

FESTIVALS AND THE THIRD REICH

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By

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ABSTRACT

Existing studies of festivity in the Third Reich have focused on its role as an effective instrument of social integration and control; that is, festivals are interpreted either as a form of propaganda or as an outward manifestation of a secular religion. Such approaches, while advancing our understanding of public celebration in Nazi Germany, fail to take into account the festival experience as a form of popular culture that mediated between the complex forces binding state, economy, and society. Fundamental to this process was the role played by modern technology. In its efforts to involve all Germans in the public celebration of the 'national community', the NSDAP exploited the technical resources of the highly industrialized German state to such an extent that the modern world of technology came to redefine the context of popular festivity in the Third Reich. As an expression of forward-looking nationalist aspirations, however, the Nazi version of the modern festival experience ultimately clashed with the diverse festival cultures already embedded in German society.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the formalization of festivity as a dynamic expression of a forward-oriented ethnically and culturally pure society organized according to the nationalist military ethos of Nazism. Drawing on various public opinion reports gathered by Nazi and state agencies as well as the underground network of the exiled SPD, Chapters 2 and 5 reconstruct the

popular response to Nazi attempts to extend organizational control into all areas of public celebration. Ranging from widespread enthusiasm to open dissent, the diversity of popular attitudes vis-à-vis Nazi festivity conforms to the image of a modern, pluralistic society, within whose public arena Germans selected or rejected aspects of festivity according to their individual political, social, economic and cultural needs.

Traditional folk festivals as a form of consumer-oriented popular culture, and Nazi attempts to transform this cultural sphere, is the focus of chapter 3. Chapter 4 examines the functional appeal of the festival industry to a Nazi state determined to alleviate Depression conditions and thereby reinforce its legitimacy.

The final chapter, extending many of these themes into the war period, argues that only in the context of a deteriorating war situation did the Nazi state attempt to institutionalize its 'totalitarian' form of social control with respect to the festival and ceremonial. At the same time, however, it suggests that the ultimate failure of an increasingly isolated Nazi administration to recast the culture of celebration and ceremony owed as much to the monumental success of the Nazi festival style before 1939 as it did to the severe restrictions on material and human resources and the declining public morale that accompanied the war.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Aschaffenburg
Abt	Abteilung (Department)
AO	Anordnung (order, directive)
BA	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
BayHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich
BDK	Bund Deutscher Karneval (German Carnival Association)
BDM	Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls)
BPP	Bayerische Politische Polizei (Bavarian Political Police)
BVP	Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party)
CEH	<i>Central European History</i>
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labour Front)
DBS	Klaus Behnken, ed., <i>Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade) 1934-1940</i>, 7 vols., Salzhausen and Frankfurt am Main, 1980. (Germany Reports of the Social Democratic Party of Germany 1934-1940)
DNB	<i>Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro</i> (German News Bureau)
FA	Filmarchiv
FuF	Reichsleitung der NSDAP. Hauptamt für Erzieher. <i>Fest- und Freizeitgestaltung im NSLB. Amtliche Mitteilungsblätter der Hauptstelle Schulung im Hauptamt für Erzieher der NSDAP</i>, hrsg. von der Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher. Hrsg. und Hauptschriftleiter Carl Wolf, (1936ff)
GAKFIDR	Gesamtfachausschuss für die Karneval- und Festartikel-industrie im Deutschen Reich (United Trade Commission for the Carnival and Festival Wares Industry in the German Reich)
GuG	<i>Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
GL	Gauleiter (head[s] of NS regional administration)

GPL	Gaupropagandaleiter (regional NS propaganda leader)
GSR	<i>German Studies Review</i>
H	Hannover
HKA	Hauptkulturamt (Central Office of Culture)
HJ	Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HStAD	Nordrhein Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Düsseldorf
HStAS	Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart
IfZ, AdP-K (mf)	Helmut Heiber, ed., <i>Akten der Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP</i> , Veröffentlichung des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Teil I, II and microfiche (Munich, 1983)
JCH	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
KdSP	Kommando der Schutzpolizei
KdF	Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy)
KL	Kreisleiter (NS district leader)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party)
KPL	Kreispropagandaleiter (district NS propaganda leader)
LB	Lagebericht (situation report)
MadR	<i>Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938-1945</i> , 17 vols., ed. Heinz Boberach (Herrsching, 1984)
MB	Monatsbericht (monthly situation report)
MF	Mittelfranken (Central Franconia)
MNN	<i>Münchener Neueste Nachrichten</i>
N	Neuburg
NB	Niederbayern (Lower Bavaria)

NSDAP/HA	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei/ Hauptarchiv
NSF	Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft (National Socialist Womanhood)
NSFK	Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSKK	Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrerkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSKOV	Nationalsozialistische Kriegsoferversorgung (National Socialist War Victims Organization)
NSLB	Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund (Nazi Teachers' Association)
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist Public Welfare Organization)
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
OB	Oberbayern (Upper Bavaria)
Obm	Oberbürgermeister (chief burgomaster)
OF	Oberfranken (Upper Franconia)
OGL	Ortsgruppenleiter (NSDAP local group leader)
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
Okt	Oktoberfest
OP	Oberpfalz (Upper Palatinate)
P	Pfalz (Palatinate)
PD	Polizeidirektion (City Police Administration)
Pg	Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
P-K	Partei-Kanzlei (NSDAP Chancellery)
PL	Politischer Leiter (NSDAP political leader)
PO	Politische Organisation (Political Organization)

PP	Polizeipräsidium
RAD	Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labour Service)
RAM	Reichsarbeitsministerium (Reich Labour Ministry)
RFSSuCdDP	Reichsführer-SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei (Reich Leader of the SS and Chief of the German Police)
RGBI	Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RK	<i>Nationalsozialistische Rundfunk-Korrespondenz</i>
RM	Reichsmark
RMdI	Reichsministerium des Innern (Reichs Ministry of the Interior)
RMfVP	Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda)
RNS	Reichsnährstand (Reich Food Estate)
ROL	Reichsorganisationsleiter (Reich Organization Leader)
RP	Regierungspräsident (Government president of state regional administration)
RPL	Reichspropagandaleitung (Reich Propaganda Leadership)
RS	Rundschreiben (circular)
RVBI	Reichsverfügungsblatt (Reich Decree Gazette)
RWM	Reichswirtschaftsministerium (Reich Economics Ministry)
S	Schwaben (Swabia)
SA	Sturmabteilung (Storm Troops; brownshirts)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service; SS Intelligence Agency)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Nazi Elite Guard; blackshirts)
StadtAM	Stadtarchiv München
Stadt	Staatsarchiv Detmold

StAM	Staatsarchiv München
Stapo	Staatspolizei (state police)
StASig	Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen
StMdI	Staatsministerium des Innern (State Ministry of the Interior)
STPL	Stützpunktleitung (NS leadership of local base)
TB	Tagesbericht (daily report)
UF	Unterfranken (Lower Franconia)
VB	<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i>
VfZ	<i>Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte</i>
VDKuF	Verband Deutscher Karneval- und Festartikelfabrikanten (Association of German Carnival and Festival Wares Manufacturers)
WAG	Wirtschaftsgruppe Ambulantes Gewerbe (Economic Group-Itinerant Branch)
WHW	Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organization)

INTRODUCTION

Late on the morning of 30 January 1933, Paul von Hindenburg, the aged President of the crisis-ridden Weimar Republic, invited Adolf Hitler, leader of the NSDAP, the largest single party in the Reichstag, to head the next government as the new Chancellor of Germany. The news spread like wildfire across Berlin as Nazis, receiving their direction from Joseph Goebbels, poured into the streets and crowded public squares in the first flush of victory. The festive mood enveloping the capital city that evening moved Harry Kessler to liken the clamour of events to a "real carnival".¹ Also observing the course of events that evening was the respected German Jewish journalist, Bella Fromm. To her it was "an ominous night" full of "deadly menace, a nightmare in the living reality of 20,000 blazing torches."² For Goebbels, Gauleiter of Berlin and head of the Party's propaganda section, meanwhile, the night seemed "almost like a dream." From an upper window in the Chancellery, he watched as a seemingly endless torchlight procession marched past the

¹Harry Kessler, *Tagebücher, 1918-1937* (Frankfurt am Main, 1961), 704. It was no coincidence that Kessler used the analogy of a "carnival mood" to describe the events of 30 January in Berlin since in many parts of Germany the traditional carnival season was in full swing. In Munich for example, the city's social luminaries, including many from the diplomatic corps attended the 'Hungarian Ball', the gala event of the season, held in the hotel Vier Jahreszeiten on 27 January. See *Völkischer Beobachter*, 31 Jan. 1933, henceforth VB.

