myth that the National Socialists were, from the beginning, the darlings of German capitalism. ...

The most striking single social fact about the National Socialist Party is that it was a party of the young. Both followers and leaders tended to be far younger than their opposite numbers in the traditional political parties and remained so throughout the period of the Weimar Republic, as is indicated by the fact that the mass entry of National Socialists into the Reichstag in 1932-33 reduced the average age of that august body by a full decade. (8)

The statistical analysis of a file containing personal information for 1672 party members before November 9, 1923, yields surprisingly young ages - especially for leadership positions. Of 944 members whose birth dates are recorded, almost two-thirds, 610, were under 31, and 195 under 21 years of age. Leadership wise, of 45 ORTSGRUPPENLEITERN (Local leaders) 2 were under 21, 24 under 31, and 38 under 41 years of age. At the provincial respectively central level, of 16 leaders 3 were under 21, 6 under 31, 4 below 40 and only 3 over 40 years of age. (9)

The SA side of the picture was equally clear. Here were no aging colonels and generals, but young and active representatives of the "new generation". Out of a group of 15 SA leaders in key positions at the provincial or central level, one was under 21, 8 were under 31, and the remaining 6 were under 39. (10)

The following occupations are listed with double digit features in the abovementioned file: Doctors, 17, simple Workers 12, Architects 10; Bank employees 29, Hairdressers 11, Housewives 14, Engineers 28, Tradesmen 120, Commercial clerks 17, Small merchants 11, Drivers 18, Artistic painters 13, Teachers 27, Mechanics 17, Party clerks 20, Locksmiths 21, Master tailors 12, Master carpenters 17, Editors 16 and Students 103. It does indeed look like a mostly lower middle-class crew. (11)

In the spring of 1920, the meetings of the NSDAP grew in numbers as well as in attendance. Soon they were held in the great Munich beer halls, the Hofbräuhaus, the Kindlkeller, and the Mathäser; for Hitler's primary aim of increasing the public's awareness of the still tiny party the histrionics of its main speaker were the best vehicle. By April, he began to speak in other Bavarian towns; twice he spoke in Stuttgart, Württemberg, and in August twice in Salzburg, Austria. The latter occasions took place at a congress of all German-speaking nationalist-socialist parties, from Bavaria, Czechoslovakia, Upper Silesia and Austria. The meeting, however, ended without constructive results. (12)

On March 31, 1920, Corporal Hitler hung up his field-gray uniform, thereby concluding his service in the Bavarian Army. He was still an Austrian citizen, and - technically - an illegal alien. He collected his meagre belongings and moved into a small backcourt room at Thierschstraße 41, a middle-class neighbourhood near the Isar River. It was, and still is, a quarter of four-story brownstones, tiny shops, and little corner vegetable markets. There was nothing incidental in his choice of habitation. He had come from the lower middle class, and the lower middle class would always be where he felt at home and which provided him with an early audience: the small shop owners and artisans, who dreaded the loss of individuality, the descend into the anonymity of the working class.

To the southeast of his apartment lay Giesing, a labourers' precinct, but - slightly northwest - Schwabing beckoned with the cafés, restaurants and bars that, in a way, were his offices. But many of the town's smaller newspapers and periodicals were printed in the quarter he now lived in, and it was in this vicinity where the offices and printing presses of the former MÜNCHENER BEOBACHTER and present VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER, most nationalist of Munich's newspapers, were situated. He may have cast a longing eye on it - the office was only a few steps from Hitler's domicile. It was a newspaper to his liking.

Recently, for instance, a story on page one had carried this headline: "Do a Real Job on the Jews!" The author recommended that Germany be cleared of all Jews, no matter how ruthless the measures. From such articles, most of them written by refugees from Russia, Hitler absorbed new information concerning the rising peril of communism. (13)

Slowly, the dangers of real-life Communism joined the Jews, the Peace Treaty, and the "November Criminals" in becoming his fourth major political issue. The problem of how to convince workers, who traditionally showed strong loyalties to socialist parties, of the superiority of National Socialism had to be solved before the masses could be won. But here appeared an internal nationalist problem. The Russian and Baltic émigrés, who were strongly represented in the German Right, resisted any admixture of socialist ideas, and the loudest voice of this anti-Socialism was nobody else but Alfred Rosenberg, the architect from Estonia, Eckart's fighter against Jerusalem. He and Hitler had not hit it off well at first sight.

"I would be lying if I said I was overwhelmed by him," recalled Rosenberg. It was only when he heard Hitler speak in public that he became enthralled. "Here I saw a German front-line soldier embarking on this struggle in a manner as clear as it was convincing, counting on himself alone with the courage of a free man. That was what drew me to Adolf Hitler after the first fifteen minutes." (14)

When the newly minted VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER began with the publication of the notorious "PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION", it was a hit with the Munich readership, and since the Protocols unveiled conspiracies of mostly Eastern, i.e. Russian Jews, it could reasonably be asserted that Eastern Jews were behind Communism as well. Hence the promises of socialism were in reality but a smokescreen for worldwide Jewish supremacy. Because newspapers as solemn as the TIMES, various French papers (in a regurgitation of anti-Semitism reminding of the Dreyfus affair) and most of the Italian press joined in the publication of the PROTOCOLS, the burghers of Munich took the warnings to their hearts. Christian zealots renewed the age-old blood libel (that Jews used the blood of Christian babies in their sinister ceremonies), and the charge that Jews had murdered the son of the Christian god. Although prevalently Catholic, most good Munichers were aware of Martin Luther's attack on the Jews: that they were "'a plague, pestilence, pure misfortune' - a blight on Christendom and the whole world which had to be dealt with peremptorily." (15) Perhaps, some commentators mused, Jews ought to be exterminated.

Lectures about the Jewish-Bolshevik World Conspiracy - the "New World Order" of these days - became a normal part of Hitler speeches, whose number had much increased since his retirement from the army. As with everything done frequently by man, soon a routine developed.

For two hours he expounded on the subject of "Why we are against the Jews," and from the beginning made it clear that his party alone "will free you from the power of the Jew!" In great detail he recounted how the Jews had polluted society since medieval days.

While distinguished by neither originality nor rhetoric eminence, his speech was a marvel of propaganda. Although his own anti-Semitism was personal rather than historical, Hitler demonstrated a genius for

amalgamating facts with events of the day in a manner calculated to inspire resentment and hate. He was often interrupted by shouts of approval and laughter. Eighteen times the audience burst into loud applause and the reaction was particularly boisterous when he referred to the Jew as a nomad involved in "highway robbery."

His earlier attacks on Jews had been low key in comparison to this carefully prepared denunciation. For the first time in public he charged that the Jewish conspiracy was international and that their advocacy of equality of all peoples and international solidarity was only a scheme to denationalize other races. Previously he had called the Jew despicable, immoral and parasitic; tonight the Jew was a destroyer, a robber, a pest with the power to "undermine entire nations."

Hitler called for an all-out struggle to the death. There was no difference between the East and the West Jews, the good or bad ones, the rich or poor ones; it was a battle against the entire Jewish race. Hitler demanded, in short, a "thorough" solution which he vaguely but ominously described as "the removal of Jews from the midst of our people." (16)

In German, he used the word "Entfernung", which draws connotations anywhere between "removal", "evacuation" and "annihilation". Thus every listener could make up his own interpretation of Hitler's proposal.

Still, the speeches filled only a part of his political life, in which an unexpected improvement occurred when, on July 8, Captain Röhm was named the replacement for Captain Mayr as Chief of Department I b/P. (17) Mayr had to be let go for his role as the Bavarian contact for the Free Corps of Ehrhardt and von der Goltz during the Kapp Putsch and Röhm became his successor. From this day on, Hitler had his ear directly in the Bavarian army command, and Röhm proved his talents in organizing guns and money for his friend and their party. The summer days of 1920 not only saw a multiplication of the party's activities in Bavaria, it also brought a new design to the visual side of the NSDAP. The new name, "National" and "Socialist" added to the old DAP, was an obvious but effective ploy to attract both ends of the political spectrum, and a similar idea had spooked Hitler's artistic eye for some time: to find symbols that could express the party's identity.

The swastika sign had been well known to him since his days as a choir boy in Lambach, and it had received recent prominence in Berlin as the emblem of the Ehrhardt Brigade. Hitler sought a way to integrate the symbol with a colour combination attractive to his future clientele. The war colours of the Second Empire, of Imperial Germany, had been black-white-red, which Hitler borrowed. With a little help from his friends, especially from one dentist in Starnberg, Dr. Friedrich Krohn, he designed a party flag. The design combined the right-angled, clockwise rotating swastika, which had also been used by the Thule Society, a few nationalist groups in Bohemia and Silesia and the Finnish army, in a white circle, recalling the white and black of the Imperial flag and the Teutonic Order. The combination was then put on a background of the most screaming red available; out-marxing the Marxists. Hitler wrote:

"In the midsummer of 1920 the new flag appeared in public for the first time. It was wonderfully suited for the young movement, and it was as young and new as the movement. No one had ever seen it before; it was like a blazing torch." It suggested, of course, far more than a blazing torch. Whipping in the wind, the swastika flag suggested streaming blood, black pistons in violent motion, sudden flares of energy. Never before had anyone designed a flag so full of menace and terror.

"As National Socialists we see our program in our flag," he wrote ingeniously. "In the red we see the social idea of the movement, in the white the national idea, in the swastika the mission to struggle for the victory of Aryan man and the same time the victory of the idea of creative work, which is eternally anti-Semitic and always will be anti-Semitic." Red was socialism, white was nationalism, the swastika was the pure German race dedicated to anti-Semitism. It was very simple and terrifyingly effective. (18)

The standard flew the first time in its official function for the NSDAP at the aforementioned meeting in Salzburg, Austria, August 7/8, 1920. (19) The flag was not the only means of propaganda Hitler designed or inspired himself. He loved to design the posters announcing party meetings, always on paper tinged in shades of crimson or vermilion. His speciality was to lay out the posters with fonts of many sizes; from the distance one might be able to make out a few words only, which

might, as one drew closer, suddenly convey a very different message. In the alternative, he used starkly contrasting graphic elements, as seen below...

Hitler's "madness", as Drexler saw it, of demanding admission fees for the meetings had much enriched the party coffers, and the meetings now provided brass bands and Bavarian catering. That would help drawing in parts of the people, but not all. The all-important question was how to attract into the party simple men and women, workers, jobless soldiers and the transients every big war inevitably produced. The word "Socialist" alone might draw in the one or other politically interested worker, perhaps from Giesing, Munich's worker district, but upon such chancy encounters one could not depend. A measure of "Socialism" had somehow to be provided in the party's character; the problem remained how much "Socialism" could be incorporated without driving away the old party hands?



NSDAP PLACARD OF THE EARLY 1930'S

The German socialists had been the main victims of the Free Corps terror: wherever, if for weeks or months only, workers' and soldiers' councils had taken over the business of governance from the collapsing reign of the princes - usually with little arm-twisting - they had subsequently been slaughtered by the likes of the swastika-bearing Ehrhardt brigade or von der Goltz's baby killers. A re-evaluation of the socialist movement's position in the new German Republic and their response to it was indispensable. The SPD had accepted the republic, and hence reformism; the KPD remained committed to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat via revolution.

In addition, the socialists had to clear their position, which had been divided and doubtful since the outbreak of the war, in regards to its internationalism, the solidarity of the workers of the world. Before the war, international socialist doctrine held that, by definition, the workers of all nations had identical interests against the capitalists. Since wars derived from competition between capitalists, socialism had to be pacifistic. A war might actually portend an opportunity to defeat the minions of the ruling capitalist class, as the first step of the inevitable revolution. The pacifism of the socialists of all countries would quickly end the war, the capitalist ploy, should one break out. Unfortunately, reality failed to acquiesce to the theory. The onset of war brought a prompt division among the German socialists, over the question whether to grant war credits to the Kaiser, who only weeks earlier had likened the socialists to vermin gnawing on the imperial oak. (20) When Wilhelm realized that he needed the canaille to get war credits, he suddenly discovered his philadelphial feelings for them - whom he henceforth addressed as his "German brethren".

The great majority of German socialists was deceived by the patriotic ruse and voted affirmatively for the credits whose consequences soon ploughed under the mud of Flanders a million of the nation's flower. With the exception of Karl Liebknecht, the SPD voted collectively for the war credits. (21) But soon, a minority of the party demurred in the face of a war that had become all else but the expected short and glorious affair. They split off to form the Unabhängigen, the Independent Socialists (USPD) in 1917. The radical wing of the USPD then formed the KPD in 1919.

The second breach within the German socialists occurred in 1919 and 1920, when the SPD's own government called in the Free Corps against their socialist relatives and hundreds, perhaps thousands of Spartacists were murdered. And not only did White Terror reign in the streets, the wheels of justice were in the hands of civil servants who were relics of the Imperial epoch; monarchists, nationalists, reactionaries. Their work revealed an odd balance of the scales of justice.

Even those judges, police, state and local officials, and military who wished to curb Hitler exhibited considerable partiality toward nationalists involved in violence. Out of 376 political assassinations in Germany between January 1919 and June 1922, 22 were committed by leftists and 354 by rightists. Leftists received, on an average, 180 months' imprisonment while rightists got only four months. Ten leftists were sentenced to death, no rightists. (22)

The most outspoken patriotic socialist Hitler met in these early days was the talented journalist Otto Strasser, a man in search of a third path between Communism à la Russe and Reformism à la SPD. He had recently participated in an international meeting of socialist deputies in Halle, which was to address the cardinal question: reform or revolution? In the event, the delegates split almost in the middle: 237 deputies voted for a union with the Third International in Moscow, that is, for continuing revolution, and 156 emissaries voted against it. No third way, no National Socialism independent from Moscow, was discussed, and Otto was disappointed.

After Halle he was a man without a party. Disgusted, he journeyed to Landshut [in Bavaria, forty miles northeast of Munich, ¶] to consult his brother [Gregor, ¶], who had organized a Free Corps-type private army of his own, with infantry and artillery batteries and a machine-gun company. Gregor admitted that nothing was more dangerous than the Russians and that there wasn't a single political party that could successfully oppose them. "Nothing can be done with talking," he said, "only action." Two important guests, he said, were coming to discuss the problem.

The next morning, according to Otto Strasser's account, a large car drew up in front of his brother's chemist shop. Two men stepped out. Otto easily recognized the first: General Ludendorff, a hero to all nationalists. Behind, at a respectful distance, "like a battalion orderly," was a pale-faced young man with a stubby moustache, clad in an ill-fitting blue suit. It was Hitler.

"We must unite all nationalist groups," announced the general. The political training was up to Herr Hitler. Ludendorff himself would take over the military leadership of these nationalist organizations. He asked Gregor to subordinate himself and his storm battalions "under my military leadership and also to join Herr Hitler's party." (23)

Despite his being a journalist, an observer of man, Strasser fatally failed to realize that the car had expelled proponents not of one but of two different promises, that of the past and that of the future. Although it may be true that Hitler saw himself still in the role of apprentice to the powers-that-be, his "self-confidence grew, based on his talent for oratory, his coldness, and his readiness to take risks. He had nothing to lose." (24) He was aware that Ludendorff, despite his popularity, was but a soldier, not a politician, and hence posed no true danger.

That the past could not be resuscitated Ludendorff never realised. The political energy of the time was one of inquiry, of thorough examination of what had happened in the past and what one hoped would happen in the future. The monarchists - particularly Hindenburg and Ludendorff - never realized that they had become superfluous and irrelevant. The youth, and many of the middle-aged, looked for new leaders, but not for a new Kaiser. What they did look for is probably best represented by a look into an entry a twenty-six year old student of economy in Munich composed for an essay contest at the university.

The competition was themed "How must the Man be Constituted who will Lead Germany Back to her Old Heights?" The student described the idol as a dictator by necessity.

For the sake of national salvation the dictator does not shun to use the weapons of his enemy, demagoguery, slogans, street parades, etc. Where all authority has vanished, only a man of the people can establish authority. This was shown in the case of Mussolini. The deeper the dictator was originally rooted in the broad masses, the better he understands how to treat them psychologically, the less the workers will distrust him, the more supporters he will win among these most energetic ranks of the people.

He himself has nothing in common with the mass; like every great man, he is all personality... When necessity commands, he does not shrink before bloodshed. Great questions are always decided by blood and iron. And the question at stake is: Shall we rise or be destroyed?

Parliament may go babbling, or not - the man acts. It transpires that despite his many speeches, he knows how to keep silent. Perhaps his own supporters are the most keenly disappointed. In order to reach his goal, he is prepared to trample on his closest friends For the sake of the great ultimate goal; he must even be willing temporarily to appear a traitor against the nation in the eyes of the majority. The law-giver proceeds with terrible hardness He knows the peoples and their influential individuals. As the need arises, he can trample them with the boots of a grenadier, or with cautious and sensitive fingers spin threads reaching as far as the Pacific Ocean. In either case the treaties of enslavement will fall. One day we shall have our new, Greater Germany, embracing all those who are of German blood. (25)

The author of these lines was Rudolf Hess, another political drifter. In the war, he had served initially at the Western Front, in the elite 1st Bavarian Infantry Regiment, the one that Hitler had wanted to join but was rejected. Eventually Hess changed to aviation, became a pilot in the Fighter Squadron 35 and was discharged honourably as a lieutenant in late 1918. He inscribed himself at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich as a student of economy, and joined the Thule Society as well as the Free Corps of Franz Ritter von Epp, the most popular in Bavaria. On October 8, 1920, Hess joined the NSDAP with member number 2243. (26) Hence the obvious similarities between Adolf Hitler, the outstanding person in the NSDAP, and Hess's description of the prayed-for saviour are not surprising. When Hess composed a letter to Minister President Ritter von Kahr on May 17, 1921, he portrayed his idol, and his relation to the working class, as follows:

"The central point is that H. is convinced that a recovery is possible only if it proves possible to lead the masses, particularly the workers, back to the nationalist cause I know Herr Hitler very well personally and am quite close to him. He has a rarely honourable, pure character, full of profound kindness, is religious, a good Catholic. His one goal is the welfare of his country. For this he is sacrificing himself in the most selfless fashion." (27)

At this occasion, Hess's enthusiasm discovers a few of Hitler's subtler qualities, his "profound kindness", that other observers failed to recognize. Still, returning to the theme of early socialism in the NSDAP and the meeting in Gregor Strasser's house in Rosenheim, it made things easier when Ludendorff confessed that, personally, he had in the war

encountered fewer problems with workers than with bosses and that he was willing to welcome former socialists to the national cause. For the moment, that was enough for Otto Strasser, who agreed to hold back his demand for a new and proper party program until a common platform could be hammered out. Initially, his political theoreticism had clashed with Hitler's idea of practical politics. Hitler sought to get the support of the workers by propaganda and charitable titbits; free school lunches, better housing, and the like, not by a political theory.

"The program isn't the question," said Hitler. The only question was power. Otto objected. Power was only the means of accomplishing the program. "These are the opinions of the intellectuals," said Hitler curtly. "We need power!" (28)

For the time being, Otto acquiesced. Here we may refer again to Sebastian Haffner's advice to be cautious in placing Hitler on the extreme Right as a matter of routine. Not only was he not a reactionary: he did not design the return of yesterday, the favourite daydream of Munich's elitist right-wing circles; to the contrary, he planned their downfall, punishment for the horrible incompetence they had evidenced between 1914 and 1918. He was to use their assistance, their donations, political protection and their envy, but the race-state he dreamed to build could, in fact, should exist without courtiers, Archbishops, Excellencies, Barons here and Viscounts there. Since he was "a populist, a man who based his power on the masses, not the elite," (29) nobility and organized religion became irrelevant in his design except, perhaps, as patsies. Nationalism had originated on the left, not the right, and it could do very well without princes and cardinals, thank you very much. After the war, nationalism consequently destroyed those empires that had relied on the old elites, the German, Austrian and Turkish ones but tellingly neither the British nor the French hegemonies.

The second notable "Leftist" element in Hitler's design for the future is the fact that his ideology, National Socialism, like Marxism relies on Hegelian principles, that history is the outward phenomenon of the development of man, and hence that it strives to achieve a summum bonum - the world spirit...

Hitlerism has at least one thing in common with Marxism - the claim to be able to explain the whole of world history from one single point of view. "The history of all society so far is a history of class struggles," we read in the Communist Manifesto, and analogously in Hitler, "All events in world history are merely the manifestation of the self-preservation drive of the races."

Such sentences have considerable emotive power. Anyone reading them has the feeling of suddenly seeing the light; what has been confused becomes simple, what had been difficult becomes easy.

To those who willingly accept them such statements give an agreeable sense of enlightenment and knowledge, and they moreover arouse a certain furious impatience with those who do not accept them, since in all such words of command there is a ring of "... and anything else is a lie." This mixture of swaggering superiority and intolerance is found equally among convinced Marxists and convinced Hitlerites. (30)

Naturally, the divergence between Otto Strasser's and Hitler's socialisms could only be glossed over for the moment, but that sufficed for Hitler, who had his eyes cast on the elder brother, Gregor Strasser, a chemist in Rosenheim, the town forty miles east of Munich which was also the birthplace of Hermann Göring. Gregor was of an altogether different calibre than his brother: other than hating Jews and Communists, he had no political persuasions. His passions were brawls, or rather melees, which were the reason Hitler was much more interested in practical Gregor, whose men and weapons were quickly added to the movement, than in the theories of Otto.

Hitler and Gregor soon found common ground. Gregor had been a front soldier himself, a junior officer, and had won the Iron Cross, First Class. Thus the outcome of the Rosenheim trip was that Gregor and his armed outfit joined the NSDAP while the debate over the correct form and amount of socialism in the NSDAP was postponed.

The NSDAP's social openness, the simple acceptance of anyone who might be of help, distinguished Hitler's movement from its competitors on the Right.

Another asset of the NSDAP was its egalitarian character. Nationalist parties of the past had appropriated true patriotic principles for the upper classes, as if only men of property and education had a fatherland. The

NSDAP was at once nationalistic and plebeian; rude and ready to brawl, it brought together the idea of nationalism and the gutter. (31)

Brilliance and viciousness lurked alike at the rim of Hitler's orations. No other speaker in Munich, or anywhere else, for that matter, was in his league. Konrad Heiden, his earliest biographer, explains:

What Hitler told the people about the depravity of the Jews, he could say just as effectively about the Prussian Junkers, the Pope in Rome, or the high English nobility. His revelation of a world conspiracy of Jews achieved its extraordinary effect not because of the Jews, but because of the world conspiracy.

The sentiment that our modern society had arrived at a breaking point, that millions and millions would be crushed in the impending collapse, tormented every man's soul. With unerring sureness Hitler expressed the speechless panic of the masses faced by an invisible enemy and gave the nameless spectre a name.

He was a pure fragment of the modern mass soul, unclouded by any personal qualities. One scarcely need ask with what arts he conquered the masses; he did not conquer them, he portrayed and represented them. His speeches are day-dreams of this mass soul; they are chaotic, full of contradictions, if their words are taken literally, often senseless, as dreams are, and yet charged with deeper meaning.

Vulgar vilification, flat jokes alternate with ringing, sometimes exalted phrases. The speeches begin always with deep pessimism and end in overjoyed redemption, a triumphant, happy ending; often they can be refuted by reason, but they follow the far mightier logic of the subconscious, which no refutation can touch. Hitler has given speech to the speechless terror of the modern mass, and to the nameless fear he has given a name. (32)

Hitler had an eye for the technical necessities of a party that was destined to grow and urged Drexler on to make the proper registrations. On September 30, 1920, the "National Socialist German Workers' Association" was founded, to give the party legal standing. (33) The objective of the society was:

"The aims and means of the association are: to collect all physically and intellectually working comrades of German blood (Aryan descent), in order to improve the individual, and hence the community, according to the party program, by educating him to political maturity, bodily fitness and moral superiority, and thus to bring about a more content and higher culture of the people." (34)

The membership soon grew from less than 200 at the end of January 1919 to 1,100 in July 1920, and 2,000 at the year's end. A year later, the party counted 5,500 members, and at the end of 1922 about 20,000, although many of these figures are self-proclaimed and must undoubtedly be taken with a grain of salt. On November 9, 1923, the party claimed a membership of over 55,000, (35) a success that was almost singlehandedly Hitler's work.

The following account mirrors the sway Hitler had over the audience's as well as over the unknown reporter's senses.

The meeting began at 7:30 and ended at 10:45 p.m. The lecturer delivered an address on Judaism. The lecturer pointed out that everywhere one looks there are Jews. All Germany is ruled by Jews. It is a shame that German labour, brain workers and manual labourers both, let themselves be so hounded by the Jews.

Naturally because the Jew has the money. The Jew sits in the government and schemes and smuggles. When he has his pockets full again he again hounds the workers back and forth so that again and again he comes out on top and we poor Germans put up with it all. He went on to talk about Russia also...

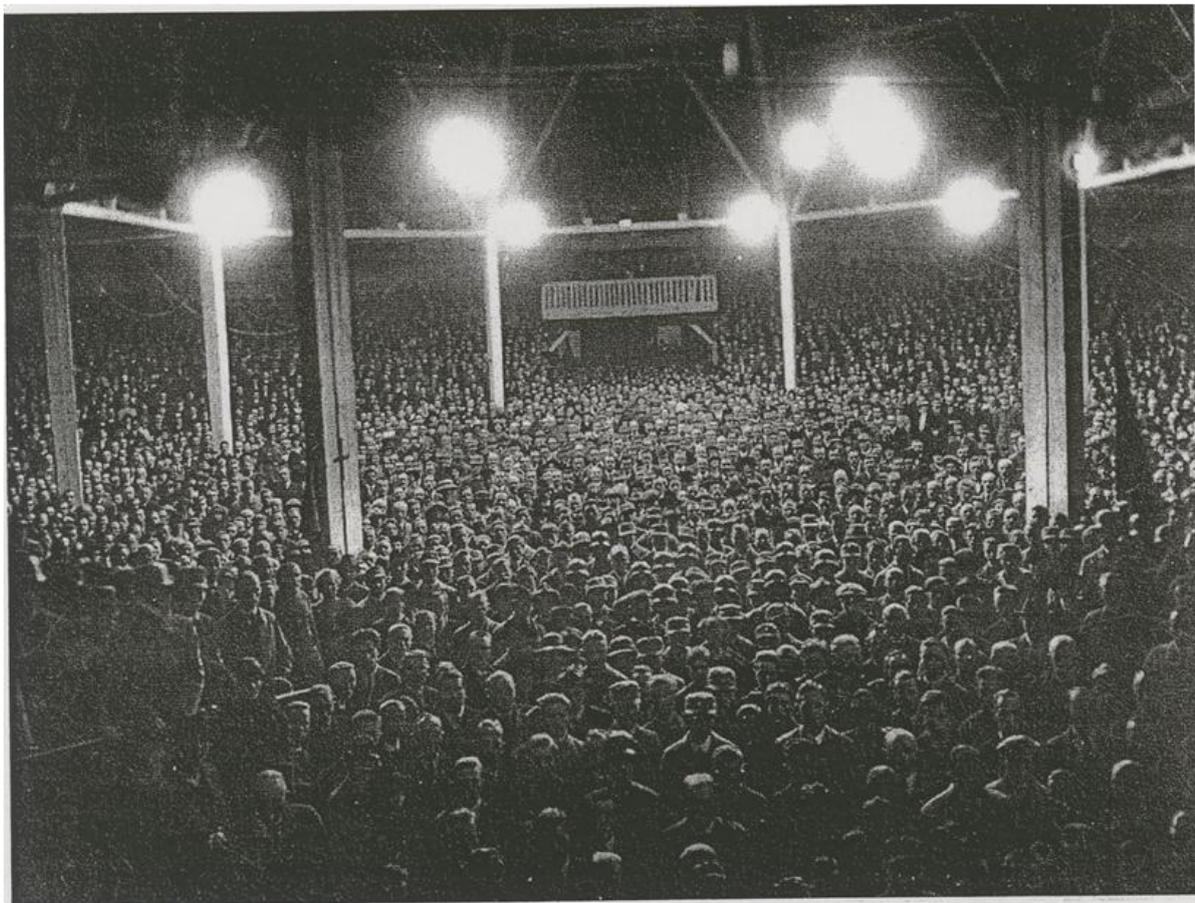
And who arranged all that? Only the Jew. Therefore Germans be united and fight against the JEWS. For they'll eat our last crust from under our noses ... The speaker's concluding words: Let us wage the struggle until the last Jew is removed from the German Reich and even though it comes to a coup and even more to another revolution The lecturer received great applause. (36)

Following this blueprint, the year 1921 saw a multiplication of the party's public and clandestine activities. Since Hitler was practically the only prominent member of the party without a day job, and who could thus spend all his time on party matters, he soon dominated the public perception of the NSDAP.

Hitler never tired of studying and improving both his public tirades as well as the organizational quality of the meetings. He conceded later that, in this respect, he had learned a lot from socialism, in particular from the aggressive public persona of the KPD, whose members he thought thoroughly misguided but nonetheless immediately sought to attract to his own brand of socialism. He observed and learned how important a part ritual played in their assemblies.

The NSDAP's meetings slowly acquired almost Pentecostal qualities; Wilhelm Shirer later compared the exuberance of especially the female part of Hitler's audience with the effervescence of American holy rollers. In a Catholic country, and a town which had invented the Oktoberfest, the NSDAP rallies soon resembled regular services. People came early, ate sausages and drank beer, folk singers chanted familiar tunes, brass bands played polkas and military marches and children munched on big pretzels or played hide-and-seek under the oak tables.

At the psychologically ideal moment, Hitler appeared, from an unexpected direction, his bodyguards parting the human waves. At the first sight of him, the band began to play the "Badenweiler Marsch," a very popular military march. It was another of his inventions; while the socialists had, of course, the 'International', the Badenweiler Marsch soon became associated with Hitler. He was the first politician to have his own "theme music"



NSDAP MEETINGS IN THE CIRCUS KRONE. ABOVE FEBRUARY 3, 1921, VIEW FROM THE ROSTRUM, BELOW OCTOBER 30, 1923. THE BUILDING HELD ABOUT 5,500 PERSONS AND WAS USUALLY PACKED.



The address itself would start slow, almost insecure, hesitantly, subdued. He talked of life in the trenches, the terror and the misery. He remembered comrades who had gone through the same things he had, and paid with their lives; only to have their sacrifice defiled by traitors.

His rhythm grew steady, his manner declamatory. Was it not true, he asked, that not only they, not only he, but all who were now present, had been betrayed? They had relinquished everything for four years' worth of a war to end all wars, and then suffered worse deprivations in two years of a 'Republic' they had not sought. Those responsible for the catastrophe, the "November criminals", were hiding behind the law and the security of government posts; but if he had his way, and the audience would support him, a day of reckoning would come.

This promise always sparked spontaneous applause and affirmations, which he knew how to turn into call-and-response patterns. When he named the culprits, the international Jewry, the international stock-exchange capital, or the international Brotherhood of Bolsheviks, the responses of the audience prompted frenzied rhythms of castigation, of rebuke and chastisement. The first interjections spurred him on, and as his tempo accelerated, so did the responses, and soon the alternations intensified in an ever faster pattern uncannily resembling sexual intercourse, complete with a public climax and postcoital tristesse; when Hitler, drowned in sweat, left the locale after a speech, his adjutant Brückner had standing order not to let anyone near him. "Don't you see," he would ask, "the man is finished for now." (37)

Although Hitler was by far the greatest asset of the party, he did not become a member of its presidium until July 29, 1921. He was quite aware of his importance and constantly sought means to increase the party's publicity. To have one's own newspaper was an early dream he had, but for such an enterprise the party coffers were far too shallow. But then, in December 1920, a lucky twist of fate occurred: the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER, the former MÜNCHENER BEOBACHTER, Munich's foremost anti-Semitic, folkish and nationalist paper, was in dire financial straits and might be purchased cheaply.

The paper and attached publishing house was the property of a Limited Liability Company with a capital of Reichsmark 120,000 in the hands of eight shareholders, among them Gottfried Feder. (38) Speed was of the essence.

At 2 a.m. on the morning of December 17 Hitler burst into Eckart's apartment, excitedly announcing that the Beobachter had to be sold because of debts and was "in danger" of falling into the wrong hands. A separatist leader intended buying it as a platform for his program. The party must get it instead. The asking price was reasonable - only 180,000 marks; and Hitler was positive Eckert could raise this from wealthy friends.

At eight the next morning Drexler was at Eckart's door. It was an unspeakable hour for a man of the latter's habits, and "at first", recalled Drexler, "he was bad-tempered. Then we started off." By noon they had collected about 60,000 marks from General von Epp whose Free Corps helped overthrow Munich's soviet government in 1919, and 30,000 more from other contributors including an anti-Semitic doctor.

Drexler himself signed a note for the paper's debt of more than 100,000 marks and at four that afternoon the purchase of the Beobachter was properly registered. Now Hitler and the NSDAP - thanks primarily to an eccentric author and a toolmaker - were prepared for the next leap forward. (39)

The acquisition of this public voice bolstered Hitler's status in the party even more since the nominal party presidium was outflanked: none of its members were able to write articles worth reading. In early 1921 it was the Allied Commission that created the background for the newspaper's and subsequently Hitler's greatest success to date.

The NSDAP was not the only political organization calling for public protests in the face of the victors in early 1921. The winter was harsh, and food riots were regular occurrences. In this dire situation, the news that was received from Paris on January 29 was unlikely to smooth the waves: the Allied Supreme War Commission announced the preliminary amount of war reparations they had, after more than two years of inquisition, found Germany liable to pay: 134 billion gold marks.

It was a truly preposterous sum; by today's standards in the neighbourhood of US\$ 10 trillion in a global economy of less than 5% the size of today. From which resources Germany, completely exhausted by war and inflation, should draw such payments was not explained; the world's leading economist John Maynard Keynes denounced the Allied demand a message from a "different universe".

Hence not only the NSDAP was in arms over the fantastic demand, all parties were. Initially, the bourgeois parties as well as the nationalists, monarchists, liberals and Catholic Centre party hedged plans for a communal protest on the Königsplatz, Munich's showcase plaza, but the common project soon floundered on the angst that the Reds would incite a riot. Committees diddled and dawdled until Hitler ran out of patience and decided to forgo the common protest demonstration. In their place, he'd run the NSDAP's greatest show yet.

Practical problems surfaced. Hitler had designed another blood-red poster to announce the great rally for the evening of February 3, but the printer was unable to deliver the goods before the morning of February 2, the day before the meeting. A nervous Hitler had additional handbills printed and, stealing a page from the Communist playbook, hired two trucks, decorated them with the biggest swastika flags he could find and sent them on their way through the streets of Munich; complete with megaphones which the accompanying party members used to advertise the meeting or to shout choice obscenities upon Jewish shop owners.

The meeting was to take place in the Circus Krone, which could seat about 6,000 visitors. It was quite a risk, and Drexler prophesied again the party's impending doom. For a time it looked as if Drexler was correct and Hitler had overplayed his hand. The meeting was scheduled to begin at the customary time of 8 p.m., and when an edgy Hitler telephoned the locale one hour earlier, he received inauspicious news: the hall, he was told, was far from being full. But apparently it was the wintry weather that had delayed the crowds rather than a lack of attention; a second phone call at about a quarter to eight revealed that the hall had filled out nicely. When Hitler arrived about an hour later, only standing room was left for latecomers.

"Future or ruin" was his theme, and his heart rejoiced in the conviction that down there before him lay his own future. After the first half hour he had the feeling that contact had been established and the audience was his. Applause began to interrupt him "in greater and greater spontaneous outbursts."

This was finally succeeded by a remarkable hush, a solemn stillness. "Then you could hardly hear more than the breathing of this gigantic multitude, and only when the last word had been spoken did the applause suddenly roar forth to find its release and conclusion in the Deutschland song, sung with the highest fervour."

