

Jeremy Noakes

PERSPECTIVES

WHO SUPPORTED HITLER?

The Nazis have traditionally been seen as a petit-bourgeois party. However, recent research has increasingly cast doubt upon this.

The past decade has seen a stream of books and articles on the social foundations of the Nazi movement and this research has provided us with a much more solidly-based understanding of the Nazi Party's support than has been available hitherto. The most contentious issue has been how far the NSDAP can be analysed in terms of class. Despite its official name, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the NSDAP used to be seen as a predominantly middle-class party, with the working class largely impervious to its appeal. However, in the past decade this view has been subjected to strong attack. What is clear is that in order to find out which sections of the German population proved most vulnerable to the Nazi appeal one has to distinguish, first, between those who became members of the party and those who merely voted for it, since members and voters were not invariably identical in terms of their social basis and, secondly, between the particular periods or phases in the party's history, since it attracted different groups at different times.

NAZI PARTY MEMBERS

The two major studies of the Nazi Party's membership which have appeared in the last 10 years disagree fundamentally in their conclusions. Michael Kater in his book *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Leaders and Members 1919-45* (1982) claimed:

the National Socialist movement was indeed a pre-

eminently lower middle-class phenomenon... Not only is there no 'need to' abandon the middle-class thesis of Nazism, as has most recently been urged, but it would be folly to do so.

The person urging the abandonment of the middle-class thesis referred to by Kater is Detlef Mühlberger who in his recent book, *Hitler's Followers* (1990), continues to insist that 'the perpetuation of the middle-class thesis in the light of the empirical evidence available is ...untenable'. He argues that 'the NSDAP... mobilised a following which was remarkably heterogeneous in social terms'.

As far as members were concerned, there were five main phases in the party's history:

- from its foundation in 1919 to the Munich Beer Hall putsch in November 1923;
- from its refounding in February 1925 to the first successful Reichstag election in September 1930;
- from September 1930 until Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933;
- the period of the takeover of power in the first few months after January 1933;
- the Third Reich itself, when the membership rolls were occasionally and briefly reopened.

For the first stage, 1919-23, the few surviving membership lists suggest that the NSDAP contained a significant number of workers, particularly skilled workers — but it was by

no means a workers party. The 'old middle class' of independent retailers and artisans was strongly represented, reflecting fairly accurately the social milieu of Munich and the towns of Bavaria where the bulk of the membership lived, and the elite tended to be over-represented: ex-officers, professionals, students, civil servants, small businessmen and artisans were typical members. The industrial working class in industrial centres of Bavaria like Augsburg and Nuremberg remained largely impervious to the appeal of Nazism, but some of the non-industrial working class proved more vulnerable.

For the period after 1925 we have the official party statistics which were produced for internal party use in 1935 and appear — for that reason — to be fairly reliable. The major problem with these statistics is that they only include those members who were still in the party in 1935, i.e. they don't include those who joined the party between 1925 and 1935 but also left it again at some point during that period. We know from the evidence of other membership lists that there was extreme fluctuation in membership during this period. In fact, the party has been described as being like a revolving door. According to one estimate, around 1.4m people had joined the party by 30 January 1933 but around 40% had left again before that date. Nevertheless, the official statistics do give us an accurate picture of the party in 1935 and at least a rough and ready

one for the earlier period (unless one assumes that those who left the party differed radically from those who stayed with it to the end, which seems unlikely).

Table 1 gives some indication of the social composition of the Nazi membership. In particular, it shows that while workers were under-represented in comparison with the population as a whole, they nevertheless formed by far the largest single group. Table 2 shows that of those who joined before 1933 a disproportionate number were under 40. Finally, it is impossible to place women in occupational or social categories, since they were included in the figures for various occupations, particularly peasants and white-collar workers, in addition to the separate category of housewives. However, one can say that in 1935 they were heavily under-represented — 5.5% of the party were women, whereas 52.2% of the German population over the age of 18 were women.