²Bella Fromm, *Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary* (New York, 1942), 74.

Reich President and the new Chancellor shouting their cheers of "gratitude and joy" in an "ecstasy of enthusiasm". The numinous celebration compelled the future Propaganda Minister to proclaim the start of the "German Revolution".³

Reports of Hitler's appointment quickly travelled over the air-waves to the most remote corners of the country and beyond, prompting similar eruptions of jubilation elsewhere in Germany as local Nazis and sympathizers joined in the spontaneous victory celebration.⁴ In some centres, such as Northeim, however, news of the momentous occasion overwhelmed local Nazis who managed to organize victory parades and entertainment events only on the following weekend (4-5 February).⁵ Nevertheless, apart from the big cities and larger towns the impact of the announcement was marginal, as a mood of pessimism prevailed among a skeptical populace whose substandard living conditions had changed little despite the palliative measures promised by all political parties during the almost uninterrupted series of elections after 1930.⁶

Injecting a note of pathos into the otherwise joyous celebration was the news of the deaths of SA *Sturmführer* Hanne Maikowski and senior police officer Josef Zauritz, both fatally wounded by communist gunfire during a street brawl. For Goebbels the murders signified the

³Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Sämtliche Fragmente*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (Munich, 1987), 2: 357-61.

⁴BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 3 Feb. 1933.

⁵William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1922-1945*, revised ed. (New York, 1984), 153-54.

⁶Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1987; reprint, Oxford, 1989), 48-49.

"consecration in blood" of the Nazi revolution.⁷ Ever the opportunist, Goebbels prepared an elaborate state commemoration for the two victims on 5 February in the Berlin Cathedral, where German monarchs had traditionally lain-in-state. In the interim the Nazis pressured police officials to prohibit leftist public demonstrations, including a SPD event scheduled for 3 February in the Berlin Lustgarten and a KPD one slated for two days later.⁸ As Hitler finished his first week in office, meanwhile, young carnival revellers in Munich crowded the hotel Bayerischer Hof for the increasingly popular "Festival of the Circus People", the highlight of which was the performance of "Wagner fights Goethe", a grotesque parody of the alleged exploitation of the German cultural giants by Jewish profiteers.⁹

The attendance of Hitler and Crown Prince William reinforced the symbolism of the commemorative ceremony held for Maikowski and Zauritz. According to Goebbels's own doubtlessly exaggerated estimation, six hundred thousand Berliners lined the streets under a rainy grey sky to

⁷Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 2: 361.

⁸Despite their zealous promotion, planned marches of the KPD regularly fell through as a result of the official ban on such activity. In Swabia and elsewhere Nazis regularly assisted police authorities in breaking up KPD marches and demonstrations. Nazis in the Palatinate region also provoked street violence by deliberately marching into SPD or KPD strongholds. See BayHStA, MA 106675, MbPDvP, 3 Feb. 1933; MA 106672, MbrPvNB/OP, 5 Mar. 1933; MA 106682, LbRPvS, 4 Mar. 1933.

⁹VB, 31 Jan. 1933, 6 Feb. 1933. The event was repeated a few evenings later. Preoccupied with the election campaign, the Nazis paid little formal attention to the carnival season which began on Epiphany (6 January) and ended on Ash Wednesday (1 March). As a service to its readers, the Munich edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi Party newspaper, carried a daily feature "Right Across Fasching" which combined reports of carnival events as well as announcements on upcoming ones, many of them held in the large beer halls frequented by the Nazis.

pay their last respects to the fallen comrades as the almost fifty-thousand strong procession made its way to the Invalidenfriedhof. At the cemetery, before a huge crowd, Goebbels and Göring spoke of the dauntless sacrifices of the two latest additions to the Nazi pantheon of heroes. Grippled by the symbolic significance of the event, Goebbels observed that for the first time SA and police officials stood together on the same front.¹⁰ His enthusiasm was not shared by all Germans. In Kessler's view, the "grotesque ceremony" represented a vulgar display of "corpse propaganda".¹¹ Nonetheless, in the same diary entry in which he recorded his solemn impressions of the state burial, Goebbels noted with obvious delight that a new Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda would be established immediately following the Reichstag election. Modelled on the NSDAP propaganda section, it represented "something entirely modern and new" and would give Nazi Germany an advantage over all other opposing nations in its efforts to regain international standing.¹²

For the next month, public halls, streets and squares across Germany reverberated to the heavy martial drumbeat of the Nazi election campaign, theatrically dubbed, "The Day of the Awakening Nation". More determined than ever to gain an absolute majority in the Reichstag, and thus end the political impasse that had forced on Hindenburg the

¹⁰Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 2: 361, 366-68. See also the report in VB, 6 Feb. 1933. For a detailed description of this case, including the trial for the alleged murderers, see Jay W. Baird, *To Die For Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990), 92-100, 106-7.

¹¹Kessler, *Tagebücher*, 705.

¹²Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 2: 368.

responsibility of governing by Presidential emergency powers, on the day following his appointment Hitler convinced the President to dissolve the Reichstag and fix the date for the national election for 5 March. On the eve of the election, as the carnival season reached its climax, the Reichstag building went up in flames.¹³ Again the Nazis seized the opportunity, with Göring issuing orders for widespread arrests and detention of KPD leaders, much to the satisfaction of middle-class and rural Germans who expressed their approval at the polls. Though short of an absolute majority, the electoral success of the NSDAP, and particularly of its charismatic leader, unleashed another storm of frenetic celebration.¹⁴ A week later, on Memorial Day, amidst a dizzying series of local electoral triumphs in Baden, Bavaria and elsewhere, Hindenburg, Hitler and Goebbels attended the ceremony in the Opera to commemorate the nation's war dead, after which the Reich President reviewed a parade of German Army, SA and Stahlhelm soldiers.¹⁵

In the days that followed Goebbels worked out the particulars for the upcoming ceremonial opening of the new Reichstag in Potsdam on 21 March, a celebration whose form, according to the newly appointed Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, would for the first time present the Nazi festival style to the nation and the world. Conscious of the urgent need to establish political legitimacy in a contracted period of revolutionary upheaval, Goebbels staged a masterful

¹³The date of the fire, the evening of 27 February, was the Monday before Lent, the traditional day for carnival parades in Germany.

¹⁴Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 53-56.

¹⁵Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 2: 387, 391.

expression of 'national reawakening', the culmination of the electoral campaign.¹⁶ With public spaces and private homes profusely decorated in greenery, bunting, banners and flags--both the imperial black-red-white and the swastika--Potsdam itself became a festive backdrop for the celebration. The historic day began with religious ceremonies in the local Lutheran and Catholic churches. As a symbolic rebuff Hitler spurned the invitation to attend the Catholic ceremony, visiting instead with Goebbels the graves of several SA men in the Luisenstadt cemetery in Berlin.¹⁷ Containing in its crypt the sarcophagi of the Prussian monarchs Frederick William I and Frederick the Great, the site of the inaugural ceremony, the Garrison Church, established a sense of continuity with the national heroic tradition. The date of the ceremony, 21 March, moreover, marked not only the first day of spring, symbolic of natural renewal in the seasonal cycle, but also the anniversary of the opening of the first Reichstag of the Second German Empire in 1871 by Bismarck, thus reinforcing the historical link with the national past.