The man who had released this flood of emotion was himself intoxicated, and he remained on the platform for twenty minutes watching the area empty. Then, "overjoyed," he went out into the sleet to his dingy, unheated little room on the Thierschstrasse. (40)

As an autobiographic - in MEIN KAMPF - Hitler was not exactly above certain poetic improvements of reality, but the success of the meeting - 5,600 attendees had paid one mark each - turned out even greater than he had hoped. Not only did the Völkischer Beobachter dutifully sing his praise, the assembly had been big enough to be covered by the other Munich newspapers as well. The old adage proved itself - for a revolutionary, all news is good news - and from this day on he was a mainstay of the press, never out of its headlines.

And he worked hard to remain there. Until the end of the year, the NSDAP organized a further twenty-eight district conventions, four great rallies and four instruction series. While there were still a number of other right-wing extremist groups in town and the NSDAP was not yet the biggest one, it was by far the most aggressive. Then, by order of the Allied Supreme Commission of June 21, 1921, all German militias, no matter their name or political orientation, were dissolved. It was the NSDAP that reaped the benefits of the decree. Initially, various models of cooperation between the nationalist units were discussed.

But Hitler's intransigence blocked all efforts at alliance. He demanded nothing less than the total submission of the other parties and would not even concede them the right of corporate entry into the National Socialist Party. He insisted instead that the other groups must dissolve and their members enter his party on an individual basis.

Drexler could not understand Hitler's obstinacy; therein lay the whole difference between the instinct for unconditional power and the conciliatory temperament of a club founder. (41)

Hitler's sullen uncooperativeness became the reason for the first and last leadership crisis of the NSDAP. Not only was Drexler still negotiating the possible merger of the party with the German-Socialist Party (DSP), the members of the party's central committee, all of whom had a day job, complained that Hitler was picking the cherries and left them with the daily administrative toil. In addition, they viewed with envy Hitler's rising prestige as an orator and public face of the party and gossiped nonstop about his nebulous personal finances and Bohemian night life.

But not all of Hitler's political congress was riotous assembly. Through Eckart, Mayr and Röhm, he had been introduced to strata of society previously closed to him. He had become the darling of the ladies' salons and the military casinos; the nobility showed interest, as did the captains of industry. Munich was the centre not only of nationalist Bavaria but also, since the Kapp fiasco, of nationalist Germany and it was the place where all the various groups were assured of secret or open support from the government. Outstanding in this respect were the Munich police president Ernst Pöhner and his deputy Wilhelm Frick, who was in charge of the Political Bureau. In 1924, at the Beer Hall Putsch trial, Pöhner admitted:

"We recognized that this movement, the National Socialist Party should not be suppressed. We did do that, and we refrained deliberately because we saw in the party the seeds of Germany's renewal, because we were convinced from the start that this movement was the one most likely to take root among workers infected with the Marxist plague and win them back into the nationalist camp. That is why we held our protecting hands over the National Socialist Party and Herrn Hitler." (42)

The protection was not confined to the realm of interdepartmental politics. The Bavarian government conferred a good dose of official recognition on Hitler when he was received by the Minister President himself, Gustav Ritter von Kahr, the hard-headed particularist who rejoiced in Bavaria's special status, whose "citizens continued to resent any directives from benighted northerners." (43) Ritter von Kahr became the first in a long line of extreme right-wing politicians who sought to use Hitler for their own purposes only to find out that the game was played the other way around. The official recognition - von Kahr also mentioned Hitler favourably in the Landtag - and public acclaim came at a pivotal moment for Hitler in his struggle with the old and resentful party hands, who relished the remembrance of the days when they had known every

POSTER FOR A NSDAP PROTEST MEETING ON MARCH 6, 1921, AGAINST WAR REPARATIONS - TRANSLATION P. 835

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei

Endlich wissen wir nun, warum die Antwort der deutschen Regierung auf die Pariser Note
so lange vor uns **geheim** gehalten wurde.

Statt auf diese neuerliche unerhörte Erpressung die einzig richtige Antwort zu geben, nämlich
den durch die Entente abermals vertriehen sogenannten

„Friedensvertrag“ von Versailles

als für Deutschland hiermit unbillig zu erklären, das Schuldbekenntnis am Krieg unter Vor-
legung der wirklichen Dokumente sofort öffentlich zu widerrufen und die Anberaumung eines
neuen Friedenskonferenz, fußend auf den uns seinerzeit als Grundlage versprochenen 14 Punkten
Wilson, zu fordern, hat die deutsche Regierung einen

„Gegenvorschlag“

aufgearbeitet. Er ist uns sehr bekannt.

Rund hundertsechundvierzig Milliarden Goldmark

das sind über

1500 Milliarden Papiermark

verbringt die deutsche Reichsregierung dem Gegner durch das deutsche Volk zahlen
zu lassen.

Ein voller Wahnsinn

Aber was wir nie bezweifeln haben, ist nun eingetreten.

Diesen internationalen Börsengeiern genügt auch das nicht.

Was sie wollen, ist Deutschlands vollständige Verflabung.

Und trotzdem soll der Ruhrhandel nun weiter fortgesetzt werden?

Dagegen protestieren wir!

Volksgenossen! Kommt heute Sonntag, den 6. März 1921, 10 Uhr vorm.

zur **Riesenprotestkundgebung** in den

Zirkus Krone

Redner **A. Hitler** über:

„London und wie?“

Geistes- und Werkarbeiter unseres Volkes, nur Ihr allein habt die Folgen dieses uner-
hörten Vertrages zu erdulden. Kommt und protestiert dagegen, daß Deutschland die Schuld
am Kriege trage. Protestiert gegen den uns vom Meinschuldigen an diesem Kriege, dem
säklich-internationalen Börsentabakal, aufgeprechten Friedensvertrag von Versailles, pro-
testiert gegen das neueste Pariser Diktat und protestiert aber endlich auch gegen eine
Reichsregierung, die neuerdings die ungedenkerlichsten Versprechungen gibt, ohne das
deutsche Volk zu befragen.

Beginn der Kundgebung 10 Uhr, Ende 12 Uhr.

Eintritt M. 1.—, Kriegsbeschädigte frei.

Juden haben keinen Zutritt.

Vorverkauf: Geschäftsstelle und Verkauf, Zigarrengeschäft, Tal 54

Einrufer: Für die Parteileitung Anton Drexler.

"NATIONAL-SOCIALIST GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY

Finally we know why the answer of the German Government to the Paris' note has been kept secret so long. Instead of giving the only proper reply to this new and horrible extortion by declaring the repeatedly violated by the Entente, purported "Peace Treaty" of Versailles invalid, publicly revoking any war guilt by publishing the true documents and the establishment of a new Peace Conference on the basis of Wilson's 14 Points, which had been promised, the German Government has created a

" COUNTER-OFFER"

which we know now. The German Government promises in it, to pay ABOUT ONE-HUNDRED FORTY SIX BILLION GOLD MARKS, which is more than 1,500 BILLION PAPER MARKS to the enemies. This is

ABSOLUTE MADNESS

Now it has happened, what we never doubted. The international stock exchange vultures are not even satisfied with this. What they really want is Germany's total enslavement. And still this horse-trading shall go on?

WE PROTEST AGAINST THIS!

FELLOW CITIZENS! *Come today, Sunday, March 6th, 1921, at 10 a.m. to join the*

GIANT PROTEST DEMONSTRATION at the CIRCUS KRONE

Speaker A.Hitler on:

LONDON AND US?

Workers of the head and workers of the hand of our common folk, you alone will suffer the consequences of this unheard-of treaty. Come and protest against Germany being burdened with war guilt. Protest against the Peace Treaty of Versailles, foisted upon us by the real and sole culprits, the Jewish-international stock exchange capital. Protest against the latest Parisian dictate and, finally, also protest against our own government which hands out promises without asking the people.

Meeting begins at 10 a.m., closes 12 noon.

Admission 1 Reichsmark, War Invalids free of charge **NO JEWS ADMITTED!**

Advance Sales: Party Office and Berchtold Cigar Shop, Tal 54

Summoner: For the Party leadership, Anton DREXLER"

member by his first name. The meetings had become too big, loud and racy; they missed the old Gemütlichkeit, the homeliness.

The opposition was led by Hitler's deputies in the party's recruiting and advertising section, Ernst Ehrensperger and Benedikt Settele. They managed to obtain the backing of the committee members Rudolf Schüssler, business manager of the party, Franz Emmer, the secretary, and Josef Berchtold, the treasurer, although Drexler, as chairman, continued to support Hitler. (44) At the time being, the party committee was democratically elected and subjected to majority votes of the members, fetters that Hitler had no intention to submit to. His chaotic lifestyle and substantial but enigmatic personal finances were not only a matter of envy but of fear; a scandal could pop up any day. The envy only increased when Hitler was received by the new Minister President, Graf von Lerchenfeld on October 25, 1921 (Von Kahr had resigned on September 12, 1921).

The question of a cooperation of all nationalist parties was put on the agenda for the party meeting of June 2, 1921, in which, however, the various factions could not be reconciled. Hitler reiterated his opposition to all alliances and affiliations and - dramatic gesture - left for Berlin on June 5, to collect money from the members of the Nationalist Club, Ludendorff, Count Reventlov and former Free Corps leader Walter Stennes. (45) He left Eckart, Rudolf Hess and young Herrmann Esser, the party's other oratorical talent, as his spies in Munich. Eckart was chosen to defend Hitler's "no" to alliances with articles in the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER, and when Drexler continued to negotiate a collaboration of all right-wing "socialists", he informed Hitler at once.

As soon as word came of Drexler's independent action, Hitler returned to Munich. And when the party executive committee, which had gained some self-assurance in the interval, called upon him to justify his behaviour, Hitler responded with a sweeping gesture.

On July 11 he declared his resignation from the party. In a lengthy statement three days later he heaped violent reproaches upon the other members of the committee, then stated as an ultimatum his conditions for returning to the party.

Among other things he demanded the immediate resignation of the executive committee, the "post of First Chairman with dictatorial powers" for himself, and "the party to be purged of the alien elements that have lately intruded into it." He also insisted that neither the name nor the program of the party could be changed; the absolute precedence of the Munich branch of the party must be preserved; there could be no union with other parties, only the annexation of other parties. And with that stubbornness which presaged the later Hitler he stated: "Concessions on our part are totally out of the question."

The degree of prestige and power that Hitler had already attained is evident from the immediate reply of the party executive committee, which was dated the following day. Instead of risking a showdown, it pleaded guilty to Hitler's charges with timid reminders of its former services, bowed completely, and was even ready to sacrifice the incumbent First Chairman, Anton Drexler, to Hitler's wrath.

The key passage in the document, in which for the first time the Byzantine tones of subsequent homage sounded, read:

"The committee is prepared, in acknowledgement of your tremendous knowledge, your singular dedication and selfless service to the Movement, and your rare oratorical gift, to concede to you dictatorial powers, and will be more delighted if after your re-entry you will take over the position of First Chairman, which Drexler long ago and repeatedly offered to you. Drexler will then remain as your coadjutor in the executive committee and, if you approve, in the same position in the action committee. If you should consider it desirable to have him completely excluded from the Movement, the next annual meeting would have to be consulted on the matter." (46)

The ruse had succeeded brilliantly, and the capitulation was signed by Drexler and six old party members. The only outward sign of the palace revolution the old guard had toyed with during Hitler's absence in Berlin was an anonymous

pamphlet titled: "Adolf Hitler -- A Traitor?" The flyer, obviously written by someone with knowledge of party details and familiar with the latest gossip, informed the burghers of Munich that Hitler was a Jew, and was working secretly on behalf of other Jews for Jewish world domination. Hitler's anti-Semitism was nothing but a trick to identify the worst enemies of the Jews, who would then be the first to be neutralized.

At a special convention on July 25, 1921, in the Sterneckerbräu, the party members were called to decide on the executive committee's proposal to give Hitler dictatorial powers. The matter with the pamphlet, however, had to be ironed out first, and Hitler addressed it right away.

Hitler had little difficulty in swaying his audience and convincing it that the pamphlet was the work of a maniac incapable of understanding that he was a man of honour, a humble servant working for the cause of Germany. Hitler spoke often about his own honour, which is the reason why we can confidently assume that he dictated the surrender document in which he is extolled for the services he rendered to the party "in the most honourable fashion."

A vote was taken by the party members. Five hundred forty-three voted that he should be given dictatorial powers. An obscure librarian, Rudolf Poach, an early member of the party - he carried the number 612 - was the only one with sufficient courage to vote against Hitler. (47)

A few more details had to be hammered out, one of which was a cunning example of Hitler's political creativity. In this day and age, a political party had to have - as any judicial entity - similarities to a registered association or a foundation in the respect that certain democratic by-laws were obligatory. Such by-laws regulated, for example, the admission or the dismissal of members; Hitler took extraordinary pains to create and box into validation a very complicated dismissal procedure: only a council of delegates from the Munich chapter had the power to open expulsion proceedings, and that only at the behest of the First President. Many circumstantial and procedural complications ensured that Hitler alone had the power to dismiss party members.

By implementing these provisions, Hitler had made the party his personal property; opposition became literally impossible. With his journey to Berlin and his resignation from the party he had played *va banque* - Aut Caesar aut Nihil - and won. At the regular annual meeting four days later, on July 29, 1921, Hermann Esser introduced him for the first time publicly as "Unser Führer" - Our Leader.

From this day on, no authority remained besides Hitler's. He was, however, tactful enough to deny himself cheap celebrations of victory; the old members were left alone to nurse their little peculiarities, while Hitler sought younger, more active human material, suited for his more aggressive style of politics. He founded a "Gymnastic and Sports Section," which, he explained, "was intended to serve as a means for bringing up our youthful members together into a powerful organization for the purpose of utilizing their strength as an offensive force at the disposal of the movement." (48) The "athletes" were drilled in the disciplines of beating, maiming, and sometimes killing political adversaries. On October 5, 1921, the "athletic" association was renamed the STURMABTEILUNG, the "Storm Detachment", abbreviated SA, whose members became known later as the "Brownshirts". (49) The NSDAP now had a dictatorial organization, tailor-made for the Führer, a small but efficient administrative apparatus and a private army.

Since his early days in Austria, Hitler knew about the strange attraction blood in the streets had upon the body politic. Both the liberal and the nationalist movements had paid in this currency in 1848/49, against the troops of the German princes. In post-war Munich, Hitler nimbly built up a presence of not so much actual violence, but its constant threat infesting the streets; Jewish shops were ransacked, trade union offices burned, ignition keys or distributors of communist lorries stolen, public buildings, illegally, decorated with Nazi flags; it was great fun, until, on September 14, Hitler went a bit too far.

The BAYERNBUND [Bavarian League, ¶], a coalition of conservative groups which, in principle, accepted the Republic and hence, in Hitler's eyes, were traitors, had invited the public to a great really in the Löwenbräukeller, one of the biggest beer cellars, for 8 p.m. that evening. One of the mainstays of the league was the Bavarian Monarchist Party, whose chairman, Engineer Otto Ballerstedt was an able, if not brilliant, speaker. Hitler had decided to attend, together with Esser,

Oskar Körner, at that time his deputy, and a posse of bodyguards. The SA had been mobilized and dispersed through the audience at strategic places. When, shortly after eight, Ballerstedt prepared to commence his speech, the Nazis intervened.

Scores of SA troops had been planted in the audience near the podium and they leaped to their feet to give Hitler a raucous demonstration. Hundreds of other party adherents planted throughout the audience joined in. Then Herrmann Esser climbed on a chair, shouting that Bavaria was in its present low state because of the Jews. This brought a chorus of demands that Ballerstedt "give the floor" to Hitler.

Someone threw the light switches in an effort to prevent a brawl. It only created tumult. When the lights went on again the SA flooded onto the stage, engulfing Ballerstedt. After beating him to pulp, the SA group shoved him off the stage into the audience.

At an examination by the police commission investigating the fracas, Hitler expressed no regrets. "It's all right," was his dogged comment. "We got what we wanted. Ballerstedt did not speak." The matter did not end with an inquiry. Hitler and Esser were both informed they would be tried for violating the peace.

The impending trial only inspired violence which erupted on the evening of November 4, during a Hitler speech at Munich's Hofbräuhaus. By the time he entered the vestibule at 7:45 p.m., the hall was overflowing with more than eight hundred occupants. The women were told to take seats near the front, as far from the doors as possible. The warning didn't faze Frau Magdalena Schweyer, proprietor of a vegetable and fruit shop opposite Hitler's dwelling and his faithful adherent. "I was too excited really to be frightened. It was plain there'd be some trouble: half the people in the place belonged to the Reds."

In fact, hostile workers from the Maffei factory, the Isaria Meter Works and other shops far outnumbered Hitler's followers. When Hitler saw that the Social Democrats had come early and taken most of the places, he ordered the doors closed. He told the SA bodyguard - there were less than fifty on hand - that this was the chance to show loyalty to the movement "and that not a man of us must leave the hall unless we were carried out dead."

They were to attack at the first sign of violence on the theory that the best defence was a good offense. "The answer was a threefold Heil that sounded rougher and hoarser than usual." This romanticized account by Hitler was mirrored in the recollections of his followers who saw him as he undoubtedly saw himself: the pure man of iron will from the trenches come to lead the Fatherland back to honour and glory.

As Hitler started toward the speaker's platform, workers shouted threats. Hitler ignored them and pushed forward. Herrmann Esser was now standing on the front table, calling the meeting to order. He jumped down and Hitler took his place. At first there were boos but even those who had come to jeer listened to his arguments and he was able to talk for more than one hour without interruption. But his opponents were only biding their time as they downed numerous mugs of beer, storing the empty ones under the tables, for ammunition.

All at once someone interrupted Hitler and he shouted a retort. There were isolated angry shouts throughout the room. A man jumped on his chair and yelled: "Freiheit!" ['Freedom', the Communist slogan and sign for the attack, ¶]. A beer stein hurtled at Hitler's head. Then a half dozen more.

"Duck down!" the young monitors up front shouted to the women. Frau Schweyer obeyed. "One heard nothing but yells, crashing beer mugs, stamping and struggling, the overturning of heavy oaken tables, and the smashing of wooden chairs. A regular battle raged in the room."

Curious, she looked up to see Hitler still standing atop a table despite the barrage of heavy mugs flying past his head. The outnumbered SA fought so ferociously that within half an hour the enemy had been driven down the stairs. It looked as if a shell had exploded in the hall demolishing chairs, tables and beer mugs.

*Finally above the din came the voice of Herrmann Esser: "The meeting goes on. The speaker has the floor."
(50)*

From now on, the possibility of violence lay in the air at every NSDAP meeting, and the "je ne sais quoi", a hint of perhaps pleurably looming disaster, became in fact one of their attractions. The battle of November 4, suitably embellished in the party lore, also became the mythos nascendi of the SA. Very many heads had to be stitched in the local hospitals that night and Hitler was perhaps the only person not surprised by the fact that the workers who had suffered worst in the melee were the first to join the NSDAP. "Cruelty impresses," said Hitler. (51) The battle had two other side effects: it was around this time that the term "Nazi" became popular, which Bavarians had long used as a sobriquet for "Ignatius" or "Ignaz", and Hitler nonchalantly applied to the Munich police department for a pistol permit, on the grounds of his person's safety being imperilled by "communist thugs". More interestingly, he received the permit.

The disputes over the war reparations remained in the headlines of the years 1921, and the debate continued into the next year. The German government had rejected the 134 billion mark verdict, to nobody's surprise, and French and Belgian troops subsequently occupied the Ruhr area, Germany's industrial heartland. On January 11, 1922, the German government propagated a parole of passive resistance in return, a measure that found all German political parties united in a national front. That is, with the exception of the NSDAP; Hitler, characteristically, not only did not support the national front, he forbade party members to partake in acts of sabotage and even had a few sinners expelled. He remarked: "If they haven't caught on that this idiocy about a common front is fatal for us, they're beyond help." (52) Not only did he realize that his minuscule front would necessarily be overlooked in a grand coalition of German parties, he did believe that resistance was hopeless, nay, stupid, unless the own house had been brought to order, i.e. the Weimar system overturned.

Underlying his stand was the conviction that no consistent and successful foreign policy could be pursued unless a united and revolutionary nation stood behind it. This view reversed the whole political tradition of the Germans, for it asserted the primacy of domestic rather than foreign policy. (53)

It was more water on Hitler's mill when the Allied Commission ultimately insisted on an immediate payment of 2 billion gold marks plus twenty-five percent of the value of all exports. The reaction was easily anticipated: the German government, running out of options, had to repudiate the suggestion of resistance, and offered to pay whatever was available; in the eyes of the Right, this was "treason" - once again.

The extreme Right was dutifully outraged over the renewed "capitulation" and all over the country political violence experienced a significant augmentation, which reached its pinnacle with the assassination of Mathias Erzberger, the Centre politician who had signed the instrument of armistice in November 1918, on August 26, 1921. (54) Then the League of Nations entered in the fray by decreeing that the province of Upper Silesia, Germany's second biggest industrial area after the Ruhr valley, was to be given to Poland despite the fact that the plebiscite on March 20, 1921, had established a majority of 707,000 votes for Germany against 479,000 votes for Poland.

The sole good news came from Rapallo, a small Italian town near Genova, where the new Foreign Secretary, Walther Rathenau, had succeeded in negotiating a bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union on Easter Sunday 1921. The Russians had been the other big loser of the war, and Rathenau's arguing their common interests satisfied Lenin that the new German Republic was a potential friend. The treaty was comprehensive, even more so in a number of clandestine supplements. Openly, Germany and the Soviet Union decided to forgive all mutual reparation claims and to resume trade on the basis of mutual preferentiality. Germany was to deliver assistance chiefly in the form of modern technology, while Russia would assist a Germany that was...

...determined to circumvent the restrictive military clauses of the Versailles Treaty without arousing the suspicions of the International Control Commission operating on its territory. Lenin had already requested German assistance in reorganizing the Red Army; General Hans von Seeckt, head of the Reichswehr, readily complied, and the military of the two powers came into close contact. Small German military units began training Russians while gaining experience in the use of special weapons. (55)

One of Lenin's best friends had initiated the cooperation.

It was Karl Radek, the brilliant intellectual in Lenin's old guard who had established the early contacts between the Soviet Union and the Reichswehr High Command and thus helped to free Germany from various fetters of the Peace Treaty.

Radek, an arch Bolshevik, tribune of the plebs, co-founder of the German Communist Party and Lenin's comrade-in-arms since the Swiss exile, was a fervent supporter of defeating the "common enemy", the victors of Versailles, by an alliance of the losers, Germany and Russia. He did not believe it necessary that Germany needed to be a Communist state herself as a precondition to the planned undertakings; in his opinion, the German nationalist movement was simply a precursor in the inevitable historic development which would bring Communism to Germany at any rate...

The interest of the Soviets was to participate in the military know-how of the Reichswehr and the war experiences of the German officer corps; and to utilize their counsel in the rebuilding of the Russian armament industry. The interest of the Reichswehr was in forbidden weapon systems and places where to test and exercise them. Agreement was reached rather swiftly and a number of secret bilateral pacts signed into existence by Stavka and Reichswehr High Command. A special staff office for the illicit affair was organized and named "Special Group R", R for Russia. This secret department created a civil front, a company called GEFU, Gesellschaft zur Förderung gewerblicher Unternehmungen, Society for the Development of Commercial Businesses.

This firm had offices in Berlin and Moscow, was financed from secret army funds, and underwrote the secret military production factories to be built in Russia. It engaged in various contracts and businesses with the Soviet government, owned subsidiaries in various parts of the country, which all engaged into forbidden activities including the manufacture of aircraft bombs, armoured vehicles, aircraft, chemical agents and even submarines; all the military ordnance Germany was prohibited to manufacture or to possess. Geoffrey Bailey, a specialist for the Red Army's hidden activities, remarked in his book "Verschwörer um Russland" ['Conspirators around Russia', ¶]:

"In 1924, the Junkers Company built several hundred all-metal aircraft in the Moscow suburb of Fili. Grenade production from the reconstructed and modernized former Czarist arsenals in Leningrad, Tula and Slatoust soon reached an annual number of over 300,000 while poison gas was manufactured by the Bersol Company in Trotsky (today's Krasnogwardeisk). Submarines and armoured ships were constructed on shipyards in Leningrad and Nikolayev. In the year 1926 over one hundred and fifty million Reichsmark, almost one third of the Reichswehr budget, went to Russia for purchase of ordnance and ammunition."

The acquisition of the illegal weapons was the simple side of the cooperation. As any importation of such contraband was prohibited and impossible to hide, contracts were signed which established German exercise facilities and complete manoeuvre areas in the Soviet Union.

Between the years 1922 and 1930 the following facilities were built: a full German airport and flight centre in Wivupal/Lipezk, 400 kilometres southeast of Moscow, a gas warfare school in Saratow at the lower Volga opened in 1927 and an armoured vehicle training facility with a full manoeuvre area in Kazan at the middle Volga, in use since 1930.

In reciprocity, Soviet officer candidates, former Czarist soldiers, honoured civil war heroes and elite political commissars were schooled in the German war academies and staff schools, where they studied the principles and teachings of Moltke, Clausewitz and Ludendorff. (56)

The outflanking of the Versailles Treaty would have certainly found the applause of the extreme Right had they known about it. Since the nationalist cabal never knew which advantages Rathenau's Russian gambit had opened to the Reichswehr, his assassination by a few more reactionary morons plunged Germany into the next crisis.

The extent and impact of this co-operation could not be calculated by Rathenau's critics and, even though German rearmament was given tremendous impact by this pact, the very Germans who wanted a strong army labelled him a Red for consorting with the Soviets.

This was only one black mark against a man who had undeservedly become the symbol of subservience to the West since he felt obliged to carry out with determination the onerous economic promises of the Versailles Treaty. Moreover, he was a wealthy Jew, accused by the Nazis of secretly plotting for Jewish domination of the world. On the fourth of June [1921, ¶] this gifted patriot was murdered, gangster style, by two former members of the Free Corps. (57)

The murder produced ripples of apprehension not only in Germany but all over the continent; not only shocked Germans but Europeans alike. Stefan Zweig had a very personal reason to attend the funeral.

For me this [Mussolini's successful coup d'état, ¶] was the first warning that under the apparently quiet surface our Europe was full of dangerous subterranean currents. I did not have to wait long for the second. I had decided, again lured by the pleasure of travelling, to go to Westerland, on the German North Sea.

For an Austrian a visit to Germany still had something encouraging about it. The Mark, compared with our miserable Krone, had held up beautifully thus far and the process of recovery seemed to be in full swing. The trains ran on time, the hotels were clean and shining; everywhere on the right and the left of the tracks there were new houses and new factories, everywhere the perfect, quiet order which one had hated before the war and which one had learned to appreciate again during the chaos.

A certain tension, to be sure, was in the air; for the whole country was waiting to learn whether the negotiations at Genoa and Rapallo (the first at which Germany had a seat as an equal with the formerly hostile powers) would bring the hoped-for alleviations of the war burdens, or at least a fair gesture of real understanding.

The leader of these negotiations, so memorable in the history of Europe, was no other than my old friend Rathenau. His genial instinct for organization had already proved itself excellently during the war; from the start he had recognized the weakest spot in the German economy where, later on, it also received its mortal blow: the procurement of raw materials, and early (here too anticipating time) he centralized the whole economic system. When the war was over and a German Foreign Minister was needed who could meet the shrewdest and most experienced diplomats among the former opponents on their own ground, naturally the choice fell on him.

Hesitatingly I telephoned him in Berlin. Why break in on a man absorbed in shaping our destiny? "Yes, it's difficult," he said to me over the telephone, "even friendship must now be sacrificed to my duty." But with his extraordinary facility for employing every minute he immediately devised a meeting.

He had to leave his card at certain embassies, and as it was a half-hour's drive from Grunewald, the simplest thing was for me to go there and have a chat in his car while he was on his way. It is a fact that his capacity for mental concentration, his stupendous facility for switching from one subject to another was so perfect, that he could talk at any time, in the car or on a train, as precisely and profoundly as in his own room. I did not wish to miss this opportunity and I believe that it afforded him satisfaction to talk with someone who was politically disinterested and bound to him personally by years of friendship.

It became a long talk and I can vouch that Rathenau, who personally was not free of vanity, had not accepted the position of German Foreign Minister with a light heart, let alone eagerly and impatiently. He knew from the start that for the time being the problem still was insoluble; and that at best he could return with some slight success, a few unimportant concessions, and that it was too early to hope for a real peace, for a generous understanding.

"Perhaps ten years from now," he said to me, "provided that things go badly with everybody and not only with us alone. First, the old generation will have to be swept out of diplomacy and the generals will have to become silent monuments on the public squares." He was fully cognizant of his doubled responsibility through the burden of his being a Jew. Seldom perhaps in history has a man entered with so much scepticism and so many inner scruples on a task which he knew that not he but only time alone could solve - and he knew also its personal danger.

Since the murder of Erzberger who had taken on the unpleasant duty of the armistice which Ludendorff had carefully shirked by going abroad, he could not doubt that a similar fate might await him also as a pioneer for mutual understanding. But, being unmarried, without children and fundamentally deeply lonely, he felt that he should not avoid the danger; nor was I bold enough to warn him to take precautions.

That Rathenau accomplished his task at Rapallo as excellently as it was possible under the then prevailing circumstances is now a historical fact. His splendid gift of quickly grasping any favourable situation, his cosmopolitan and his personal prestige never proved themselves more brilliantly. But already there were groups strong in the land that knew that they would secure followers only by assuring the vanquished people again and again that they really were not vanquished and that negotiations or compromises were treason to the nation. ...

It was in the city then, that I said good-bye to him in front of the Ministry, without having any premonition that this would be the last good-bye. And later I saw by photographs that the road through which we had driven together was the same where, shortly after, the murderers waylaid the same automobile; it was no more than chance that I did not witness the historically fateful scene. This was I the better able to approach fully, because of the lively impression on my senses, the tragic episode with which the disaster of Germany, the disaster of Europe began. (58)

On the same day Walter Rathenau's blood spilled on a Berlin sidewalk, Adolf Hitler was taken out of circulation for five weeks. The judicial aftermath of the Ballerstedt affair had caught up with him, and he was sentenced to three months of imprisonment for inciting a riot. He served five weeks and later admitted that he hated every minute of it. While he sat in Stadelheim prison on a diet of government-sponsored gruel, the federal government in Berlin enacted, in the wake of Rathenau's assassination, a "Law for the Protection of the Republic," an edict aimed at curbing political terror. The well-intentioned directive aggravated the legal consequences arising of political violence, threatened with increased fines or jail time, and was completely ignored by the extremists of both camps. For the worse, it was instantly ridiculed: from the initials of its title, GESETZ ZUM SCHUTZE DER REPUBLIK, the Nazis formed the word "Geschurep", which sounded rather preposterous and funny. If the government thought it was able to stop the movement with a few days worth of jail time, Hitler remarked, it only showed its true weakness.

On the first day after his release from jail on July 27, 1922, Hitler booked the Bürgerbräukeller for a great rally to take place the following evening. It was one of Munich's biggest beer cellars, and an anticipatory crowd of five thousand assumed that he would speak about the new law, which he did, and more. It seems that the time in prison had given Hitler an opportunity to work on his political theory; the audience received on this evening the revelation of the new and improved theory on the history of man, from the anti-Semitic point of view. Comparable to Marxism in viewing human history as rooted in a single struggle, as between capitalists and proletariat, the sum of human history as divulged by Hitler this night was the expression of a racial conflict.

Sub specie aeternitatis - under the eyes of eternity - a battle raged between the two racial archetypes: the völkisch, Aryan and nationalist people on the one hand, the Germans at the tip of the lance, and international Jewry. The latter had founded and operated the stock exchange, nemesis of the working class, as well as liberalism and communism, which were but ruses to profit from the raw cultural energy of the Aryan race. Germany was a tough nut for them to crack, Hitler remarked, because of the natural resistance of Aryan Germans to Jewish manipulations; this very fact being the reason why the ministrations of the Jews centred on Germany. Once this mightiest pillar of pure blood had fallen, their

global victory was assured. Thus the Jewish conspiracy's objectives were simply "to make the nation defenceless in arms and to make the people defenceless in spirit." (59)

The "Geschurep" was simply the newest foil used to probe the people's resistance, a means to find out where immunity to Jewish propaganda could be discovered and extinguished. Hitler called on Germany's youth to fight the racial nemesis.

"So as I come to the end of my speech I want to ask something of those among you who are young. And for that there is a very special reason. The old parties train their youth in the gift of gab, we prefer to train them to use their bodily strength. For I tell you: the young man who does not find his way to the place where in the last resort the destiny of his people is most truly represented, only studies philosophy and in a time like this buries himself behind his books or sits at home by the fire, he is no German youth! I call upon you! Join our Stormtroopers! ...

He who today fights on our side cannot win great laurels, far less can he win great material goods -- it is more likely that he will end up in jail. He who today is a leader must be an idealist, if only for the reason that he leads those against whom it would seem that everything has conspired." (60)

It was the openness of the party to the youth that gave her its dynamic impatience; unlike the bourgeois parties which never abandoned seniority and elitism, the NSDAP took everyone and offered them a new beginning. A great many people longed for exactly such a remedy: after five years of a lost war, revolutions, one Soviet Republic, inflation, pauperization of the middle class and the trauma of Versailles, a new start - tabula rasa - was an attractive proposition. Practically all strata of society could thus be addressed by the NSDAP and the limited appeal the other nationalist groups had for the broad mass of the people could be overcome.

On the whole, it was a mentality rather than a class which marked the convert to National Socialism in those early days; it was an ostensibly non-political but actually pro-authoritarian and leadership-hungry state of mind, and one which could be found in all classes and subgroups.

Under the changed conditions of the republic people of this sort found themselves in a sad plight. Their anxiety complexes were reinforced because the new political form established no authority that could claim their attachment and future loyalty. These people had always owed part of their sense of personal value to identification with the political order. But this present state meant nothing to them.

Their stern ideal of order and respect, which they had doggedly preserved through all the chaos of the times, seemed to them challenged by the very constitution of the republic, by democracy and freedom of the press, the clash of opinions and the horse trading among parties. The world had become incomprehensible to them... Yet Hitler understood them.

One summary of an early Hitler speech runs: "He compared pre-war Germany, in which order, cleanliness and rectitude prevailed, with the present-day Germany of the revolution." The nation had a deeply rooted instinct for rules and discipline; it wanted the world orderly or it did not want the world at all. (61)

The party experienced rapid growth all along 1921 and founded its first non-Bavarian chapters, as in Hanover, Zwickau and Dortmund, in the same year. (62) In the midst of 1922, 6,000 members were counted. But then - in the wake of the Rathenau assassination - the suddenly galloping inflation drew in a flood of new members. The value of the U.S. Dollar had stood at 120 marks in January 1922; by July of the same year it had crept up to 270 marks, and in December 1922 the exchange rate was 8200 marks. Soon one dollar was worth millions, then billions of marks, and the economic havoc wrought by the inflation increased the protest potential exponentially, and hence the membership of the NSDAP, in which it expressed itself, to 20,000 names by the end of 1922. (63)

The psychological impact upon the lower bourgeoisie, the rentiers, skilled workers, soldiers, small artisans and shopkeepers which formed the backbone of the party, hit home less because of the loss of their relatively meagre savings, but for the (correct) realization that the state had gone from an "unselfish, just and honest institution" over to pursue

"fraudulent bankruptcy by means of the inflation, thus cheating its citizens." (64) The war debts plus the rest of the Berlin government's obligations, about 150 billion marks in all, had been paid back, easily, in worthless paper marks, and the brazen success of speculators - Hugo Stinnes would own almost a fifth of the German industry by mid-1923 - only assured the small savers, pensioners and war widows of the moral bankruptcy of the government and the business elite alike. Of the German politicians, only Hitler addressed their feelings.

What the nation at the moment was experiencing for the first time -- the succession of disenchantment, decline, and declassing, together with the search for scapegoats on whom to heap the blame -- Hitler had long ago gone through. Ever since he had been turned down at the Academy he had known the anguish of a reality that ran counter to his longings and his expectations.

Now he could translate his own complexes and discontents to a superindividual plane. Were it not for this congruence between the personal and the social-pathological situation, Hitler could never have wielded such hypnotic power over his fellow citizens. But he had long ago memorized all their reasons and pretexts; he knew the formulas, had long ago discovered the villain.