NAZI VOTERS

The confessional effect

What kinds of people made up the Nazi electorate? First, all researchers are unanimous that religious denomination or confession was

the most important single factor in determining who was more or less likely to vote Nazi. The census of 1933 revealed that 63% of the German population were Protestant, 33% were Catholic, 0.8% were Jews and around 0.3% were other denominations or none. What is more, most districts were *either* overwhelmingly Protestant or Catholic. Only 1 in 7 were confessionally mixed. It was, above all, rural Catholic districts which proved most resistant to Nazism. In his book *Hitler's Wähler* (Hitler's Voters) (1990), Jürgen Falter has estimated that the Catholic Centre Party and its sister party, the Bavarian People's Party, lost only 600,000 voters to the Nazis between 1928 and 1933, a period when the Nazi vote went up from 810,000 to over 17 million.

However, this argument must be qualified. First, the confessional effect varied according to the different phases of the party's electoral history. It only emerged from December 1924 and particularly after 1928. In the May 1924 election the Nazi electoral bastions were confessionally mixed but socially homogeneous, namely agrarian. Between 1919 and 1924 the Nazi Party had been mainly based in Bavaria, with its core in Catholic southern Bavaria. It was in the period 1928–30, however, that the centre of Nazi successes moved from south to north and above all to the overwhelmingly Protestant northeast. By

1932, in the north and east almost half the electorate voted Nazi, whereas in the largely Catholic west only one-third did so. However, in terms of numbers as opposed to percentages of votes the picture looks slightly different. For the area which produced the largest number of Nazi votes, namely 40%, was the heavily-populated electoral districts in the centre of Germany, in Protestant Saxony, whereas only 10% came from the lightly settled northeast and northwest.

The second qualification is that between August 1932 and March 1933 the gap between Protestant and Catholic support for the Nazi Party was narrowing. In the November 1932 election the drop in the Catholic vote for the Nazis of 2.4% was significantly lower than the Reich average of 4.7% or that in Protestant districts of 6%. Also, in the March 1933 election, the party made something of a breakthrough in Catholic rural areas where its vote increased by 16.3% compared with 12.3% in the Reich. This breakthrough was particularly striking in Bavaria, partly at the expense of the Catholic Bavarian People's Party but mainly at the expense of previous Catholic non-voters for whom the fact that the party

Table 1: Party members as of 1 January 1935, divided according to jobs and date of membership.

Job	Date of party membership										
	Before seizure of power		From 14.9.30 to 30.1.33		Up to 30.1.33		After seizure of power		Total		Society June 1933
	Before 14.9.30		From 14.9.30 to 30.1.33		Up to 30.1.33		After 30.1.33		No.	%	
I Persons in employment	121,151	5.1	669,678	28.4	790,829	33.5	1,567,055	66.5	2,357,884	100.0	
		93.5		93.1		93.1		95.3		94.5	
1 Workers	33,944	4.5	233,479	30.8	267,423	35.3	488,544	64.7	755,967	100.0	46.3
		26.3		32.5		31.5		29.7		30.3	
2 White-collar employees	31,067	6.4	147,855	30.6	178,922	37.0	305,132	63.0	484,054	100.0	12.4
		24.0		20.6		21.0		18.6		19.4	
3 Self-employed	24,563	5.2	124,579	26.2	149,142	31.4	326,081	68.6	475,223	100.0	9.6
		18.9		17.3		17.6		19.8		19.0	
artisans	11,059	5.3	55,814	26.8	66,873	32.1	141,309	67.9	208,182	100.0	
		8.5		7.7		7.9		8.6		8.3	
tradesmen	9,918	5.3	48,920	26.0	58,838	31.1	128,776	68.7	187,614	100.0	
		7.6		6.8		6.9		7.8		7.5	
professions	3,586	4.5	19,845	25.0	23,431	29.5	55,996	70.5	79,427	100.0	
		2.8		2.8		2.8		1.4		3.2	
4 Civil servants	10,015	3.3	46,967	15.3	56,982	18.6	250,223	81.4	307,205	100.0	4.8
		7.7		6.5		6.7		15.2		12.4	
civil servants	7,992	3.6	36,088	16.2	44,080	19.8	179,033	80.2	223,113	100.0	
		6.2		5.0		5.2		10.9		9.0	
teachers	2,023	2.4	10,879	12.9	12,902	15.3	71,190	84.7	84,092	100.0	
		1.5		1.5		1.5		4.3		3.4	
5 Peasants	17,181	6.7	89,800	35.2	106,981	41.9	148,310	58.1	255,291	100.0	20.7
		13.2		12.5		12.6		9.0		10.2	
6 Others	4,381	5.5	26,998	33.7	31,379	39.2	48,765	60.8	80,144	100.0	
		3.4		3.7		3.7		3.0		3.2	6.2
II Persons not in employment											
7 Pensioners	2,453	6.5	11,684	30.7	14,137	37.2	23,736	62.8	37,873	100.0	
		1.9		1.6		1.7		1.4		1.5	
III Family dependents without a full-time job	5,959	6.1	38,084	38.8	44,043	44.9	54,090	55.1	98,113	100.0	
		4.6		5.3		5.2		3.3		4.0	
8 Housewives	4,706	7.3	29,304	45.3	34,010	52.6	30,617	47.4	64,627	100.0	
		3.6		4.1		4.0		1.9		2.6	
9 Students and schoolchildren	1,253	3.7	8,780	26.2	10,033	2.9	23,473	70.1	33,506	100.0	
		1.0		1.2		1.2		1.4		1.4	
Total	129,563	5.2	719,446	28.8	849,009	34.0	1,644,881	66.0	2,493,890	100.0	
		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	