In opening the official ceremony Hindenburg invoked the spirit of Prussianism symbolized by the "celebrated shrine" of the Garrison Church and its entombed monarchs. He closed his brief address with a call for the renewal of an integral "national self-consciousness" and an

¹⁶Ibid., 393-95. On the program of events and symbolic importance of the 'Day of Potsdam', see Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, revised ed. (Harmondsworth, 1962), 267-68.

¹⁷Max Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1945*, trans. Mary Fran Gilbert (London, 1990), 1: 270. Also see Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-1944*, with an introductory essay on "The Mind of Adolf Hitler" by H.R. Trevor-Roper (New York, 1953), 160.

end to party-political squabbling.¹⁸ Hitler then ascended the rostrum. Addressing an audience comprised of Reichstag members from the right-wing parties, the Reich President and other prominent public figures drawn from the traditional elites--Crown Prince William, Field Marshall von Mackensen and Colonel General von Seeckt--Hitler made sure that the symbolic meaning of the ceremony was not lost on the German people. The 'national uprising', he declared "consummated the marriage between the symbols of old glory and young strength."¹⁹ Emphasizing historical continuity, he added that the election had signalled the "will of the nation" to renew the "two thousand year struggle of the German Volk," for national "freedom", last taken up by Bismarck and carried on by the Second Empire up to November 1918. In giving its consent to the "new order of German life" on 5 March, Hitler stressed, the German people had wiped away the painful memory of "the crises without end" that had shattered the national will during the Weimar era. It had been left to the Nazis to restore the "basic principles of a firm trust" between the German Volk and the state. "We want to take into consideration all the experiences--in both individual and community life as well as in our economy--which have proven useful to the welfare of the people",

¹⁸As Hitler mentioned in his address, adding to the sense of continuity was the fact that Hindenburg had entered the Garrison Church for the first time as a young lieutenant in the Royal Army fresh from the military triumph of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. See Bullock, *Hitler*, 268. Shortly before the commencement of the Reichstag ceremony, Hitler and Hindenburg shook hands on the steps of the Garrison Church. A photo of the symbolic gesture was subsequently reproduced and distributed in the form of millions of postcards and placards. See Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York, 1974), 420.

¹⁹For this and the following quotations see the text of Hitler's 'Potsdam Day' speech in Domarus, *Speeches*, 1: 271-74.

declared the new 'People's Chancellor'.

Yet it was to the future and the "nation's struggle for existence" that Hitler steered his audience. The state would draw on the "living powers of the Volk as the supporting elements of the German future"; it would at the same time--he added in a restrained manner that muted the essentially Manichean perspective informing Nazism--"make a sincere effort to unite those with good intentions and ensure that those who attempt to damage the German Volk receive their due." Hitler also assigned to the new Nazi state its modern role as broker among competing political, social and economic interests. At the same time, by claiming that it was "acting in accordance with the will of the nation", he recast the new government of the 'National Uprising' as a supra-political entity above self-serving party interests, a government whose forward-oriented mandate was "to bring about the just balance of vital interests demanded by the future of the entire Volk." In a fitting conclusion Hitler again invoked the "everlasting" national values of courage and persistence personified by the 'first servant of the state', Frederick the Great, in his struggle for national "freedom and glory", a mantle that he himself would assume in the coming years.

The celebration continued outside the church as a parade of soldiers from the German army, SA and *Stahlhelm* marched past the Reich President, the Chancellor and the Crown Prince. Later that evening a massive torchlight procession of SS units marched through the Brandenburg Gate. On their way to a performance of Wagner's "Die Meistersinger" in the Kroll Opera, Hitler, Goebbels and other leading Nazis, meanwhile, passed triumphantly through a throng of well-wishers,

men, women and children, who crowded the streets, buses and streetcars singing and cheering.²⁰ Reports from southern Germany recorded that the festivities attending the opening of the Reichstag attracted participants from all segments of the population, with flags hung in profusion and torchlight marches held in the larger centres.²¹

For those wishing to join in the Potsdam celebration from a distance portions of the event were carried on the radio. The enormous impact on the popular imagination of the combined elements of technology and festivity was expressed by Martin Koller, who recalled the momentous occasion when his father brought a radio into the family home:

I remember my father bringing home a box one day.... He turned some knobs and it began to sputter and crack. All at once the world barged into our living room. From there I followed the events of the Day of Potsdam, as it was called in 1933. You could hear the bells ringing, the marching music playing, and then "the Führer, the Führer." These were our first impressions of a new world technology that let us take part in what was happening in the world."²²

The intrusion of the radio into the family home transformed private time and space. It delocalized individual experience, allowing all Germans to participate simultaneously in nationally shared festive events. In the public realm, at the same time, cinema audiences had the opportunity to view highlights of the ceremony as part of the weekly newsreels shown

²⁰Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 2: 396.

²¹BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 5 Apr. 1933; MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 6 Apr. 1933.

²²Quoted in Johannes Steinhoff, Peter Pechel, and Dennis Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich: An Oral History* (Washington, DC, 1989), xxxvii.

prior to the feature film.²³ Film allowed the Nazis to record the optical and acoustical dimensions of the Potsdam celebration and through repeated presentation permit its (re)experiencing by a mass audience. Given the national attention focused on the ceremony, largely facilitated through the modern media, there is no reason to doubt reports suggesting that it contributed to winning widespread confidence in the new government.²⁴

The images evoked at the Potsdam Day ceremony--in the persons of Hitler and Hindenburg, as well as the time and place--reflected a potent brew of charismatic leadership, the Prussian spirit of militarism, natural rebirth and a combined historical and mythical discourse with the national past and future, as newspapers were quick to publicize and historians have duly recorded. Two days later, the entire Reichstag delegation, with the exception of the SPD, passed Hitler's Enabling Act, which provided legal sanction for the series of measures designed to reorganize the political culture in accordance with National Socialist objectives, a process in which many Germans, including wayward Nazis, would soon "receive their due."

* * *

²³A special edition of the Ufa weekly newsreel allowed cinema audiences to view scenes from the Day of Potsdam ceremony the following day. See BA-FA, UTW 133/1933, Eildienst Ufa-Tonwoche no. 133, 1933. The event also received coverage as part of the regular newsreels. See *ibid.*, 288, Ufa-Wochenschau no. 13, 1933; *ibid.*, 512, Emelka-Tonwoche no. 14, 1933. Scenes were also included in an hour-long feature documentary chronicling the first seven weeks of the 'German revolution' leading up to the Enabling Act. *Ibid.*, 9, "Deutschland erwacht", 1933.

²⁴BayHStA, MA 106675, MhPDvP, 5 Apr. 1933; MA 106680, MhRPvUF, 6 Apr. 1933; MA 106682, LhRPvS, 6 Apr. 1933.

In the heady 'revolutionary' atmosphere permeating the seven weeks between Hitler's appointment and the 'Day of Potsdam', the NSDAP not only gained political control of the country but also provided the entire German population with a powerful and dynamic demonstration of the Nazi festival style. Indeed, as a defining feature of the Nazi experience, the virtually uninterrupted surfeit of festivalia in this initial phase of the 'Nazi revolution' established the general context of public celebration that would prevail throughout the Third Reich. Ranging from the mass spectacles in Nuremberg and atop the Bückeberg to the intimacy of birthday celebrations in the family home, under National Socialism festivity combined a variety of elements, both derivative and novel, in a singular expression of the Nazi cultural ethos.

At the centre of the Nazi festival experience stood the carefully constructed persona of the Führer. Embellishing this almost cabalistic aura surrounding the mythical image of the Nazi leader were the ritualistic elements of torchlight processions, the ubiquitous music of Wagner, the ceremonial martyrdom of Nazi 'heroes' (of which Malkowski was neither the first nor the last), the repeated appeals to quasi-mystical slogans and concepts like 'blood and soil' and 'national community', and the revaluation of festive space and time. Additionally, the serried ranks of uniformed marchers drawn from the Party's ancillary organizations, the SA, SS and HJ, as well as from veteran Front soldier associations like the *Stahlhelm*, provided Nazi festivity with its martial form and spirit and contributed to the sense of purpose, dynamism and vitality animating the 'Nazi movement'. Equally important was the mix of official affairs of state as evinced in the

speeches of Hitler and other prominent Nazis with the more convivial forms of entertainment organized locally to celebrate the 'new order'.