No wonder his hearers were electrified by his words. What captivated them was not the logic of his arguments nor the pithiness of his slogans and images, but the sense of shared experiences, shared sufferings and hopes. The failed bourgeois Adolf Hitler could communicate with them on the level of a common distress. Their aggressions brought them together. To a great extent his special charisma, a mixture of obsessiveness, passionate banality, and vulgarity derived from this sharing.

He proved the truth of Jacob Burckhardt's saying that history sometimes loves to concentrate itself in a single human being, whom the world thereupon obeys; time and the man enter into a great, mysterious covenant.
(65)

Psychoanalyst Carl Jung found no word better suited than "magic" to describe the rapport between orator and attendees. But Hitler did not blindly trust ESP, he made sure that the visitors got a good show for the 1 Mark entry fee. And increasingly, it were not only the lesser men and women who showed vulnerability to Hitler's seething diatribes, it were men of education, of former or present means, who flocked to the NSDAP. Karl Lüdecke, a businessman with access to foreign currency and hence quite a catch for the party, described his first encounter with Hitler as follows:

"Presently my critical faculty was swept away... He was holding the masses, and me with them, under a hypnotic spell by the sheer force of his conviction ... I do not know how to describe the emotions that swept over me as I heard this man. His words were like a scourge. When he spoke of the disgrace of Germany, I felt ready to spring on any enemy. His appeal to German manhood was like a call to arms, the gospel he preached a sacred truth. He seemed another Luther. I forgot everything but the man; then, glancing round, I saw that his magnetism was holding these thousands as one.

Of course I was ripe for this experience. I was a man of thirty-two, weary of disgust and disillusionment, a wanderer seeking a cause; a patriot without a channel for his patriotism, a yearner after the heroic without a hero. The intense will of the man, the passion of his sincerity seemed to flow from him into me. I experienced an exaltation that could be likened only to religious conversion ... I had found myself, my leader, and my cause." (66)

Yet not all listeners remained perpetually enchanted. General Otto von Lossow, commander of the Reichswehr in Bavaria (7th Infantry Division), who will play a prominent role in the happenings of November 1923, later testified:

"Hitler's stunning and suggestive oratory initially made a big impression upon me. But the more often I heard him, the more this first impression waned. I realized that Hitler's long speeches basically contained always the same issues, that a part of his claims is self-evident for every nationally-minded German and that another part is all but proof that Hitler has no sense for reality, possibility and practicability at all." (67)

Lüdecke, however, was Hitler's new star convert, and so it happened that a most important duty was bestowed on him. The next-in-line right-wing putsch was planned by the successful doctor and less known public health official Dr. Otto Pittinger, who was domiciled in Regensburg, seventy miles north of Munich. His outfit was called "BUND BAYERN UND REICH", Federation for Bavaria and Empire, and it partook on a big rally of all patriotic assemblies in Munich.

On 16 August 1922, Hitler spoke alongside other leaders of the nationalist associations at a huge protest rally of the VEREINIGTE VATERLÄNDISCHE VERBÄNDE BAYERN (United Patriotic Associations of Bavaria) on the Königsplatz in Munich.

The rally, held under the slogan "For Germany - Against Berlin", directed at "the approaching Jewish Bolshevism under the protection of the Republic", was the first time that the SA had appeared in public as a paramilitary formation under its own banners. Its numbers - no more than 800 or so men about this time - were, however, dwarfed by the 30,000 armed men of Pittinger's BUND BAYERN UND REICH, and by the large, well-armed formations of BUND OBERLAND and the REICHSFLAGGE.

Talk of a putsch against Lerchenfeld (the successor of von Kahr as Bavarian Minister President, ¶1) in favour of the restoration of Kahr was in the air. There were rumours that this would take place at a further mass protest rally against Lerchenfeld, planned for 25 August. (68)

Lüdecke was given the mission to keep Regensburg and the north of Bavaria informed about the state of affairs in Munich. He dutifully boarded a northbound train, to explain his mission to the northern sympathizers. When news reached him that nothing had happened in Munich, he took a taxi to discuss the situation with the head of the rebellion. Arriving at Dr. Pittinger's headquarters, the municipal health office, he encountered the prospective new ruler of Bavaria emerging in the direction of the parking lot. The good doctor did not deign to answer Lüdecke's questions but loaded a suitcase into the trunk of his car and sped off to a well-deserved vacation in Italy, as Lüdecke was later able to find out from a maid. The putsch had not happened, because nobody had shown up.

More correctly, a few thousand National Socialists had indeed shown up on Munich's Karolinenplatz, but a lack of support and action at length tired the patriotic posse, and perhaps 5,000 of them ended up in the huge Kindkeller Inn, where, rumour had it, they were to receive instructions from the Führer. Hitler had meanwhile acquired the useful information that the Bavarian government was stalling or stopping the trains which were to bring to Munich the armed units of the United Patriotic Associations, and thus he could not count on reinforcements. For a moment it seemed as if Hitler might confront the police that had shown up to keep the Nazis in the locale from engaging the about a thousand Communists who had convened just outside of it, but then he called his men off. (69)

The next day Lüdecke met a livid Hitler. "I was ready - my men were ready!" he angrily told Lüdecke. "From now on I go my way alone." Even if not a soul followed, he would go it alone. "No more Pittingers, no more Fatherland societies! One party. One single party. These gentlemen, these counts and generals - they won't do anything. I shall. I alone." (70)

It was a precious, useful, fate-changing lesson Hitler learned by the failure of the "Pittinger Putsch": to trust no one; to depend entirely on one's own powers. In earlier days, his self-esteem, his self-reliance had known bounds, had known doubts. Only a few months previously, he had confessed to writer Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, who was then writing a book titled THE THIRD REICH - in which he depicted "the 'true statesman' as 'at one and the same time ruler, warrior, and priest'" (71) that:

"You have everything I lack. You create the spiritual framework for Germany's reconstruction. I am but a drummer and an assembler. Let us work together." Envisaging a nationalistic, socialist corporate state, Moeller refused Hitler's offer, then told a colleague, 'That fellow will never grasp it. I would rather commit suicide than see such a man in office.'" (72)

It was one of the standard complaints of the extreme Right to decry the "leaderlessness" of democracy and republic, and the success of Benito Mussolini in taking over Italy's government - by a train ride, not a "March on Rome" - on October 28,

1922, seemed to prove the superiority of authoritarian leadership, of action, of the seizure of power. Only slowly did Hitler familiarize himself with the thought of being, perhaps, more than a "drummer". In a speech on May 4, 1923, he had explained that "Our task is to give the dictator, when he comes, a people ready for him!" (73) Given how things stood at that time, the future dictator could only be Ludendorff. But the more the general dove into the sudden treacheries of politics, the clearer became his lack of political instinct.

Political instinct, however, was what Hitler had, and he began to understand that while Ludendorff - due to his popularity with soldiers and the nationalist Right in general - was a necessary ally, he was not a leader of people. Since to Hitler all things were things of imagination - for the moment - why should he not re-imagine his role? Thus he testified a year later, in April 1924, at his trial:

"Not from modesty did I want at that time to be the drummer. That is the highest there is. The rest is unimportant." (74)

Yet in the summer of 1922, with Ludendorff's shadow looming large over the putsch plans of the Right, Hitler was restricted to drumming - the grapes then hung too high for his vulpine desires. But with the continuing mistakes of the "counts and generals" and the success of his own movement, his self-esteem grew. Perhaps the people were to follow the "drummer", if no suitable candidate could be found among the ranks of the former elites that had so much discredited themselves?

Let the dice fly high!

CONVERGENCE

Verse-nous ton poison qu'il nous reconforte!
 Serve us your poison, Sire, to treat us well!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
 Minds burning, we know what we have to do,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer au Ciel, qu'importe?
 And plunge to depths of Heaven or of Hell,
Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver de nouveau!
 To fathom the Unknown and find the New!

Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, "Voyaging", VIII B

By mid-1922, Adolf Hitler had established himself as the foremost political figure in Bavaria's nationalist circles. After the capitulations of Drexler and Harrer, the old party guard, and the adoption of a new party statute that gave Hitler complete control, the NSDAP and her "athletes", the SA, were instruments that could be wielded through the gamut of the political necessities, from enticement to brute force. That the latter was to have no ill consequences was ensured by Police Commissioner Ernst Pöhner and his Chief of Political Affairs, Wilhelm Frick, who were Nazi sympathizers and held their "protecting hand over the NSDAP and Herrn Hitler." (1)

But for a few weeks of late 1922, Hitler had to make room in the Munich newspaper headlines when national issues were transcended by developments in Italy. The world's attention was directed to the country in which Verdi, Rossini and Puccini had composed their operas, and, if rumours were correct, what transpired there might have resulted from the nightmare of some opera librettist.

Benito Mussolini, born 1883 in Dovia, a small town in north-eastern Italy, was by profession an elementary school teacher, before a protracted sojourn in Switzerland (1902-1904) brought him into contact with the socialist movement. Under its influence, he developed concepts for a reformation of the deeply conservative Italian society, which stubbornly resisted changes of the still pervasive feudal structures. From 1905 to 1906 he served in the Italian army and returned, honourably discharged, to his young students. Promulgating his socialist persuasions initially as a hobby, by writing the occasional article for left-wing magazines and newspapers, he became a professional political columnist when he joined the staff of an Austrian newspaper on the other side of the border. This occupation also gave him ample opportunity to improve his German, an expertise that came in handy later. He developed an uncanny pen for sardonic descriptions of the fallacies of the reigning Austrian and Italian monarchies, which led to his swift expulsion from Austria for alleged revolutionary activities.

Back home he landed another, better, newspaper job in 1912, when he became the editor of the official newspaper of the Italian Socialist Party. In the summer of 1914, the Italian Socialists, like their spiritual brethren all over the continent, were sharply divided over the question whether to support an eventual war. It turned out that, as in most other countries, the more radical socialists opposed the war, the minority position, as it were, while most of their moderate colleagues fell prey to Italy's "sacro egoismo". This patriotic or treasonous point of view held that Italy not only should not fulfill her obligations under the Triple Alliance, as a confederate of Germany and Austria, but should prepare to attack Austria once the country was weakened enough by war to be unable to defend her southern border. Then Italy could take possession of South Tyrolia, Trieste and Friuli on the cheap.

The socialists eventually split over the issue, Mussolini supporting the belligerent faction, for what he was roundly criticized. He accepted the consequences, resigned, and opened up his own newspaper *IL POPOLO D'ITALIA*, "The Italian People", in which he continued to argue for Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Entente.

In 1915 Italy did enter the war, as Mussolini had counselled, and the Socialist Party threw him out. He returned to take the King's Shilling and wore the uniform two more years. He was wounded in 1917, and was honourably released a second time. As it happened to so many of his contemporaries, the experience of the war and the ensuing economical sufferings of the poor reawakened his desire for political change. In 1919 he founded his own association of war veterans, the *FASCI DI COMBATTIMENTO*, an Italian version of the Free Corps. The political program of the group was on the nebulous side, but called for Italian rule of the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, the inheritance of the *Imperium Romanum*. Mussolini's socialist roots still showed up in his demand of state ownership of the heavy industry.

Mussolini soon realized that the Italian Right, which he sought out as a political home for his group, was mainly composed of propertied people who were aghast at any referral to reforms, of whatever kind, and he had to scale back the socialist content to vague phrases of the desirability of workers' emancipation. The party program he thus composed in 1920 was colourless enough so that anybody might subscribe to it. Everything that might arouse negative reactions of nobility and industry was carefully purged from the opus and the conservative circles of the country, nobility, military and the cloth began to embrace Mussolini and his "Fascisti". In 1921, he changed the movement's name officially into "NATIONAL ITALIAN FASCIST PARTY" and, for special occasions, formed with war comrades a brigade of thugs which he clothed, availing himself of a bargain sale of the army supplier, into the cheapest garments available, black shirts. Hence the ruffians became known as the "Blackshirts".

In an affair more ridiculous than heroic, Mussolini and his rowdies staged, on October 27, 1922, the adventure which Fascist hagiography later was to glorify as the "March on Rome". Contrary to the moniker, nobody actually marched upon the capital, least of all Signor Mussolini. The undertaking consisted of nothing more than Blackshirt demonstrations in a few big northern Italian cities, timed to coincide with the journey Mussolini took on a train - second class - from Milan to Roma Termini, the capital's main railway station. After his arrival he commandeered a taxicab to bring him to the palace of King Victor Emmanuel III, where he asked for an immediate audience. When he was admitted into the monarch's presence, he requested from His Excellency to be appointed, forthwith, to the office of Prime Minister of the Italian Republic. The petition was granted.

Two or three companies of the army, or a battalion of *Carabinieri*, the military police, could have arrested the Blackshirts in Milan and Torino as well as their strange chieftain, and the apparition might have been over in a day; in the event, the people of Italy learned from the lecture of the morrow's papers that they had a new government. Aficionados of opera buffa, the Italians cherished the bravura performance and applauded their new Prime Minister the next evening as if he were an amalgamate of Julius Caesar and Don Giovanni, with a possible admixture of ten per cent Macbeth.

The Prime Minister was pleased with his audience; so pleased that he informed the public in 1925 that, henceforth, he would save his fellow citizens the dregs and the dirt of campaigns. He volunteered to remain Prime Minister for the foreseeable future, which would make elections superfluous. In honour of this considerable sacrifice, he wished to be addressed, from now on, simply as the Duce, the leader. It was theatre, but for at least a decade an able politician, or at least a natural populist lurked behind the Caesarean mask. That Italy could not command as much leadership, pre-eminence and glory in the world as he wished she would, had less to do with personal failures than with the Italian predilection for *la dolce vita*.

A few months earlier Lüdecke, Hitler fresh convert, had been dispatched to Italy to meet Mussolini and establish friendly relations. The Italian leader had to admit that he, unfortunately, had not yet heard about his prospective Austrian colleague, but agreed with Lüdecke on the unfairness of the Treaty of Versailles, and declared himself fully congruent with Hitler's ideas as far as Lüdecke could explain them. He shared Hitler's views, he said, about the conspiracy of the international stock exchange capitalists. But when Lüdecke came to the importance of anti-Semitism, Mussolini had to profess his comparative ignorance of the matter. There were only about 55,000 Jews in Italy and anti-Semitism was not a political factor.

Notwithstanding Mussolini's deficiencies in the anti-Semitic department, Lüdecke returned to Munich to deliver a very positive account of the meeting. Both movements, he opined, were anti-Communist, anti-Liberal, and anti-parliamentarian, both aimed at a radical transformation of the respective societies and, not to forget, both leaders were popular former front-line soldiers, which would help in elections (even though Mussolini had no more need of this advantage).

Delighted by the good news and eager to export his own brand of politics beyond the confines of Munich's streets, Hitler staged the party's first excursion, a summer outing, in August 1922. A few rented trucks transported a deputation of party luminaries and a cohort of stormtroopers to the picturesque spa town of Bad Tölz, charmingly situated at the shores of the Wiessee Lake, about forty miles southeast of the Bavarian capital. An improvised rostrum was raised on the back of one of the trucks that came to a stop in the middle of the market square. Benches were seized from a nearby inn, leaflets handed out, swastika banners spread over the square, and Hitler mounted the rostrum to speak: the stage was set, the fun could begin.

After an hour or so, word had passed to a nearby factory, and the socialist local sent a group of roughnecks to end the Nazi show. Mutual enmity quickly inflamed the tempers and the resulting brawl was easily won by the better trained and more experienced SA, as Hitler had planned all along. Excursions into the gently rolling hills of Munich's surroundings quickly became a matter of habit; during the summer school holidays the children were taken out as well, to spend a day in the fresh air and to play police and thieves in the mews and lanes of the villages.

The party coffers at length allowed the purchase of the formerly rented trucks; marquees and megaphones were bought, banners and parasols decorated in the party colours, and the summer rallies became almost professionally staged events. Erich Röhm ransacked the army surplus depots in search of a cheap uniform for the SA, an endeavour which eventually yielded brown shirts with almost matching brown pants and kepis and thus occasioned the birth of the SA's nickname of "Brownshirts". Weapons of all kinds, including light field guns, were procured from the secret caches of the Free Corps and even some old army ordnance was returned to active service.

From the summer of 1922 on, the NSDAP regularly presented itself in one of Munich's great beer gardens on weekend days, usually Saturdays. A few short speeches were given, a brass band entertained the adults, and hostesses invited the children to games. The winners earned coupons, in the party colours: a litre of free beer for father, coffee, perhaps, for mother, lemonade for the children, or sausages for all.

Never had political money yielded a higher return than these alms for Munich's economically handicapped.¹

In the fall of 1922, various völkische, nationalist and conservative organizations had begun preparations for a meeting to bring together all patriotically minded bodies of the nation, in one town, for a demonstration of their (presumed) power and (doubtful) unity. The convention was to take place in Coburg, the hereditary seat of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, under the patronage of the Grand Duke and Duchess themselves. The meeting was scheduled for October 14 and 15, 1922, a week after the end of the Munich Oktoberfest.

As a matter of form, the NSDAP was invited to attend the conference, and in the reply to an inquiry Hitler directed to the planning committee, he was told to bring "some companions." (2) Deciding on a broad interpretation of the vague directive, Hitler rented a train and stuffed it with six companies of SA, about six hundred men, and his personal staff of six. Most of the SA men had to pay part of the expenses from their own pockets, but regardless of the cost it was a merry train which left Munich in the wee hours of October 14.

Since his days in the Männerheim and the trenches, Hitler was aware of basic male needs and had not forgotten to attach a restaurant car to the rear of the train. It was stacked with sausages, pretzels and beer, served nonstop. The non-smoker Hitler had even provided a cigarette girl, although the smokers had to use a separate compartment. At that

¹ Until this day, Munich beer gardens are divided, by custom and law, into a section featuring tables covered with cloth, in proximity to the buffet, where food and drink must be bought from the house, and uncovered tables, a bit farther away, where only beer must be purchased from the house but the guests may bring their own food. This liberty naturally attracted the poorer families; Hitler knew this, and made sure that the winning children came from uncovered tables.

time the SA had not yet been issued the brown uniforms, so that a dress code had to be developed for the occasion. Each man was instructed to wear brown, gray or black attire, so that the ensemble formed an almost monochromatic palette of earth tones, against which their black-white-red armbands starkly contrasted. A brass band was aboard as well, which accompanied without pause the uninterrupted flow of beer that was consumed. When the train rolled into Nuremberg station two and a half hours later, for a scheduled stop, the merriness had, if possible, only increased. In the old Imperial city another two hundred men joined up and the train began the last two hours of its journey; Bavarian card games, some of which do allow cheating, beer, sausages and cigars made the time fly by.

In the forward compartment Hitler had assembled his staff: Max Amann, the former sergeant, Uli Graf, a former wrestler and bouncer, and Christian Weber, a former horse-trader who, like his boss, occasionally found it proper to brandish a whip. The party brains were represented by Alfred Rosenberg, Dietrich Eckart, who regaled the group with the history of every town and castle they passed, and the urbane Lüdecke, who curiously followed the conversations of the motley crew.

Two hours later, the train rolled into Coburg station. The sausage and pretzel front was demobilized and the companies formed clusters at the train doors, which allowed them to form ranks and lines immediately upon exiting the car. Coburg was thus honoured with its first ever SA exercise, and the honoraries of the reception committee were speechless. Eight hundred stormtroopers paraded before Hitler, who then led the way to the conference hotel.

There was one thing Hitler had realized and indeed counted upon that the luminaries in the town never anticipated: the Coburg convention, in the spirit of its initiators, was to be chiefly a conference of familiar faces and old acquaintances; a political kaffeeklatsch of the nobility, a get-together of old generals and impoverished barons, with the admixture of a few nationalist history professors. Hitler was sure that none of the countless excellencies present expected anything but an exercise in nostalgia, and nobody, Hitler calculated, would have thought to oppose the counter-demonstrations the Left was sure to mount. Indeed, as soon as the NSDAP delegation left the train station, they were met by the local chapters of KPD and USPD, reinforced by workers from the many factories of Nuremberg.

The Communists in particular were highly motivated in their efforts to sabotage the tête-a-tête of the nobility, the more so by the present discussion in the country's newspapers whether the aristocracy should be allowed to keep their old possessions or whether they were to be confiscated in the new "Republican Spirit". On the train station's plaza, red flags denoted the presence of a delegation of communist activists, who began to cast mockery and derision upon the arrivees. The Marxist deputation, however, had expected dignitaries in herringbone and cutaways, not the SA, and thus decided on a timely retreat, to await the arrival of reinforcements.

The SA formed columns, the band began to play, and the procession began to parade into town. The local police department, alerted by the presence of the communists, tried to do its best and sent men to line the way from the train station to the meeting place in the centre of town, the Hofbräukeller, a huge hotel cum inn cum beer hall. The sheer size of Hitler's delegation gave rise to problems. Hitler harboured no doubt about the peaceful intentions of the dignitaries and aristocrats he met in the hotel: they had come for a chiefly nostalgic experience while he and his men had come for action, for headlines. His spies informed him that the vicinity of the Keller was filling up with socialist and communist deputations; about a thousand men, give or take, who engaged in mockery of the convention. Because the police had been able to suppress riots on the way to the meeting place

Hitler ordered his units to march back the way they had come. Moreover, he added a theatrical touch that brought the tension to an intolerable height: the bands stopped playing and the men marched to throbbing drum rolls only. This time the predictable street battle erupted. It dragged on in a series of small skirmishes all through the day and into the night, and ultimately the National Socialists emerged as the victors.

This was the first of those challenges to the political authorities that were to dominate the following years. Significantly, Coburg became one of the most reliable NSDAP bases... The braggadocio of Hitler's men during the following weeks repeatedly led to rumours of coups. Finally, Interior Minister Schweyer sent for Hitler and issued a grave warning. If there were any resort to force, Schweyer said, he would order the police to shoot.

But Hitler assured him he would "never as long as I live make a putsch." He gave the minister his word of honour. (3)

It was a delicate tactical situation. Not only had the battle of Coburg put the still tiny party into the headlines of the nation, Hitler was able to win the entry and subordination of Julius Streicher and his following from the Franconian chapter of the DEUTSCHSOZIALISTISCHE PARTEI ["German-Socialist Party", into the NSDAP, which at once doubled the latter's membership roster: soon the treasurer reported 20,000 cardholders. (4) Streicher was a school teacher by trade but a "pornographic" anti-Semite by volition, "obsessed by wild fantasies of ritual murders, Jewish lust, world conspiracy, miscegenation, and lascivious black-haired devils panting after the innocent flesh of Aryan women." (5) He was the uncrowned king of indecency, and his vexations worked well in protestant Franconia, in which anti-Semitism played a far bigger political role as in urbane, Catholic, relaxed Munich. Franconia's ecstatic support was the reason to stage the annual party conventions after 1928 in Nuremberg.

Thus Hitler's strength had nominally doubled, but the Bavarian government, led by the rural-conservative Bavarian People's Party, was not willing to make concessions. When Hitler planned to elevate what used to be the annual general convention of the party to become the "1. Reichsparteitag" ['1st National Party Day', ¶], by planning no less than six public meetings, blessing of standards and a mass convention on the Mars Field, the military grounds, the Bavarian council of ministers stepped in.

"This is not a time for great political conflicts, which might increase the risk of hostilities between Germans. Hence the leaders of the NSDAP have been informed that, under the circumstances prevailing, no open-air events or festivals in regards to the party convention will be permitted.

They refused to follow this order and threatened to counter the power of the state with their own. By this act the National Socialist German Workers' Party has left the grounds of legality and declared war on the lawful government.

To pre-empt all disturbances of law and order, from whatever side they might arise, the administration has now decided to declare martial law." (6)

Not only did Hitler, as mentioned above, visit Minister Schweyer, many Bavarian Reichswehr officers pounded on General von Lossow, commander of the army in Bavaria, to take the decree back. It did not help that, four days after Mussolini's triumph in Rome, Herrmann Esser had announced in the Banquet Hall of the Hofbräuhaus that "Germany's Mussolini is called Hitler," (7) which Minister Schweyer took exactly as it was meant, a declaration of war and proof that the NSDAP sought a coup d'état. But ill prepared to withstand the pressure of the nationalist officers, von Lossow did an about-face and recommended to Schweyer and the cabinet to lift the martial law decree. Thus Hitler got the permission to proceed with the preparations for the first "Reichsparteitag" of the NSDAP, which was to include six meetings on Saturday, January 27, 1923, and a mass demonstration on the Mars Field on Sunday, January 28.

This weekend would see four new faces in the first row of the party leadership. We have met Rudolf Hess earlier, in the context of his winning the essay competition of the university. He was born on April 26, 1894, in Alexandria, Egypt, as the son of a successful import/export merchant. He was educated, with the goal of eventually taking over the family business, in a succession of excellent boarding schools: he finished secondary school in a protestant institute in Bad Godesberg, then visited a Commercial Academy in Neuchatel, Switzerland, and entered an apprenticeship in a company in Hamburg. (8) But the outbreak of the war interrupted his career, and its experience changed him deeply.

He could not but compare the dedication of the soldiers, who daily risked life and limb for the Vaterland, with the childish affair of counting profits, the vain veneration of mammon. He volunteered for the Bavarian 1st Infantry Regiment, the King's Own, into which he was accepted, contrary to Hitler, as a junior officer. He saw service in Flanders, not far from Hitler's Regiment List, and was wounded in 1916. After his recuperation he served in Romania, where he was wounded a second time. He managed to get posted to the air corps, where he became a pilot, joined Fighter Squadron 35, and was discharged as a lieutenant in September 1918. He inscribed at the university and began to hear economics and geopolitics, which was taught by Professor Haushofer. He joined the Thule Society and was a member of the Free Corps of General

Franz Ritter von Epp, which had a (small) part in the liquidation of Levine's Bavarian Soviet Republic. (9) When he met Hitler, he was instantly mesmerized. For the next nineteen years of his life he subordinated himself to his idol; a perfect receiver of orders of which he never changed an iota, an industrious Dr. Watson to his Sherlock Holmes. He also brought Hitler and Haushofer together; the latter had influence on Hitler's "Lebensraum" theories.

Hess was a retiring man, modest and unassertive. Although he had fought well on the battlefield and in the streets and his prize-winning essay breathed blood and iron, he was far from bloodthirsty. Yet while he preferred books and music to brawling, he was never found wanting in beer-hall battles and had won Hitler's affection by his actions in the bloody fracas at the Hofbräuhaus.

With his solid square face, bushy black eyebrows, intense and clenched lips, he was the picture of a man "prepared to trample on his closest friends." Only when he broke into a smile was the true Hess revealed -- an ingenious, bucktoothed young idealist.

Ilse Hess, then Ilse Pröhl, recalls that "he rarely smiled, did not smoke, despised alcohol and had no patience with young people enjoying dancing and social life after a war had been lost." An enigma, except to those who knew him intimately, Hess was the ideal disciple. Too bashful and unambitious to strive for power, he was prepared to follow Hitler wherever he led. (10)

Compared to the aviative deeds of Rudolf Hess, of which nothing much was reported, the record of Hermann Göring was impressive: twenty-two air victories were accounted for on his behalf. He also became the last commandant of the most famous squadron in the world, Baron von Richthofen's, the Red Baron's, Flying Circus.

Where Hess was shy, Göring was flamboyant, and something of a Renaissance man for his gargantuan appetite for the good things in life. His father had been governor of German South-West Africa, today's Namibia, personally chosen for the post by the Iron Chancellor himself. His son Hermann was born on January 12, 1893 in Rosenheim, forty miles east of Munich, but through his father's connection to the Prussian officer corps he studied, after graduating from the Gymnasium of Ansbach, in the Cadet Academies of Karlsruhe, in the Palatinate, and Gross-Lichterfelde near Berlin. (11)

After his twentieth air victory he had been awarded Germany's highest decoration, the Pour Le Mérite, and, unlike most of Hitler's early followers who had problems to make ends meet in the post-war period, he had no trouble earning a living. Soon after the armistice he found employment with nascent air lines and flying shows in Denmark and Sweden, where he met his first wife-to-be Carin, née Baroness von Fock-Kantzow, (12) daughter of a Swedish aristocrat and an Irish brewery heiress. She was, however, in a temporary holding pattern, as aviator Göring would have called it, for she had to wait for the divorce of her first marriage to come through. But the situation in Germany left patriot Göring unable to remain in the blissful peace of Sweden, and he returned to Munich in early 1922. He inscribed himself to hear history and political science at the university, but confessed that theory was not his forte.

"I remember a meeting at which they were discussing getting meals and beds for veteran officers. 'You damn fools!' I told them. 'Do you think that an officer who is worth his salt can't find a bed to sleep in, even if it happens to be in the bed of a pretty blonde? Damn it, there are more important things at stake!' Somebody got fresh and I banged him over the head. Well, of course, the meeting broke up in an uproar." That ended his attempt to head a revolution and it wasn't until the fall of 1922 at a mass meeting that he found someone worth following.

It was a meeting at the Königsplatz protesting Allied demands to hand over alleged war criminals. A series of speakers from various parties took the platform. Then the crowd began calling out, "Hitler!" By chance he was standing near Göring and Carin, who had been married early that year, and they overheard him remark that he wouldn't think addressing "these tame bourgeois pirates." Something about the man in the belted trench coat impressed Göring so much that he went to a party meeting at the Café Neumann.

"I just sat unobtrusively in the background. I remember Rosenberg was there. Hitler explained why he hadn't spoken. No Frenchman is going to lose sleep over that kind of harmless talk, he said. You've got to have

bayonets to back up your threats. Well, that was what I wanted to hear. He wanted to build up a party that would make Germany strong and smash the Treaty of Versailles. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'that's the party for me! Down with the Treaty of Versailles, God damn it! That's my meat!'

At party headquarters he filled out a membership application. The appearance of such a war hero in the shabby office must have caused a stir. "Anyway," he recalled, "somebody tells me that Hitler would like to see me immediately." One look at the imposing Göring was enough for Hitler. Here was the ideal Nordic: luminous blue eyes, straight features and pink and white complexion. "He told me that it was a stroke of fate that I should come to him just as he was looking for somebody to take charge of the SA." They agreed to postpone the announcement a month, but Göring immediately began training the SA as a military organization. "Military! I'll tell the world it was military!" (13)

There was, however, a curious flaw of character in his new chief of the SA, as far as Hitler was concerned: not only had Göring never been a racist, he had, to the contrary, various Jewish friends. Hitler soon decided that he simply had to overlook the mysterious shortcoming, because Göring was eminently useful to the party. Unlike Röhm, he knew the high officers, the generals and admirals of the nation, and through his wife a good measure of European nobility. He knew his way around in high society, looked well on parades, and knew it: in 1945 Allied troops found, in a derailed train, over three hundred gala uniforms of the Reichsmarschall. That he was dependent on morphine, on account of his war wounds, could not be helped.

What Göring did to advertise the NSDAP in the open, Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter accomplished in more clandestine ways. Born in Riga, Estonia, in 1884, he studied engineering and chemistry since December 1910 at Munich's Technical University. He spent parts of the war in diplomatic service in Turkey and returned to Munich in 1916 to take a doctorate in chemical engineering. After a stint on the Western Front in 1917, he returned to quasi-diplomatic service as translator in Sweden and back in Riga. In November 1918, he had to leave the now independent Republic of Estonia, and via Königsberg and Berlin arrived back in Munich in 1920, where he met, among Rosenberg and other Baltic emigrants, Hitler, and joined the NSDAP in November 1920 as member # 2414. (14)

Even more than Dietrich Eckart or Göring, he knew the right people, especially Ludendorff, whose political counsellor and eminence grise for Baltic affairs he became. Soon Scheubner-Richter, an "adventurer with a chequered past and a knack for lucrative undercover political deals," (15) became the party's expert in secret funding.

Especially in the early years Hitler owed to Scheubner-Richter's talent for raising funds much of the financial basis for his activities. According to a note in an official file, Scheubner-Richter succeeded in digging up "enormous sums of money."

He hovered in the background, surrounded by mystery; but at the same time he had vast social assurance, was a great talker, and maintained connections with many industrialists, with the House of Wittelsbach, with Grand Duke Kyrill [the heir to the Russian throne, ¶], and with high prelates. His influence on Hitler was considerable; he was the only one of those killed at the Feldherrnhalle on November 9, 1923, whom Hitler held to be irreplaceable. (16)

Some of Scheubner-Richter's clandestine contacts were also members of the Nationalist Club in Berlin, where Hitler had spoken first during his absence of Munich in July 1921, which precipitated the capitulation of Drexler and the old party hands and Hitler's taking over the party. His first address at the Club, his meeting of Ludendorff, Count Reventlov, Free Corps leader Walter Stennes and other nationalist dignitaries in this summer and the NSDAP's subsequent successes in 1922 prompted the interest of the Allied Control Commission in Berlin. The august body contacted Warren Robbins, legation secretary at the American Embassy in Berlin, and asked him to send a trusted man to Munich for a report on the current situation. Robbins, a Harvard man, enlisted the services of Captain Truman Smith, assistant military attaché at the embassy, and directed the former alumnus of West Point and Yale to descend into the pits of the Bavarian beer halls; to find out what the Bavarians, of whose likely separatist nature the Commission was well informed of, would concoct if left to their own designs. (17)

Smith's mission objectives were to report whether Bavaria was likely to declare herself independent from Germany; whether there was a possibility of a renewed left-wing coup; whether the NSDAP was strong enough to try a putsch on their own, and, if so, where the sympathies of the Bavarian government, police and army resided. Captain Smith dutifully boarded the next train to Munich, arrived on the morning of November 18, 1922, took a room at the Marienbad Hotel vis-a-vis the railway station, and contacted Robert Murphy at the U.S. Consulate for an introduction into the complexities of Bavarian politics. (18)

At the consulate, Murphy gave him an account of the current situation. At the time being, Bavaria was technically a republic, which had retained certain stately functions like railway, postal and telegraphic services as well as local military command from the erstwhile monarchy. The political system was parliamentary - the government consisted of a Minister President, the functional equivalent of a Prime Minister in a constitutional monarchy, and his cabinet. This government was elected by a majority of the parliament and in theory needed the support of this majority to remain in power. In reality, as a result of the previous battles against the Reds, the government exercised its power unrestrained through army and police, and the new minister president, in Murphy's judgement, was but a puppet of von Kahr. While the socialists were beaten, perhaps for a decade, rumours of a putsch by the Right were dime a dozen, but hard to judge or verify. Hitler, Murphy opined, was an able exploiter of the discontent, but it was questionable whether the Hitler party could be successfully exported beyond the confines of Bavaria.

Smith went to work immediately. Robbins had contacted his old Harvard classmate Ernst Hanfstängl, scion of a family which had been in the international art trade for decades and, in particular in its New York branch, was acquainted with luminaries as diverse as Pierpont Morgan, William Randolph Hearst, Henry Ford, Arturo Toscanini, Enrico Caruso or Charlie Chaplin. (19) Since Hanfstängl had only returned from ten years in New York in the summer of 1921, his introductory services were of limited scope, but when Smith met Scheubner-Richter, the latter brought him swiftly into contact with Crown Prince Rupprecht, Professor Karl Alexander von Mueller, General Ludendorff, Cardinal Faulhaber and finally Alfred Rosenberg, who arranged for Smith to observe a review of the SA in front of the new party office at Corneliusstrasse 12. Smith was impressed.

"A remarkable sight indeed - twelve hundred of the roughest toughnecks I have ever seen in my life pass in review before Hitler at the goosestep under the old Reichsflag wearing red arm bands with Hakenkreuzen. Hitler, following the review, makes a speech ... then shouts, 'Death to the Jews' etc. and etc. There was frantic cheering. I never saw such a sight in my life." (20)

Hitler was busy with other engagements on the day after the parade and had no time for Smith, who went to see General Ludendorff instead. The general professed his anti-Marxism but had little to offer in the way of political alternatives: the republic had to be overcome, and then one would see. The following day Smith finally got hold of Hitler, visiting him in his pied-à-terre in the annex of Thierschstrasse 41. After the meeting Smith recorded in his diary: "A marvellous demagogue. I have rarely listened to such a logical and fanatical man. His power over the mob must be immense." (907) Smith shows a ready talent to perceive how the two sides, logic and fanaticism, conflicted with or comforted each other in Hitler's political thinking; most of Hitler's adversaries in the years to come mistook the message for the man.