Note: In the percentage columns, the upper of the two figures shows the percentage of party membership on 1 January 1935; the lower figure shows the percentage of party membership within the period of time covered by each pair of vertical columns.

now formed the government, together with the fuss about the Reichstag Fire, may well have proved decisive. Even so, in March 1933 religious confession was still the most important single factor in determining how people voted and, whereas 1 in 2 of non-Catholics voted Nazi, only 1 in 3 Catholic voters did so.

Gender, age and degree of urbanisation

What about gender as a factor in determining Nazi electoral support? According to Falter, in 1924–30 women were significantly less likely to vote Nazi than men. However, by July 1932, the gender balance was more or less equal, although in Protestant districts there appear to have been slightly more women than men voting Nazi, in Catholic districts fewer. In March 1933, however, significantly more women than men voted Nazi. These appear to have been drawn mainly from previous non-voters. Again, the fact that the Nazis were now the main government party appears to have been decisive in persuading more women to vote Nazi, i.e. they had now become respectable.

On the question of age, surprisingly, Falter found no significant correlation between age and voting Nazi; indeed, if anything, older voters appear to have been slightly more vulnerable. This is undoubtedly the most remarkable difference between Nazi voters and Nazi members who, as we have seen, tended to be significantly younger than average.

What about the degree of urbanisation as a factor? Falter discovered that until 1932 the Nazi Party had a remarkably balanced electorate as far as size of locality was concerned. It was only in the July 1932 election that the percentage of Nazi voters living in large cities (over 100,000) with 33% went significantly below the Reich average vote of 37%. In this election the highest percentage of the Nazi vote was in small towns of 2–5,000 inhabitants. But, overall, the party had the most balanced

electorate of any major party as far as the size of locality was concerned.

Class

Finally, there is the controversial question of class and occupation as a factor determining the Nazi electorate. Thomas Childers in his book *The Nazi Voter* (1983) makes the point that here too one must differentiate between different phases in the development of the party between 1924 and 1933. Thus, in the 1924 elections, in which the Nazi Party strictly speaking did not take part since it was banned, but in which ex-Nazis voted for the Völkisch-Social block in May and the German Racial Freedom Movement in December, he argues that the Nazi electorate was primarily made up of the so-called 'old middle class', that is to say self-employed businessmen, artisans and retailers and peasant farmers. This group, he maintains, formed the nucleus of the party's following and 'constituted the most stable and consistent components of the National Socialist constituency between 1924 and 1932'.