These formal aspects of Nazi festivity were in turn enhanced through the extensive use of modern technology, which not only made possible the mass representation at the festival site itself, but through the reproductive capabilities of print, radio and film permitted it to reach a much broader audience. In a different vein, significant Nazi support for carnival celebration, a popular convivial tradition that had met with widespread public disapprobation in the aftermath of the war and again with the onset of the Depression, signalled a return to normality and presumably did much to disarm potential criticism (not least among members of the festival industry) during this initial, pivotal phase of the Nazi seizure of power. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the violent repression of leftist demonstrations and marches, as well as Hitler's snub to the Catholic church, illustrates the tenacity with which the Nazis sought to impose their unchallengeable authority in all areas of public life. Finally, clearly discernible in these early weeks of the Nazi regime was the process by which festivity forfeited a great deal of its genuine conviviality and spontaneity and acquired its more contrived and orchestrated form of self-representation for mass consumption. This process would become more apparent in the years to come as the Nazi state gradually extended its organizational apparatus into all areas of public and private celebration, an intrusion enthusiastically welcomed by many, accepted passively by some, quietly resented by others and openly opposed by fewer still.

Festivity has appeared as such a straightforward feature of the cultural landscape of the Third Reich that it has received comparatively little detailed attention, especially among social and cultural historians.²⁵ Beginning with Karlheinz Schmeer's pioneering study, *Die Regie des öffentlichen Lebens im Dritten Reich*, the monographic literature on Nazi festivity has concentrated primarily on its role as an effective instrument of rule. As a result, research in the areas of planning, organization, propaganda and ideology has provided considerable insight into the conceptual and functional aspects of Nazi festivity.²⁶ As an

²⁵On the need for such a sociocultural study of Nazi festivity, see Peter Baldwin, "Social Interpretations of Nazism: Renewing a Tradition," *JCH* 25 (1990): 28.

²⁶Karlheinz Schmeer, *Die Regie des öffentlichen Lebens* (Munich, 1956). On individual celebrations see Fritz Terveen, "Der Filmbericht über Hitlers 50. Geburtstag," *VfZ* 7 (1959): 75-84; Josef Henke, "Die Reichsparteitage der NSDAP in Nürnberg 1933-1938.--Planung, Organisation, Propaganda," in *Aus der Arbeit des Bundesarchivs*, eds. Heinz Boberach and Hans Booms (Boppard, 1977), 398-422; Peter Bucher, "Hitlers 50. Geburtstag: Zur Quellenvielfalt im Bundesarchiv," in *ibid.*, 423-46; Karl Friedrich Reimers, "Der Reichsparteitage als Instrument totaler Propaganda," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 75 (1979): 216-28; Ernest K. Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945* (East Lansing, 1965). For a compelling study of the interplay between myth and ideology and propaganda in the 9 November ceremony see Baird, *Die For Germany*, chap. 3. On the link between propaganda and popular culture with respect to the Nazi holiday calendar, see Randall L. Bytwerk, "Rhetorical Aspects of Nazi Holidays," *Journal of Popular Culture* 13 (1979): 239-47.

With the exception of the studies of propaganda, English-speaking historians have for the most part contented themselves with demonstrating the manipulative power of the Nazi dictatorship as evidenced in the powerful images of the Party Rallies in Nuremberg or the Berlin Olympics. Apposite here is Hamilton T. Burden, *The Nuremberg Rallies: 1923-39* (New York, 1967). Although Burden's study provides a valuable description of the development and form of the Party rallies, it suffers from a limited use of primary evidence. In his reliance on an analytical framework that exaggerates both the largely discredited totalitarian concept as well as the fundamentally martial character of the rallies, Burden also overstates their effectiveness as propaganda. In treating the rallies in isolation, moreover, he fails to convey the variety and extensiveness of Nazi public celebration. On the Berlin

extension of these concerns a number of studies on both sides of the ocean, while continuing to focus on techniques of social and cultural control, have treated festivity as an outward expression of a political phenomenon that was in essence a secular or civic religion.²⁷

Olympiad see Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (New York, 1971); Duff Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games: The 1936 Olympics* (London, 1986). For an anthropological view, see Moyra Byrne, "Nazi Festival: The 1936 Berlin Olympics," in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque, 1987), 109-22.

²⁷The characterization of not only Nazism but all 'totalitarian' ideologies as a form of secular religion, a conceptual typology first introduced by Eric Vogelin in the 1930s, receives its most systematic treatment in Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The Age of Ideologies: A History of Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Ewald Osers (London, 1984). Its most comprehensive analysis as "political messianism" whose origins are to be found in the Enlightenment and the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, is the three-volume study by Jacob A. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London, 1952); *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase* (London, 1960); and *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* (London, 1980). For other more tendentious applications of this mode of explanation of Nazism, see James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution* (Stanford, 1980) and Robert A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature* (New York, 1986). As an explanation of Nazi festivity the term appears initially in Hans-Jochen Gamm, *Der braune Kult: Das Dritte Reich und sein Ersatzreligion* (Hamburg, 1962); and more systematically in Klaus Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation: Ideologischer Kult und politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen, 1971). The most prominent exponent of this thesis in the English language has been George L. Mosse. Mosse regards Nazi festivals as the culmination of a historical process dating from the French Revolution in which mass politics gave form to fervent nationalism, with its concomitant rites, symbols and cultic groups and personalities. See George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1975), and idem "Fascism and the French Revolution," *JCH* 24 (1989): 5-26. Also see Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London, 1971), 72-89; Hans Ulrich Thamer, "Faszination und Manipulation: Die Nürnberger Reichsparteitage der NSDAP," in *Das Fest: Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Uwe Schultz (Munich, 1988), 352-68; Wolfgang Benz, "The Ritual and Stage Management of National Socialism: Techniques of Domination and the Public Sphere," in *The Attractions of Fascism: Social Psychology and Aesthetics of the 'Triumph of the Right'*, ed. John Milfull (New York, Oxford, and Munich, 1990), 273-88. For a sociological perspective that emphasizes the appropriation of religious symbols and rituals which in the form of political celebration gave expression to the myth-bound Nazi ideology, but which avoids the term secular

Yet while these two approaches have advanced our understanding of the origins, development, form, content, purpose and style of presentation of festivity in Nazi Germany, historians in elaborating one or the other of these positions have tended to treat them in relative isolation, removed from the social context. In analyzing festivity from a functional perspective as a technique of rule or in the reified realm of ideology as a syncretic civic religion, historians have generally confused intention with results, and thus present a misleading interpretation of Nazi festivity that tends to exaggerate its role in shaping German culture and society. Given the premium that Nazism as a political system placed on social integration, it seems appropriate that any substantive treatment of festivity should attempt to reconstruct and evaluate the popular response to the Nazi transformation of the festival experience. As a highly socialized form of human experience, characterized by a collective effervescence of conviviality and sociability removed in place and time from the reality of everyday life, and therefore an eminently appealing feature of any sociocultural structure, the festival, perhaps more than any other form of popular culture, presents the historian with a favorable opportunity to reconstruct popular attitudes toward the Nazi cultural revolution.²⁰

religion, see Simon Taylor, "Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism," *British Journal of Sociology* 23 (December 1981): 504-20.

²⁰This is the classic Durkheimian model of festivity as a social experience removed in space and time from the everyday in which an ephemeral and transcendent unanimity of the collective consciousness is achieved. For the purposes of this study it serves as an ideal type of festival experience, one that closely corresponded to the Nazis' own functionalist approach to public celebration. On the applicability of Durkheim's model to modern revolutionary periods see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge,

Existing explanations of festivity as a form of propaganda, social mobilization or organization, or as an expression of a secular or political religion, in short, are too narrow. They fail to take into account the festival experience as a form of popular culture that under Nazism mediated between the complex forces binding state, economy and society. Central to this process was the role played by modern technology. For the Nazi festival the modern centralized media and transportation system served as more than simply a means to an end. In their efforts to reach the widest possible audience, Nazi leaders exploited the technical resources of the industrialized German state to such an extent that the modern world of technology came to redefine the context of public celebration in the Third Reich.