Hitler described his movement as a "union of Hand and Brain workers to oppose Marxism," and said that the "present abuses of capital must be done away with, if Bolshevism is to be put down." The parliamentary system had to be replaced. "Only a dictatorship can bring Germany to its feet." He stated that it was "much better for America and England that the decisive struggle between our civilization and Marxism be fought out on German soil rather than on American and English soil. If we (America) do not help German Nationalism, Bolshevism will conquer Germany. Then there will be no more reparations and Russian and German Bolshevism, out of motives of self-preservation, must attack the western nations." (21)

Smith was surprised that, as of yet, Hitler had failed to mention his nemesis, the Jewish World Conspiracy. While he had delivered a monologue about the origins and development of socialism as a political doctrine, the way he understood it, he had not yet identified the alleged creators of the perilous idea. Smith finally asked him point-blank about his anti-Semitic oratories, whose importance Hitler played down. He admitted that in politics, against the usual background din, one

sometimes must employ headline-making inaccuracies, but, personally, he only "favoured the withdrawal of citizenship and their exclusion from public affairs." (22)

By the time he left the building, the captain had accepted a ticket for Hitler's next scheduled speech on November 22 in the Kindlkeller, but he was recalled the very same day to Berlin for apparently more important business. He gave his ticket to Hanfstängl with the request to attend the event and report his conclusions to his friend Warren Robbins at the embassy in Berlin.

Hanfstängl came from the best stock of both sides of the Atlantic: on his mother's side he descended from the Sedgwicks, a New England family which supplied two generals to the Union side of the civil war; one of them prominent enough to be a pallbearer at President Lincoln's funeral and the second, John Sedgwick, eternalized in a memento at West Point for his heroic death at the Spotsylvania Courthouse. (23) The German side of the family had served for generations as privy councillors to the Dukes of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and had been successful in the art market.

The family owned an art publishing house in Munich well known for its excellent reproductions. Hanfstängl had been brought up in an atmosphere of art and music, the home a rendezvous for Lilli Lehmann, Wilhelm Busch, Sarasate, Richard Strauss, Felix Weingartner, Wilhelm Backhaus, Fridtjof Nansen and Mark Twain. He himself played the piano with verve and his six-feet-four frame hunched over the keyboard like an impish bear was a common sight in the best Bavarian salons. His nickname was Putzi (little fellow). (24)

Putzi's Harvard classmates included Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and through the latter's connections he had made the acquaintance of Franklin's great uncle Theodore and Woodrow Wilson as well. On this evening of November 22, 1922, he accompanied Captain Smith to his night train to Berlin and was met, in the station, by Alfred Rosenberg, who took Hanfstängl to the Kindlkeller. (25)

When they arrived, the hall was filling out rapidly, with a quite heterogeneous audience. Hanfstängl saw many soldiers and a few officers, civil servants and postal workers, shopkeepers and mechanics, a few dignitaries, and a disproportionate number of young people, who at this time were far from reluctant at all to engage in political dispute. Then he tried to get his bearings.



ERNST HANFSTÄNGL AND HITLER IN THE GARDEN OF THE CAFÉ HECK IN MUNICH.

After I had made it luckily up to the mezzanine and found a place at the press table next to the podium, I sought advice from my neighbour, an elderly local reporter, who turned out to be a well-informed and helpful Polonius.

"And who, of the men over there at the party desk, is Herr Hitler?" I inquired.

My neighbour looked at me over the rim of his glasses, clearly surprised. "Well, what, you mean you do not know? Where by Jove are you living, my dear sir?"

"I'm quite the stranger here. I've been abroad too long, and now I am a correspondent for the overseas German language press," I swindled.

"Well, that explains it. Now listen: the small guy over there, the one so busily running around, is Max Amann, the party's manager. He's somewhat of a roughneck, used to be Hitler's sergeant. The guy in the middle, with the glasses, is Anton Drexler, the true founder of the party. But he's quite out of it by now; the real dealer in the party is the guy over there, the one with the little moustache below his nose -- that's Hitler. I bet you never heard a better orator. Still, I doubt whether he'll do the full show today. He just served a few months jail time for disturbing the public peace. He got them for breaking up, with his henchmen, a meeting of Engineer Ballerstedt, the Separatist leader, where he jumped up the podium and threatened him. And that must not be, it's disturbing the peace. So I gather he'll not risk anything again so soon."

By now I had began to watch Hitler closely. He reminded me of a type I had seen before, the typical cadet-in-mufti, stone-faced, accustomed to command.

"Listen up! He's about to begin," murmured my neighbour and, in plain anticipation, pushed his glasses up to his brow. On the desk of the party luminaries, Anton Drexler stood up and delivered a brief introduction after having opened the meeting officially in the name of the NSDAP. Then he introduced party comrade Adolf Hitler. Great applause.

Hitler went to the podium, shoulders-squared, taking unhurried steps. Now I had him directly in my view. Sitting only about six metres away, I could observe each nuance of his gestures and his mien. I also noticed the stunning blue of his eyes - something Truman Smith had already remarked on - every time he turned his head in my direction. In dignified posture, as if called for a review, he awaited the ceasing of applause. Then he began.

Whoever knows Hitler only from the events of later years - the demagogue and dictator, overindulging at the microphone - has no idea of his natural, unamplified, voice that dwelled in full-sounding registers during these first years of his political career. His baritone crooned and resonated, his throat could produce hair-raising barbs and barks, his vocal chords were fresh and allowed him to create nuances of natural ability and peerless efficiency.

Of the many politician-orators I have listened to in the course of my life - three masters of the trade were, for example, Theodore Roosevelt, the blind Senator Gore from Oklahoma and Woodrow Wilson, the "Man with the Golden Tongue" - none came close to master the effects that stood to Hitler's beck and call; albeit to his and our own detriment.

By means of the same mimicry he occasionally used to entertain his personal circle with striking imitations of other people, their gestures, body language, and diction: with the same intuitive emotional control he was able to project his aims and ideas into the minds and the subconsciousness of his audience.

He was able to describe the feelings of a housewife facing the empty stands at the Viktualienmarkt [Munich's vegetable and fruit market, ¶], to speak in the jargon of disappointed soldiers or officers, to address the thoughts of a burgher impoverished by the rampant inflation or those of an honest public servant who is overlooked for promotion.

But all this might well have been relegated to the level of tactical semi-truths that form the daily bread of politics, had Hitler not, visible for all, believed in the absolute truth of his complaints and the possibility of redemption, of relief, the fulfilment of his words and dreams. His promises became his reality, in the moment he uttered them...

In the first ten minutes he gave, in measured tones, honest and upright, a condensation of the events of the last three or four years. He related the incidents that had plagued the nation since November 1918, the collapse of the monarchy, the proclamation of the republic, the shame of the Treaty of Versailles, the war

guilt clause extorted on the threat of renewed hostilities, the errors in the slogans of the pacifists and in the doctrines of the Marxists - disappointments and disillusionments that showed to every clear-thinking man the sense - and hopelessness of conflicts between workers and owners, or between Nationalists and Socialists.

As soon as Hitler realized that his audience had followed him so far in agreement, he relaxed his left leg - like a soldier on the "as you were" - and began to accompany his words with uncommonly expressive gestures. At the same time, the tone of his voice became somewhat more aggressive without turning coarse or hateful. To the contrary: his cunning slights and disparagements - oscillating between sarcasm, buffoonery and satire - and the elegance of some of his canny remarks reminded one of the wit of Vienna's best coffeehouse comedians. It was a form of humour that hit home without appearing raucous or vulgar. He depicted the Kaiser, for example, as a weak and abject failure who had lost his wits exactly when it counted most and was surrounded by a clique of counsellors just as clueless. The politicians of the Left were pictured as turncoats who sought the sinecures of public service and the troughs of safe government posts but had without defiance surrendered everything to the war victors - Germany's honour to boot - instead of preserving it for the remedy of the national predicament.

In one of his next points, he contrasted Bavarian separatism and the Catholic Church's religious monopoly claim to the selfless camaraderie and humanity of the front soldier, who leaps to the aid of a wounded comrade without asking first whether he was a Bavarian or Prussian, a Catholic or a Protestant.

"Believe me," he cried, "this is the spirit we Germans need in this time of tribulation. It is the spirit that brings forth miracles and leads the vanquished and the betrayed to a new and brighter future! Think of the example of Kemal Pasha or the triumphal march of Mussolini's Blackshirts upon Rome, just weeks ago!" Colossal applause filled the house.

The more the topics of his tirade energized him and the more frequent applause and affirmative remarks sounded through the hall, the more he accelerated tempo and loudness of his discourse, while his hands emphasized the climaxes of thesis and antithesis, underlined the ups and down of his rhetorical cadences and commented on the pizzicato of his thoughts. Came a critical remark, he slightly lifted his hands as if to catch a ball and folded his arms, all the while slyly smiling. The answer, when it came, were two or three short sentences, uttered without hatefulness but full of wit and humour so that - again - Hitler had the laughs on his side. Sometimes his technique almost reminded one of that of a master violinist who seldom uses the full length of his bow but, ever so slightly, hints at a note, almost as its own anticipation.

Awakening from a slight fascination, I glimpsed around the hall and noted the miraculous conversion that had transpired. The damp and brooding mass that one hour ago had shoved me at my squeezing through and directed many objectionable epithets at my persona, had by now become a community touched in their innermost feelings.

Here were people fervently listening, who had long since forgotten to drink from their beer mugs but drew in every word of the speaker like ambrosia. A few metres away from me, I observed a young woman clasping her hands in breathless ecstasy, and even the police commanded to secure the public safety stared at the speaker in mute adoration.

I might as well admit that, perhaps, on this first event after his return from jail, Hitler may have wielded a particularly elegant foil and, inspired by the victory of the Italian fascists, may have been able to present his arguments especially convincing - fact is that, after the conclusion of his speech, I applauded just as heartily and excitedly as did the multitude, which advanced through the hall in the direction of the podium.

I rose spontaneously and went to the party desk, where Hitler, dripping sweat, received the congratulations of his followers. He accepted my compliments with a self-aware smile, but without contempt, and gazed at me alertly when I introduced myself as an acquaintance of Truman Smith. The hand holding the kerchief he

used to dry his brows stopped in midair; he sniffed, raised his head and looked at me. "Oh," he said, pleased, "then you're a friend of the tall American that visited me this morning. So, what are you going to report him?"

"I'll write him definitely that, personally, I am in complete agreement with ninety-five percent of your arguments, and have voiced my desire to discuss the rest of it at a more suitable occasion."

Hitler beamed. "I am sure I can grant this request, since I am quite sure that we will agree on the last five percent as well."

"All right. Good-bye then, Herr Hitler!" (26)

Hanfstängl reported, as requested, to Captain Smith, who reported, as requested, to Counsellor Robbins, who, not exactly as requested, composed a personal memorandum for his superiors at the U.S. Department of State at Foggy Bottom, Washington. Robbins wrote:

"My own prognostication on the general attitude of the Bavarian outfit is that sooner or later a serious break is going to come from there. Hitler, the young Austrian sergeant, who fought in the German army during the war, and who is now leading a fascist movement, known as the "Grey shirts", is working very slowly and I should say efficiently along the same lines as Mussolini.

I am told by some of our men who have been down there, that he is an extraordinary orator and though not of the highest moral standing, a great leader of men. He is obtaining a great deal of money from the manufacturers just as Mussolini did and is going very slowly. He told Truman Smith, our Assistant Military Attaché, who was down there, that he had no intention of starting any big movement for the next month or so, and probably not before two months, that he is collecting funds and equipment, and that all was going well." (27)

The State Department filed the report and forgot it. Similar reports, gathered by the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, which directs the Munich police, were at least forwarded to Berlin, to the attention of new chancellor Wilhelm Cuno.

The first report was an alarmist communiqué forwarded by the Bulgarian consul in Munich, not a spy by trade, to one of Cuno's assistants, with whom he was personally acquainted. The message reported a conversation the consul claimed to have had recently with Hitler, in which the latter had voiced his opinion that the parliamentary system in Germany was soon to collapse, due to a lack of support by the people. This would reign in a Communist dictatorship, and thus the end of civilization as it was known. The only possible antidote was to concentrate all power in the hands of the National Socialists who could act, by controlling Bavaria, as a counterweight against the big industrial cities of the north, Hamburg, Cologne, Bremen, Berlin, which would undoubtedly be overwhelmed by the Marxists.

The Bavarian army and police were, by a huge majority, nationalistically inclined and were able to destroy any Communist upheavals in Bavaria in statu nascendi. The National Socialists would then organize the counterrevolution, the liberation of northern Germany. He, Hitler, would lead the campaign himself, because he was "ready, if necessary, to march across fields of blood and corpses." (28)

A second report, even more clairvoyant, was provided by a Munich police officer on the occasion of his composing an account of a NSDAP rally. He observed that the Hitler movement was

"...without a doubt dangerous to the government, not only for the present form of government, but for any political system at all, because if they really achieve their dark ideas in regard of the Jews, Social Democrats, and Bank-capitalists, then there will be much blood and disorder." (29)

There were other reports, but, alas, the attention of Cuno's government was diverted by circumstances we shall discuss presently, and hence the reports went unheeded. For in early January 1923 it was not Bavaria where national affairs made headlines, and it were events quite unrelated to Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP that set the tenor of Germany's nationalist newspapers. It was the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr district, which led to the strange situation that - as Ian

Kershaw observed - "on this occasion at least, the Reich government seemed to be acting firmly -- and acting with mass popular support." (30)

At the end of December 1922, Cuno's government had asked the Allied conference in Paris for a two-year moratorium on reparation payments - a sensible request considering the economic situation but interpreted in France as a sign of German obstinacy. The request was denied, and in the resulting fracas France treated the vanquished to a series of "well-chosen humiliations." (31)

Germany had fallen behind in its reparation payments in wood - it owed 200,000 metres of telegraph poles and had delivered only 65,000 metres - and coal deliveries to the tune of 24 million Gold Marks. Compared with payments made of 1,480 million Gold Marks it was a trivial amount.

But 135,000 metres of missing telegraph poles sufficed for French and Belgian troops on 11 January to march into the Ruhr district to ensure coal deliveries. Germany was gripped by an elemental wave of national fury that crossed all social and political divides.

A "national unity front" stretching from Social Democrats to German Nationals was founded. The unity - invoking the "Burgfrieden" (civil truce) of 1914, when in the wake of war fever class conflict and internal disputes had temporarily given way to a sense of national accord - had little chance of lasting. But it was an immediate expression of the depth of feeling in the country.

On 13 January the Reich government declared a campaign of "passive resistance" against the Ruhr occupation. 14 January was to be a day of mourning throughout Germany. The gunning-down by French soldiers - possibly provoked by German nationalists - of workers in the Krupp factory at Essen on 31 March, leaving thirteen dead and forty-one wounded, was the worst of numerous confrontations that wildly inflamed an already overheated situation. (32)

As mentioned above, one would have expected Hitler in the vanguard of the protesters' picket line, but it was an indication of his tactical ingenuity that made him refuse uniformity. The existence of the NSDAP in the public eye depended upon its contrast to the other parties, and for its minute size it could only attract special attention by not blending in, especially with the competition on the right wing. It was close to impossible for the NSDAP, as a Bavarian nationalist splitter-group, to be recognized on its own in the sheer breadth of the "NATIONAL UNITY FRONT", and Hitler realized this at once. He expressed...

"... his new self-confidence in a bold and provocative gesture: he withdrew the NSDAP from the front for national unity and warned his bewildered followers that anyone who took active part in the resistance against France would be expelled from the party. Some such expulsions were actually carried out. ...

It has become standard to see Hitler's behaviour as totally unscrupulous and unprincipled. But here is an instance in which he stood steadfastly by his principles, even though it meant exposing himself to unpopularity and misunderstanding. He himself saw this stand as one of the crucial decisions of his career.

His allies and backers - people of prestige and staunch conservatives - always looked upon him as one of their own, as nationalist and conservative as themselves. But in his very first political decision of any magnitude Hitler brushed away all the false alliances, from Kahr to Papen, and showed that when the chips were down he would act like a true revolutionary." (33)

More debilitating for the country's economy than the actual occupation - which was eventually given up - turned out the quickening of the inflation to rates not witnessed before. At the end of the war, the exchange rate between Reichsmark and Dollar had floated at around eight to one; by the end of 1922 it hovered at RM 6,750 for \$ 1, but in mid-January 1923 the rate already stood at 50,000 to 1. As a related effect, unemployment soared beyond the wildest imaginations and the resulting public wrath filled the nation's consciousness. The NSDAP profited most from it.

Hitler's rejection of the national front allowed him to concentrate on the annual party convention, which was to become the first "REICHSPARTEITAG" - Reich Party Day - and which, not by incident, turned into a "showdown with the government."

(34) The second half of the year 1922 had added the likenesses of Julius Streicher, Rudolf Hess, Hermann Göring, Kurt Lüdecke, Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, and soon Ernst Hanfstaengl to the top echelon of the NSDAP, and their connections and resources only served to add credibility to the rumours that Hitler planned a putsch during the great party rally that was scheduled for January 27 to 29, 1923.

The rally, however, would not only present the party to the nation, perhaps the world, it would also invite scrutiny - at least from the competition - and direct the public attention upon its leader. Hitler was reluctant, or, more precisely, allergic to inquiries about his past and had gone great distances to murk up his personal history. In November 1921 he penned the following letter to an unidentified addressee who asked, apparently not for the first time, for personal information.

November 29, 1921

Dear Doctor,

As Herr Eckart has informed me, you have again indicated an interest in my rise to the position of party leader.

I am therefore permitting myself to give you a brief account of my life.

I was born in Braunau am Inn on April 20, 1889, the son of the post office official Alois Hitler. My schooling consisted of 5 classes of Volksschule and 4 of Unterrealschule. It was the ambition of my youth to become an architect, and I believe that if politics had not taken hold of me, I would never have practiced any other profession. As you probably know, I had lost both my father and mother by the time I was 17 years old, and being without resources and possessing only about 80 Kronen when I arrived in Vienna, I was forced to earn my bread as a common labourer.

I was not yet 18 when I worked as an unskilled labourer on construction sites and in the course of two years I performed most of the tasks of a day labourer. Meanwhile I studied, as much as my means permitted, the histories of art and civilizations and architecture, and incidentally occupied myself with political problems. Coming from a more or less cosmopolitan family, I became an anti-Semite in less than a year as the result of lessons learned in the school of harsh reality. Nevertheless, during this period, I found that I could not join any of the existing political parties.

After endless labour I succeeded in acquiring the training necessary for a painter, and from the age of 20 I was thus able to earn a modest living. I became an architectural draftsman and an architectural painter, and in my 21st year I became completely independent. In 1912, following my profession, I went to live permanently in Munich. In the course of 4 years, from the age 20 to 24, I became more and more preoccupied with politics, not so much in the way of attending meetings as in the way of fundamental studies of political economy and of all the available anti-Semitic literature.

From the age of 22 onward I was an especially ardent student of military-political history, and over the years I have never failed to pursue deep and searching studies of world history.

Even then I took no active parts in politics. I avoided any temptation to present myself as a public speaker for the reasons that I felt no inner sympathy with any of the existing parties.

At this time my supreme ambition was still to become an architect.

On August 5, 1914, my request to the King having been granted, I reported to the 1st Bavarian Infantry Regiment in order to join the German Army. Several days later I was transferred to the 2d Infantry Regiment, and on August 16 I was assigned to the 16th Bavarian Infantry Regiment then in process of being formed.

This regiment, which marched under the name of the List regiment, was the first among the volunteer regiments to reach the battlefield and received its baptism of fire in "the Battle of the Yser."

This was one of the volunteer regiments which were almost completely destroyed within the course of a few days.

On December 2, 1914, I was awarded the Iron Cross, second class. I remained with my regiment, and during the battle of the Somme on October 7, 1916, I was wounded for the first time (by a shell splinter in the left thigh), and on October 10, 1916, on the anniversary of my first battle, I returned wounded to my homeland.

After being treated for two months at the hospital in Beelitz near Berlin I was assigned in December, 1916, to the reserve battalion of the 2d Infantry Regiment at Munich, and immediately announced that I would volunteer for the front. On March 1, 1917, I was sent to my original regiment, and on 17-9-1917 I was awarded the Cross of Military Merit, third class, with swords; on May 9, 1918, the regimental diploma; 4-8-1918 the Iron Cross, first class; on 18-5-1918 a black wound stripe; and on 25-8-1918 the Medal of Military Service, third class.

On the night of October 13/14, 1918, I was overcome with poison gas, which for a while left me completely blind. From Werwick in Flanders I was transported to the military hospital at Pasewalk near Stettin. The blindness left me in a comparatively short while, my sight returning gradually, and since the revolution had broken out on November 9 I asked to be assigned in the shortest possible time to Munich, and so on December 18 I found myself once more in the reserve battalion of the 2d Infantry Regiment in Munich.

During the period of Soviet rule I was on the proscribed list, and after the downfall of the Red dictatorship I was seconded to the investigating commission of the 2d Infantry Regiment, and later I was appointed as a training officer to the 41st Regiment of Sharpshooters. In this regiment, as in others, I held conferences on the subject of the insanity of the bloody Soviet dictatorship, and I can joyfully claim that when these soldiers were demobilized as a result of the reduction in numbers of the Reichswehr, they formed the first group of my own followers.

In June, 1919, I joined the German Workers' Party, which consisted at this time of seven members, for now at last I felt I had found a movement in the sphere of politics which answered to my ideal. Today the number of our followers in Munich alone has reached 4 thousand, and I may claim with pride that this success has been largely achieved through my efforts.

Permit me to stop at this point, and I remain,

Yours respectfully, A. HITLER (35)

The number of deceptions, falsifications and misrepresentations in these barely three pages of a letter is considerable, and permits a short digression through the thicket of Hitler's improvements of his curriculum vitae.

His father was, of course, a Customs official, not a postal officer, and Hitler had much more than 80 Kronen when he "arrived in Vienna". That he worked as a labourer on construction sites seems to be completely invented, and, given his less than imposing physique, does not sound convincing at all, were it not for his given the opportunity to decry the practices and the general existence of labour unions. That he became a successful, as far as earning a living would be concerned, "architectural draftsman" and "architectural painter" seems to belong to the category of fiction as well, as seems the claim that he became "completely independent" during his 21st year. He went to Munich in 1913, not in 1912, and the reason for the change of datum appears logical if it served to deter investigations into his Austrian desertion affair.

He then proceeds to enter the - so to say - "decent" part of his life with a few improvements of his military career. At the onset of the war he wants the addressee to understand, he was summoned to the famous, aristocratic First, i.e. the Bavarian King's Own Regiment, and the reader may assume that his subsequent postings to less illustrious units were merely fumbles of the personnel office. Wounded, he returns to his "homeland" in Germany, not counting, it would seem, his Austrian birth and the first twenty-four years of his life there. When he is sent back to Munich in December 1918, he finds himself "once more" in the 2nd Infantry Regiment.

There had been no "proscription" in the short days of the Bavarian Soviet Republic and hence no list existed on which his name could have appeared on. As far as the "bloody Soviet dictatorship" is concerned, the one true instance of "Red Terror", the abduction and murder of the eight or ten members of the Thule Society, was paid back a hundred times over by the bestiality of the Free Corps.

That he was a training officer in at least two regiments, the 2d Infantry and the 41st Sharpshooters must have been quite an elevation for a humble corporal, even if the promotion was restricted to the realm of his daydreams. Finally, we know that at the time of his entry the DAP had about fifty members, not seven, and the membership of the NSDAP at the time of his composing the letter stood at approximately two thousand, not at over four thousand.

The strange thing about the letter is not, per se, the existence and number of his misrepresentations: after all it is a human habit to lie, and there are few among us who have never employed a lie's temporary convenience. The question is why he lies about perfectly unassuming facts when no necessity demands nor gratitude exacts deception. Why changing his father's profession from the Customs' House to the Post Office; why claiming to have gone to Munich in 1912 instead of 1913; why trying to pass as an "officer" when he had a low opinion of them throughout the war?

One might argue that it is simply the habit of a paranoid personality to cover the tracks of its mania whether it is necessary or not. A person so inclined might also have a different perception of necessity. Hitler wants to make it difficult for reporters or investigators to find out the "hard facts" of his life. If a reporter or detective were to examine the annals of the Imperial Austrian Postal Service for an officer named Alois Hitler, nothing could be found, and the same result would occur if the files of the Bavarian army would be combed for a "training officer" named Hitler in the 2d Infantry Regiment or the 41st Sharpshooters. In the context of his party position, Hitler's life necessarily became a matter of public scrutiny, and would the more so at the great rally coming up. Hitler wanted to draw the public attention on what he was to say, not on who he was.

As mentioned above, the Bavarian government initially attempted to ban the great rally, but had been forced to abandon the veto when Röhm mobilized General von Epp, Free Corps hero, who visited Bavarian army commander General von Lossow with Hitler in tow, and, on the latter's promise of good behaviour, secured Lossow's somewhat hesitant support of the rally. The support of von Kahr, who was at the moment President of the Government of Upper Bavaria, the district surrounding Munich, and of the new Police President Nortz were obtained in the same manner, and the ban on open-air events was eventually lifted. (36)

To save face, however, Nortz requested the leader of the NSDAP at a second meeting to reduce the number of meetings to six and to stage the dedication of the standards not on the Marsfeld but inside the nearby Circus Krone. Hitler, realizing that he had won this match, vaguely indicated compliance.

Then, under the slogan of Deutschland erwache! ("Germany, awake!"), he held all twelve mass meetings. The dedication of the standards, which he himself had designed, took place on the Marsfeld after all, in the presence of 5,000 storm troopers. There was a driving snowstorm.

"Either the National Socialist German Workers' Party is the coming movement in Germany," Hitler thundered, "in which case not even the devil can stop it, or it is not, and deserves to be destroyed." Battalions of exuberant SA men marched past walls and kiosks covered with proclamations of the state of emergency. With them marched several military bands, and the storm troopers roared out their songs defaming the "Jew Republic." (37)

At the meeting in the Löwenbräukeller on the evening of January 27, Professor Karl Alexander von Mueller found his former student transformed almost beyond belief.

"It was on this day in the Löwenbräu that I heard for the first time Hitler speaking to the public. I had visited many political rallies in this hall, but neither in the course of the war nor during the revolution had I ever felt such a hot blast of hypnotic mass excitement on my face when I entered the hall. It was not only because of the suspense and anxiety of these days and weeks.

'They have their own fighting songs, standards, symbols, their own salute,' I noted, 'uniformed guards, a forest of blood-red flags with a black swastika on top of a white background, a most curious melange of the soldierly and the revolutionary, of nationalism and social issues - in the audience as well: mostly the plummeting middle class in all its shapes and guises. Martial music for hours on end, short speeches by party lieutenants, when would he [Hitler, ¶] arrive? Had something unforeseen occurred? It is impossible to describe the tension, the fever that arose in this atmosphere.

Suddenly, movement at the back entry. Commands are shouted. The speaker on the podium stops in mid-sentence. All rise with hailing cheers. Then, in the midst of the ecstatic crowds and the screaming flags, the messiah appears, surrounded by his sycophants, striding quickly, the right hand straightened out in perpetual party salute.

He passed by very close to me, and I could see that this was a different man than the one I had met at the one or other social occasion." (38)

The party day was a rousing success and seemed to indicate that, indeed, the future might belong to Hitler's movement. None of the other right-wing groups had dared to openly violate the martial law decree, and the Nazis' brazenly throwing the gauntlet at the government mightily impressed the burghers. It was now that the membership really took off. Between February and November 1923 the NSDAP recorded over 35,000 new membership entries, and, beginning on February 8, 1923, the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER was published daily. (39)

The growth of the NSDAP only served to intensify the putsch rumours. For reasons not entirely clear, Hitler reversed himself on the alliance question and allowed the SA to join a new patriotic league, together with the other paramilitary right-wing organizations. Arranged by Röhm, the SA joined the militias of the REICHSFLAGGE (Reich Banner), WIKINGBUND (Viking League), BUND OBERLAND (Oberland League), VATERLÄNDISCHER VEREIN MÜNCHEN (Munich Patriotic Club) and KAMPFVERBAND NIEDERBAYERN (Fighting League Lower Bavaria), and a new KAMPFBUND (Fighting League) was formed, under the military leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Kriebel. Arms were supplied by Röhm's friends in the Reichswehr.

The KAMPFBUND, and thus Hitler and the NSDAP as well, stood in opposition to the older nationalist assembly, the VEREINIGTE VATERLÄNDISCHE VERBÄNDE ["VVV", League of Patriotic Associations, ¶], which were being led by former Minister President von Kahr and Professor Bauer, a high school teacher. But while the KAMPFBUND tried to concentrate all paramilitary elements in clear anticipation of a coup d'état, perhaps a "March on Berlin", the VVV was a hodgepodge without clear profile, consisting of nationalist anti-Semites, Pan-Germans, Pro-Austrians, Monarchists and Bavarian separatists and thus unsuited for action. (40)

While the KAMPFBUND had the muscle, it had its organizational drawbacks as well; Hitler learned soon that, despite Röhm's organizing regular strategic planning meetings with representatives of the associations, no political coordination was possible, since "his partners' slow-moving soldier mentality could not follow his wild flights of fancy." (41) Then there was another problem.

He had created the SA as a revolutionary army directly responsible to him, but now Kriebel and Röhm were trying to turn the SA into a secret reserve for the so-called Hundred Thousand Man Army. He noted with annoyance that the storm troops were being stripped of their ideological cast and downgraded to mere military reserve units. A few months later, in order to regain authority, Hitler instructed his old fellow soldier,

former Lieutenant Josef Berchtold, to organize a kind of staff guard to be named STOSSTRUPP (Shock Troop) HITLER. This was the origin of the SS. (42)

In Clausewitz's words, Hitler had to reassess the primacy of politics and until the Night of the Long Knives this particular problem with the SA persisted. For the moment, Hitler's greater challenge was how to adapt to becoming a public figure, and how to cope with the demands of the public eye in his private life.

Various witnesses of these days have assured us that his tiny apartment in the Thierschstrasse was a wonder to behold, a public library in a monk's cell. Featuring a single room with a narrow bed below an even narrower window, books were all over the place, the floor, and the sanitary installations. The visitors agree on his literary taste: historia and militaria comprised the lion's share of the available room, with an admixture of biographies and atlases. Putzi Hanfstängl, however, looked beyond the top shelf.

The upper rows held the volumes he pointed out to his visitors first: Hermann Stegemann's "History of the World War" besides Ludendorff's work on the identical subject, Treitschke's "German History", Spamer's "Illustrated World History", Clausewitz's standard "On War", Kugler's history of Frederick the Great, Houston Stewart Chamberlain's Wagner biography and a world history by Maximilian Count Wartenburg; in addition the "Geographical Characterizations" by August Wilhelm Grube, the "Classic Sagas of Antiquity" by Gustav Schwab, and Sven Hedin's war memories. These were, with a few others whose titles I forgot, the volumes standing on parade, and they coincided with Hitler's views as a politician.

But then there followed a steep descent from Mars to Venus. Once one peered behind the cheap novels and murder mysteries on the lower shelf, in the attempt to examine Hitler's more intimate reading habits, one found a complete if used edition of the Jew Eduard Fuchs's works of debauchery, which, as the moral majority knew, were capable of "poisoning the moral attitudes of the Aryan people": his "History of Erotic Art" and several of his risqué "Illustrated Moralities". (43)

These discoveries did not quite fit their owners monkish attitude; hence their discreet placement. As far as historia and militaria went, his labours on military chronicles and the histories of revolutions delivered a fruitful harvest for the future use of SA and SS. He had begun to fill, whenever possible, the SA's command positions on the platoon or company level with naval, or even better, air force officers; by this policy he attempted to eschew the army discipline drilled into every foot soldier at boot camp; air force officers and in particular pilots, he opined, were used to make and live by their own decisions and thus far more independent-minded than the army which was used to the collectivism of staff orders. The SA - and soon the SS as well - were designed to be shock troops, not boy scouts.

There is no doubt that the violence of SA and SS was created, trained and ordered by Hitler directly or at least with his assertive compliance. Years later, in his Landsberg cell, he dedicated a whole chapter of Mein Kampf to the proper revolutionary functions of the stormtroopers.

The chapter called "Basic Ideas Regarding the Meaning and Organization of the SA" occupies forty-two closely printed pages in Mein Kampf. Hitler had given much thought to the existing quasi-military organizations, which included Captain Röhm's Reichs War Flag group, Friedrich Weber's Oberland Bund, various veterans' organizations, and secret societies like the Consul Organization, founded by Captain Ehrhardt for the purpose of assassinating liberal politicians.



FIRST NSDAP PARTY DAY

ABOVE, JANUARY 28, 1923: OUTDOOR MEETING OF APPROXIMATELY 6,000 MEMBERS AND ONLOOKERS ON THE MARS FIELD, IN VIOLATION OF THE BAN IMPOSED BY THE BAVARIAN GOVERNMENT. BELOW, HITLER ADDRESSING THE CROWD. ON THE PRECEDING EVENING, HE HAD SPOKEN ON SIX INDOOR MEETINGS TO A COMBINED AUDIENCE PERHAPS TWICE THAT NUMBER.



Hitler declared that he would have nothing to do with secret societies --"everything must be in the open, under the sky" -- but he protested too much. He knew a great deal about them, assisted the Consul Organization, and was on close terms with Captain Ehrhardt. His objection to these groups was that they had no clear-cut program for destroying the Berlin government. He saw his storm troopers as the men who would ultimately bring that government to its knees. (44)



PATRIOTIC CONVENTION, JUNE 10, 1923 - A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ALBERT LEO SCHLAGETER, MARTYR OF THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF THE RUHR DISTRICT, DRAWS 40,000 MEMBERS OF THE PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATIONS AND THE SA ON MUNICH'S KÖNIGSPLATZ.

But when he was not reading or speaking, he was indeed a presence in Munich's extensive night life. He spent many evenings either in the cosy *Gemütlichkeit* of Schwabing's many cafés and restaurants, in Dietrich Eckart's apartment there, or, more and more, in the salons of the better society, to which Eckart, Scheubner-Richter and now Hanfstängl provided access.

He commanded early idolization in the salon of Elsa Bruckmann, a born Romanian Princess Cantacuzene (45) and wife of the eponymous Munich publisher, and in the circle of the Bechstein family, the famous piano manufacturers. Through Hanfstängl Hitler was now introduced to the likes of William Bayard Hale, classmate of Woodrow Wilson at Princeton but now an opponent of the President, or the German-American painter Wilhelm Funk, centre of an atelier that regularly assembled the wealthiest German industrialists. (46)

Hanfstängl's talents on the piano secured him Hitler's attention.

One critical day I met Hitler in his little apartment, and he asked me to play him some music on the old upright piano in the hallway to soothe him. In these days a rumour made its rounds that Hitler, the wild French-eater, had received monies from the French secret service through the one or other indirect source. Had the calumny proven true, Hitler's political career would have been over. And since his opponents were only too aware of it, they attempted to have him officially investigated by the police on the story, to pin on him the odium of treason whether the accusations were true or not.

*Thus Hitler's request on this day may well have sprung from a feeling of despair. I began a Bach fugue on the seriously out-of-tune upright, to which Hitler listened rather disinterestedly, until I had warmed up my fingers enough to jump in to the prelude of *Die Meistersänger*. With this choice I had hit Hitler's musical taste in the right spot. The next moment he was up and, walking up and down the hall whilst accompanying the music*

with the gestures of an opera conductor, began to whistle the notes in a strange and searing vibrato but completely in tune. He knew the whole prelude from A to Z, and since he did have an outstanding ear for the spirit of the music, our improvised duet began to amuse me.

When I had ended the finale con gusto, an excited and completely recovered Hitler praised my style and interpretation and told me, "My, you are a whole orchestra, Hanfstängl!" (47)

Although no piano fit in it, the Hanfstängl apartment in Schwabing saw Hitler's presence continuously - and not only for political discussions.