By contrast, the relationship between the Nazi Party and the 'new middle class', which was composed of civil servants and white collar workers was 'surprisingly tenuous'. This group only turned to the Nazis in the crisis period of 1930–33 and, of its two component groups, the civil servants were significantly more likely to vote Nazi than the white collar employees. Childers' thesis about the relatively low proportion of white collar workers among the Nazi electorate is confirmed by Falter. Childers also claims that widows and pensioners who, since they were on fixed incomes, had been badly hit by the inflation, also formed a significant element in the Nazi constituency. However, like the 'new middle class' their voting was crisis-related. Again, Falter confirms this point demonstrating that there is a slight positive correlation between a high Nazi vote and districts where there was a higher than average number of pensioners and vice versa. Thus, many pensioners were prepared to vote for the party, if not to become members of it.

In his book *Who Voted for Hitler?* (1982),

Richard Hamilton emphasised the extent of Nazi support among the upper and upper middle classes. Examining the electoral returns from the posher districts of a number of German cities, such as Blankenese in Hamburg, he found remarkably high votes for the Nazi Party, particularly in the July 1932 election and this picture was confirmed by high Nazi votes recorded on cruise liners whose passengers can be assumed to have come from the upper social classes. This provides a welcome corrective to the view of the Nazi Party as a largely lower middle-class phenomenon. However, in sheer numbers of course the lower middle-class voters outnumbered those of the upper middle class.

Lastly, there is the most contentious issue, namely the question of how far the working class voted Nazi. It is contentious partly because of its ideological implications and partly because of the problem of defining a 'worker'. There can be no question about the fact that the party made a sustained effort to win over workers throughout the period. According to Childers, the party succeeded in winning a significant amount of working-class support among blue collar workers engaged in handicrafts and small-scale manufacturing. Falter claims that agricultural workers were more likely to vote Nazi than average voters, whereas other workers were less likely to do so — but only slightly. And in March 1933, 33% of workers entitled to vote supported the Nazis compared with 39% of all voters entitled to vote. Moreover, although the socialist camp made up of SPD and KPD remained remarkably stable between 1928 and 1933, nevertheless he estimates that during that period the Nazi Party had won over 2 million SPD voters and 350,000 from the KPD. In the July 1932 election, 1 in 7 Nazi voters had been won from the SPD, i.e. although workers were slightly under-represented in the Nazi Party electorate, this under-representation was significantly less than has often been thought.

CONCLUSION

Table 2 Age of Nazi Party membership as of 1 January 1935, divided according to date of joining.

Date of birth	Age	Date of party membership										
		Before seizure of power				After seizure of power				% of total population		
		Before 14.9.30	From 14.9.30 to 30.1.33		Total	After 30.1.33	Total					
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%			
1914–16	18–20	468	0.5	14,972	17.0	15,440	17.5	72,648	82.5	88,088	100.0	5.8
			0.4		2.1		1.8		4.4		3.5	
1904–13	21–30	47,167	5.5	296,438	34.8	343,605	40.3	508,869	59.7	852,474	100.0	25.3
			36.4		41.3		40.4		31.0		34.1	
1894–1903	31–40	40,700	5.9	193,937	28.0	234,637	33.9	459,780	66.1	694,417	100.0	22.0
			31.4		26.9		27.8		27.9		27.9	
1884–93	41–50	22,835	4.7	122,884	25.2	145,719	29.9	342,338	70.1	488,057	100.0	14.5
			17.6		17.1		20.8		19.6		17.1	
1874–83	51–60	12,546	4.5	66,454	23.9	79,000	28.4	199,491	71.6	278,491	100.0	14.5
			9.7		9.2		9.3		12.1		11.2	
1873 and earlier	61 and over	5,847	6.3	24,761	26.8	30,608	33.1	61,755	66.9	92,363	100.0	15.3
			4.5		3.4		3.6		3.8		3.7	
Total		129,563	5.2	719,446	28.9	849,009	34.1	1,644,881	65.9	2,493,890	100.0	100.0
			100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	

Note: in the percentage columns, the upper of the two figures shows the percentage of party membership on 1 January 1935; the lower figure shows the percentage of party membership within the period of time covered by each pair of vertical columns.