As a popular cultural activity festivity in the Third Reich became industrialized according to the perceived needs of a modern mass society, as Walter Benjamin observed with respect to art in his seminal

Mass., 1988), 31-32; and James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1993), 145-46. It should be added here that the present study, like those by Ozouf and Geldern, has benefitted from the extensive literature on festivals by cultural anthropologists and sociologists. Though occasional interpretations and analyses are incorporated into the text to illustrate specific aspects of Nazi festivals, (as indicated in the footnotes to the various chaps.) the more fundamental influence of this literature on the present study is in its methodological emphasis on the social dynamic of festivity. Of primary relevance to this dissertation is the study of the transformative effect of technology on the German folklore tradition in the modern period by Hermann Bausinger, *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, trans. Elke Dettmer (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990). Also of importance are the collections of essays on the festival in Falassi, ed., *Time out of Time*; Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festival and Ritual* (Washington, 1982); and Barbara Babcock, ed., *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca, 1978).

essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".²⁹ This "aesthetization of political life", in which the Nazis attempted to articulate their particular view of modernity across the entire cultural milieu in accordance with the Wagnerian concept of the 'total work of art' (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), served to enhance the political legitimacy of the Nazi state and to act as an instrument of social mobilization and integration.³⁰ The Nazis presented their own stylized version of a modern festival to a nation both infatuated and infuriated with the chaotic experience of modernity in the Weimar era. As an expression of forward-looking national emancipatory aspirations, however, the prescribed norms of festival presentation and behaviour informing the Nazi version of the modern festival experience ultimately clashed with the diverse festival cultures already embedded in German society. Chief among these were the alternative modern emancipatory festival culture of the socialist labour movement and the Christian liturgy and ceremonial that continued to shape public and private life in Protestant and especially Catholic regions.

* * *

Accordingly, the present study differs from previous ones in several respects. In the first place, it ascribes to Nazi political culture a

²⁹Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt (New York, 1969), 217-51.

³⁰Rainer Stollmann, "Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art: Tendencies of the Aesthetization of Political Life in National Socialism," *New German Critique* 13 (Spring 1978): 41-60. By adhering to a Marxist analysis that defines political culture in the Third Reich as both reactionary and totalitarian Stollmann denies Nazism any modernizing features.

transformative forward-looking modernism that aimed to create a new culturally homogeneous social order based on a hierarchical organizational principle that conferred rank according to race and individual talent. As such, it contributes to the growing revisionist literature that seeks to situate Nazism and Nazi society entirely within the process of modernity. Animating the new scholarship is the repudiation of the 'illiberal paradigm', the notion of a 'special path' to modernity from which Germany deviated due to the absence of a dominant middle class with its corresponding liberal and democratic ethos.³¹ In socioeconomic terms, National Socialism constituted a brutal rejection of modernization. Thus, in Henry A. Turner's words, Nazism represented a "utopian antimodernism ... an extreme revolt against the modern industrial world and an attempt to recapture a distant mythic past."³² Though focusing largely on the Wilhelmine period, the debate over the German *Sonderweg* to modernity has demonstrated that the concept of modernity is not synonymous with notions of progress, liberalism, socialism, or democracy. This revisionist literature, therefore, owes more to the interpretive agenda of the British Marxists Geoff Eley, David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans than it does to earlier works by Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum, both of which ascribed to Nazism

³¹The 'illiberal paradigm' informs attempts to establish the antimodernist ideological pedigree of Nazism, such as the classic statement by Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: a Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, reprint ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1974), xi-xv. For a stimulating discussion of the merits and liabilities associated with the concept of illiberalism, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "Illiberalism and Beyond: German History in Search of a Paradigm," *JMH* 55 (1983): 268-284.

³²Henry A. Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," in *Reappraisals of Fascism*, ed. Henry A. Turner (New York, 1975), 120.

an unintentional modernization of German society.³³ Yet as recent studies have suggested, far from being a reactionary, atavistic political movement that wished to turn the clock back to some golden era in the past, in its ideological, social and cultural aspects the Nazi movement was a fundamentally forward-looking political culture that, archaisms aside, prefigured much of the agenda shaping the post-war technocratic world of the welfare state.³⁴

In cultural terms historians have focused on the inter-war transformation of the public sphere into a space designed for the mass spectacle and the emergence of a modern popular culture shaped by technical developments in the twentieth century and designed for mass consumption. Of all political parties in Germany, the Nazis best understood this component of the modern experience and made every effort to control it after January 1933.³⁵ As a modern mass cultural

³³Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London, 1968); David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939*, (Garden City, NY, 1966; reprint, New York and London, 1980). David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley initially questioned the whole idea of a German 'special path' in *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Oxford, 1984).

³⁴See the introductory essay by the two editors in *The Nazi Elite*, eds. Ronald Smelser and Rainer Zitelmann, trans. Mary Fischer (New York, 1993), 1-6, esp. 4. Also see the collection of essays in Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann, eds. *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung* (Darmstadt, 1991); and Ronald Smelser, "How 'Modern' Were the Nazis? DAF Social Planning and the Modernization Question," *GSR* 13 (1990): 285-302; Rainer Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs* (Hamburg, 1987); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism* (Cambridge, 1989), chap. 8. On the holocaust as a "paradigm of modern bureaucratic rationality" see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1989), 149-50.

³⁵See most recently the compelling study by Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republik: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York, 1992), 161-63. For a different version that empha-

experience, Nazi celebration combined martial and *völkisch* customs and traditions, aggressive political activism, apolitical entertainment and technical rationality in a monumental style intended to reconcile the self-representational and participatory forms of festival, whose function was to serve as a powerful expression of the racially and culturally pure *Volkgemeinschaft*. Ultimately, however, as the discussion of the origins, structure and function of the Nazi festival in chapter 1 seeks to demonstrate, the myth of the 'national community' served as little more than an instrument of callous state power politics.

Second, it imparts greater relevance to the social context in its attempt to reconstruct and evaluate the festival experience in the Third Reich.³⁰ Significant sections of the dissertation are devoted to

sizes the dynamic destructive force of modernity that culminated in the futuristic thrust of the Nazi movement with its perverted aesthetics of kitsch, see Modris Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York, 1989), 303-31. Narrowly based on the written record left behind by the Nazi leadership, primarily that of Goebbels and Hitler, Ecksteins's analysis of the Nazi movement lacks the methodological rigour found elsewhere in an otherwise provocative study that provides a number of novel insights into the social response to the cultural contradictions of modernity. The most convincing attempt to delineate the process by which the Nazis selected from a broad range of components offered by mass popular culture to invent their distinctive manifestation of a modern popular cultural synthesis of mass spectacle and technology, is Adelheid von Saldern, "Cultural Conflicts, Popular Mass Culture, and the Question of Nazi Success: The Eilenriede Motorcycle Races, 1924-1939," *GSR* 15 (1992): 317-38. Quite rightly, von Saldern emphasizes the need for a shift in focus from the one-sided politicized notion of modern mass popular culture as the exclusive preserve of the democratic liberal normative tradition to a neutralized definition of modernity that corresponds to the transformative character of the modern experience as a process of continual redefinition.