Hitler often visited the small Hanfstängl apartment in Schwabing across from the large school where he had done his basic training in 1914.² Probably the greatest attraction was Hanfstängl's wife, Helene, an American of German descent who was tall, brunette, and strikingly attractive. He came in his best suit, the shiny blue serge. "He was respectful, even diffident," recalled Hanfstängl, "and very careful to adhere to the forms of address still de rigueur in Germany between people of lower rank when speaking to those of better education, title, or academic attainment."

From the first it was obvious that he was physically attracted to Helene, as much by her warm, quiet charm as by her looks, and he treated her with a respect bordering on worship. In her unpublished memoirs written ten years later, she describes their first meeting on a Munich street in early 1923: "He was at the time a slim, shy young man, with a far-away look in his very blue eyes. He was dressed almost shabbily - a cheap white shirt, black tie, a worn dark blue suit, with which he wore an incongruous dark brown leather vest, a beige-coloured trench coat, much the worse for wear, cheap black shoes and a soft greyish hat. His appearance was quite pathetic." (48)

From this day on, Hitler almost established a second pied-à-terre in the Hanfstängl domicile. Helene realized that he came to like in particular the fact that he could relax, could be for himself at the Hanfstängl residence, and was not always under the stress of representation. He played with Egon, the toddler of the house, or gave imitations of other party honoraries, to the amusement of the whole family.

The most important service Hanfstängl rendered the NSDAP in these years was an interest-free loan of one thousand U.S. Dollars, a mind-boggling sum in these days of wild inflation. It allowed the party the purchase of two modern rotary presses in the big American newspaper format, and with these machines, the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER could be published daily. (49) It only turned out later that Hanfstängl's largesse secured a post for the man he detested most in the party - Alfred Rosenberg -- who took over as editor of the newspaper from the ailing Dietrich Eckart.

Hitler made Rosenberg editor of the daily BEOBACHTER, replacing Eckart, who was often absent from his desk for weeks. This position not only entrenched Rosenberg's position as the party's expert on the East but reinforced the influence of fellow refugees from Russia such as Scheubner-Richter...

All of the Russian émigrés were fanatically dedicated to the destruction of Bolshevism and most of them were imbued with the Czarist solution to the Jewish conspiracy - terror and brute force. To such zealots social and economic anti-Semitism were effete and ineffective methods. Only the pogrom worked. (50)

The drawback of the daily publication of the newspaper was that the cost of the materials temporarily emptied the party coffers, and in the spring of 1923, Hitler and Hanfstängl combined the pleasure of a holiday with the financial advantages of collecting contributions from sympathizers. With Maurice on the wheel, they set out for Berlin. A delicate situation transpired in Saxony, at this time controlled in wide parts by Communist militias, when they were stopped north of Leipzig by a Red roadblock. With acute situational awareness, Hanfstängl brandished the old Swiss passports he had received from the Swiss Consulate in New York in lieu of then nonexistent German passports at the occasion of his Atlantic crossing back to Germany in 1921, and, with a heavy American accent, revealed that he was a furniture manufacturer visiting Leipzig for

² It was the school building on Elisabeth Square, which housed Recruit Depot VI of the Replacement Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment in August 1914. Boot camp for Hitler came later, at the Oberwiesefeld Barracks and on the Lechfeld in Swabia.

the famous trade fair. Maurice was his chauffeur, and the man in the blue suit was, of course, his valet. The communists were impressed to meet a true enemy of the working class in person and allowed the party to pass without further ado.

In Berlin, Hitler used the time between the meetings with sponsors for a few more protracted museum visits and studies of the great buildings, everything he had no time to do on his earlier visits. He did raise some financial support from the National Club, although the popular theory that Hitler and the NSDAP had been sponsored at this time to the extent of many million Gold marks by the German steel industry is baseless. On the way back Hitler asked Maurice to take the small detour that led to Bayreuth, Richard Wagner's hometown during the last decades of his life.

Back in Munich, the theme on the streets was still the occupation of the Ruhr, and Hitler continued his criticism of the "passive resistance" policy: for starters, the resistance should not be passive but active, and directed at the true culprit, the Jews.

On April 13, for instance, he blamed them directly for the Ruhr takeover as well as the loss of the war and the inflation. He charged that "so-called World Pacifism" was a Jewish invention; that the leaders of the proletariat were Jews ("Jews again!"); that the Freemasons were tools of the Jews ("Once more the Jews!"); and that, in fact, the Jews were conspiring to conquer the world!

"So," he shouted, "Russia and Germany had to be overthrown in order that the ancient prophecy might be fulfilled! So the whole world was lashed into fury! So every lie and propaganda agency was brutally set in action against the state of the last - the German -- idealists! And thus it was the Judah who won the World War. Or would you wish to maintain that the French, the English, or the American people won the war?"

He concluded in a burst of emotion demanding justice for the two million Germans who had died in the World War and the millions of orphans, crippled and widows who remained. "We owe it to these millions to build a new Germany!" (51)

By oratorical and psychological measures, his performance had much improved since the small beginnings at the Sterneckerbräu. Once he explained his tactics to Hanfstängl.

"When I talk to people, especially those who are not yet Party members, or who are about to break away for some reason or other, I always talk as if the fate of the nation was bound up in their decision. That they are in a position to give an example for the many to follow. Certainly it means appealing to their vanity and ambition, but once I have got them to that point the rest is easy."

All men, rich or poor, he said, had an inner sense of unfulfillment. "Slumbering somewhere is the readiness to risk some final sacrifice, some adventure, in order to give a new shape to their lives. They will spend their last money on a lottery ticket. It is my business to channel that urge for political purposes. In essence, every political movement is based on the desire of its supporters, men or women, to better things not only for themselves but for their children and others. ...

The humbler people are, the greater the craving to identify themselves with a cause bigger than themselves, and if I can persuade them that the fate of the German nation is at stake,³ then they will become part of an irresistible movement, embracing all classes." (52)

In the simplicity of their pragmatism, Hitler's tactics may lack the ardour of Voltaire, the romantic rationality of Rousseau or the dialectic aspirations of Karl Marx, but they nonetheless identify the crucial axiom of arousing the necessary partisanship: that the urge to belong to the future must outweigh both the limits of accepted political practice and the petty dictates of personal well-being. The want for the morrow, properly propagated, is the very substance revolutions are

³ Patriotism is an apparently perpetual chimera. For the longest time, the well-educated student encountered in his Latin lessons the old adage *DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI* ['It is sweet and honourable to die for the Fatherland', ¶]. When the present author, decades ago, asked his teacher what could conceivably be wrong with living, not dying, for the Fatherland, sweet and honourable, all he earned was extra homework.

made of. The second necessary element is that of the adversary; the public wrath must be directed at a well-known culprit, the enemy within.

It was Hitler's genius for propaganda that made him realize that Jews and Communists together are the perfect malefactors because they are everywhere. Perpetual repetition imbued the perils of their presence into the collective German mind, where it contacted the desire to understand what could not readily be understood: the loss of the war, the injury of the peace, frost and famine.

By identifying the culprits, Hitler gave his political persuasions the necessary two elements that interconnected in a way even the politically ignorant could fathom: it's the fault of the Jews and the Communists. And by keeping things simple and naming the culprits, Hitler could steer around the right-wing's Scylla and Charybdis; that, as the parties of the haves, enlisting the support of the have-nots proved elusive.

While the liberal parties, at least in principle, were able to claim that their fight was for the liberty of all men, and the socialists proposed to emancipate the workers of all nations, the conservative parties necessarily lacked the vision of a brighter future for the whole of mankind.

But despite being able to broaden the party's attractiveness past the boundaries of the rich and the important, Hitler's putsch plans found themselves in a bind. The successful challenge of the government during the party day established the NSDAP as the "top dog" (53) of the Bavarian Right, but at the same time Röhm and the other leaders of the Kampfbund had superseded, to a degree, his authority over the SA and its allies. Hitler realized that more clamour was necessary to maintain the nationalist momentum.

He devised a scheme that centred on the great festivity of the socialists, Labour Day, traditionally May 1 in Europe, also called May Day. On April 13, he called upon the Minister President Eugen von Knilling with the proposal to have the Bavarian government prohibit the Red festivities. When His Excellency declined to follow Hitler's suggestion, the latter took the reply, as he had planned all along, as an admission that the state was not able to protect its people from the evils of Communism and took the denial as a pretext to call for an anti-Labour Day demonstration of all nationalist powers, with the NSDAP in the lead.

He proposed a national demonstration on May Day, and an armed attack on the "Reds". Increasingly alarmed by the prospect of serious disturbances, the Munich police revoked its permission for the Left's street-parade, and now confined permission only to the holding of a limited demonstration on the spacious Theresienwiese near the city centre.

Rumours of a putsch from the Left, almost certainly set into circulation by the Right, served as a pretext for a "defence" by the paramilitary bodies. They demanded "their" weapons back from safe keeping under the control of the Reichswehr. But on the afternoon of 30 April, at a meeting with paramilitary leaders, Lossow, concerned about the danger of a putsch from the Right, refused to hand over the armaments. Hitler, in a blind rage, accused Lossow of breach of trust.

But there was nothing to be done. Hitler had been overconfident. And this time, for once, the state authorities had remained firm. All that could be salvaged was a gathering the following morning of around 2,000 men from the paramilitary formations - about 1,300 from the National Socialists - on the Oberwiesenfeld in the barracks area north of the city, well away from the May Day demonstration and firmly ringed by a cordon of police.

Tame exercises carried out with arms distributed from Röhm's arsenal were no substitute for the planned assault on the Left. After standing around for much of the time since dawn holding their rifles and facing the police, the men handed back their arms around two o'clock and dispersed. (54)

The Reds had meanwhile enjoyed their May Day rally on the Theresienwiese, and most of the 30,000 participants had subsequently moved to the vast Hirschgarten beer garden nearby, to cool the throats hoarse from singing with a litre of beer or two. No annoyances from the Right materialized on this day, and the feeling pervading Munich and much of the

nation was that Hitler had lost much of his allure. Many, among them acting U.S. Consul Robert Murphy, the MÜNCHNER POST and the ambassador of Württemberg saw Hitler's star in decline. (55) A former Free Corps leader swore "I reject Hitler completely! He failed miserably on the first day of May and he will always fail." (56)



ABOVE AND BELOW: THE MAY DAY FIASCO

ON THE MORNING OF MAY 1, 1923, ABOUT 700 MEMBERS OF THE PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATIONS AND 1300 SA MEN RECEIVED GUNS, "ORGANIZED" FROM THE REICHSWEHR BY CAPTAIN ERNST RÖHM, FOR A PLANNED ATTACK ON THE SOCIALISTS' CEREMONIAL MARCH THROUGH MUNICH. WHEN GENERAL VON LOSSOW FOUND OUT, THE GUNS HAD TO BE HANDED BACK, AS SEEN BELOW, AND THE MASSACRE HAD TO BE CALLED OFF. IT WAS HITLER'S GREATEST DEBACLE YET.



Hitler felt the ordeal strongly, and decided to visit Berchtesgaden for a few weeks, a pictorial town in the Alps close to Salzburg and the Austrian border, where he had rented a room in a pension, to spend a holiday. The fiasco of May Day brought, together with the traditional lull of summer politics, quietness over Bavaria; some thought that it was the tranquillity of a lost cause.

Hanfstängl, who remained in Munich to man the barricades, learned that a small number of patriotic-nationalist organizations planned a protest march in early June at the continuing French occupation of the Ruhr area. He alerted Dietrich Eckart and the two jumped into the next train to Salzburg. They found Hitler, having registered himself as "Herr Wolf" at the Pension Moritz on the slope of a mountain called the Obersalzberg, from where one had a delightful view over Salzburg and Austria. Hanfstängl's plan was to persuade Hitler to give a speech on behalf of the NSDAP at the völkische congregation, for he knew that Hitler's absence would fuel speculations of his impending demise as the undisputed leader of the Right.

At first Hitler was not enthusiastic about addressing a demonstration with so many diverse speakers, but Hanfstängl persisted and the two began blocking out a speech. That night Eckart, who shared Hanfstängl's bedroom, complained that Hitler would parade around swinging his rhinoceros-hide whip in a swashbuckling manner to impress the wife of the pension manager.

"The way Adolf is carrying on now goes beyond me," he said. "The man is plain crazy." He told of overhearing Hitler show off to the lady in question by denouncing Berlin in extravagant terms: "... the luxury, the perversion, the iniquity, the wanton display and the Jewish materialism disgusted me so thoroughly that I was almost beside myself. I nearly imagined myself to be Jesus Christ when he came to his Father's Temple and found the money changers." Whereupon, claimed Eckart, Hitler brandished his whip and exclaimed that it was his mission to descend upon the capital like a Christ and scourge the corrupt.

The following day Hitler accompanied Hanfstängl to the station and, as they descended the Obersalzberg, remarked that Eckart, whom he had recently replaced as editor of the party newspaper, had become "an old pessimist, a senile weakling." Schopenhauer had only turned him into a doubting Thomas. "Where would I get if I listened to all his transcendental talk? A nice ultimate wisdom that! To reduce oneself to a minimum of desire and will. Once will is gone, all is gone. This life is war." He began whistling the Swan Song from Lohengrin in "a curious soft tremolo."

Anton Drexler and his wife also disapproved of Hitler's play-acting on the Obersalzberg. They were equally disconcerted by his growing enthusiasm for revolutionary action. Their alarm was shared by others who objected to his associating with industrialists, wealthy socialites and bankers rather than building a solid base of genuine socialists from the working class.

Hitler must have been aware that he faced another revolt within the party, one born of discontent and dismay among those who first held highest hopes for him as leader of Germany's renaissance. (57)

In hindsight it becomes clear that Hitler indeed reviewed and improved his plans during the vacation. The May Day fiasco had demonstrated that no putsch was possible against the Reichswehr and the police, and that even their neutrality was probably not enough - their active support was a necessity. The forces he could hope to muster, perhaps a few thousand men, were insignificant compared to the human masses that could be enlisted and mobilized by the Left, and the fate of the Kapp Putsch had taught him that the nation could not be won without first winning the street.

Hence, nolens volens, he had to forge a coalition as broad as possible, even if it meant to include the monarchists and reactionaries, the Catholic centre or the conservative Bavarian People's Party, no matter how heartily he despised them. And there was another reason to play nice, temporarily, with the Bavarian government.

In the dramatic hours of May Day, Hitler had forgotten that he was still subject to parole from the Ballerstedt case, and by attempting to depose the Bavarian government, he had clearly violated its conditions. Munich's superior

court, the Landgericht, had ordered an investigation into the matter, and it was quite possible that Hitler would not only have to serve the two months jail time remaining from the Ballerstedt case but might be sentenced to an additional two years. For the worse, Interior Minister Schweyer would then have an expedient reason to expel Hitler from Bavaria and Germany and to deport him back to Austria.

But luck smiled on Hitler again, this time in the person of Justice Minister Franz Gürtner. An ardent nationalist, he took it upon himself to let the prosecutor know that the case should be "postponed", given the volatility of the present political situation. The advice was dutifully accepted, and on August 1, the investigation was temporarily halted and on May 22, 1924, all charges were dismissed. (58)

The relative calm of the summer of 1923 ended with Hitler's return from Berchtesgaden. He filled the Circus Krone five times before the end of August and spoke on ten public meetings of party chapters outside of Munich. (59) The next, somewhat more cautious attempt to challenge the mettle of the Bavarian government, which oscillated between sympathy for the extreme Right and feeble attempts to enforce the state's authority, came at the Deutsches Turnfest, the annual rally of the German gymnastic clubs. These organizations had been born during the late Napoleonic wars and were politically associated with German nationalism ever since - even if in 1848/49 they were found on the liberal side: by then, Napoleon gone, the German princes were the enemy. On July 14, "it came to violent clashes between the SA and the police as the Nazi formations, leaving the meeting at the Circus Krone, disobeyed police orders prohibiting the display of party banners." (60) Although such confrontations had by now become par for the course, Hitler knew, as did everybody else, that revolutionary élan could not be sustained indefinitely. To a degree, his problem was now that he had relinquished parts of his authority when he had subordinated the SA to the command structures of the patriotic league. By now, Ludendorff was the central figure of the nationalist cabal, and had not fate sided with Hitler when he needed it most urgently, he might have been obliged to yield his political pre-eminence to Ludendorff.

Fortunately, the late summer brought an opportunity to paint over the May Day frustrations. The greatest of all patriotic rallies, the "GERMAN DAY", was to be held this year in Nuremberg on September 1 and 2, the anniversary of the Battle of Sedan in 1870, which had delivered Napoleon III and 100,000 French soldiers into Prussian captivity and all but decided the Franco-Prussian War. Nuremberg, with its medieval fortifications largely intact, became the meeting ground for over 100,000 enthusiasts. The biggest delegations came from the NSDAP and Röhm's Reichsflagge, and Hitler was able to recoup much of the prestige he had lost on May Day when he shared the podium during the long review of the troops with General Ludendorff, Prince Ludwig Ferdinand of Bavaria and Colonel Kriebel, the military commander of the patriotic league. (61)

The streets were a sea of Nazi and Bavarian flags as the crowds roared "Heil!", waved handkerchiefs and tossed flowers and wreaths at Ludendorff and the marching units. "It was the unbridled expression of that multitude of defeated, miserable, displaced and shattered people, who now saw a ray of hope, of freedom from slavery and need. Many women and men cried, so overcome were they by emotion."

The largest number of marchers came from the NSDAP and after the opening parade Hitler spoke at one of the meetings. He looked more groomed than he had at Coburg, with pressed suit, low-cut shoes and neatly slicked-down hair. "In a few weeks the dice will roll," he declared prophetically. "What is in the making today will be greater than the World War. It will be fought out on German soil for the whole world."

On the second day the German Battle League was formed. Outwardly an association of nationalists, it was a creature of the NSDAP: its secretary-general was Scheubner-Richter, its military leader another Hitler man, one of its main organizations (the Reichsflagge) was dominated by Röhm; and its initial proclamation (written by Feder) sounded as if it came out of Hitler's mouth. It declared opposition to parliamentarism, international capital, the class struggle, pacifism, Marxism, and the Jews. (62)

The "German Day" had brought Hitler back into the limelight, and, only a few days later, he was able to seize another opportunity to stoke patriotic fervour, this time in connection with the situation at the Ruhr. On September 24, the new chancellor Gustav Stresemann "called off the passive resistance movement and resumed reparations payments to France."

(63) This left Hitler, who had opposed the resistance, for the moment in a bind, because now it could be argued that he was supporting the position of the Berlin government and was guilty of conspiring with France, the enemy.

During all the preceding months Hitler had spoken out against the passive resistance, but his revolutionary aims now required him to brand the administration's unpopular step a piece of cowardly, despicable treason and to exploit the situation to the full for the purposes of undermining the government.

On the very next day he met with the leaders of the Kampfbund [Deutscher Kampfbund, 'German Battle League', ¶]: Kriebel, Hess, Weber, Goering, and Röhm. In a stormy two-and-a-half hour speech he unfolded his plans and visions, ending with the plea that he be given the leadership of the Deutscher Kampfbund.

As Röhm later reported, Hess was in tears as he extended his hand to Hitler. Weber, too, was moved, while Röhm himself wept and trembled, as he said, from the depth of his emotion. Convinced that matters were moving toward a climax, he resigned from the Reichswehr the very next day and threw his lot in entirely with Hitler. (64)

The capitulation of the military commanders allowed Hitler to increase the party activities in preparation for the showdown he felt was to occur before long. The feeling of imminent trouble was mirrored in the outside world by inflation on a scale truly unknown before. In January 1923, one U.S. Dollar cost 18,000 Marks, in August of the year the rate was 4,600,000 Marks to a Dollar, by September about 99,000,000 Marks, in October 26,000,000,000 Marks and on November 15, 1923 the fantastic sum of 4,200,000,000,000 Marks for a single U.S. Dollar. (65) Reichsmarks were literally used as wallpaper, and beggars threw away million-mark notes in contempt.

Nobody was surprised that the political ramifications almost tore the republic apart. Initially, the Left seemed to try a constructive approach: the SPD joined Stresemann's coalition government in Berlin, and the KPD joined the local administrations in Thuringia and Saxony. The Communists, however, could not resist the temptation too long and soon planned to overthrow these governments; in Hamburg the Reds actually took over between October 23 and 26, before the attempt ended in a hail of police bullets. The situations in Saxony and Thuringia were eventually solved as well; in the latter the Communist ministers eventually left the government although in Saxony a few dozen people were shot dead in street battles. (66)

The Red risings gave Hitler the pretext he needed and he reacted by putting the SA on emergency alert and planning a gigantic rally for September 27, on which he was to speak at no less than fourteen mass gatherings. (67) But for once the government was faster. Stresemann's move to cancel resistance in the Ruhr precipitated a reaction of the Bavarian government. The country's tentative separatism, rumours of putsches from left and right and enmity against the "Marxist" (955) government in Berlin at length provoked urgent measures. On September 26, Minister President von Knilling informed the cabinet that the situation on the streets was beyond the constitutional provisions and that he saw no remedy but to appoint a "State Commissioner" with dictatorial powers. (68)

He declared a state of emergency, reintroduced martial law, and appointed Gustav von Kahr to the post of executive director. For practical purposes, Bavaria would be ruled by a troika: subordinated to von Kahr served General Lossow as commander of the Bavarian army and Colonel Hans Ritter von Seisser as commissioner of the Bavarian State Police. Behind the triumvirate, directing the puppets, were Cardinal Michael Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, and, naturally, Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, head of the House of Wittelsbach, who happened to live in Berchtesgaden, close to where Hitler had spent his holiday.

[Von Kahr] now declared that he welcomed the co-operation of the Kampfbund but warned Hitler against what he called "private initiatives". The fourteen rallies could not be permitted. Hitler was beside himself with rage.

As head of the Kampfbund, the most powerful paramilitary organization on the scene, Hitler had begun to think himself the equal and partner of the government. With one stroke Kahr had reduced him to a public

nuisance. In one of these tantrums later to become so famous, ranting and raving until he almost blacked out, Hitler threatened revolution.

That would have meant breaking his own ground rules, which called for moving in concert with the power of the state. Only in the course of an all-night session were Röhm, Pöhner, and Scheubner-Richter able to dissuade him from a coup d'état. (69)

Knilling's surprising action meant that Hitler had to reassess his plans. He took a few days off and visited, in fulfilment of a long-hedged dream, Bayreuth and the Wagner family. He introduced himself by reviewing the local SA unit, which he had parading up and down the front of Haus Wahnfried, the family's domicile. He was eventually invited in, apparently by Frau Winifred Wagner, the English-born wife of the master's son Siegfried, and was introduced to Cosima Wagner, the daughter of Franz Liszt and the maestro's widow, eighty-six years old and still a majestic woman. Hitler also made the acquaintance of another cherished family member.

Here, too, was the Master's son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, most fervent of German nationalists, although born the son of an English admiral from Portsmouth.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain was the author of a work called FOUNDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, which sought to prove that the Teutonic race alone possessed the mission to civilize the world. Hitler had made a cult of Wagner, and he was not surprised to learn that the Wagner family had made a cult of him.

Cosima kissed him, Winifred took his hand, Siegfried smiled earnestly, and Chamberlain announced that he [Hitler] was "god-given". Never had Hitler received so much affection and applause from people whose opinions he prized. When he returned to Munich he found a letter from the aged Houston Stewart Chamberlain praising him as a Messiah and comparing Chamberlain himself with John the Baptist.

"At one blow you have transformed the state of my soul," he [Chamberlain] wrote. "That Germany in her hour of need has produced a Hitler testifies to its vitality. Now at last I am able to sleep peacefully and I shall have no need to wake up again. God protect you!"

The approbation of the Wagner family appears to have convinced Hitler that he was indeed "god-given". Previously he had sometimes wondered whether he was not "eine kleine Johannismatur", a "little John the Baptist type", the forerunner who discreetly vanishes when the Messiah appears. He knew better now. (70)

In this period of temporary irresolution, he began to contemplate his relation to General Ludendorff, who was regarded by many as the icon of national rebirth, but had neither political talent nor his own organization. Without the Kampfbund, Ludendorff was powerless, as was von Kahr without the Bavarian army. To win, Hitler had to make himself indispensable to both. With the leadership of the Kampfbund he had, of course, the trump card, but he had to get both Ludendorff and Von Kahr into the kitty at the same time. In a situation in which both would find themselves without alternative, the "drummer" would become the catalyst of the national revolution. This required careful plotting.

While Hitler dithered, Berlin debated. With the Red crises in Hamburg and Saxony not yet over, the Bavarian insurrection might herald the complete collapse of the nation.

In this tense and murky situation, the future of the country depended on the Reichswehr. Its commander, General von Seeckt, was himself often mentioned in rightist circles as a possible dictator. With the composure of one who knows that ultimate power rests with him, he made a late entrance to the cabinet meeting. Asked by Ebert where the Reichswehr stood at this moment, he replied: "The Reichswehr, Mr. President, stands behind me."

For one brief moment the real power relationships were blindingly illuminated. Nevertheless, at this point he displayed loyalty to the political authorities. A nationwide state of emergency was declared, and executive power throughout the Reich was given to Seeckt. In the weeks to come he proved capable of even-handed dealing with the disruptive forces of both Right and Left. (71)

Hitler still hesitated, uncharacteristically. While the foot soldiers of the movement appealed to him to seize the day, he had to find a *modus vivendi* with Von Kahr first, because he could not afford to be opposed by army and police. His most reliable ally, at the moment, was the bleak economic outlook, but if that changed, if Stresemann somehow found an agreement with France, the best chance might be lost.

And still he vacillated, prevaricated, hemmed and hawed at informal meetings. He began a great promenade around and through the town, visiting everybody he ever met before. He sustained the believers and encouraged the neophytes, but did not say what exactly he thought about, until his ideas had firmed up. Helene Hanfstängl noted that "absolutely no one could ever persuade him to change his mind, once it was made up. On a number of occasions when his followers tried to coerce him I noticed the faraway, unheeding expression in his eyes; it was as though he had closed his mind to all ideas but his own." (72)

By the end of September, he had reached conclusions.

DEAD RECKONING

*For my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the paths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles;
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew,
Though much is taken,
Much abides.*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson "Ulysses", L. 66

Whilst the Reich government in Berlin monitored General von Seeckt's efforts to end the Red risings in Saxony, Thuringia and Hamburg, Adolf Hitler plotted its downfall. The time seemed ripe - the nation hit rock bottom.

In retrospect, the last months of the year 1923 seemed to intensify all the ills, real or imagined, that the land had suffered. Famine had first thrown its shadow over the country in the "turnip winter" of 1916/17, and the frosty winters of 1919 and 1921 much enlarged the food and fuel crises. The public was not aware to what extent the hunger was a consequence of Ludendorff's wartime planning blunders and the progression of frost, hunger, infirmity and disease was laid, quite understandably, at the feet of the enemy, the Allies, Communists or Jews. The perpetual sight of war amputees in the streets was a daily, depressive, reminder of the war, and the arrogance, habitual larceny and frequent rape committed by French and Belgian occupation troops only served to remind the people, bitterly, of their helplessness.

The inflation reached such obscene proportions that even the printing of money became an exercise in futility. Under contract of the government, the rotary presses of twenty companies ran day and night, seven days a week, but could not print money quick enough to keep up with the devaluation. Thus old notes were simply over stamped with red ink. A bank note, issued, for example, in Berlin in December 1922 with a nominal value of 1000 Reichsmark was over stamped, eight months later, with 1 MILLARDE MARK, a billion Mark; a bank note printed by the Bavarian State Bank in the summer of 1923 with a face value of 500,000 Marks was over stamped, three months later, to evidence a sum of 20 MILLIARDEN MARK, twenty billion Mark. (1)

As always it were the weak, the poor, that were hit the hardest and the good folks who had patriotically bought war bonds or lived on fixed salaries or pensions. The middle class was wiped out as if hit by a meteor; only speculators thrived. Whoever had access to convertible currency became an instant Croesus, indeed, currency exchange became the new pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The psychological consequences were devastating.

Hitler returned from Bayreuth in a jubilant mood; he wore the adoration of the Wagners like a knighthood, and Chamberlain's endorsement as the apotheosis of his historical importance. He was aware that his followers expected action soon, but he had a tactical problem to solve first.

However, the cards were not in his hands. Kahr and the two other members of the triumvirate which was effectively ruling Bavaria (State Police chief Seisser and Reichswehr commander Lossow) had their own agenda, which differed in significant detail from that of the Kampfbund leadership.

In extensive negotiations with north German contacts throughout October, the triumvirate was looking to install a nationalist dictatorship in Berlin based on a directorate, with or without Kahr as a member but certainly without the inclusion of Ludendorff or Hitler, and resting on the support of the Reichswehr.

The Kampfbund leadership, on the other hand, wanted a directorate in Munich, centring on Ludendorff and Hitler, certainly without Kahr, which would take Berlin by force. And while Lossow took it for granted that any move against the Berlin government would be carried out by the military, the Kampfbund presumed that it would be a paramilitary operation with Reichswehr backing. (2)

It was crucial for Hitler not to lose momentum. The party claimed to have gained over 30,000 new members so far in 1923, and Hitler sought to find the proper tactic to envelop Kahr. A beginning was made when Kahr ignored Seeckt's demand that the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER should be shut down for "incendiary and libellous" articles. (3)

Then the Reich government issued warrants to arrest the Free Corps leaders Rossbach, Heiss and Ehrhardt, which were not only ignored; Kahr actually recalled Ehrhardt from his Austrian exile and put him to planning the "March on Berlin". Seeckt now fired Lossow from his post as commander of the Reichswehr's 7th Infantry Division, but the very next day von Kahr created an instant "Bavarian Army (Reichswehr)" and made Lossow its chief. (4) Meanwhile Hitler engaged in apocalyptic prophecy.

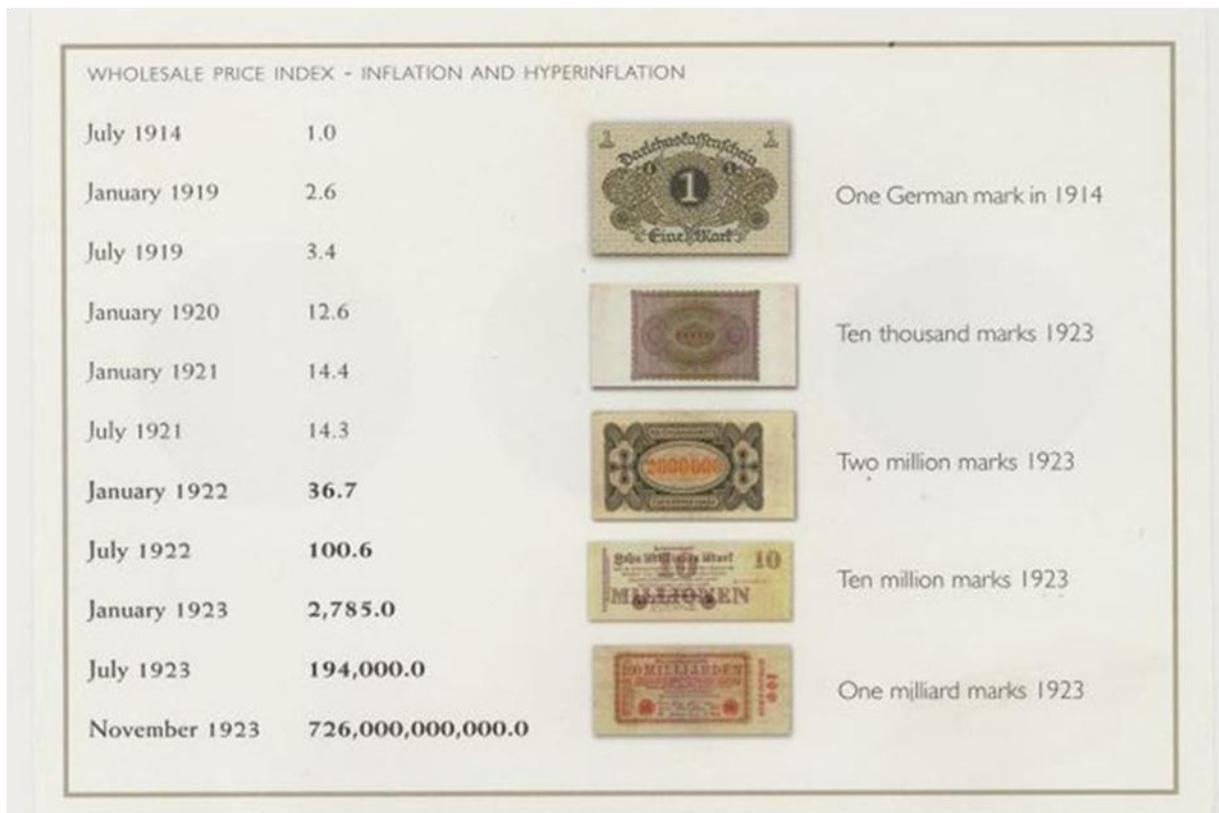
"Then the day will have come for which this movement was created. The hour for which we have fought all these years. The moment in which the National Socialist movement will launch its triumphal march for the salvation of Germany. Not for an election were we founded, but to leap into the breach in time of greatest need, when this people in fear and trembling sees the red monster advancing upon it Our movement alone holds the key to salvation - that is already perceived by millions. That has become almost a new article of faith." (5)

Hitler's movements as well as his public sermons were, of course, monitored and reported by the police, and from Seisser's desk the accounts were sent to Kahr. Despite his power, Kahr felt a dilemma; his duty was clearly to hold the lid down on Hitler and his party, but clearly he could use him, he sympathized with him, and, notwithstanding the public order, a good part of Munich's "better society" had made it clear that Hitler was to be treated with velvet gloves.

This was the first occurrence of a pattern that will repeat itself all over the years until 1933: the illusion of bourgeois Rightist circles to be able to use Hitler for their own ends, to control him, to let him do the base work the excellencies thought themselves above. It was a tragic error most German politicians, industrialists and generals submitted to for the next ten years to come. It turned out that those who want to share a meal with the devil need a long spoon.

October came and not much changed in the Mexican stand-off between Kampfbund and triumvirate. As far as misperceptions go, the governments were perhaps the bigger ones, for that Hitler's designs differed from his own not only in details but indeed in aim and size never entered Von Kahr's contemplations. Hitler was popular, so much Kahr was willing to concede, but his role could not be more significant than that of a "drummer", to bring attention to the national cause.

Von Kahr was unaware that the visit in Bayreuth had changed Hitler, who still looked up to Ludendorff but to none else. Most of the Right saw the Hitler movement as representing worthy and noble feelings, if slightly, say, on the plebeian side. "There are decent emotions which lead misguided people to the Nazis," wrote Eduard Hamm, a liberal MP of the Bavarian Democratic Party in 1922, "men who honourably desire to serve their people and their state." (6) Such was the prevailing attitude in Munich's better society, and hence the police hardly ever did much to curb the enthusiasm of Hitler's confederates.



ABOVE, GERMANY'S WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX FROM JULY 1914 TO NOVEMBER 1923. THE LOWEST BANK NOTE IS ACTUALLY "WORTH" 100 MILLIARD MARKS, I.E. 100 BILLION MARKS IN U.S. PARLANCE.

BELOW, AN ASSORTMENT OF BANK NOTES FROM 1923. IN THE MIDDLE, A NOTE FOR "EINE BILLION", I.E. ONE TRILLION MARKS - IT BOUGHT CAPTAIN RÖHM, AS HE DESCRIBED IN HIS MEMOIRS, LUNCH - BUT NOT DINNER.



The Lossow affair made headlines. The day after von Lossow had been dismissed from his post, the army units in Bavaria, to a man, renounced the oath to the Republic and her government and replaced it with a new one, affirming obedience and loyalty to the Bavarian government and personally to General von Lossow, "until an adjustment between Bavaria and the Reich has been arrived at, and I renew my obligation to obey my superior officers." (7) It was mutiny, and barratry, executed formally without violence, but illegal nonetheless. "There will be no civil war," said a Bavarian cabinet member to Robert Murphy. "The ship of state has merely listed too far to the left, and it was and is Bavaria's duty to right it." (8) Despite the minister's calm, the volume and intensity of the political duels fought out in the beer cellars, barbershops and newspaper headlines was astounding.