Unlike the controversy over Nazi membership, there is now a consensus among scholars who have studied the Nazi electorate that the Nazi movement drew its support from a remarkably wide range of social groups, including a significant element from the working class. Indeed, it has been termed a *Volkspartei*, a people's or national party as opposed to a party representing a specific section of the population. The two leading authorities on the Nazi electorate have defined the party as follows: first, Thomas Childers in *The Nazi Voter*:

[By 1930] The NSDAP had become a unique phenomenon in German electoral politics, a catchall party of protest, whose constituents, *while drawn primarily from the middle-class electorate* [my italics], were united above all by a profound contempt for the existing political and economic system.

Secondly, Jürgen Falter in *Hitlers Wähler* called the NSDAP: 'a *Volkspartei* of protest with a *middle-class budge*' (*Bauch*) [literally stomach — my italics]. In the light of these definitions, one could say, therefore, that, despite the new emphasis on the heterogeneity of the Nazi electorate, the middle-class thesis still retains some validity, albeit in a significantly modified form. In my view the same is true of the party's membership.

Finally, it is important to emphasise once more how unstable support for the Nazi Party was. We have already seen that, as far as the membership was concerned, the party was like a revolving door with people joining and leaving all the time. The party's electorate was also highly volatile. Indeed, after the November 1932 election, in which the NSDAP lost support for the first time (4%), there were good grounds for thinking that it might disintegrate. In the regional and local elections in Thuringia and Saxony in December 1932 the NSDAP lost heavily; in its previous stronghold of Thuringia it was 40% down from its already substantially reduced vote of November. The Party's Reich Propaganda headquarters summed up the situation by stressing 'it must not come to another election. The results could not be imagined'. The modest success in the Lippe state election in January 1933 was only possible because of Lippe's tiny size and the amount of resources thrown in by the party. What would have happened if Hitler had continued to be denied office will remain one of the big ifs of history, but at the time the party's prospects appeared bleak.

FURTHER READING

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Donald C. Watt

PERSPECTIVES

OPPOSITION IN THE THIRD REICH

The Nazi regime successfully crushed political opposition and cowed opponents in the churches. However, although organised opposition disappeared, opposition and allegiance to pre-Nazi state forms remained, helping to explain the vigorous revival of democracy in postwar West Germany.

Let me just remind you very quickly of the steps by which Hitler's dictatorship was established, because the obvious thing about Hitler's dictatorship was that it happened after he came to power. To christen 30 January 1933, when he was appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg, as the day of the seizure of power is a nonsense. He was appointed Chancellor as one of only three Nazis, with the President over him and a Vice-Chancellor who was a Catholic. The idea was that he would re-establish a majority in the Reichstag, so that the President no longer had to go on using the emergency powers referred to him by the Weimar constitution to govern, as he had had to do since 1931, when the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Socialists in the Reichstag had broken up. He only had two other Nazis in the cabinet then, Goebbels as minister of propaganda, a newly-created post, and Goering, who doubled this with the position of President of the State of Prussia and who as a result got all the Prussian police under his control. The steps towards the dictatorship follow thereafter chronologically. The first of these was the use of the fire in the Reichstag, lit by a somewhat deranged leftist called Van der Lubbe. Hitler used this to bully the Reichstag into passing an enabling act which conferred the powers of state upon him as Chancellor. As a result of this he was able to declare the Socialist and Communist Parties illegal, to break up the trade unions and to pressure the other political parties, until by the summer of 1933 they had all been 'mashed together' underneath the Nazi Party and ceased their separate existence. In the summer of 1933 he also negotiated a concordat with the Catholic Church, part of the price of which was the disappearance of Catholicism as an organised political movement, and the retirement of the Catholic political leaders who took refuge in Italy in the Vatican. On 30 July 1934 he purged the Nazi Stormtroops, the SA. Shortly after that Hindenburg died and instead of there being a new presidential election, the presidency was abolished and all civil servants and all

soldiers swore their oath of loyalty to Germany in the person of Hitler himself.