³⁰Attempts to situate festivity in the social context have largely been confined to local studies. On the limited impact of Nazi festivals on public life in the northern German city of Northeim, see the classic account by William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The*

the popular reception of festivity in Nazi Germany. The evidence on which the examination of popular opinion is based is not without its hermeneutic difficulties. In a political culture as repressive as that of Nazi Germany intimidation seriously impaired genuine popular criticism of the regime. Hence the existing source material is sporadic, subjective and inherently biased, and any conclusions reached must remain, in the end, impressionistic and tentative. Nevertheless, as noted elsewhere, the confidential situation and morale reports gathered by Party and state agencies--SS security service (SD), Government Presidents and municipal police departments--on the one hand, and the reports gathered by the exiled SPD (*Sopade*) in Prague through its underground network on the other, when used with caution, are of immense value in reconstructing the variegated and fluctuating popular attitudes in the Third Reich.³⁷ With this caveat in mind, as an attempt to

Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945, rev. ed. (New York, 1984), 202-16, 255, and passim. The uneven and incomplete Nazi infiltration of festival culture in sharpshooting and other middle-class associations in the Hessian university town of Marburg is examined in Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism* (Chapel Hill and London, 1986), 245, 251-52, 270-71.

³⁷The SD reports are reproduced in Heinz Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich: Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS, 1934-1945*, 17 vols. (Herrsching, 1984), henceforth *MadR*. The invaluable *Sopade* reports are collected in Klaus Behnken, ed., *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade), 1934-1940*, 7 vols. (Salzhausen and Frankfurt am Main, 1980), hereafter *DBS*. For a critical evaluation of the nature of the source material on popular opinion in Nazi Germany, see Marlis G. Steinert, *Hitler's War and the Germans: Public Mood and Attitudes During the Second World War* (Athens, OH, 1977), 2-18; Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983), 6-10; Michael Voges, "Klassenkampf in der 'Betriebsgemeinschaft': Die 'Deutschland Berichte' der Sopade (1934-1940) als Quelle zum Widerstand der Industriearbeiter im Dritten Reich." *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 21 (1981): 332-43; and the introductions to the appropriate chapters in *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, eds. Martin Broszat et al., 6 vols. (Munich and Vienna, 1977-1983).

reconcile 'history from above' and 'below', this study adopts a social perspective in which the festival experience in Nazi Germany assumes a considerably more complex and contentious character than previously allowed, as the discussions in chapters 2 and 5 demonstrate. Nazism was far from a monolithic political culture in which a 'totalitarian' or increasingly radicalized dictatorship imposed its ideologically impelled ethos on the passive receptacle of an acclamatory or compliant and undifferentiated social mass. Accordingly, this study offers an image of a modern, pluralistic society within whose public sphere Germans from all segments of society selected or rejected, under the most extreme pressures of ideological conformity, those aspects of festivity that corresponded to their individual political, social, economic and cultural needs.

Third, this interpretation is enhanced by extending the boundaries of celebration to encompass popular festivals such as carnival and folk festivals. Popular festival traditions and customs as a form of popular culture, and Nazi attempts to transform this cultural sphere, are the focus of chapter 3. In contrast to the prevailing explanation of Nazism as a civic religion, meanwhile, chapter 4 discusses the functional appeal of the festival industry to a Nazi state determined to alleviate Depression conditions through economic rationalization and job creation and thereby reinforce its legitimacy.

The sixth and final chapter, extending many of these themes into the war period, argues that only in the context of a deteriorating war situation, especially after the colossal disaster of Stalingrad, did the Nazi state attempt to institutionalize its final 'totalitarian' form of

social control with respect to the festival and ceremonial. At the same time, however, it suggests that the ultimate failure of an increasingly isolated National Socialist administration to recast the culture of celebration and ceremony owed as much to the monumental success of the Nazi festival style in the years of peace as it did to the severe restrictions on material and human resources and the declining public morale that accompanied the war. The conclusion briefly recapitulates the various themes and indicates possible theoretical and historical implications of the festival experience in the Third Reich.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF CELEBRATION: NAZI FESTIVALS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The expression of freedom through festival is as old as Western civilization.¹ In modern Europe, the leaders of both the French and Russian revolutions created festivals that presented their own versions of freedom for popular consumption.² In Germany, meanwhile, festival, revolution and freedom were inextricably bound up with popular national aspirations.³ Though the Germany of the Second Reich managed to avoid the revolutionary process in this historical equation until 1918, the Nazi 'seizure of power' on 30 January 1933 signalled a radical shift in emphasis with the inflammatory proclamation of the 'National Uprising'. Yet the NSDAP, like any political mass party assuming the reins of power, had to establish its legitimacy to govern. Unlike most such parties, however, the Nazis were prepared to use every means available, legal or otherwise, to smash existing and potential opposition and to impose their authoritarian control over the state and society. Of central importance to the process of political legitimization was the gradual organization of domestic cultural life, including public

¹N. E. Andreasen, "Festival and Freedom: A Study of an Old Testament Theme," *Interpretation* 28 (1974): 281-97.

²Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, passim, 8-12; Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 1-13 and passim.

³Jonathan Sperber, "Festivals of National Unity in the German Revolution of 1848-1849," *Past & Present* 136 (August 1992): 114-38.

celebration, in accordance with the principle of popular ethnic nationalism.

By focusing on the origins, administration, form, function and the revaluation of time and space of Nazi festivity, this chapter provides a descriptive and analytical overview of the doctrinaire conceptualization of public celebration in the peacetime years of the Third Reich. In so doing it stresses the modern formalization of public celebration in the highly industrialized Nazi state through the manipulation of both the form and substance of advanced technology. The transformation of folk festivals into a feature of the organized leisure and popular entertainment industries,⁴ the Nazi orchestration of mass spectacles in Nuremberg, Berlin, Munich and elsewhere, in addition to the construction of festive space, the performance of many of the 'rituals' therein as well as the constellation of material components present, whether used to educate or entertain, assumed their form largely as a result of technological developments. The mass aesthetic informing the distinctive Nazi festival style was, in short, inconceivable without the unsurpassed state-controlled exploitation of mass communication and transportation technology.

Selectively drawing on a cluster of festival traditions, the Nazis invented their own distinctive popular festival culture that in form and function adhered to the principles of the new popular mass-consumer cultural aesthetic emerging in the highly charged political

⁴On the transformation of German folklore, including the folk festival tradition, into a component of popular culture in the modern industrial era, see the classic study by Bausinger, *Folk Culture*.

atmosphere of the inter-war period.⁶ Whether as thinly-veiled propaganda in the adroit hands of Joseph Goebbels, or as organized recreational entertainment under the auspices of Robert Ley's KdF leisure organization, the Nazi festival served as an instrument of social integration and political mobilization. The Nazi revaluation of festival space and time in terms of permanence and myth, forward movement and, above all, order, in effect provided a mirror of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideal of social organization based on the Prussian military *Führerprinzip*. Especially in the emphasis on disciplined, technically efficient movement it communicated in dynamic fashion the wholly modern sense of controlled forward-oriented motion, 'aestheticized' political culture as spirited activism, the hallmark of the Nazi 'movement'. At the same time the dynamic choreography and discipline informing the festival aesthetic under Nazism reinforced the Faustian image of a political leadership seemingly confident in its mastery over the development and destiny of a highly industrialized and technologically advanced German nation.⁷

Its antediluvian aspects notwithstanding, Nazism was far from being a reactionary political movement that wished to turn the clock

⁶On the emergence of modern popular mass-consumer culture in the Weimar era with its tendency towards the mass spectacle and 'Americanization' see, Peukert, *Weimar Republic*, 161-63; Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 267-71.

⁷On the Faustian imagery of controlled development as a pivotal aspect of the modern experience, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Penguin ed. (Harmondsworth, 1988), 38-86. On the profound impact of technology on modern German consciousness, see Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1992); Saldern, "Cultural Conflicts", 317-38. See also Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (London, 1983).

back to a preindustrial world of small towns and petit-bourgeois pastimes. The synthetic product of modern political and military mass movements,⁷ Nazism represented, as the Nazis repeatedly trumpeted at public celebrations, a national revolution, an historic turning point, committed to the creation "of a new type of human being from whom would spring a new morality, a new social system, and eventually a new international order". Heralded as a 'third way' between bourgeois capitalism and working-class socialism, Nazism, which derived its political authority from the 'national community', represented for many Germans "a headlong plunge into the future",⁸ offering as it did in its carefully orchestrated spectacles, an attractive, modern vision of an orderly, dynamic and meaningful world beyond the seemingly perpetual chaos of the present.