The atmosphere was heavy with secrecy, intrigue, and deep mutual distrust. Councils of war were held almost continuously, plans of action forged, passwords coined. In a more serious vein, weapons were collected and military exercises staged. (9)

Hitler was convinced that, in a pinch, the people would be following him rather than Kahr, but that was not true for the armed forces which would obey Lossow. He suspected the real difference between his Kampfbund and the government was that the KAMPFBUND's "March on Berlin" might too easily be replaced by a Bavarian separatist "Away from Berlin", if von Kahr had the say-so. (10) He retained this suspicion although von Kahr, on the same day he had reinstated Lossow to command, attacked Berlin and the Reich government in a lead article on the front page of the MÜNCHENER ZEITUNG, the city's major newspaper. Kahr characterized his disobediences of Reich orders as a legitimate challenge against the "illegal Marxist" government in Berlin and called for the armed overthrow of the administration. By borrowing Hitler's platform for a day, he aimed to appeal to the NSDAP and the paramilitary formations.

The article was but a ploy, a tactical sting, adding fog to a hazy morning. Stresemann was no mean nationalist himself and his administration was neither "illegal", since it was backed by a parliamentary majority, nor "Marxist", since neither the KPD nor the USPD partook in the governmental coalition. Kahr's article did not mean in realiter that the triumvirate was now ready to follow Hitler's path. It rather expressed a schoolboy's happiness over a well-done prank: Bavaria liked very much to keep her own liberal and Catholic profile against Rhenish industrialism and Prussian Calvinism, and Kahr was sure that his article would impel Stresemann to defend his "Marxist" government. This, in turn, would allow von Kahr to claim that the Communists indeed controlled the Berlin government.

Stresemann's reaction, published on the next day, October 22, in the same paper, proved that he was one cool customer. It read not much different from what von Kahr had alleged: Stresemann asserted that there were 33,000 Marxists holding public office in Prussia, therefore, "as a result, domestic politics are purely Marxist; that is to say they are directed against the natural order of things and are oriented toward compulsion, agitation, demagoguery and street fighting. Foreign policy is becoming internationalized and those who control it are careful to ensure that Germany never becomes powerful again." (11) If Stresemann had not forgotten to include the Jews in his diatribe, the text could have come straight from Hitler's desk.

Thus Kahr play to out-Hitler Hitler had failed. Subsequently, during October 1923, Bavaria enjoyed a period of political carnival, intermittently accentuated by the sound of gunfire in the night. Arguments, curses and libel flew freely between Left and Right, but increasingly between the right-wing factions themselves. The triumvirate's designs followed the true-and-tried recipe of military takeovers; Lossow would order the army to disarm Socialists and Communists (of weapons they did not possess) and with the excuse of looming revolution abolish the parliament, declare martial law and reintroduce the monarchy, perhaps with the Crown Prince as the new King Rupprecht the First.¹The new Bavarian state would then rejoin the Reich, perhaps, but on its own conditions. And if the Prussians minded, they could come down and try; Bavarians had handled Prussians on the battlefield before.

¹To illustrate the cross-purposes within Hitler's inner circle, Captain Röhm had already made two attempts to enlist Prince Rupprecht's co-operation. On the first occasion he fell to his knees and, with clasped hand, begged Rupprecht to work with Hitler; he was summarily dismissed in a "not too friendly fashion". On the second, Röhm suggested that Hitler, Ludendorff and the Crown Prince jointly rule Bavaria, using this state as a base to win over North Germany with an armed invasion consisting of the various patriotic organizations. "I told him that was nonsense," recalled Rupprecht's political adviser. (12)

After a number of all-day conferences, fuelled by the flames of reckless patriotism, Kahr, Lossow and Seisser had to admit that only three scenarios proved truly viable: one could pretend that nothing had happened and go back to the status quo ante, reporting back to Berlin as usual; one could secede from the Reich and establish a new, independent Bavarian monarchy, or one could assemble the nationalist forces and dare the "March on Berlin". By the end of October, the triumvirate tended to the latter script, but in a version that used primarily the regular military and Kampfbund units solely as auxiliaries.

Apparently in preparation of such a scheme, Lossow invited the leaders of army, state police and the patriotic organizations to a big powwow on October 24; among the latter Lieutenant Colonel Kriebel, the military leader of the KAMPFBUND. Lossow forgot to invite Hitler, or anyone from the SA, for that matter. (13) He gave a martial address, requesting the armed deposition of the Reich government, much as von Kahr had suggested in his earlier newspaper article, but remained strangely uncommitted as far as concrete planning went. It seemed obvious that the triumvirate feared a Hitler putsch that might draw on the Right, the patriotic paramilitaries and perhaps parts of the regular army into Hitler's arms; support that might render him able to march on Berlin after he had wrested power from Kahr and Lossow. The triumvirate still hoped to attract the Reichswehr leadership to their side, but Lossow's personal mission to Berlin and a meeting with Seeckt on November 3 only brought negative confirmation; Seeckt would not move against the Reich government. (14)

Meanwhile Hitler sought to devise a plan how to achieve at least the semblance of legal authority: for practical purposes, to ensure the loyalty of army and police, and for emotional purposes, to secure the support of nobility and Church. It was the Baltic wing of the party, Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter, who came up with a plan to achieve this cooperation that was worthy of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. They would simply kidnap the Crown Prince, Cardinal Faulhaber and von Kahr at the ceremonies of November 4, when a war memorial was to be unveiled and consecrated. The dignitaries would assemble, as it was custom in Munich at such occasions, in a small alley behind the Feldherrnhalle, where they were separated from the spectators that filled the Odeonsplatz. They could be quickly snatched and then informed, politely, by Hitler, that the Nazis had successfully defeated a Red putsch but had been forced, unfortunately, to seize the government, to prevent a separation of Bavaria from the Reich. Rosenberg was sure that they would cooperate. No one knows what would have happened had the bizarre plan been executed, but Hanfständl sank the ship by asking, simply, what the plotters thought the army would do if they kidnapped and threatened the head of the royal family, the Church, and the government? Hitler agreed, and the ruse was abandoned, although Rosenberg did not seem to get the message.

Hitler often told different stories to his confederates. He may have dismissed the kidnap plan out of hand as his remark to Hanfständl [that he would keep Rosenberg on a short leash, ¶] implied. Rosenberg however was convinced the putsch was on until he discovered on German Memorial Day that there were strong police units in the alley and informed Hitler that the coup de main had to be abandoned.

Helene Hanfständl repeatedly noticed Hitler's habit of keeping his advisers at odds with each other and in the dark - "he never confided a single plan, visit or the fact that he made new acquaintances, to more than one or two followers at a time. This often led to uncomfortable situations when different party members suddenly discovered that they were not completely in the picture - Hitler's idea of complete personal control of all plans." (15)

In late October, Hitler's passions threatened to boil over. In a frenzied rally at the Circus Krone on October 30, he openly challenged all state authority. Röhm noted his master's words: "The German problem will be solved for me only after the black, white and red swastika banner floats on the Berlin Palace! We all feel that the hour has come and, like the soldier in the field, we will not shirk our duty as Germans. We will follow the order to keep in step, and march forward!" (16) The police observers dutifully noted each word.

Doubling up, Hitler asked for and received an appointment with Colonel von Seisser, the police commissioner. The two met on November 1 at the home of Dr. Friedrich Weber, the veterinarian who was chairman of the BUND OBERLAND. He reiterated his proposal of the "Grand Solution", a tetrarchy consisting of Ludendorff, Lossow, Seisser and himself, but Seisser refused to entertain the idea. Hitler wondered why. He thought it quite possible that the higher officers might follow the orders of the triumvirate, but the NCO's and enlisted men would follow Ludendorff. He told Lossow so, and that

time was running out: "Our people are under such economic pressure that we must either act or they will swing to the Communists." (17) Lossow told Hitler that he was working on getting the approval of the other Reichswehr division commanders, and as soon as this was arranged, the putsch was to take place. Hitler perhaps sensed the lie; at any rate, his doubts about Lossow's sincerity grew. These doubts showed themselves amply justified when Kahr invited carefully chosen members of the nationalist groups to another conference on November 6. Again, Hitler was not invited, but the triumvirate was apparently so uninformed of the realities in the Kampfbund that they seemed not to be aware that their invitation of Scheubner-Richter to the session, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Kampfbund, amounted to informing Hitler about every word that was spoken. Which words, then, were spoken?

Few new ones. Basically, Kahr repeated his warning of September 6 that the government remained firmly in the saddle and no "private initiatives" would be tolerated, but by then the bush drums had already informed the Kampfbund that Lossow's trip to Berlin had been a failure and that von Seeckt had rejected to aid the Bavarians. Kahr thus badly needed the paramilitary units, to reinforce his troops, but was afraid that, once the ball was rolling, Hitler would take over; in essence von Kahr seemed in pursuit of a Hitler solution without Hitler.

Who was informed the same day by Kriebel and Scheubner-Richter on the details of Kahr's kaffeeklatsch. The host had opened the meeting.

"The atypical way must be prepared. Preparations have already been made. But if the atypical way must be taken, then everybody must cooperate. It must be accomplished according to a united, sufficiently prepared and thought-out plan."

The next speaker, Lossow, supported Kahr and his determination to crush any Putsch by force of arms.

"I am ready to support a rightist dictatorship if the affair is likely to succeed," said the general. He would participate if there was a fifty-one percent chance for success. "But if we are merely to be harassed into a Putsch, which will come to a sorry end in five or six days, I will not cooperate."

In conclusion, both he and Colonel von Seisser underlined their warnings to the members of the Battle League to cooperate - or else. (18)

The triumvirate's revolutionary dedication appears quite lacklustre here, to say the least, for much of the daring character of revolution is derived from its inherent risk. And every repetition of the "or else" made Kahr less convincing.

At the improvised conference in Scheubner-Richter's apartment on the evening of November 6, Hitler, Kriebel and Dr. Weber agreed to ask Ludendorff to arrange a meeting between Hitler and von Kahr. A preliminary plan for action was devised as well, to begin on the night of Saturday, November 10. The idea was to call for a great night exercise of the best Kampfbund units at the Fröttmaninger Heide, just northeast of the city. At the conclusion of the manoeuvre the troops would march to the city centre, pretending to be on the way home, and there announce the Nationalist takeover, by way of which they would force the triumvirate to pledge their support. It would be the fifth anniversary of Armistice Day, and, of course, a Sunday; traffic would be light, thus leaving the streets to the SA.

The morrow brought a second meeting and more planning of details: the major towns would have to be neutralized by the seizure of communication and transportation hubs, railroad stations, police precincts, radio, telephone and telegram facilities and public utilities. As much, or little, planning went into the seizure of these objects as went into denying their use to the enemy: Communist attacks or counterstrokes were to be suppressed by gunfire; it would be ordered to shoot to kill. The count of personnel resulted, theoretically, in a nominal superiority of strike troops: about four thousand armed fighters of the SA, Bund Oberland, Reichsflagge and other organizations were available, who would be opposed, it was surmised, by about 2,500 police and army troops stationed in the capital.

The whole affair, however, went topsy-turvy when Ludendorff's attempts to arrange a meeting between Hitler and von Kahr failed, but the latter unexpectedly announced to hold a great patriotic rally, to take place on the evening of November 8, the very next day, at the Bürgerbräukeller. This locale was one of Munich's biggest beer cellars and could

easily accommodate three thousand guests. The date fit with the fifth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution, and whatever it was that Kahr was to say, it would not be in praise of Communists.

Speculation ran wild, although it was widely expected that Kahr, less than six weeks in office, would explain what he planned to do with the awesome executive power he had been invested with; that he would give an outline to the future, to give a name or face to his regime. Kahr's real intention, however, was of tactical nature, to draw as much support as he could from the extreme Right to his, what was essentially the bourgeois-monarchical position and away from Hitler.

All prominent members of the Right were to attend, the triumvirate, the cabinet, Church, nobility and the leaders of industry and the patriotic organizations. Hitler received an invitation so perfunctory that it was clear that his presence would not be considered necessary.

The meeting, arranged at short notice, was seen by the Kampfbund leadership as a threat, all the more so in the light of Kahr's refusal to meet Hitler before it took place. At the very least the meeting was seen as an attempt to strengthen Kahr's position and weaken the power of the Kampfbund.

Whether they believed that Kahr intended to seal the breach with the nationalists by proclaiming the restoration of the Bavarian monarchy is uncertain. They were probably more concerned about the possibility of Kahr instigating the "action" against Berlin without the Kampfbund's involvement - all the more so since Hitler was aware of Lossow's comment on 24 October, that the "march on Berlin" to erect a national dictatorship would take place at the latest within fourteen days.

Any rate, Hitler felt his hand forced by Kahr's meeting. (19)

Hitler knew that, come hell or high water, he needed to pre-empt Kahr; if anybody putsched, it would be him. He was aware that history, as well as Fortuna, hardly ever recognizes the runner-up, but, on the other hand, he had to keep a tight leash on proceedings; revolutions, he knew, always devour their own children. A strike against the state, then, it had to be, leading to the creation of some kind of national-authoritative regime. *FORTES FORTUNA JUVAT*, Fortune favours the Brave, was one of Hitler's axioms.

For reasons not entirely comprehensible, the English language has not produced a specific word or expression which conveys the connotations attached to the German word *putsch* or its French equivalent *coup diktat*. Merriam-Webster's dictionary, employed as arbiter *elegantiarum*, defines:

putsch, [G]: *a secretly plotted and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow a government,*

and

coup d'état, *n. pl. coups d'états* [F]; *lit. stroke of state*: *a sudden violent overthrow of a government by a small group.*

Putsches, to use the word the burghers of Munich knew, come in all shapes and sizes, manners and disguises. The most polite was probably the people of Iceland in 1944, informing their titular overlord, King Christian X of Denmark, by telegram that they had declared themselves independent but expressed the confident hope that future good relations between Denmark and the new republic would not be jeopardized by the nature of the message.

Slightly less polite was the way a clique of Serbian army officers insisted upon a change of government in 1903: the officers not only slaughtered their own Royal couple, but threw their dismembered bodies out of a palace window to feed the street dogs.

Coup d'états also vary widely in the ripples they cause on the surface of the respective societies and surroundings: while the French Revolution changed things forever, and for the whole world, in some third-world countries the annual summer putsch is a regular affair. Germany, however, did not have a whole lot of revolutionary experience, and neither Hitler nor anybody else was entirely sure what to do best.

In any case, with the announcement of his own rally, Kahr had directly challenged Hitler's leadership of the extreme Right. A hastily summoned conference of NSDAP and SA leaders came to the conclusion that Kahr's meeting was, perhaps, the opportunity they have been waiting for: the complete leadership of the state and the Right would be present in a single place.

What would happen, Hitler mused, if one simply collected the whole shebang, brought them into a separate room, and gave them the choice either to support the coup or become its first victims? Without the triumvirate's assistance the coup would have no chance. Hitler's aim was not to grab the power in Bavaria for itself but to provoke the nation into a revolt against the Reich government; he was not interested, he told Hanfstätgl, to become a subordinate minister of the Bavarian state.

But most of his co-conspirators were far less audacious than their Führer, and in putting to discussion the idea to strike later on the same day, Hitler encountered a veritable gamut of objections and demurrals. He discussed, cajoled, threatened and begged, until, in the wee hours of November 8, 1923, the decision was reached to launch the putsch indeed this very night. In a dramatic gesture worthy of an epic movie, Scheubner-Richter handed his valet a number of letters to the press and various publishers -- to be delivered at 8 p.m. in the evening.

In hindsight, it is clear that Hitler had to act.

Since the defeat of May 1, from which he had barely recovered, the call to act was almost unavoidable. Otherwise he would jeopardize the very quality that made him unique among the profusion of parties and politicians: the radical, almost existential seriousness of his sense of outrage. It was his unyieldingness and refusal to compromise that made him impressive and credible. As leader of the Kampfbund he had acquired command over a striking force whose will to act was no longer fragmented by collective leadership. (20)

As a graduate of the front lines, Hitler knew that the favourable tactical situation of the moment could not be sustained indefinitely.

Hitler had not only to worry about the morale of his troops; the mere passage of time also had its dangers. The revolutionary discontent threatened to evaporate; it had been strained far too long. Meanwhile, the end of the struggle for the Ruhr and the defeat of the Left had brought a turn toward normality. Even the inflation seemed about to be checked, and the spirit of revolution seemed to be vanishing along with the crisis.

There was no question that Hitler's effectiveness was entirely bound up with national distress. So to hesitate now would be fatal, even if certain pledges he had made [to Kahr and Lossow, ¶] stood in his way. (21)

As it would be the case in a fairy tale or Hollywood movie, the morning of November 8 dawned grey, cold and windy. The weather office had predicted snow in the higher altitudes and for once they were correct: a white blanket covered the hills south of the town and lonely snowflakes were spotted here and there on its streets.

Hitler woke up with a headache plus an inflamed incisor, a merry combination, he admitted, to greet the important day. His confidants insisted that he see a dentist before making history, but he "didn't have time, and there was going to be a revolution which would change everything." (22) He had to follow his star. When Hanfstätgl asked what would happen if he fell seriously ill, Hitler replied that "if that should be the case or I should die it would only be a sign that my star has run its course and my mission is fulfilled." (23)

Since Kahr's call for the great patriotic convention had come unexpected, the preparations were marked by a sense of haste. No staff had been set up to coordinate events, no timetables existed, and confusion governed the morning. Preliminary orders were to be given to SA leaders by phone, but it turned out that many could not be reached in this way

because they were already at work or did not own a telephone. Hence these men had to be notified by courier, a time-consuming procedure. There was not really a strategic plan, and no tactical order for the battle; the party was far from the consummate skill in the projection of power that would be demonstrated so effortlessly in later years. Only the handful of men who had been present at the nightly meeting was acquainted with the plan, as far as it existed.

It speaks for the confusion of the morning that when Alfred Rosenberg was discussing the daily newspaper edition with Hanfstängl around noon, he was oblivious of any special plans for the day. The front-page of the November 8 issue displayed a picture of the Prussian General Yorck. He was the man who had organized the change of sides of the Prussian army in 1813, from being an unwilling confederate of Napoleon to turn against him. It was the Convention of Tauroggen, precipitated by the Corsican's loss of most of the Grande Armée during the retreat from Moscow. The caption below the picture read, "Shall we find a second General Yorck in our hour of need?"(24)

While these two, who detested each other, were weighing the possible effects of the picture, they heard stamping outside and a hoarse voice: "Where is Captain Göring?" The door was flung open and Hitler, wearing his tightly belted trench coat and gripping his whip, burst in, "pallid with excitement."

"Swear you will not mention this to a living soul," he said with suppressed urgency. "The hour has come. Tonight we act!" He asked them both to be part of his personal escort. They were to bring pistols and rendezvous outside the beer hall at seven o'clock. Hanfstängl hurried home to tell his wife to take their son Egon to the villa they had just built in the country, then informed a number of international journalists, including H.R. Knickerbocker, that they "must under no circumstances" miss the meeting that evening.

By afternoon Hitler had controlled his excitement and was gossiping at the Café Heck with Heinrich Hoffmann, his photographer crony, as though this was just another ordinary day. Suddenly Hitler suggested they visit Esser, who was laid up with jaundice. While Hoffmann waited outside, Hitler revealed to Esser that he was going to announce the national revolution that evening. He needed help. At exactly 9:30 p.m. Esser, carrying a flag, was to rush up the podium of the Löwenbräukeller, where a nationalist meeting was to be held [parallel to the one in the Bürgerbräukeller, and announce the National Socialist revolution.

Hitler emerged to tell Hoffmann that Esser felt much better and the two strolled aimlessly along the Schellingstrasse. Moments later Goering approached and Hitler took him off for a private talk only to return with the announcement that he had a terrible headache and must leave. By now Hoffmann was completely bewildered. What on earth, he asked, was Hitler doing that evening? He answered mysteriously that he would be "very busy on a very important job," then set off for party headquarters. (25)

Hoffmann was not the only man totally out of the picture. At the subsequent trial, a few humorous moments occurred when the hapless prosecution tried to establish the knowledge and whereabouts of some supposed co-conspirators, who had never heard anything about a putsch all day, or were told by outsiders.

Afternoon had come, and those members of the SA who did have work finished it for the day, went home, and changed into the quasi-uniforms that Captain Röhm had organized: field-grey windbreakers with brown kepis and belts, and their forget-me-not, the black-white-red swastika armband. The companies assembled in front of the party office in the Corneliusstrasse, and as soon as a company was complete, the troop was sent to its strategic target, that is, one of the great beer halls.

Dusk falls around 5:00 p.m. on a November night in Munich, and it was already dark when a huge car stopped at the condominium where Scheubner-Richter was domiciled, and General Ludendorff ascended the stairs to speak to him briefly. After a few minutes first the general, and then Scheubner-Richter and his valet, returned outside and sped off with their cars in the direction of the party office.

The offices were only a few hundred yards distant from the west bank of the Isar River, which bisects Munich, and the distance to the Bürgerbräukeller, on the eastern side of the river, was only a good mile. The Keller was a huge building on a slight hill overlooking the river and its Festival Hall could easily seat 3,000 guests on its solid oak tables. With the

exemption of the Circus Krone, it was the largest meeting hall in town. The police had sent a full company of uniformed men plus a horsed unit for the outside, and had planted dozens of plainclothesmen in the audience. In the Rosenheimer Straße barracks a mile down the road a whole battalion of riot police would be available if circumstances required it. (26)

Meanwhile Hanfstängl had collected the journalists, including Knickerbocker, at the party office, and the drive to the locale lasted only a few minutes; it was close to 8 p.m. when the small caravan closed in on the building. Hanfstängl's party had problems getting in. The hall was already overcrowded, and Hitler began to wonder whether all his troops would fit in. The expedition slowly made its way through the multitude in front of the entrance, and Hitler plus his entourage needed the assistance of the police to reach the platform.

On the rostrum, the nominal host, Ritter von Kahr, lectured on the dangers of Marxism to an audience which was not exactly excited but placid enough as long as the beer flowed freely, which it did. To blend in with the crowd, Hanfstängl bought beer for all while Hitler paced up and down nervously, anxious for the arrival of his special bodyguard unit led by Goering. Hitler had of course calculated in the heavy presence of the police and built his plan on the element of surprise. The SA trucks were to arrive all at the same time, and unload as quickly as possible. The police would be encircled, and thus a momentary impasse was to be achieved; later on, of course, the police was counted on to support the putsch. The plan called for Goering and his special team to enter the hall armed with submachine guns and to disarm the plainclothesmen as discreetly as possible. (27)

The trucks arrived and halted, as ordered, just around the corner, to await the appearance of Goering, who materialized just after 8:30 p.m. The trucks rounded the corner on his signal and disgorged their men at the hall entrance. Twenty or thirty uniformed policeman seemed momentarily poised to defend the entrance, but the sight of the machine pistols Göring's cohort was brandishing subverted their courage, and they melted away from the doors like effigies in a bonfire.

Hitler had quietly sipped on his beer mug but set it aside the moment he saw Goering's brutes enter the hall. When the stormtroopers saw him, shouts of "Heil Hitler" filled the air and, behind them, the five horsemen of this special apocalypse appeared: Scheubner-Richter, the faux nobleman from the Baltic coast, ex-butcher and bodyguard Ulrich Graf, Putzi Hanfstängl, the tall Harvard man, Max Amann, Hitler's sergeant in the trenches, and Rudolf Hess, the idealistic student of geopolitics. (28)

The uniformed policemen voted with their feet, seeking solace in retreat; this earned them a few catcalls likening them to the Keystone Kops, who were very popular in Munich. Two platoons of Goering's commandos made runs to either side of the hall where they set up machine guns. The citizens of Munich knew a machine-gun when they saw it, and, wherever present, women and children were shielded under the sturdy oak tables, whose legs came off for use as weapons. In the middle of the sudden uproar, Hitler realized that he could hardly be seen, much less be heard, and climbed a chair. That helped with the visibility issue. To command the acoustic attention of the multitude, he fired a round from his pistol into the ceiling above him. This gave him the undivided attention of the audience.

"Quiet!" he shouted. In the shocked silence Hitler said, "The national revolution has broken out! The hall is surrounded!" No one was to leave the hall. Sweat poured down his pale face. He looked insane or drunk to some but a few were struck by the ridiculous sight of a pistol-brandishing revolutionary in such a badly cut morning suit. Comic as he looked, Hitler was dead serious.

He ordered the triumvirate to follow him into an adjoining room, guaranteeing their security. But the three men did not move. Finally Kahr took a backward step as Hitler began clambering over a table toward the speaker's platform. Seisser's aide, a major, came forward, hand in pocket as if about to draw his pistol. Hitler jammed his own pistol against the major's forehead and said "Take your hand out."

Hitler assured the triumvirate and the audience that everything could be settled in ten minutes. This time the three men and two aides followed Hitler to the side room. "Komödie spielen ['Put on an act!]," whispered Lossow to his colleagues. In the private room Hitler was more agitated than ever. "Please forgive me for proceeding in this manner," he said, "But I had no other means." He answered Seisser's accusations of

breaking his word not to make a putsch with an apology; he did it for the good of Germany. He told them that ex-Police President Pöhner was going to be the new Bavarian Minister President and Ludendorff would assume command of the new national army based on the radical right Battle League, and lead the march on Berlin. After the Putschists seized power, Hitler promised, the triumvirate would have even greater power: Kahr would be made Regent of Bavaria; Lossow Reich Army Minister; and Seisser Reich Police Minister [this post did not exist, for police was a matter of the federal states, ¶].

When the three failed to respond Hitler drew out his pistol (all in jest, he later testified). "There are five rounds in it," he said hoarsely, "four for the traitors, and if it fails, one for me." He handed over the weapon to Graf, who was already armed with a machine pistol. Under such circumstances to die or not to die was meaningless, replied Kahr coolly. What interested him was General Ludendorff's position in the matter. Hitler didn't seem to know what to do. He took several quick swallows of beer, apologized to Kahr, then charged out of the room.

The audience outside was getting out of hand. Someone shouted, "Theatre!" Another that this was a Mexican revolution. There was a cacophony of whistles and jeers until Goering, emulating his chief, fired a pistol shot into the ceiling. He bellowed out that this display was not directed against Kahr, the Reichswehr or the state police. When argument failed, he tried humour. "You've got your beer," he shouted. "What are you worrying about?"

The uproar did not faze Hitler. He pushed his way up to the platform ignoring the catcalls and insults. He raised his pistol. The din continued and he shouted angrily, "If silence is not restored, I will order a machine gun placed in the gallery!" All of a sudden he was no more the figure of fun.

"What followed then," recalled Professor von Mueller, the conservative historian, "was an oratorical masterpiece, which any actor might well envy." He began quietly, without any pathos. "He made it appear as if the triumvirate was about to come around as he assured the audience that Ludendorff would assume leadership of the army; that Lossow would be Army Minister and Seisser Police Minister. "The task of the provisional German National Government is to organize the march on that sinful Babel, Berlin, and save the German people!" (29)

Witnesses of this performance have testified to the feeling of total confidence that emanated from Hitler. When he portrayed the functions the triumvirate would have in the new government, it was clear to see that he believed in forming a new reality with his words alone; that these posts existed, and Kahr, Lossow and Seisser were their present incumbents.

They had to be, since without their support there loomed instant defeat. To win Berlin, Hitler had to win Bavaria first, and to win Bavaria, he had to win the support of the government and the people of Munich. His speech as well as the coup he planned had to appeal to the special Bavarian contempt for Prussians and all other people born north of the Main River border, and to the fact that Bavaria was one of the great duchies of Germany seven hundred years before the Hohenzollerns in Brandenburg made their first appearance on any map. His speech and his plan depended on each other; they had to become each other's apotheosis.

From the first words, recalled Hanfstängl, the insignificant man in the comical cutaway who resembled a nervous "provincial bridegroom" on display in the dusty window of a Bavarian village photographer became a superman.

"It was like the difference between a Stradivarius lying in its case, just a few bits of wood and lengths of catgut, and the same violin played by a master." Professor von Mueller couldn't remember in his entire life "such a change of attitude of a crowd in a few minutes, almost a few seconds. There were certainly many who were not yet converted. But the sense of the majority had fully reversed itself. Hitler had turned them inside out, as one turns a glove inside out, with a few sentences. It had almost something of hocus-pocus, or magic about it. Loud approval roared forth, no further opposition was to be heard."

"Outside are Kahr, Lossow and Seisser," Hitler said earnestly. "They are struggling hard to reach a decision. May I say to them that you will stand behind them?"

"Ja! Ja!" roared the crowd.

[Hitler continued] "I can say this to you: either the German revolution begins tonight or we will all be dead by dawn." The crowd his, he headed back for the private room to bring the triumvirate to heel. (30)

It is hard to say whether Hitler planned it all along, but just after he had won the support of the crowd but still faced the problem of convincing the triumvirate, his trump-card appeared.

The man who could decide the matter was already approaching the Bürgerbräukeller in Hitler's Mercedes. General Ludendorff was in the back seat with his stepson (an ardent Putschist) and Scheubner-Richter. Despite the fog, their car careened across the bridge from the inner city at reckless speed.

The sight of the General at the entrance of the beer hall brought a chorus of Hells! But Ludendorff, seeing how far things had gone, was "amazed and far from pleased." Hitler hurried out of the anteroom to shake hands with him. They conversed briefly and the scowling Ludendorff agreed to help convince the triumvirate. They disappeared into the side room.

Irritated as he was by Hitler's unilateral action, Ludendorff applied the force of his rank and personality on his two fellow officers. "All right, gentlemen," he told them, "come along with us, and give me your hand on it." It was the general who responded first. Lossow extended his hand and said "Good." Then the colonel gave his hand to Ludendorff. The civilian, Kahr, was the last to submit but the first to speak once the entire group returned to the platform.

Ramrod stiff, his face a mask, the commissar declared that he would serve Bavaria as Regent for the monarchy. The applause that interrupted this sober announcement was "fanatic," according to one police official.

As he surveyed the enthusiastic audience, Hitler was in a state of ecstasy. "I am going," he said emotionally, "to fulfill the vow I made to myself five years ago when I was a blind cripple in the military hospital: to know neither rest nor peace until the November criminals had been overthrown, until on the ruins of the wretched Germany of today there should have arisen once more a Germany of power and greatness, of freedom and splendour."

Then Ludendorff, pale and sombre, spoke briefly and earnestly, giving Mueller the impression that here was a man who realized "this was a matter of life and death, probably more death than life." In complete control of the situation, Hitler went down the line shaking hands to the accompaniment of wave after wave of cheers.

Overcome by mass excitement and beer, the audience could hardly contain its delight. Forgotten were earlier derision and even anger. The crowd stood and roared out "Deutschland Über Alles." Tears streamed down many a cheek and some people were so emotionally wrought they could not even sing.

But someone next to a state police official turned and said, "The only thing missing is the psychiatrist." (31)

FROM BEER TO ETERNITY

*From morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropped from the zenith like a falling star.*

John Milton "Paradise Lost", Bk. 1, L. 742

It's better to burn out than to fade away.

Neil Young "My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue)"

Half a decade had passed in this fall of the year 1923 since the general armistice had ended the Great War that no one yet had reason to call the "First" one. The new German Republic faced a plethora of political and economic challenges, but the process of repairing the wounds the war had caused was delayed, or, rather, made impossible by the sheer abstruseness of much that had characterized these years. Sebastian Haffner comments on the effects of these years of war, revolution, famine and inflation:

"How shall I describe my feelings -- the feelings of an eleven-year-old boy whose entire inner world has collapsed? However much I try, I find it difficult to find an equivalent in ordinary, everyday life.

Certain fantastic catastrophes are only possible in dream worlds. Maybe one could imagine someone who year after year has deposited large sums of money in his bank, and when one day he asks for a statement, discovers a gigantic overdraft instead of a fortune; but that only happens in dreams." (1)

The Weimar Republic was not really to blame, for she had not only undergone a complicated delivery, she had quickly found herself a Republic without Republicans, had to try to provide work and wages where five years of war had wrecked the economy, and, on top of it, was to pay reparations in amounts formerly having belonged exclusively to the realm of higher mathematics. And the economic struggle did not only have direct consequences; much of the misery was psychological in nature.

The inflation seemed to signal a collapse not just of monetary values but of all the values of the pre-war "BÜRGERLICHE GESELLSCHAFT" (bourgeois society). What price the Rechtsstaat -- the state based on law -- if long-standing contracts could be fulfilled only with worthless paper marks?

As for Rube and Ordnung, the peace and order that had been so dear to nineteenth-century Germans, there seemed little left of that. In every year between 1919 and 1923 there were attempted coups by the extreme Left or the extreme Right, to say nothing of a spate of assassinations by sinister secret societies, one of which claimed the life of Rathenau, who as Foreign Minister had become identified with the effort to fulfill the

Versailles obligation. In the wake of the currency collapse, many voters drifted away from the middle-class parties of the centre-right and centre-left, disillusioned with the horse trading between business and labour that seemed to dominate Weimar politics...

The depression was crucial not because the unemployed voted for the Nazis, but because so many of them swung to the Communists; as in so many other countries, fascism seemed to many a rational political response to the threat of Red revolution. (2)

That was, of course, what Hitler counted upon and was the reason that his decrying of the Marxist plague became the centre of his campaign. This concept required that he found a way around the much more logical assumption that the war was responsible for the economic troubles. The Marxists, naturally, blamed the capitalists, in particular the profiteers, first those of the war and then those of the inflation. Stefan Zweig found out that, in the fall of 1923, a loaf of bread cost four trillion marks, a sum that would have bought, in 1913, a great part of the British Empire, and saw British unemployed live in the luxury hotels of Salzburg, Austria; their few pounds of monthly allowance made them instant billionaires in Germany and Austria.

All European economies were severely mauled by the war, but ...

... Two things made the German experience unique. The first was Hitler himself, who was in many ways more bizarre than Chaplin knew. An art-school reject who had once scraped a living by selling kitschy postcards; an Austrian draft-dodger who had ended up a decorated Bavarian corporal; a lazy mediocrity who rose late and enjoyed both Wagner's operas and Karl May's cowboy yarns -- here indeed was an unlikely heir to the legacy of Frederick the Great and Otto von Bismarck.

In Munich in the early 1920s he could be seen attending the soirees of a Romanian princess "in his gangster hat and trench coat over his dinner jacket, touting a pistol and carrying as usual his dog-whip". It is not altogether surprising that President Hindenburg assumed he was Bohemian. Others thought he looked more like "a man trying to seduce the cook", or perhaps a renegade tram conductor. (3)

While Hitler was still shaking hands in the Bürgerbräukeller and listened with half an ear to Ludendorff arguing with the triumvirate over the course of procedures, the audience in the Löwenbräukeller, on the other side of town, was ripe with clamour. Two brass bands had been hired to entertain the audience of about 2,000 Battle League and SA members with the most popular marches and sentimental songs, and the beer flew freely. Ernst Röhm was the man in charge and had his elite dispersed through the hall, to practice crowd control. He had started his speech a trifle late, past the 8 p.m. mark, and was waiting to hear from the Bürgerbräukeller. He had installed a runner service between the two beer cellars, not being the type to trust in telephone cables, which could be cut.

The original plan, which had called for Esser running up the rostrum at 9:30 to raise the party flag and announce the revolution, had been given up due to his earlier illness. But here he was, although without a flag. He climbed up onto the podium and relieved Röhm on the microphone. The latter took a break and investigated whether there had been any news from Hitler.

At a quarter to nine, the telephone in the main office, which worked just fine, rang, and Röhm's man on the receiver passed the affirmative message to his boss, in the classic code: "Baby safely delivered." Röhm ran back into the hall, ascended the platform and interrupted Esser. The Bavarian Government had been deposed, he cried; Adolf Hitler had declared the revolution. Kahr, Lossow and Seisser had all accepted posts in the new government, and by the morrow the patriots were to march on Berlin and hang the November criminals.

The plan appeared entirely reasonable to the intoxicated audience. Soldiers ripped off the Republican cockades from their headgear, SA and Battle League embraced, pandemonium broke loose. The bands played the national anthem nonstop. It took Röhm a few minutes to find a megaphone and instruct the crowd to follow him to the Bürgerbräukeller, to link up with Hitler and the new government.