In 1935 the Nuremberg laws were passed which enabled him to purge the civil service of those who were regarded as politically or racially unsuitable. 1936, the year of the re-occupation of the Rhineland, was also the year in which Hitler decided that he had to take the German economy to a further stage of preparation for war, and he organised the Four-Year Plan and put it under the control of Goering. There ensued a battle for the control of the German economy between Schacht, an economic expert who had restored German internal economic activity in 1933 by virtually cutting Germany off from the outside world of finance and loans, and Goering, which Schacht was to lose. He was forced out of the position of minister of economics in the autumn of 1937 and sacked from the Reichsbank in February 1939. Shortly afterwards his deputy had a nervous breakdown because of the way in which the German economy was being handled.

In February 1938 Hitler succeeded both in bringing the Foreign Ministry under his control and in breaking the power of the German military machine, by abolishing the Ministry of Defence, getting rid of Blomberg and Fritsch, setting up the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, the High Command of the armed forces under his own control and forcing Beck, his principal opponent, into resignation. The crushing of the army was to continue between then and December 1941.

CRUSHING POLITICAL OPPONENTS

By then it had become clear that organised opposition to Hitler on a large scale was impossible. The socialists, whose leadership took refuge in exile, firstly in Prague, then in Paris and then in London, found that you could bring together members of the old parties, but there was a critical mass beyond which something would be betrayed, somebody would be indiscreet in public, somebody would be denounced, and the Gestapo was set upon them. There are four separate move-

The Reichstag Fire, 1933.

ments between 1933 and 1939 on which one can see this process taking place. Similarly with the trade unions. It is after all, if you have a police that has turned to political matters in a society that had hitherto been open, not a matter of great difficulty to identify the people with whom you are going to have trouble if you want to set up a single party state. First of all you can identify them by their positions. Then you have them on record because they make speeches and get reported in the newspapers. If you have a good press-cutting service and a good system of enquiry as to who occupies positions of authority and places where people will listen to them, drawing up an automatic arrest list, putting them all behind bars and beating up the recalcitrant ones regularly, killing the odd one as an example to anybody else, this is a perfectly simple thing to do. One of the reasons why it is clear that the Reichstag fire was not fired by the Nazis as a perfect excuse is that the German police were not ready. The list on which they acted against the socialist and communist leadership was a year out-of-date. Some of the people had died, some of them had moved, and quite a good number got away because they were not where they were supposed to be anyway. If it had been properly planned they should have taken a much larger proportion of those available. As it was, of course, they made a clean sweep of anybody who fell into their hands and those who went into concentration camps and died resisting arrest, who were shot while trying to escape and all the rest of this well-known set of excuses was very large.

The press was broken and the control of radio and film passed under the control of Goebbels. To pass leaflets, to listen to foreign broadcasts and anything like that was made illegal and special radio sets were manufactured, the so-called people's receivers, which could not pick up anything but weak signals so that they could not listen to anything from abroad. One of the sneakiest things British Intelligence did was to buy into Radio Luxembourg's news service in 1937. Radio Luxembourg was the most powerful commercial station in all of Europe. It enabled them to broadcast Chamberlain's speeches during 1938 to give the lie to any attempt to make him out as a warmonger, to the fury of Goebbels and his ilk who managed by protesting eventually to get the Luxembourg government to shut down any political or news broadcasts from Luxembourg radio sometime in 1939.

Resistance is a difficult word too, because in the rest of Europe it means military or quasi-military or para-military organisation of sabotage. We think of the resistance in Yugoslavia, think of Tito or Mihailovich, the Cetniks or the Partisans. If we think of it in France we think of the Maquisards. In Germany, even in Austria, there was no resistance of that sort until the last days. You do not after all take up arms against your own people. That is not resistance, that is civil war. One has to remind oneself that between 1918 and 1924 the Germans had had a great deal of civil war and between 1931 and 1933 they had a lot more with continuous fighting, including

shooting, in the streets between communists and Nazis.

OPPOSITION IN THE CHURCHES

Resistance in Germany had better be described as opposition and it takes two parts. The only organisations which had any access to publicity were the churches, the Catholic Church and parts of the Protestant Churches. The Catholic Church, by the concordat, accepted the destruction of political Catholicism in order to preserve those parts of the aims of political Catholicism which were important to them, that is non-interference by the state in Catholic education and in the Catholic financial agencies.