ORIGINS OF NAZI FESTIVALS

Throughout history societies in celebration have selected from a diverse morphology those features expressive of their own particular cultural and political ethos.⁹ In this the Nazis were no exception. In their attempts to reshape political culture through festivity the Nazis entered into an ecumenical language of symbolic discourse that had largely been appropriated by the nationalist right in Germany during the course of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Karlheinz Schmeier's pioneering

⁷John Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (New York, 1987), 255-56.

⁸Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 303.

⁹For an anthropological perspective on the celebratory process common to all cultures, see Turner, ed. *Celebration*, 7.

¹⁰Mosse, *Nationalization*, 2-9.

study of Nazi festivals isolates several disparate idioms of rites, material components and ceremonial forms that later came to be incorporated in Nazi festival culture. Early in its development the NSDAP adopted the symbols of the swastika and stylized eagle as well as the penchant for badges, arm bands and other material components prevailing among the myriad of small radical nationalist groups that emerged in the Wilhelmine period and proliferated in the aftermath of World War I. The SA copied the marching songs of the *Freikorps* and other paramilitary organizations. The political success of the Italian Fascists underscored the visual effect of a common uniform of single colour as well as the all important ritual gesture of a distinctive salute. From leftist political culture Hitler and the Nazis adapted the symbolic force of flags and particularly the colour red. More importantly, having experienced a mass rally staged by the leftist parties in Berlin's Lustgarten shortly after the war, Hitler recognized the emotive and integrative power of this modern form of festival activity as an especially appealing form of political activism and propaganda. Consequently, for Schmeer, there was little new in the Nazi festival style except the grim determination with which Hitler made use of existing idioms as a stylized means of political publicity.¹¹

In his study of Nazi festivity as the outward expression of a civic religion imposed by what was in essence an ideological cult, Klaus Vondung identified four key festive traditions that left their imprint on the Nazi style of celebration.¹² First were the national festivals

¹¹Schmeer, *Regie*, 12-16.

¹²The following discussion follows Vondung, *Magie*, 13-32.

of the Kaiser's birthday in 1871 and Sedan Day, first observed in 1873, whose significance for the Nazi festival style lay in the secularization of festivals and the emergence of a chauvinistic political cult steeped in the heroic mystique of nationalism. Secondly, the rituals and artistic forms that gave expression to the German youth movement, with its 'Heil' greeting, midsummer bonfire celebrations, and forays into the realm of folk music and amateur theatre with their emphasis on speaking choral arrangements, subsequently found parallels in Nazi festivalia. A third and narrower precursor was to be found in the *völkisch* cult theatre, with its dramatic presentations of the 'people's community' in the works of such figures as Hanns Johst, who later became the President of the Reich Literature Chamber in the Third Reich. Emerging after the First World War, this cultural movement had its most direct impact on the *Thingspiel* movement, which itself was of marginal significance in the cultural life of Nazi Germany.¹³ A fourth and final festive tradition identified by Vondung, whose customs and ceremonial rites of passage and initiation evidently found their way into the Nazi festival style, was the small nationalistic and racist religious organizations that dotted the German cultural landscape; these had their origins in

¹³Performed in open-air amphitheatres constructed on ancient Greek models, the *Thingspiel* represented a conscious attempt to establish an alleged racial and cultural line of descent from classical Greece to Nazi Germany. Though plans existed to build more than 400 such amphitheatres, only 40 had been built when Goebbels cancelled the unpopular program in 1937. See Robert R. Taylor, *The Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1974), 210; and Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels*, trans. John K. Dickinson (New York, 1972), 162-63; Mosse, *Nationalization*, 115-18, 183. Mosse's study of the emergence of the 'new' politics of mass movements that culminated in the 'secular religion' of Nazism echoes the interpretation of Vondung.

the nineteenth century and later merged into the religious movement of the German Christians in the Third Reich.

Any assessment of the origins of Nazi festivity is necessarily linked with Hitler since the Nazi leader was largely responsible for the early development and formalization of the self-representational festive style of Nazism before 1933. Ernst Hanfstaengel, who as a student at Harvard was one of the few early Nazis to have experienced life outside of Germany, claimed to have introduced Hitler to the boisterous cheer-leading and marches that stirred American college football crowds and which the NSDAP leader immediately appropriated for the movement in the form of pipe and drum SA marches and 'Sieg Heil' refrain.¹⁴ Whatever the veracity of Hanfstaengl's claims, they add to the eclectic traditions of public ceremonial from which the Nazis developed their own mass cultural aesthetic. Another obvious influence on the Nazi festival style was the works of Richard Wagner. Not only did Hitler's unbounded admiration ensure that Wagner's music would become a standard feature of all Nazi ceremonial, but the composer's holistic conceptualization of art in terms of a participatory *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the cultural equivalent of the 'totalitarian' trajectory of Nazi ideology, found expression in

¹⁴Hanfstaengl also insisted on his singular contribution to the spectacular form of Nazi funeral ceremonies. Inspired by stories of Lincoln's funeral procession he had advocated the need for national celebration of martyred heroes for the first time with the death of Leo Schlageter. See Ernst Hanfstaengl, *Hitler: The Missing Years*, with an introduction by Brian Connell (London, 1957), 51, 82-83. The Lincoln parallel seems rather far-fetched. A more likely source for Hitler's insistence on state funerals for Nazi heroes was his presence at the state burial procession of anti-semitic Vienna mayor Karl Lueger in 1910. See Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1971), 121; Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 162.

the dramaturgical and self-representational style of Nazi festivity.¹⁵ Not to be overlooked, moreover, is the residual effect of Catholic ceremonial on the Nazi leader.¹⁶ Finally, Hitler's frequent digressions on the history and culture of antiquity, suggests that Hellenic and Roman festival culture cannot be discounted as probable sources for the prominence given festivity in the Third Reich.¹⁷

Yet there is little reason to doubt that the most profound influence on Hitler's conception of festivity as a form of propaganda and a device for social organization and integration was the defining experience of the First World War.¹⁸ Like many of his generation,

¹⁵In his political memoir, Hitler wrote of the unbounded respect for the Bayreuth composer that had gripped him since his youth. See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 16-17. During the war he referred to his annual pilgrimage to the Bayreuth Festival as a transcendent experience. See Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 244. See also Mosse, *Nationalization*, 100-109; Fest, *Hitler*, 533-34.

¹⁶Recalling his youth spent in Catholic Austria, Hitler wrote: "I had the excellent opportunity to intoxicate myself with the solemn splendour of the brilliant church festivals." Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 6. For an analysis of Hitler's conscious appropriation of Catholic liturgy in the formulation of Nazi festivity, see Vondung, *Magie*, 36-37.

¹⁷In Hitler's view the festival space of ancient cities, including its temples, stadiums and circuses, reflected the spirit of heroic community, a sense of shared belonging wholly absent in the chaotic modern city. See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 265-66. During the war, Hitler spoke of his intention to give the Nuremberg Party rallies "the atmosphere of the Olympic Games Festivals of ancient days." See Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 433. In a discussion of 'Hitler's taste' Mosse notes the synthesis of neo-classicism and Romanticism, the cultural legacy of the nineteenth century that is fundamental to the understanding of the Nazi leader's attitude towards art and culture. See Mosse, *Nationalization*, 183-91. For an extensive treatment of the influence of classical antiquity on architecture and urban planning in Nazi Germany, see Alex Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture: The Impact of Classical Antiquity* (University Park and London, 1990).