We ought stop here for a moment and contemplate the actual numbers of men available on the sides of the prospective putschists and the government. Harold Gordon does the math for us:

The Putschists could count on very considerable numbers of men from München and were also bringing in men from much of southern Bavaria to strengthen these local forces. They also had the advantage of a great deal of popular support in the city. Yet, many of the members of their organizations and many of their supporters were not of any immediate military value. In terms of actual troops their strength was roughly as follow:

PUTSCHISTS

SA of the NSDAP

- SA Regiment München - 1500 officers and men
- Stosstrupp Hitler - about 125 officers and men
- SA units from southern Bavaria - about 250 - 300 men

Bund Oberland

- 3 battalions, undoubtedly understrength - perhaps 2000 officers and men

Reichskriegsflagge

- 2 infantry detachments, 1 machine gun detachment, and 1 artillery battery - about 200 officers and men

Kampfbund München

- approximately 2 infantry companies - about 150 officers and men

In other words, the Kampfbund had a maximum of some 4,000 armed men available for use in the Putsch. They were opposed by the government forces (in men available for combat) as follows:

GOVERNMENT

A) BAVARIAN POLICE

Blue Police¹ - about 250 officers and men

Landespolizei² München

- Headquarters and general staff (Landespolizeiamt) in the Armeemuseum (Army Museum, ¶)
- Regimental headquarters (Polizeidirektion München) on Ettstraße
- First Battalion (Erster Abschnitt) - about 400 officers and men (headquarters in Residenz)
- Second Battalion (Zweiter Abschnitt) - about 400 officers and men (headquarters in Max II Kaserne, at the corner of Leonrodstraße and Dachauerstraße)
- Third Battalion (Dritter Abschnitt) - about 400 officers and men (Maximilianeum and Türkenkaserne)
- Approximately 1 motorized company (Kraftfahrbereitschaft) - about 75 officers and men (Türkenkaserne)

¹ Municipal Police

² State Police

- 1 armoured car detachment with 12 obsolete armoured cars - about 75 officers and men (Türkenkaserne)
- 1 communications technical battalion (Türkenkaserne)
- 1 Battalion Landespolizei München Land³ - about 400 officers and men (Max II Kaserne)
- 1 mounted reconnaissance squadron (Streitstaffel) - about 50 officers and men (Max II Kaserne)

(Besides these units in München itself, there were available approximately two more regiments, a battalion at the Polizeivorschule in Eichstätt, and miscellaneous smaller units scattered throughout the state)

B) REICHSWEHR

Headquarters of Wehrkreis VII and the Seventh Division (Ludwig- and Schönfeldstraßen)

- First Battalion, Nineteenth Infantry Regiment - about 300 men (Oberwiesenfeldkasernenviertel)
- Headquarters of Infanterieführer VII and Artillerieführer VII (Ludwig- and Schönfeldstraßen)
- Seventh Engineer Battalion - about 225 officers and men (Oberwiesenfeld, Pionierkaserne I and II)
- Seventh Signal Battalion - about 150 officers and men (Oberwiesenfeld, Nachrichtenkaserne)
- Seventh Motor Transport Battalion, headquarters and first company - about 100 officers and men
- Seventh Transport Battalion (horse-drawn), headquarters and first and second companies - about 125 officers and men
- Seventh Medical Battalion
- Fifth Battery, Seventh Artillery Regiment - about 90 officers and men (Oberwiesenfeld)
- City Commandant's headquarters (Army Museum)
- Infantry School - about 350 officers, cadets, and men (Blutenburgstraße at Marsplatz)

(The remainder of the Seventh Division and the Seventeenth Cavalry Regiment were also under the command of General von Lossow and were available for use against rebels within twenty-four hours, assuming that the railways continued functioning). (4)

From these figures we can draw the following conclusion: in sheer number of men, the approximately 4000 rebel forces were superior, the more so because many of the Reichswehr men were on non-combat and staff duty, which reduced their theoretical number of perhaps 1500 men to only 800 ready for action. The Infantry and Engineer Schools were not even under Bavarian command but reported to Berlin. (5)

The putschists too had the element of surprise on their side - not in the least because in the months and weeks before the putsch so many blind alarms had been sounded. But surprise was a factor of limited usability - once the whole Reichswehr and its superior organization and ample reserves could be alerted, it would be over. The putsch had to come to a quick result.

The immediate threat for the rebels was the police, which was well organized and combat-ready, the adversary to be overcome first. It came down, as in all revolutions, to timing. The likely scenario was....

...therefore, for a potentially crucial four hours a mobilised Putschist force faced a disorganized, greatly understrength opposing force, temporarily robbed of many of its leaders. However, this advantage was destined to be only temporary, and could only be temporary unless the Putschists were able, by rapid and ruthless action, to destroy or win over the opposing forces in München within this narrow time span. By 12:30 a.m. the tide would have turned. The enlisted men would be back in their barracks; the bulk of the officers and non-commissioned officers recalled or brought in by the news of the crisis, and the numerical superiority

³ Munich County Police

of the Putschists would be offset by the superior discipline, organization, armament, and leadership of the government troops. (6)

Meanwhile the mob from the Löwenbräukeller under Röhm proceeded merrily down Brienner Street, which leads to the other side of the river, when the riotous assembly was stopped by a motorcycle courier delivering Hitler's orders. The throng was to be split up: Röhm's Reichsflagge soldiers were to march off to the Army Headquarters on the Schönfeldstrasse, where von Lossow had his staff and office, to neutralize any eventual dangers arising thereof, while the SA was to proceed southeast, arm themselves with guns hidden in a secret cache in the basement of St. Anna monastery and occupy or at least control the Red quarter of Giesing, whence Marxist counterstrokes might emerge. Only the small troop of the Bund Oberland was to join up with Hitler and Ludendorff in the Bürgerbräukeller.

Many citizens realized that something ominous was going on and left their houses to satisfy their curiosity. Röhm's Reichsflagge detachment, followed by one of the brass bands, attracted a huge crowd. The Reich's war flag, the namesake of the organization, which was held high in the vanguard of the formation, was carried by an earnest-looking young chicken farmer from the suburb of Haar. His name was Heinrich Himmler, and he had joined the Reichsflagge through contacts with Röhm and Gregor Strasser, not initially because of Adolf Hitler. He wore spectacles, and was not a big man, but on this day his face glowed in cherubic ecstasy.

When the Reichsflagge troop arrived at its target, Röhm ordered his men to encircle the lot and block the access but to stay out of the building for the moment. He alone entered the building, where he had worked for years, making it past the guards due to his rank and dominant personality. He went to the room of the duty officer, a young lieutenant, whom he informed about the putsch. The young man replied that he submitted only to coercion, and, pronto!, Röhm was in command, ordering in his troop. The guards were replaced, machine guns were brought, demonstratively, into position, and barbed wire was strung around the compound.

Röhm's men occupied everything except the telephone office, unbelievably but true. The duty officer, ridiculed but now left alone, sat down in the telephone switchboard room and wondered about the things to happen. He was not a revolutionary spirit.

Meanwhile in the Bürgerbräukeller, the situation hovered between euphoria and confusion.

At the beer hall Hess was rounding up "enemies of the people" as hostages. He stood on a chair in the great hall calling out names of officials and officers, including Minister President Knilling, Police President Mantel and Prince Rupprecht's political adviser. They dutifully stepped forward as if they were unruly schoolboys -- all except Justice Minister Gürtner, who made a break for freedom but was caught. At first they were incarcerated in a small room upstairs but then it was decided that Hess should transfer them for safekeeping to a house near the Tegernsee, a lake south of Munich.

Others in Hitler's inner circle were off on assignments: Max Amann, the squat but formidable street fighter, led a group to a bank which he seized for the new government's central offices, while Scheubner-Richter, Esser and Hanfstängl were reconnoitring the city streets to check on the progress of the revolution. They found a city of confusion. Many citizens were enthusiastic, others perplexed, and some indignant. Few knew what was going on, including those involved in the action since conflicting orders kept emanating from the Bürgerbräu.

The man principally responsible for the first successes of the Putschists was Frick of the Munich Police Presidium. He persuaded his colleagues on duty not to launch any counterattack against the Putschists, then hovered near a phone to calm bewildered police officials who called in for information. His advice was always to wait and do nothing. Because of this state of inaction, his former chief, the deposed Police President Pöhner, was able to walk into police headquarters and, without any show of force, take charge. His first act was to make arrangements for a press conference with the leading non-Marxist newspapers.

At the Bürgerbräukeller Hitler was in a state of euphoria, with the police under control, and district headquarters occupied by Röhm. Then came a report from the engineer barracks: the Putschists were having an argument with the engineers. Hitler made a snap decision to leave his command post to straighten out the matter in person.

It was a grave tactical error, followed by a second: placing General Ludendorff in charge. No sooner had Hitler left the building than General von Lossow said he had to go to his office and issue orders. This seemed reasonable to Ludendorff, who allowed Lossow to march out of the beer hall with Kahr and Seisser not far behind.

Hitler did no good at the engineer barracks, being turned away at the gate. He returned half an hour later and was appalled to find that the triumvirate had been allowed to escape. He assailed Ludendorff. How could he have done such a thing? Now Lossow could sabotage the revolution! The general looked frostily down his nose at the former corporal. A German officer, he said, would never break an oath. (7)

It was to turn out that the triumvirate's morals were far more flexible than Ludendorff assumed. But for the moment, their absence did not matter. At around 11 p.m. another military formation arrived in support of the Putsch, the about one thousand cadets of the Infantry School, the military academy. It transpired that, with few exceptions, the whole school had been mobilized by a speech held by Lieutenant Gerhard Rossbach, a veteran of the war and the Free Corps. He had obtained, from mysterious sources, swastika armbands for the men and swastika banners to go with the party flags and old Imperial standards he had organized as well. The cadets paraded in review before ex-corporal Hitler and ex-Quartermaster General Ludendorff, and were subsequently sent off to occupy the offices of State Commissioner von Kahr.

Thereafter a conference was improvised in another room, on the first floor of the Bürgerbräu building. The army HQ was telephoned, whence Röhm reported that Lossow had not shown up, neither had Seisser or von Kahr. Was it possible, Scheubner-Richter inquired, that these gentlemen had other plans? Ludendorff categorically denied treason: the men, he maintained, had given him their word as officers and gentlemen.

Meanwhile another officer and gentleman reached the army HQ.

Major Max Schwandner, an officer on the staff of the commander of army units in Bavaria [General von Lossow, ¶], was just entering the building. He heard rumours of a Putsch and sought out the duty officer, who could only say that "the affair was extremely unclean and fishy."

"While we spoke," recalled Schwandner, "Captain Röhm stormed into [the room] in full uniform of the old army with all [his] medals and asked for General von Lossow. I immediately told Röhm that this Putsch was in clear violation of yesterday's understanding with von Lossow. Röhm replied in a voice vibrant with sincerity that everything was all right. Von Lossow, Kahr and von Seisser had all declared themselves in accord with everything and would soon come to Hitler in the military district headquarters. I said only that that was something different."

After Röhm left, the duty officer motioned to Schwandner and whispered, "The affair is crooked." Lossow, he said, was with Seisser and the commandant of the Bavarian Army at the 19th Infantry barracks and would "definitely not come here."

A little later a call came through the still unmonitored switchboard. It was from Lossow at his new command post, safe in the centre of the regimental barracks complex. He ordered a counterattack on the Putschists he had recently pledged to support; loyal army battalions in Augsburg, Ingolstadt, Regensburg, Landshut and other surrounding localities were to be transported to Munich by rail.

Schwandner promptly called the transport officer, passed on Lossow's orders and agreed to phone instructions to half the battalions himself. The Putsch was planned in one room and sabotaged in the one next to it. Finally, just before midnight, it occurred to the plotters to limit the switchboard to Putschist traffic but by then all of Lossow's counter orders had been transmitted. (8)

Meanwhile Hanfstängl and Esser had returned to the Bürgerbräukeller from a reconnaissance mission which, unfortunately, had not revealed much. They had paid visits to the Foreign Ministry at Promenade Square and to the Police Presidium at the Ettstrasse but had been rebuffed at both places without receiving news. An effort by Göring to reach von Kahr in his offices at Maximilian Street by telephone failed, and Major Siry who was sent to report from the army barracks came back breathlessly, having escaped arrest only by luck. Thereafter Lieutenant Neunzert, the Kampfbund's communications man, who had been delegated to secure the Crown Prince's authority for the Putsch, returned with negative results: not only had the Prince withheld his support, but actually sent a courier to Lossow, Kahr and Seisser, who were now in the barracks of the 19th Infantry Regiment, urging them to suppress the coup. (9)

With the exception of the town centre, where troops under swastika banners marching hither and yon caused a lot of commotion, the capital slept, oblivious of the events. At the American Consulate, Robert Murphy had been informed of the coup and prepared the following cable to put the U.S. Embassy in Berlin in the picture:

"... ACCORDING TO HITLER TASK OF THIS GOVERNMENT IS TO MARCH ON BERLIN, WAGE TWELFTH HOUR FIGHT; ASSERTED THAT THE DAWN WOULD SEE EITHER NEW NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OR THE DEATH OF THE SPEAKER."⁴

Meanwhile at the Bürgerbräu, Hess made himself useful again by collecting more hostages. He had sent out grab commandos who went through phone books to identify Jewish names or union leaders, who were subsequently visited, kidnapped, packed into trucks and sent to the same quarry at the Tegernsee to which the earlier group of Excellencies had been gone. Another group of SA men set out, perhaps to earn the Führer's gratitude, to storm the offices of the socialist newspaper Münchner Post and to destroy the presses; only to be stopped in the act by the message that the party wished to use the presses for its own purposes.

In the situation centre at the Bürgerbräu, even General Ludendorff had to admit by now that the continuing absence of the triumvirate might well indicate that the gentlemen had other plans. Things were in earnest danger of floating belly-up, and Scheubner-Richter and his valet Aigner were dispatched to find von Seisser. Not quite surprisingly, they were unable to find him, and on their return, Hitler directed Aigner to go get Rosenberg and take him to a print shop. Rosenberg was to make copies of Hitler's grand announcement of the night before, of the document which bore the signatures not only of Hitler and Ludendorff but the triumvirate as well.

The wet copies in hand, Rosenberg stormed to the office of the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER and began to draft an editorial for the morning edition. The article was titled, somewhat sweepingly, "CALL TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE", extolled the virtues of the new government, and asked the citizens to deliver President Ebert and the other 'November criminals' to the new administration, for the purpose of hanging them.

In the army command building, Röhm belatedly realized what role the duty officer had played in the last hours and arrested him. Far too late, he now ordered to detain all officers except the known and reliable members of the conspiracy. Major Schwandner, however, escaped before the net was thrown over the building.

Meanwhile the situation of the cadets at Kahr's office building grew tense. After being allowed to leave by Ludendorff, von Kahr had gone straight to his office, where he found his subalterns already informed of the recent developments by the police. They had already issued counter orders on their own cognizance. Waiting at the office was a message from the Crown Prince, "Crush this movement at any cost. Use troops if necessary." The venerable Prince had apparently forgotten that the days of the monarchy, and hence his power of command, were over.

When the cadets' column came into sight, von Kahr ordered the few dozen policemen at his disposal to set up a defence of the building. Ludendorff had originally ordered the cadets to take the building at "whatever the cost", but the young soldiers shrank from spilling blood. A standoff ensued, but at length the cadets figured out their greater number

⁴When Murphy was not permitted to send this telegram in code, he indignantly demanded an interview with Hitler himself. "After hours of argument, I finally did get in to see him at 3 a.m., only to be told rather mildly that I could not send my telegram. My protest was only a formality by this time, since I already sent my colleague, Halstead, in a car to file the telegram from Stuttgart."(10)



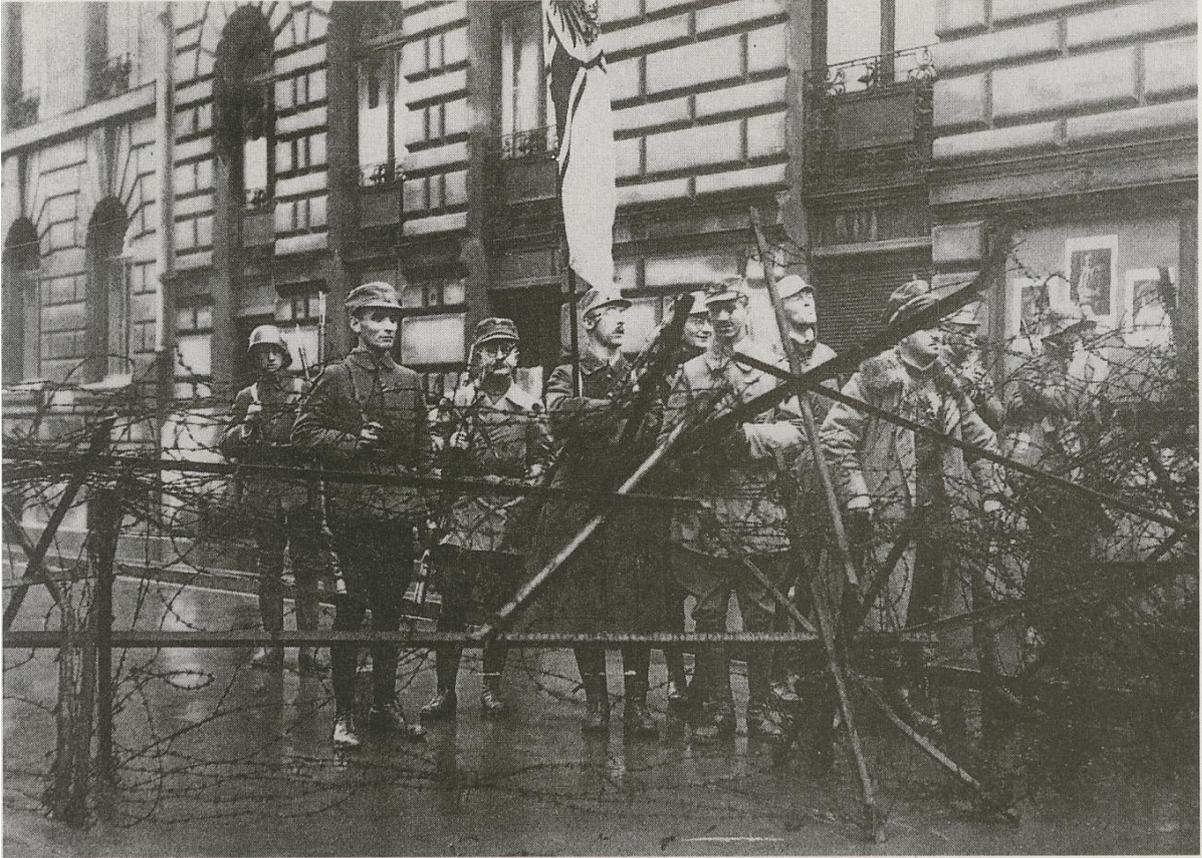
HITLER IN FRONT OF HIS BOOKSHELF IN 1923



THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH BEFORE THE PUTSCH - MEMORIAL DAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1923: ALFRED ROSENBERG ON THE

THE LEFT OF HITLER, DR. FRIEDRICH WEBER ON THE RIGHT.

SEIZURE OF THE WAR MINISTRY
HEINRICH HIMMLER, ONLY 23, CARRIES THE OLD REICH BANNER.



REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE FROM RURAL BAVARIA.

number gave them a tactical advantage and formed a wedge, backed by machine guns. The police called for negotiations before violence erupted, and Rossbach went inside to find a diplomatic solution. It is not clear what was discussed, but after ten minutes he came back out, the cadets closed ranks, and left. The first battle of the revolution was lost. Von Kahr watched the siege ring disappear and went to the infantry barracks to meet von Lossow and von Seisser.

Meanwhile, the situation in the army command building at Schöpfungstraße had not improved. When the day shift telephone operator reported for duty, Röhm had him retrieve copies of all orders von Lossow had sent out. At 2:55 a.m. on this morning of November 9, 1923, all German wireless stations had received the following message:

State Commissar General v. Kahr, Col. von Seisser and General v. Lossow repudiate the Hitler Putsch. Expressions of support extracted by gunpoint invalid. Caution is urged against misuse of the above names. v. Lossow (11)

The lack of feedback at length concerned Hitler and Ludendorff in the beer hall and they removed to army headquarters to a conference with Röhm, who showed them von Lossow's order. This telegram, however, was far from being the triumvirate's sole activity. Seisser alarmed the state police, and von Kahr published an official decree disowning the coup. Although it cannot have been easy to find suitable words to obscure the participation of Lossow, Kahr and Seisser in the event, the statement was quickly printed and distributed all over town.

Deception, he [von Kahr] said, had turned a demonstration for Germany's awakening into sickening violence. "Had the senseless and purposeless attempt at revolt succeeded, Germany would have plunged into the abyss and Bavaria with it." He dissolved the NSDAP and other right-wing organizations, declaring that those responsible for the Putsch would "ruthlessly be made to suffer the punishment they deserve." It had been a long and bitter evening for the commissar.

It was not until 5 a.m. that confirmation of the repudiation of the Putsch by the triumvirate reached military district headquarters. The informant was the deposed commandant of the Infantry School. He regretfully informed Hitler that the triumvirate did not feel honour bound to their oaths since they were made at pistol point. General v. Lossow was going to put down the Putsch with force. If Hitler was stunned, he did not show it. He made a long speech to his fellow conspirators, ending with the declaration that, if need be, he was determined to fight and die for his cause.

With Ludendorff's concurrence, he [Hitler] ordered Scheubner-Richter and his servant ... to find their own newly designated Minister President and order him to seize the police headquarters with an Oberland unit. Pöhner set off on his mission with gusto and was so confident that he walked into the Police Directory with a single companion. He was escorted to the office of the major in charge and, to his consternation ("It came like a blow from a club"), was arrested. His former assistant, Frick, was already in custody.

By this time Hitler, Ludendorff and the staff were on their way back to the beer hall, leaving Röhm and his followers to hold up the military district building. Dismayed as he was, Hitler had not yet given up. "If we get through, very well," he remarked grimly, "if not, we'll have to hang ourselves." It was still dark as word went out to those Putschists not manning strongholds to assemble at the beer hall. (12)

And then, for a time, Hitler's confidence returned. Apparently Ludendorff and Streicher, who had appeared in the early morning, counselled to appeal to the people; to seek a reversal of fortune with a great demonstration. "Propaganda, propaganda," he exclaimed, "now it all depends on propaganda!" He immediately scheduled fourteen mass meetings for the next evening, each of which he would honour with his presence. On "the day after that, an enormous rally would be held on the Königsplatz, where tens of thousands would celebrate the national uprising." (13) It is questionable whether Hitler truly believed that rallies could absolve him from responsibility for the attempted coup, but a great showing of popular support might mitigate the consequences.

And in fact the prospects for a "March on Berlin" were by no means unfavourable. As became clear the next morning, public sentiment was clearly on the side of Hitler and the Kampfbund. From numerous apartment

house windows and even from City Hall and public buildings the swastika flag fluttered and the newspaper accounts of the events in the Bürgerbräukeller had an approving tone. Many people came to the campaign headquarters the Kampfbund had set up in various parts of the city, while in the barracks the lower rank officers and the enlisted men frankly expressed their sympathy with Hitler's plan for the march. (14)

Much would depend on whether public opinion was to influence the acts of the triumvirate. A lot had been expected from Pöhner, who was already in custody; even if he, it was surmised, was unable to find pro-Putsch policemen, he could at least have obstructed Kahr's countermeasures. A platoon of Battle League men was sent to free him, a second one, composed of SA men, to the printing firm Parcus which printed money for the government. The stormtroopers seized a bit over fifteen trillion Reichsmark, petty cash for the revolution. The money was only handed out in return for a receipt, which the SA leader signed without ado.

On their way back, the cash commando was met by newly arrived sympathizers from outside of the town, who appeared on open trucks, a cold journey behind them. What they may have missed in comfort, they compensated with cheer and optimism, unaware of how bad things stood. The biggest unit, in size as well as in spirit, was Gregor Strasser's commando from Landshut, the old ducal town and seat of the first Royal Bavarian University founded in 1426 AD. When his car rolled down Leopold Street, Strasser inspected the streets; finding them peaceful, he grew suspicious.

At his arrival at the beer hall, he was met by Göring, who informed him about the triumvirate's "treason" but seemed nonetheless ready to continue with the coup. Since neither of them had contact with Hitler at the moment, they eventually decided to reload the men on the trucks and keep them ready for action. Around 9 a.m., the Kampfbund detail that had been ordered to free Pöhner returned unsuccessfully. As with the cadets, the troopers had been ready for a brawl but not a serious battle and had turned back after unsatisfactory negotiations. Their failure meant that the police would definitely not support the coup. A less demanding job was ultimately found for the men: to detain those city counsellors, Marxists, Socialists or Liberals, that would not yield to Putschist orders. To arrest a few middle-aged public servants finally proved to be a task within the abilities of the revolutionary vanguard. The old Rathaus, seat of the City Council and the Mayor's Office, was stormed in a minute and everybody who remotely looked like a socialist was arrested. Some janitors were arrested, too.

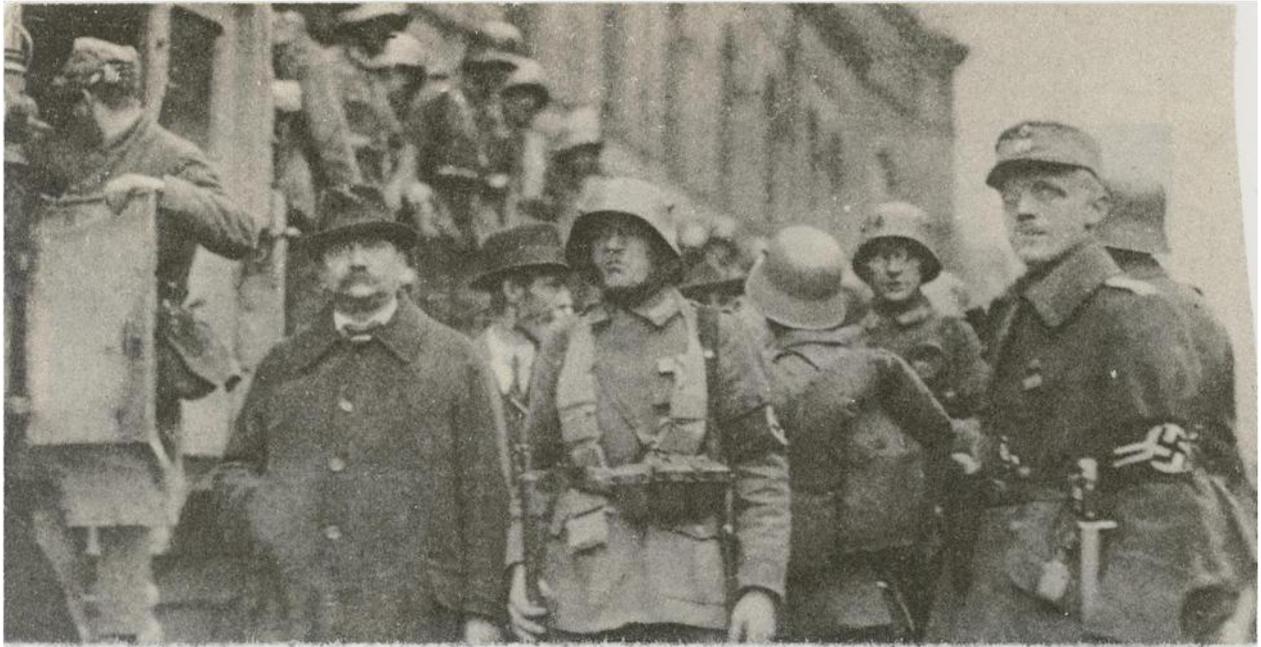
The detainees were brought out the door onto the Marienplatz, the town's central plaza, facing a myriad of Putsch-sightseeing spectators. The burghers, however, were more curious than bloodthirsty and the captives were not harmed. The assemblage rather listened to a few NSDAP speakers, who, from an improvised podium in the middle of the square, spoke in favour of the Putsch and accused the triumvirate of treason. The multitude filled the great square so completely that, as the famous photograph shows, trolley car I/ 6 to Sendling could move neither forth nor back. By now the atmosphere was almost festive; flags and banners flew from the buildings.

The tactical situation for the Putschists was less than agreeable: in the outer boroughs the police was arresting sympathizers and destroyed posters, flags and banners; in the city centre, the situation was exactly reversed: the Kampfbund men sought to arrest the police patrols that distributed von Kahr's repudiation decree. As a whole it was confusing and slightly disgusting, perhaps reflecting how a coup d'état should appear. Göring and Strasser directed detachments to seize the main bridges over the Isar River, to interdict large-scale troop manoeuvres. This was not empty caution, although it was the green-uniformed state police instead of the Reichswehr that showed up at about 10 a.m. on the access ramps of the two main bridges. (15)

Fortunately, for the moment both police and Kampfbund had orders to observe and report, and thus nothing more serious happened for the time being than the exchange of hostile stares. Ideas were now at a premium at the Bürgerbräukeller.

Colonel Hermann Kriebel, who had served in the war on Ludendorff's staff, wanted to withdraw to Rosenheim where they might win over the local right radicals. Göring seconded this. It was his home town and he assured everyone it was strongly pro-Hitler. Here they could assemble reinforcements and regroup. "The movement cannot end in the ditch of some obscure country lane," was Ludendorff's sarcastic retort. It was up

to Hitler. He hesitated briefly but he was a born gambler and the prospect of a lengthy guerrilla campaign was not appealing. He wanted to win or lose on one throw of the dice, and he vetoed the Kriebel plan.



PUTSCHISTS ARREST THE MAYOR OF MUNICH (LEFT OF CENTRE)

JULIUS STREICHER LEADS PUTSCHIST AGITATION ON MARIENPLATZ - # 6 TROLLEY CARS CAN'T MOVE HITHER OR YON.



The discussion dragged on until late morning while the situation on the streets deteriorated. At military district headquarters Captain Röhm and his men were under siege by army and state police troops. While the older members of the Battle League were not at all eager to face such overwhelming odds, the 150 men of Röhm's own group were ready for combat.

Word of the government attack against Röhm brought arguments at the Bürgerbräukeller to a halt. It was evident that the Putschists had to act now or surrender ignominiously. According to Ludendorff, it was he who first thought of marching in force into the heart of Munich to rescue Röhm. "We march!" he said. If it was Ludendorff's idea, it was carried out in Hitler fashion -- as a propaganda parade, a display of power designed to arouse support for the Putsch from the citizenry.

"We would go to the city," Hitler later testified, "to win the people to our side, to see how public opinion would react, and then to see how Kahr, Lossow and Seisser would react to public opinion. After all, those gentlemen would hardly be foolish enough to use machine guns against a general uprising of the people. That's how the march into the city was decided on."

Ludendorff was convinced that army troops would not impede the march, and recently had assured a friend: "The heavens will fall before the Bavarian Reichswehr turns against me." Hitler was just as confident that neither army nor state police would fire on a war hero like Ludendorff, who would be in the front row.

Hitler's decision ("the most desperately daring decision of my life") was made and orders were hurriedly dispatched to units manning the bridges. Outside the beer hall Colonel Kriebel, the professional soldier, began setting up the line of march. Hitler was just leaving the conference room about 11:30 a.m. as Eckart sauntered in. Once they had been the closest friends. Now Hitler "looked very dark and said, 'Good day,' in a hard voice." Outside the affronted author received another rebuff when he greeted Ludendorff respectfully. The general gave him "an indifferent tip of the hat." (16)

As it is a tradition in dramatic scenery and final acts, a lead-grey dawn had greeted the coup; it was cold again, and a flurry of snowflakes descended upon the sidewalks. The pale morning light had barely illuminated the depths of the beer cellar where the Putschists had munched a breakfast of stale bread and cheese, the leftovers of yesterday's snack bar.

The four hours since had not yielded a better plan than to march to the town centre and appeal to the masses. The church clocks struck twelve, high noon, when the sun, a milky globe shimmering through layers of misty clouds and the remnants of the morning fog, illuminated the gathering of the troops. They had lost the brass bands, for lack of payment. An air of finality surrounded the assembly.

The vanguard formed a wedge, again; if somewhat hesitatingly, composed of combat veterans and banner carriers, bearing the swastika standard and the black and white Imperial colours. The second group featured the leadership: Hitler was flanked on the left by Ludendorff and on the right by Scheubner-Richter. On their side walked Kriebel, Graf, the bodyguard, and Hermann Göring who provided the fashion highlight of the assembly: wearing a steel helmet with a big white swastika painted on and a black leather overcoat under which, in stark contrast, the light blue stripes of his Pour Le Mérite could not be overlooked. Hitler forbade following Göring's suggestion to bring along some of the arrested city councillors as hostages; creating martyrs for the opposition was not his intention.

Behind the leadership three distinctive groups formed, in columns of four abreast; on the left side the elite: one hundred of Hitler's bodyguard unit, in military outfit, with rifles and hand grenades; in the middle the Munich SA regiment, the winners of many a beer hall brawl, and on the right the Bund Oberland, Colonel Kriebel's men.

In the rear of these paramilitary outfits a somewhat incongruent collection of men tried to form a semblance of anti-Republican unity: whether these men wore old uniforms or not, whether they brandished weapons or not and whether they appeared trained or not, they presented, as their common brand, a swastika brassard on the left arm. The infantry school cadets who followed this motley crowd in the rear marched, easily distinguishable, with far more aplomb than the civilians. A quick muster gave a result of about two thousand men, who slowly closed ranks and moved into the

direction of the of the Ludwig bridge, to cross the Isar river on the way to the Schönfeldstrasse, where Röhm was besieged. (17)

It was only a good mile's walk to the river, and fifteen minutes after they had started, the revolutionary assortment faced a platoon of state police at the embankment of the bridge. The vanguard slowly approached when the police commander, in a loud voice, as not to be overheard, ordered his charges to load live ammunition. He had hardly finished the order when a surprise attack of the SA engulfed both police and putschists in a momentary fray; the next minute saw the police line overrun and the putschists heading northwest, to liberate Röhm and his troops.

Their march took them through the eastern city centre where they were applauded by the burghers and the many visitors who had been mobilized by the rumours which spread like wildfires. The centipede grew when idle bystanders joined in curiosity and children ran around the flag bearers as if Barnum and Bailey's were in town. The men made up for the loss of the brass bands by singing their favourite hymns; perhaps not in perfect tune, but with a lot of heart, and maybe a little fear.

The troops passed the Isartor, the old eastern city gate, and entered the Tal, the thoroughfare leading from the former portal to the Marienplatz, the town centre. The Tal is always one of Munich's most crowded streets, and this day proved no exception. The size of the blindworm had by then grown perceptively and when the posse reached the Marienplatz, the heart of the town was still densely packed with supporters and onlookers. The crowd entertained itself with patriotic songs, and the trolley cars of line 6 were still stuck in the crowd.

Suddenly the centipede hesitated; as if there was confusion about where to go. Colonel Kriebel, who had the tactical command, was not sure what to do either, but the indecisiveness ended when Ludendorff took a right turn into Weinstrasse, which leads to the Odeonsplatz and the Feldherrnhalle, the Hall of the Generals, in front of which a press photographer had caught the snapshot of the jubilant crowd with Hitler in its midst celebrating the declaration of war on August 2, 1914. Since this was also the general direction the throng would have to take to the army command building and Röhm, everybody followed the general. Kriebel later said that he had never thought about it: "If Ludendorff is marching this way, naturally we'll go with him." (18) Ludendorff himself could not recall a conscious decision. "At certain moments in life one acts instinctively and doesn't know why ... We just wanted to get to Röhm and bring him back." (19)

It is less than a mile on the Residenzstrasse from the Marienplatz to the Odeonsplatz. Access to the square was shut off by the police. The next sixty seconds seemed to transpire in slow motion.