On 30 July 1934 a lot of scores were settled other than those which involved the SA. For example, Von Schleicher, the last Weimar Chancellor, was shot, and the leader of Catholic Action, Dr Clausener, also fell victim to SS murderers. On that occasion the Catholic Church decided not to go public. And it was to emerge that the Catholic leadership was very divided on what you did about Nazism. On the one hand there was the man who was to be the next Pope, Pacelli, his replacement as the papal nuncio in Berlin, Orseaigo, and Cardinal Bertram, the leading German cardinal, and several bishops, who took the view that to go public was to go far too far and that you should protest in private. They were to have a problem with the then Pope, Pius XI, who was as virulently anti-Nazi as he was anti-Communist. In 1937 he issued an encyclical *With burning anxiety*, (*Mit brennender Sorge* are the opening German words) commenting on the attacks on the Catholic Church, condemning the racial doctrines of Nazism. There was for a

brief period a head-on collision between the Catholic Church and the Nazis. It ended in what one may loosely describe as a Mexican stand-off. The Nazis stopped attacking monasteries and nunneries and arresting priests, and the moderate non-oppositional section of the Catholic Church withdrew its public opposition to Nazism.

But there was to come a new crisis in 1941. This arose over the implementation of Nazi mass murder of the mentally ill in German asylums. Once again there was a division between Cardinal Bertram and a smaller group of the most prominent bishops. Bishop Gehlen of Munster, Bishop Preising of Berlin and two others being the most notorious, the method that they chose for making their opposition public was the reading from the pulpits of Bishop's Letters. A Bishop's Letter had to be read from every Catholic pulpit in the diocese. It was the one access to public opinion that the Gestapo and Goebbels could not control. Once again, the final outcome of it was that the Nazis abandoned, at any rate overtly, the policy of eliminating the mentally ill.

Where the Protestant Churches were concerned, they were more open to Nazi attack and were divided. There were Nazi churchmen in the Protestant Church and there were German state-appointed Lutheran bishops. The result was that the German Lutheran Churches, where the heads were elected by electoral colleges within each presbytery, organisations which were much more vulnerable than the hierarchy to pressure from the police, divided. Only three of the bishops retained their resistance to Hitler and broke away, setting up the so-called Confessional Church. The Confessional Church itself was to break between the so-called moderates and the radicals. The independent Confessional Church

way of life. You liked folk singing, you were a member of a socialist folk singing group. You liked collecting stamps, you were a member of the Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands Briefmarks Sammlung or whatever it was called. And the personal relationships that those created could continue, even though the party itself was dissolved.

The communists were more open to penetration by the Gestapo. Indeed the Communist Party was very largely destroyed in Germany, partly by the action on the part of the German police after the Reichstag fire in 1933, partly because it was another year or so before they abandoned the doctrine that the socialists were worse enemies of Communism and the working class than the Nazis were, and partly because they were on the whole an organisation which was very well known to their neighbours. And there were not wanting plenty of people to denounce them — there was a neighbour who wanted part of a person's house, so if you knew he was a communist you denounced him to the Gestapo because that would get rid of him, and his wife would be thrown out on the street and then you could take it over. All the nastier side of ordinary public life.

The only protection against this was that within the individual areas into which Germany was divided, the *Gaue* as they were called, some of the Gauleiters would not have the Gestapo operating in the area for love nor money because it would have challenged their own authority. My favourite is Hans Frank, who quite rightly was hung by the Poles after the war, but who would not have Himmler classifying the Poles in the part of Poland and Germany that was his Gau as non-Germans and therefore subject to rules. As he said publicly 'If I looked like Himmler I would not talk about Aryanism'. I mention this to show that one of the great oddities about Germany which one has to understand is that in a nation of 80 million and in a country the size it was, there were all kinds of exceptions. There was a very brave woman who has just retired as political editor of the liberal weekly *Die Zeit* in Hamburg. She and her friend belonged to the Prussian nobility and never sent their children to a German school under the Nazis. They kept ahead of the school inspectors by moving from one part of their massive estate to another. One of the areas which was totally unpenetrated by the Gestapo until very close to the end was the German aristocracy. One of them, Goerdeler, the former Bürgermeister of Leipzig, was in touch with the British from 1937 onwards. The Gestapo never got at him because nobody who he knew would have dreamed of talking to the Gestapo about this. This was one of the areas where social solidarity was a countervailing force against the penetration of the political police and the informant system.