Here a line of city police blocked the way. But the Putschists surged forward, singing, "O Deutschland hoch in Ehren" ['Oh Germany high in honours', ¶]. Looking down from her hotel room, Frau Winifred Wagner was amazed to see her idol, Hitler, marching down the narrow Residenzstrasse next to Ludendorff. Just ahead in the Odeonsplatz small groups of green-uniformed men were scrambling into a blocking position. There was only room enough in the street for eight abreast.

Hitler locked arms with Scheubner-Richter in preparation for trouble but Ludendorff touched no one, still supremely confident that no one would fire on him. Directly ahead was a cordon of state police under First Lieutenant Michael Freiherr von Godin. Faced with an oncoming mob, Godin called out, "Second Company, double time, march!" The state police jogged forward but the Putschists did not break, standing off the enemy with levelled bayonets and pistols. Godin used his rifle to parry two bayonet thrusts, "overturning the men behind them with rifle at high port." All at once a shot exploded. Godin heard it zing past his head; it killed a sergeant. "For a fraction of a second my company stood frozen. Then, before I could give an order, my people opened fire, with the effect of a salvo."

The Putschists returned the fire and panic broke out as marchers and bystanders scrambled for safety. One of the first to fall was Scheubner-Richter, shot in the lungs. Another was Graf, who had leaped in front of Hitler to take the half dozen bullets meant for him. In falling, the personal bodyguard clutched Hitler, yanking him down so sharply that his left arm was dislocated. On the other side Scheubner-Richter also helped drag Hitler to the pavement. Ludendorff's faithful servant, who had been ordered to go home, was bleeding on the

asphalt. His friend Aigner, the servant of the dying Scheubner-Richter, crawled to him. He was dead. Someone stepped over Aigner. It was General Ludendorff marching erectly, left hand in coat pocket, into the line of fire.⁵

As Hitler sprawled on the ground thinking he had been shot in the left side, comrades tried to shield him. Eighteen men lay dead in the streets: fourteen followers of Hitler and four state police, all, incidentally, more or less sympathetic with National Socialism. Those in the front of the marching column alone knew what had happened. The crows jammed up behind only heard firecracker explosions ahead, then a rumour that both Hitler and Ludendorff were killed. The Putschists scrambled to the rear.

Ludendorff marched through the police cordon and into the arms of a lieutenant who placed him under arrest and escorted him to the Residenz [the former town palace of the Wittelsbachers, ¶] ... Hitler painfully struggled to his feet, cradling his injured arm. He was in agony as he slowly moved away from the battleground, face pale, hair falling over his face. He was accompanied by Dr. Walter Schulze, chief of the Munich SA medical corps, a towering young man. They came upon a small boy lying at the curb, bleeding profusely. Hitler wanted to carry him off but Schulze called to his wife's cousin (a botany student named Schuster) to take the boy.

At Max Joseph Platz they finally reached Hitler's old grey Selve, which had been loaded with medical supplies. An elderly first aid man named Frankel got in the front seat with the driver while Hitler and the doctor got into the rear seat. Schuster stood on the running board holding the wounded boy. Hitler told the driver to head for the Bürgerbräukeller so he could find out what was going on. But at the Marienplatz they came under heavy machine-gun fire and had to change directions several times. They found the Ludwig Bridge blocked and turned back.

By this time the boy had regained consciousness and Schuster dismounted so he could take the youngster home. The car continued toward the Sendlinger Torplatz. Here they encountered another burst of -fire near the old southern cemetery. Since it was impossible to get back to the beer hall, there was nothing to do but keep driving south towards Salzburg.

Göring's display of his Pour Le Mérite decoration had not saved him and he lay on the pavement with a bullet in his upper thigh. Frau Ilse Ballin, who had rushed from her home to help the wounded, found him bleeding profusely. With the help of her sister, she dragged the heavy burden indoors. The sisters dressed Göring's wound and were about to summon an ambulance when he weakly asked them to help him get to a private clinic. He could not bear the indignity of arrest. Frau Ballin, the wife of a Jewish merchant, had pity on him, and thus he escaped prison. (20)

There is, however, reason to doubt some details of the account above, in particular the story of the wounded boy. In the years after 1933, party hagiography had Hitler carry the boy out of danger in his own arms; an act that would certainly qualify as a miracle given his dislocated shoulder. Nobody ever offered trustworthy corroboration, and, alas, the boy was never found. Moreover, the story of the getaway by car through hails of machine-gun bullets may appeal mostly to the credulous.

Yet the consequences of Hitler's mistakes in challenging the power of the state were immediately clear: in less than a minute, in the blink of an eye, the revolution had turned into an exodus and the proposed national campaign had collapsed, in a single volley of bullets. Nullified were four years of dreams, conspiracies and agitation. The two thousand men of the Putschist column had all but evaporated after the salvo; the flower of the rebellion sought salvation in escape.

⁵ Most accounts picture Ludendorff as courageous for staying on his feet and Hitler as ignoble for dropping to the street even though Hitler's arm dislocation indicates he was dragged down. Undoubtedly Hitler would have hit the ground on his own since he was a seasoned front-line soldier. Robert Murphy testified that "both Ludendorff and Hitler behaved in identical manner, like the battle-hardened soldiers they were. Both fell flat to escape the hail of bullets." Another eyewitness, a watchman, also saw Ludendorff throw himself to the ground and then find cover "behind a corpse or wounded man." A second watchman corroborated the fact that no one was standing after the volley. (21)

Mopping up took the police the better part of the remaining day; they found Putschists hiding in places as peculiar as under the flour sacks of a bakery, public toilets on cemeteries, and about a dozen in the closets of a young ladies' academy. By evening, over a hundred arrests were counted. The rear echelons of the movement, which had preferred the safety of the beer hall to the vagaries of the street, had no desire to link their fortunes to a lost cause: they meekly stacked their rifles on the floor, left the cellar, and vanished in the crowd. Röhm was informed, by one of Lossow's aides that Hitler was dead and Ludendorff arrested. Further resistance was futile, he realized, and gave up.

The Putsch may have foundered, but the citizens of the town made their sympathies clear. When the police marched away their captives from the Odeonsplatz, they were abused by the indignant crowd with cries of "Pfui! Jew defenders! Betrayers of the Fatherland! Bloodhounds! Heil Hitler -- Down with Kahr!" (22)

Between the Bürgerbräukeller and the city centre, Gregor Strasser's SA unit still held a bridge over the Isar; still exchanging hostile stares with the police. The news of the fiasco on the Odeonsplatz reached them soon, informing them that Ludendorff was dead and Hitler wounded and captured. Gregor Strasser now showed some of the experience he had gained in the war. Having no ambition to become a martyr of a failed cause, he shepherded his men into a tactical retreat nimble enough that the police found no gap to attack. The column marched into the direction of the central railway station, when, passing a stretch of woodland, they met a Munich SA detachment busy smashing their rifles against the trees, a pastime Strasser immediately ordered them to cease. The guns, he said, will find their use another day. When the station came into sight, they closed ranks, seized a train, and vanished.

Another absconding SA company, the one that had arrested the city councillors, had already reached the highway leading in south-easterly direction from Munich to Salzburg and the Austrian border. About halfway, at a forest close to Rosenheim, the cavalcade halted, and the prisoners were led into the woods. They must have assumed the worst, and thus were almost ecstatically grateful when they were asked to surrender their clothes rather than their lives. The Putschists climbed into the Excellencies' festive suits and disappeared quickly, leaving the honourable city fathers to their own resources. The police eventually found them and restored them to their offices.

The situation at the Tegernsee Lake, whither the Hess platoon had taken Minister President von Knilling and the other hostages taken at the Bürgerbräukeller, proved disastrous. Hess had stowed the distinguished servants of the public good into a lakeside villa, which, however, lacked a telephone. Hess left to find one, to report his success back to Munich and ask for further instructions, but when he arrived back at the building he found it deserted: the hostages had persuaded their guards to take them back to Munich. Thus Hess not only lost his hostages but the truck as well, and found himself stuck forty miles southeast of Munich.

At the Odeonsplatz, the Red Cross had meanwhile taken over and loaded the numerous wounded into ambulances. Scheubner-Richter's faithful servant Aigner established the deaths of his employer and of his best friend, Ludendorff's valet, and took it upon himself to inform the families. He later recalled:

"Sick in my soul and totally shattered I returned to our residence in the Widenmayerstrasse." Frau Scheubner-Richter asked where her husband was. Aigner lied but she insisted on the truth. "I can still remember her words, 'That's terrible but that is why one is an officer's wife.'" (23)

The only man momentarily not in the picture was Putzi Hanfstängl. Just before the revolutionary column had left the beer hall, he had been dispatched to another intelligence mission: to observe and report on the tactical dispositions of police and Reichswehr around the city centre.

"Where only an hour before droves of citizens had surrounded the party speakers in the inner precincts and exulted in the commotion, now the faces of the passers-by showed irresolution. The majority of the public as well of the police, Reichswehr, and Battle League units had thought the troop and police deployments in the city centre parts of the preparations for the "March on Berlin", but the understanding of the sad reality now precipitated distress and a feeling of futility.

Municipal policemen tore the proclamations of the last evening, signed by Hitler, Kahr, Lossow and Seisser, off the doors and walls of the houses or replaced them with Kahr's more recent anti-Putsch declaration. The weather joined in the tristesse, with intermittent showers from a leaden sky.

It did not look better in the offices of the VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER, whither I retired. The common feelings were confusion and depression, and Rosenberg characterized the prevailing mood with the words 'The whole story is over now.'

I took this as advice to think of what might come next, and marched home. I had barely arrived when the telephone rang, and my sister Erna informed me excitedly that 'Sauerbruch (the famous surgeon) just called, and told me that Hitler and Ludendorff, and their men, have left the Bürgerbräu and are marching over the Ludwig Bridge into the Tal.'" (24)

Hanfstätgl left the house in the direction of Brienner Strasse, which would take him to the town centre, but soon met scores of men fleeing from it. He was informed that the police had fired, that Hitler, Ludendorff and Goering were dead, and that the day had brought "finis Germanise". (25) He turned on his heels to go back home but met, halfway, Esser, Amann, Eckart and Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer, in an open car rushing down the road. Hanfstätgl joined the posse which retired to Hoffmann's apartment, which, they surmised, was safest from a police search. On arrival, they began preparations to escape to Austria; each man for himself, they hoped, would be less conspicuous than a group.

Thus it came to pass that Helene Hanfstätgl did not receive a visit from her husband on that day in the family's recently acquired dacha in Uffing, some thirty miles south of Munich, but from Hitler, her great admirer. He arrived in the escape car, having been diagnosed for the moment with a dislocated shoulder which, Dr. Schulze pointed out, was very hard to fix in a small, erratically moving car. Hitler directed the driver to Uffing.

It may be a telltale sign whither a man turns to when hurt or threatened; whither he directs his hopes of sanctuary. One might have assumed that Hitler would seek to reach Landshut or Rosenheim, places where SA units existed and where local indifference to the state police might have assisted his concealment.

But in this existential crisis he sought to find shelter with the woman he admired and respected most, and, perhaps, unattainably romanced: Helene Hanfstätgl, the beautiful, intelligent and sensible socialite; a woman as far removed in personality and manners from his small bourgeois, Lower Austrian roots as could be. She was the one he had trusted with the knowledge of the personal reasons for his anti-Semitism, and he constantly showed up at the Hanfstätgl's town apartment with the flimsiest of excuses; that he was too tired to return to his apartment in the Thierschstrasse, that he had to wait for an important telephone call to reach him at Hanfstätgl's telephone or that someone was to meet him down on the street and would ring the door bell soon. For the rest of his life Helene was a persistent subject of his private conversations. An old hand once reminisced that "he continued to chat about the evils of smoking, the joys of motoring, dogs, the origin of Tristan and Isolde, the beauty of Frau Hanfstätgl and Jews."

The fugitives reached a small forest on the outskirts of the little village of Uffing, where they decided to ditch the car. They proceeded per pedes to the small Hanfstätgl cottage where they arrived in the late afternoon. Frau Hanfstätgl betrayed no surprise over the sudden visitation and showed at once that she was a practical woman as well as a semi-goddess. She fed the company, assisted Dr. Schulze in provisionally fixing Hitler's shoulder, and sent the party to bed early.

The company still felt less than rested when the morning dawned; nobody had slept well, either for pain, as in Hitler's case, or for the tension of expecting the police to show up any minute. After breakfast Hitler asked the medic to return to Munich by train, find the Bechsteins, and ask them to send their limousine, to pick up Hitler discreetly. Dr. Schulze was asked to drive the escape car back to Munich and enlist the aid of a medical acquaintance of his, an assistant of the famous Professor Dr. Sauerbruch. If possible, he should bring him to Uffing to work on Hitler's arm.

After the departure of the two doctors Hitler tried to reassure his hostess that her husband was safe [he had no idea where he was, ¶], then fretted about what might have happened to his comrades. If he got any sleep

that night it was shattered early the next morning by the deafening tintinnabulation of bells from the nearby church. It was Sunday the eleventh.

Hitler did not appear until lunch. Because of the sling [around his arm, ¶], he could not wear his coat and had draped Hanfstängl's huge dark blue terry cloth bathrobe around him. It brought a smile to his gaunt face. He felt like a pseudo-Roman senator, he said, and he told Helene the story of how his father had ridiculed him as the "toga boy."

As the afternoon wore on Hitler grew restless and began pacing up and down the sitting room. He became increasingly impatient concerning the Bechstein car. Why the delay? It was only a matter of hours, perhaps minutes, he fretted, before he would be traced to Uffing. At dusk he asked Helene to close the shutters and draw the curtains, then resumed his moody pacing. (26)

Eventually, the police caught up with him. Ernst Hanfstängl later described their appearance.

First they closed in and searched the property of my mother, outside of the village, for a good hour; even the hay in the loft and the plumeaus on the beds were probed with bayonets. Meanwhile my house was under observation, and Hitler grew aware that flight would be impossible. (27)

The consequences Hitler drew from the presence of the police, were, if we believe Herrn Hanfstängl's narrative, likely to guarantee a great if bloody finale. Here we need to digress for a minute. A long time ago, Hanfstängl's Harvard music teacher, Professor Marshall, had invited his student to a dinner at the St.-Botholph-Club in Boston, on the same evening that a guest speaker, a Boston police agent, gave an address on the basic teachings of Jiu-Jitsu, the Japanese art of self-defence.

Chosen to be the lecturer's object of demonstration, the detective showed me a useful trick to disarm an attacker armed with a revolver, a move that I --years later -- taught my wife. Then, on the evening of November 11, two police trucks full of green uniformed state police -- the arrest commando -- stopped in front of our cottage in Uffing. When my wife hastened up the stairs to the attic where Hitler hid, she met him, armed with a gun, in the tiny antechambre.

"This is the end!" he screamed. "Have these pigs arrest me? I rather be dead!" Yet before he could effect his resolution, my wife applied the Boston cop's Jiu-Jitsu trick and - in a high arc - the revolver flew into a large flour bin, where it vanished at once. (28)

The goddess now scolded Hitler as if he were a schoolboy; reminding him of his responsibilities -- the men, the party, and the people -- and offered to take quick notes if he wished to send messages to his closest followers before the police showed up. Hitler realized his duties, thanked her sincerely, and began to dictate a short message to his men.

Rosenberg would become acting leader of the NSDAP with Amann as his deputy, who should also direct the business and finance matters; together with Julius Streicher and Hermann Esser the former two were to form a quadrumvirate that was to take care of party activities until further notice. He appointed the goddess's husband to the post of principal solicitor of contributions, uninformed that the latter was on the way to Austria. After finishing the notes and hiding them in the flour bin, Frau Hanfstängl went down to answer the door bell.

The sounds of police cars, shouting, and the barking of dogs filled the air of the quiet village. A trio of constables eventually appeared on the Hanfstängl's doorstep and were allowed to enter. Helene guided the men upstairs to the small sitting room and opened the door, unveiling Hitler, still dressed in Hanfstängl's bathroom attire. Without much ado, the policemen took him into custody; so happy to have found their prey at last that they forgot to search the house. They packed their captive into a truck and left immediately for Weilheim, the county centre.

It was almost ten o'clock at night when they arrived at the local court where Hitler was formally arraigned. It was decided that probable cause existed to charge him with high treason, and that the detainee was to be taken immediately to the prison at Landsberg, a small town about forty miles west of Munich. (29)

Since it was thought entirely possible that remnants of the Putschists might try to free the prisoner, the Reichswehr was asked to provide security. They sent an armed detail to Landsberg forthwith, which had, however, not yet arrived when the police column reached the prison compound.

The prison of Landsberg consisted of a medium security housing unit for thieves or fraudsters and the like, and a "fortress", a high-security section for murderers, rapists or political prisoners. Hitler was brought to cell # 7, which was the sole one that had an anteroom for visitors and guards, and which had, until this evening, housed Count Arco-Valley, the assassin of Kurt Eisner.

For Hitler was accustomed to little space since his days in the asylum and the Männerheim in Vienna and the small rooms he had lived in for most of the last five years in Munich, he betrayed no problems in adapting to the narrowness of his new residence. In fact, his cell was bigger and better lighted than his room in the Thierschstrasse, and the window had a view of the prison garden's shrubs and flowerbeds. From the first night onward, Hitler found himself in the care of gaoler Franz Hemmrich, who was instructed to look after him in particular and aid him as much as was permissible, and had no other duties.

In the outside world, news of the Beer Hall Putsch, as it became known, dominated the newspaper headlines for a few days. For lack of reliable witnesses, however, most of the articles had to rely on speculation.

In New York City it was described as a militarist uprising with Hitler playing a secondary role. In Rome, where Kurt Lüdecke was again conferring with Mussolini on behalf of Hitler, the noon editions declared that Crown Prince Rupprecht had joined the revolutionists. (30)

A few days later, when things had cleared up a bit, it was the consensus of the international press that Hitler was finished as a politician and party leader. The author of the recent German bestseller "The Third Reich", Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, expressed the melancholy and depression of the extreme Right, which for the failure of the coup had to postpone their dreams of a successful renaissance of a new, authoritatively governed Germany.

"Our history has gone astray. Nothing of ours is succeeding in the world. Nothing today, nothing yesterday. Nothing -- if we think back -- nothing for the last generation. ... Our cause was still-born from the start... Something has gone wrong with everything. And when we try to set anything alright, it breaks to piece ... An evil spell hangs over the Reich." (31)

But in the same treatise van den Bruck reveals that he, as many conservatives were wont to do in the future, misinterpreted the cause of Hitler's defeat.

"There are many things that can be said against Hitler. But one thing one will always be able to say: he was a fanatic for Germany ... Hitler was wrecked by his proletarian primitivism. He did not understand how to give his National Socialism any intellectual basis. He was passion incarnate, but entirely without measure or sense of proportion." (32)

It turned out later that nothing was less important to Hitler and National Socialism than the existence or lack of some "intellectual basis". When Alfred Rosenberg attempted to establish such a foundation in his book "The Myth of the 20th Century", even Hitler confessed that he had read the opus only partially because it was too hard to follow. The Beer Hall Putsch had not failed because of the lack of an intellectual theory, but on account of the guns of a single Munich police platoon.

But for the moment, the extreme Right had lost its impetus, which became only more conspicuous in 1924 when the economy improved. Hitler realized that the connivance of monarchists and old-fashioned nationalists was not enough to overcome the power of a state that still commanded guns, Republican or not.

The events of these November days convinced Hitler that a coup d'état was doomed to failure without the support of the military and a means of neutralizing the trade unions that had so effectively extinguished the Kapp putsch. To change the Fatherland by the ballot box, which became his Plan B, necessitated the incorporation of the greater part of

the conservative vote into the movement, the neutrality or, preferably, the blessing of the Church, and a great, external crisis, perhaps war, or an economic collapse. Ten years later, these conditions coincided.⁶

For although the coup had failed, it had forever changed the playing field. As Orlando Figes noted in regards to that other great post-war revolutionary, Lenin, that "it was not Marxism that made Lenin a revolutionary but Lenin who made Marxism revolutionary," (33) so it was neither Nationalism alone, the former Leftist cause, nor Socialism by itself that made Hitler a revolutionary, but his brewing of a concoction that united elements of both that made National Socialism revolutionary. In this sense it is quite correct to call the end-product "Hitlerism".

Now Hitler had realized that, in the achievement of a future revolution, the NSDAP needed to gain the support of the bourgeois elites and the Reichswehr - against which no putsch could succeed - and had to break the lock of SPD and KPD on the industrial workers' vote. Haphazardness wouldn't suffice. To overcome the Republic of Weimar would require an extensive coalition of anger and frustration, a choir of resentful patriots, and an orchestra of discontent - conducted by the little drummer boy.

⁶Lukacs cites in this context Harold Gordon's comment on Hitler's cunning use of crises:

"By sheer determination and sense of mission Hitler transformed himself from the frenetic revolutionary who had been shattered and silenced by the Putsch into a political leader ready to accept years of careful building and constant struggle as a prelude to power. Rossbach, Ehrhardt and Ludendorff all failed to turn this vital corner and perished politically.

Hitler took it in stride and left them far behind. The Putsch had transformed the old Hitler into the new, just as World War I and the revolution had turned the bohemian would-be artist of Vienna and München into a revolutionary leader -- and of the two transformations it was perhaps the greater. Hitler's first crisis made him a revolutionary. His second made him the undisputed leader of a serious political movement. The third crisis brought him to the helm of Germany, while the fourth led him to conquest, defeat, and death." (34)

**CONCLUSION
AND
APPENDICES**

CONCLUSION

BEROWNE: Why, all delights are vain, and that most vain.

Which with pain purchased doth inherit pain:

As painfully to pore upon a book

To seek the light of truth, while truth the while

Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.

William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour Lost*, Act 1, Scene 1, L. 72

Shakespeare's pessimism gives us an opportunity to pause and reflect on our preceding *historia*. We have seen how Hitler's underestimated acting talents reciprocated with sincere belief in his own phantasmagorias of Jewish and Communist threats all over the world - and because everyone could see that he did believe in his vexations, the suggestive effect on his audience often bordered on the powers of hypnotism.

He knew exactly what many Germans - beaten in war, starving, ill, and resentful - wanted to hear and these prescriptions he freely distributed. He was also very mindful of the fact that a proper Messiah requires a certain distance from the followers in private matters, as General Charles de Gaulle once expressed:

"First and foremost, there can be no prestige without mystery, for familiarity breeds contempt. All religions have their holy of holies, and no man is a hero to his valet.

In the designs, the demeanour, and the mental operations of a leader there must always be 'something' which others cannot altogether fathom, which puzzles them, stirs them, and rivets their attention. ...

Aloofness, character and the personification of quietness, is these qualities that surround with prestige those who are prepared to carry a burden that is too heavy for lesser mortals. ...

He [the Leader, ¶] must accept the loneliness which, according to Faguet, is the 'wretchedness of superior beings.'" (1)

Charisma, a well developed ability of playmanship and iron belief in his prejudices were the combination that convinced his followers, and these three elements operated best in conjunction - two out of three probably wouldn't have sufficed. Laurence Rees has commented extensively on this leaf of trefoil, the trinity of Hitler's political success:

Hitler has often being accused of being an "actor", but a vital part of his early appeal was that his supporters in the beer halls, like Emil Klein, thought he was "genuine" through and through. "When I first saw him address a meeting at the Hofbräuhaus [a large beer hall in Munich]," says Emil Klein, "the man gave off such a charisma that people believed whatever he said.

And when someone today says that he was an actor, then I have to say that the German nation must have been complete idiots to have granted a man like that such belief, to the extent that the entire German nation held out to the last day of the war.

I still believe to this day that Hitler believed that he would be able to fulfil what he preached. That he believed it in all honesty, believed it himself. ...

And ultimately all those I was together with, the many people at the party conferences everywhere, the people believed him, and they could only believe him because it was evident that he did [believe it] too, that he spoke with conviction, and that was something lacking in those days." (2)

If we recall the bafflement and confusion that befell many historians in their appraisal of Hitler's personality (cf. Ian Kershaw, Preface, p.5, n.14) ...

"How do we explain that a man with so little intellectual gifts and social abilities could compel such an enormous historical effect that made the whole world hold its breath?"

... we recognize our problem in viewing with our present eyes a world bygone. It alters perception. What Adolf Hitler was able to do for the longest time in his life – and it is not a mean accomplishment, alas! – was to be what his followers desired and his enemies acknowledged, whatever their divisive interests. A Man For All Seasons – and none.

"His speeches are day dreams of this mass soul. The speeches begin always with pessimism and end in overjoyed redemption, a triumphant happy ending; often they can be refuted by reason, but they follow the far mightier logic of the subconscious, which no refutation can touch. Hitler has given speech to the speechless terror of the modern mass." (3)

Strategic ingenuity had deserted him in the hours of the actual putsch on November 8/9, 1923 - did he truly believe to upend with a few thousand supporters not only the Bavarian Government, but also local and state police, the Reichswehr, and the whole infrastructure of a modern state? Yet he learned his lesson quickly and came to understand that one needs the support or at least benevolent neutrality of the state and its elites for a successful revolution.

It proved effective in 1933.

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169	359	Clark	339
170	359	Clark	342
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172	359	Albertini	I/548
173	359	Albertini	I/548
174	359	Albertini	I/549
175	360	Albertini	I/549
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21	367	Clark	1
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23	368	Clark	38

24	368	Clark	38
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84	528	Keegan	FWW	45 - 46
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108	533	West, Rebecca	Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, in Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 6th Edition, 978-0-19-860720-5 (hc.)	830
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2	641	Keegan	FWW	270
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4	644	Hodge, Nathan	The \$ 1 Trillion Fighter Jet, Wall Street Journal, May 26, 2011	5
5	645	Ferguson	The Pity of War	114
6	646	Zinn, Howard	A People's History of the U.S., Harper Collins N.Y., 2010, 978-0-06-196558-6 (deluxe edition) (pbk.)	362
7	646	Zinn		362 - 363
8	646	Hofstadter, Richard	The American Political Tradition, Vintage Books, 1989 (1948), 0-679-72315-3 (pbk.)	339 (262)
9	646	Hofstadter		342 (264 - 265)
10	647	Keegan	FWW	350
11	647	Hofstadter		353 - 355 (274 - 275)
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17	649	Keegan	FWW	326
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22	651	Fussell, Paul	The Great War and Modern Memory, Oxford University Press 1975, 2000, 978-0-19-513332-5 (pbk.)	14
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32	662	Keegan	FWW	335
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34	664	Spiegel Special Geschichte	4/2007, ISSN 1612-6017	47 - 49
35	667	Keegan	FWW	340
36	667 - 669	Bullock, David	The Russian Civil War, Osprey Publishing Limited 2008, 978-1-84603-271-4 (pbk.)	17 - 20
37	669	Bullock		29
38	669 - 670	Bullock		29 - 30
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10	684	Applebaum, Anne	Gulag, Anchor Books 2004, 1-4000-3409- 4 (pbk.)	4 - 5
11	685	Bullock		38
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18	688	Hobsbawn, Eric	The Age of Extremes, Vintage Books 1996, 0-679-73005-2 (pbk.)	389 n.2
19	689	Bullock		57 - 58
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27	723	Massie, Robert	Castles of Steel, Ballantine Books 2003, 0-345-40878-0 (pbk.)	770
28	723	Massie	CoS	770
29	724	Keegan	FWW	413
30	724	Weitz, Eric	Weimar Germany, Princeton University Press, 978-0-691-01695-5 (hc.)	16
31	724	Persico, Joseph	11th Month, 11th Day, 11th Hour, Random House 2004, 0-375-50825-2 (hc.)	290
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33	724	Read, Anthony	The World on Fire, Norton Books 2008, 978-0-393-06124-6 (hc.)	26
34	725	Weitz		15
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17	742	Toland		72
18	742	Read		47
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6	767	Joachimsthaler	Korrektur	201
7	767	Joachimsthaler	Korrektur	214
8	767	Plöckinger, Othmar	Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren - Hitler's prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918 - 1920, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 2013, 978-3-506-77570-2 (hc.)	45
9	767	Plöckinger		48 - 49
10	769	Joachimsthaler	Korrektur	225
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7	786	Ferguson	The War of the World	164
8	788	Strachan		1
9	790	Neiberg, Michael	Dance of the Furies, Belknap Press 2011, 978-0-674-04954-3 (hc.)	73
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11	802	Hitler	MK (E)	355
12	803	Toland		87
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20	805	Joachimsthaler	HW	259 - 260
21	806	Toland		94 - 95
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23	807	Knox, MacGregor	To the Threshold of Power 1922/1933, Volume I, Cambridge University Press 2007, 978-0-521-70329-1 (pbk.)	333
24	807	Haffner		14 - 15
25	807	Joachimsthaler	HW	267
26	808	Toland		96
27	807	Joachimsthaler	HW	267
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31	811	Joachimsthaler	HW	270
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- Nicholas II**, born 1868, murdered 1918, officially titled "Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias", was the last Emperor of Russia, Grand Duke of Finland, and titular King of Poland. He was a plodder of limited intelligence and imagination. He resigned on March 2, 1917 (OS March 15), and was later imprisoned and murdered. 156, 267, 275, 280, 309, 313-15, 317-18, 320, 326-28, 336-37, 345, 348, 352, 354, 357, 364, 368, 372-73, 375, 394, 413, 421-23, 428-29, 431, 433, 447-49, 451-53, 458, 467, 470, 473-74, 499, 502, 507, 606, 675-76, 686, 689, 697, 1006
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- Pasić, Nikola**, the dominant political figure in Serbia, at various times between 1890 and 1926, Mayor of Belgrade and Prime Minister of the Kingdoms of Serbia and subsequently Yugoslavia. His knowledge of the Sarajevo assassination plan is disputed, 348, 394, 396-401, 423-24, 427, 434
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- Pöhner, Ernst**, Commissioner of Munich police, aided Hitler and the Nazis from the background and was a central figure in the Putsch, when he was nominated future Prime Minister of Bavaria, 847, 888, 913
- Poincaré, Raymond**, anti-German revanchist French politician who served three times as Prime Minister and 1913 - 1920 as President of France, 360, 362, 374, 406, 423 bellicosity 384 genius 454, claims in his memoirs 472
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- Reichswehr**, *post-war German army under the limitations of the Peace of Versailles, limited to 100,000 men, no armour or airplanes*, 770, 784, 788, 802, 804, 817-18, 831, 839, 840, 844, 853-54, 858, 861, 863, 869, 870, 872, 873, 875, 878, 883-84, 886-87, 889, 892, 899, 901, 904-08, 913, 918-19, 921-22, 1002, 1003
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- Röhm, Ernst**, *Captain in the German Army, early friend of Hitler (they used the intimate "Du"), first leader of the SA, Reichstag deputy in the 1920s, from 1930 on SA's Chief of Staff, well-known homosexual, was murdered in the bloody party purge of June 30 to July 2, 1934, the "Night of the Long Knives"*, 818, 819, 827-28, 838, 847, 867, 876, 877, 878, 888, 894, 895, 904, 907, 908, 909, 912, 915, 916, 918
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- Rosenberg, Alfred**, *Baltic journalist and political thinker for the NSDAP*, 814, 837, 866, 867, 895, 909, 919, 920

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- Samsonov, Alexander, Russian General, led the attack of the Russian Second Army into East Prussia and was decisively defeated at the Battle of Tannenberg, committing suicide,* 293, 470, 590, 592, 593, 595, 596, 598, 599, 600
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- Sazonov, Sergey, Russian Foreign Minister from 1910-1916, more now than in earlier times criticized for his role in the advent of the Great War,* 349, 350, 352, 353, 354, 358, 359, 360, 361, 387, 392, 398, 407, 408, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 423, 424, 425, 428, 429, 433, 434, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 451, 453, 458, 459, 460, 465, 476
- Scheidemann, Philip, with Hugo Haase from 1913 on chairman of the SPD, after the split-off of the left he co-chaired with Friedrich Ebert. He proclaimed the German Republic on November 9, 1918 and in 1919 was shortly the first Minister President, i.e. Chancellor, of the German Republic,* 746, 768
- Scheubner-Richter, Erwin. old friend of Adolf Hitler and an effective NSDAP party hand, died in the putsch,* 853, 854, 860, 866, 867, 873, 874, 881, 882, 884, 885, 886, 888, 893, 894, 895, 901, 902, 903, 904
- Schlieffen, Count Alfred von, Chief of the German General Staff 1891-1905. In his estate was found - after his retirement - a "Denkschrift", a plan which concerned a war between Germany and France. Since the details of the plan did not become known until 1958, many legends grew about this purportedly "infallible" war plan - see "Denkschrift",* 294, 307, 308, 321-22, 401, 415, 456, 470, 476, 484, 490-91, 502, 503, 505, 507-25, 527-30, 532, 534, 537, 539, 547, 561-63, 573, -74, 577-578, 588, 592, 613, 627, 791, 805, 1000, 1005
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- Seeckt, Hans von, German General, C-in-C of the Reichswehr from 1920 - 1926, the strong man of the Weimar Republic**, 830, 853, 889, 892, 895-96
- Seisser, Hans Ritter (Knight) von, Bavarian police commissioner in 1923, played a shadowy role in Hitler's putsch plan**, 874, 881, 882, 887, 888, 890, 894, 895, 898, 901, 905
- Self Determination, one of Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" in his peace initiative 1917 - available only for winners, it was found**, 661, 738, 786-87, 797, 800, 807, 824
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- Somme, French River in the Picardy, scene of some of the worst battles of the war, especially the British summer offensive of 1916**, 523, 583, 590, 638, 640-44, 649, 651, 665, 667, 724-25, 727-28, 751, 875, 931-32, 987, 990
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- Soviet Union, Communist Russia after the Civil War, founded 1924**, 28, 46, 48, 199, 701, 715, 760, 771, 775, 807, 853-54
- Spartacists, socialist members of the "Spartakusbund" ("Spartacus League), one of the three major communist parties in post-war Germany. After a failed uprising in January 1919 their followers eventually joined with the USPD to form the KPD**, 744-45, 750, 753, 757-60, 763, 769-70, 777, 783, 789, 829, 834, 840
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- Stalin, Joseph, born as Ioseb Besarionis Dze Jugashvili in Georgia, was appointed general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1922 and reigned as dictator until his death in 1953**, 16, 17, 508, 683, 685, 698, 701, 716, 835
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- St. Petersburg, renamed Petrograd in 1917, Russian capital and see of the Tsar**, 144, 159, 161, 169, 224, 272, 280, 308-12, 314, 317, 319, 323-24, 332, 337, 340, 342-43, 346-47, 349, 352-57, 359-60, 362-64, 366-67, 373, 384, 400-01, 403, 412, 416, 418, 421-23, 428, 432-33, 436-38, 440-41, 443-44, 446-48, 452-55, 457-59, 461, 465-68, 470-72, 474, 479, 528, 543, 547, 615, 617, 619, 645, 695, 722, 1003

- Straits, The**, *the two narrows which lock the Black Sea from the Mediterranean Ocean, the Dardanelles or Hellespont, in the Aegean Sea near the Island of Lesbos, and the Bosphorus at Istanbul. The straits are of highest strategic importance for Russia, for its fleet remains bottled up in the Black Sea. It has been the ambition of Tsars and their foreign ministers to break the Turkish lock on the straits for centuries. The Russians convinced their allies in the Great War to an attack at the Dardanelles at Gallipoli, which misfired completely and had to be abandoned*, 309, 311-12, 314-316, 321, 323, 341-46, 366, 373, 375, 384, 391, 405-06, 412, 430, 433, 489, 545, 547
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- Tirpitz, Alfred von**, *German Grand Admiral, Secretary of State of the German Imperial Naval Office, the administrative branch of the German Imperial Navy from 1897 until 1916. He was the father of the "High Seas Fleet"*, 171, 316-17, 358, 362-63, 375, 413-15, 474, 479-80, 483, 651
- Treasury**, 46, 48, 56, 57, 69, 71, 86, 87, 89, 100, 805
- Triple Alliance**, *or Triplice: Military alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, founded 1892. It was a dubious arrangement from the beginning, for in secret clauses - unknown to her partners - Italy pledged not to undertake measures against either Great Britain or France. In the case of the 1914 war, Italy did not only shirk her responsibilities but in May 1915 indeed attacked her formal ally*
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