INTERNAL EMIGRATION

On the other hand of course in the big cities, particularly in the big blocks of flats in which so many Germans lived, all the Gestapo needed was to enlist the caretaker in the block. So the system of social control worked both

ways. There were parts of Germany that it did not touch, and there was a whole internal migration of people who simply kept their heads down, who were to emerge in 1945–46. One of my favourite characters was the minister of education from Bavaria, a formidable woman who had been a Social Democrat and had been beaten up by the Nazis in 1933 and had simply, as they said, behaved like a submarine, gone into internal emigration, and emerged after the war. And she particularly made herself felt because she resisted the educational philosophy of the American occupying authorities, which was heavily influenced by the philosophy of peer guidance, peer relationships, that did not believe in pushing children, that did not believe in teaching them ancient languages and so on, whereas the average Bavarian parent wanted to return to the system of education that they had known before the Nazis. She, with the solid support of the Bavarian electorate, told the American education authority where to get off. And the American education authority were in the appalling position that they could only defend their version of democracy by behaving in a totally undemocratic manner and the man concerned, who was a minor school inspector from Iowa, had a very severe nervous breakdown and had to be taken off home. His successors decided that they better leave well alone because it would not look good if it got into the press.

These are the phenomena which one can use to explain the survival of political institutions in Germany. The other thing, which of course is less a part of the British tradition of law and very much a part of the German and for that matter European ones, is the limitation of executive power by law. The slogan of the German opposition of all sorts was a return to a state based on law, *Recht*, rather than on power, *Macht*. Out of this you can see the development of the very open, and in some ways remarkably democratic system in Germany that has existed since the mid-1950s. It is a logical development, but to appreciate it you have to look at German history in this century as something through which a lot of people lived. But their lives were not broken into little chunks simply because it happens to be convenient for historical periodisation to talk about Germany as Weimar Germany, Nazi Germany, post-Nazi Germany, and think of them as three periods that were totally separate from one another. It is through that period that institutions and feelings and organisations and most of all the personal relationships and alliances that were based on them survived. They survived in the Catholic parties, they survived in part of the Lutheran parties, and they survived between the socialists. And these were to be the two strongest parties which emerged in 1946: the alliance between the Evangelical Lutheran and political religious organisations and the Catholics, which was to produce the present German Christian Democrat Party, and the emergence, eventually abandoning its Marxism, of the German Social Democrat Party under Willy Brandt which was to hold power for so long in the 1970s.

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included some of the best-known members of the resistance, including the theologian Dohnanyi and others. There were Catholic members of the resistance, particularly the group at Kreisgau around the family home of Helmut von Moltke, who played a part in trying to elaborate the ideas as to what a post-Hitler government should do. But the churches as a whole took as their motto the rule 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, unto God the things that are God's', something that allows for a division, and only attacked when they felt that their sphere was being particularly invaded. To their eternal shame of course it must be said, as it was said of the Pope during the Second World War, they never protested publicly against the measures of the Final Solution. Individuals did, the Vatican passed on to Western governments all the information that came its way, which was considerable, about the Final Solution, but paralysed by the fear of another deportation to Avignon, the Vatican remained officially silent. Not that its senior members had anything to say for Nazism at all, but Pius XII felt that to take overt political opposition to Hitler would expose Catholics throughout Europe to persecution, would not produce a positive gain and might lead to the imposition upon the Catholic Church of a Nazi Pope, or even of a position where there were two Popes at the same time, as there had been during the worst periods of the Middle Ages.

TO DENOUNCE OR PROTEST?

For the Socialist Party, what one has to remember about the German socialists is that being a socialist in Germany was not a matter of voting for a political party, it was more a