¹⁸The most penetrating analysis of the effect of the war on Hitler's world view, including the outward form of the Nazi style in uniforms, marches, flags and banners, is provided by Keegan, *Mask of*

including many later Nazis, Hitler's rite of passage into manhood occurred in the collective experience of the 'socialism of the trenches' that developed among the *Frontkämpfer* in response to the destructive forces of modern war.¹⁹ In this masculine martial culture, with its highly structured, formally ranked, hierarchical order, its rigorous discipline through repeated drill, parade and reveille, its camaraderie forged in common uniform and by the ever-present shared danger of a common enemy, and perhaps most significantly its intensified sense of self-sacrifice for the national good, Hitler and many of his generation found an antidote to the fragmented sociocultural world of flabby bourgeois materialism and, in Hitler's eyes at least, the effeminate chaos of modern mass society.²⁰ The ridicule repeatedly heaped on the obtuse, effeminate masses in *Mein Kampf* had its corollary in Hitler's expressed desire to effect the formation of the 'national community' through the introduction of the *Führerprinzip*, the organizational principle of the

Command, 235-58. See also Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 173-94.

¹⁹The 'Myth of the War Experience' as George L. Mosse has pointed out continued to exert considerable influence on inter-war German culture and politics particularly on the radical Right. Particularly in speeches to the nation's youth, as in his address to the Hitler Youth during the Nuremberg Party Rally of 1936, Hitler repeatedly invoked the image of the *Frontkämpfer*, imbued with the martial values of courage, resolve, discipline and self-sacrifice. Only with the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 did the Nazis inject a healthy amount of realism into the portrayal of war. See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York and Oxford, 1990), 159-211.

²⁰Typical of Hitler's contemptuous view of modern mass society was his statement that "[t]he people in their overwhelming majority are so feminine by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determines their thoughts and actions far less than emotion and feeling." See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 183.

Prussian military tradition translated into the sociopolitical sphere.²¹

Organization alone, however, was incapable of creating the new militarized social order imbued with the 'fighting spirit' that Hitler deemed necessary for the future existence of the German nation. The lost war had convinced him of the value of propaganda in mobilizing mass support.²² Since, in his opinion, the masses were moved less by reason than by emotion, Hitler devoted much of his early efforts to the development of an active propaganda style whose effectiveness lay in its appeal to popular sentiment. Towards this end, Nazi propaganda offered both positive integration through identification with the national purpose and negative integration through hostility towards the putative enemies of the German nation, namely, liberals, socialists, communists, and Jews. Only the relentless assault on the popular imagination by the simple and oft-repeated slogans of Nazi propaganda, Hitler believed, would win anti-nationalist opponents over to the movement.²³ Combining the pseudo-rationalistic Social Darwinist principle of racial selection and preservation with the emotive fervour of nationalism, this ideology found its early outward, active form in the dynamic marching columns of flag-waving brownshirts and the political rallies routinely held in Munich's large beer halls temporarily decorated for the occasion with the banners and flags of the movement.

²¹Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 449-50. Hitler defined the leadership principle of the Prussian Army as: "authority of every leader downward and responsibility upward." See also Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 397-401, 459.

²²Hitler devoted an entire chapter of *Mein Kampf* to war propaganda and recapitulated his views in a subsequent chapter on propaganda and organization. See *ibid.*, 176-86, 579-95.

²³*Ibid.*, 333.

Yet to give precedence to any one of these conventions of festival discourse in the formulation of the Nazi festival structure would be to risk distortion of the historical record. What can safely be said, however, is that in constructing their derivative yet imposing festival aesthetic the Nazis drew from a common morphology of festival discourse, deliberately extracting what they required to achieve their ideologically directed mass political culture. What can also be said without contention is that the totalizing structure of Nazi festivity rested on the principles of social organization and active propaganda and aimed in practice at the deliberate exploitation of modern technology in the forms of mass communication and transportation. The apparent chaos and alienation issuing from the cultural pluralism of mass society in Weimar Germany was anathema to the Nazis, many of whom like Hitler were members of a generation tempered by the routine discipline of World War I trench life. To this must be added the Nazis' attraction to the folk festival tradition, which as a non-political form of domestic popular culture was nonetheless consistent with their nationalist views of cultural matters.

NAZI FESTIVALS: ADMINISTRATION, FORM AND FUNCTION

In the years following the initial phase of the 'seizure of power' the Nazi state entered a period of comparative stabilization. With this stability came the threat of stagnation. Sensing the continual need to revitalize the dynamic energy of the movement, Nazi leaders turned to ceremonies and festivities to recapture the aggressiveness and commitment that animated the Party before 1933. As a result, the festival replaced the mass rallies of the *Kampfzeit* as the most effective means of promoting ideological training within the Party and disseminating the

new National Socialist ethos among the general population. Conceptualized as a dynamic form of political activism and cultural regeneration, the Nazi festival constituted, for Nazis like NSLB ideologue Karl Seibold, the new face of the Third Reich. In contrast to what the Nazis regarded as the purposelessness of public celebration in the 'liberal' age, under National Socialism festivals organized all Germans under the single "great idea" of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁴ The most important and consistent features of the Nazi festival form--the daily flag ritual, the serried marches with flags and torches, the repeated appeal to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the proclamation ceremony conveying the meaning of individual festivals, the communal devotions in word and song and the obligatory oath to Führer and Reich--served not only to renew the dynamic force of the movement through active involvement of all Party and cadre members, but in their outward expression also demonstrated to the German population and to the entire world the strength of faith and the unified will animating Nazism. Accordingly, in its ideal 'total' formalization the Nazi festival eschewed passive spectating. Through participation in marches, the singing of national anthems²⁵ and other choral songs, the raising of the arm in salute or the bearing of torches or the ceremonial swearing of oaths, the Nazi festival invited the

²⁴Karl Seibold, "Die Grundsätze der Fei ergestaltung im Schulungslager," in *Fest- und Freizeitgestaltung im NSLB: Amtliche Mitteilungsblätter der Hauptstelle Schulung im Hauptamt für Erzieher*. hrsg. von der Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher. Hrsg. und Hauptschriftleiter Carl Wolf, 1 (1936): 8-11, hereafter *FuF*.

²⁵It became customary to end all Nazi festivals with the playing of both the national anthem "*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*" and the "*Horst Wessel Song*", the Nazi marching song written by Wessel, an SA man purportedly killed in a street brawl with communists in 1930.

entire German population to participate to a greater or lesser extent in the celebration of the 'national community'.²⁶

Apart from the singularity of the two Olympiads in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Berlin in 1936 and other major sporting events, Hitler's fiftieth birthday celebration in 1939, and the series of nationally organized state festivals celebrating Hitler's diplomatic successes, three massive annual theatrical spectacles dominated the festival landscape in the Third Reich.²⁷ These three events, the 1 May rally in Berlin on the Tempelhof Feld, the Nuremberg Party rallies, held over eight days at the beginning of September, and the autumn Harvest Thanksgiving Festival atop the Bückeberg, near Hameln, provided the regime with its annual national context of celebration. Though the focus of much public attention, both domestic and foreign, these national propaganda events actually functioned as a hub for the diffuse network of celebrations staged in almost every populated centre across the Reich. The celebration of 1 May and Harvest Thanksgiving took place in city, town and village squares, in factory canteens and community halls. Local Nazis organized Party rallies at the *Gau* and *Kreis* levels. Yet these national propaganda spectacles, along with their local counterparts, represented only one aspect, albeit an imposing one, of Nazi festivity. Administered by a welter of overlapping agencies and ancillary organizations, Nazi festivity extended across the entire society, permeating all areas of public and, ostensibly, even private

²⁶Ibid., 11.

²⁷The following discussion is based on Schmeer, *Regie*, 28-120; and Vondung, *Magie*, 70-104, 113-22. Also see Heiber, *Goebbels*, 183-208.

celebration.

Much of Nazi festivity was intended largely for the Party and its ancillary organizations. To celebrate the 'Nazi Revolution', the NSDAP leadership instituted a regular cycle of Party festivals corresponding to the three National Socialist holidays, 30 January (Seizure of Power Day), 24 February (Anniversary of the Founding of the Party), and 9 November (Day of Remembrance for the Movement's Dead), the annual commemoration of the abortive putsch of 1923. As a means to maintain Party morale, observance of these Nazi holidays incorporated official affairs of state, normally in the form of important speeches by the Party leaders, with the stock features of Nazi ritual, ceremony, and celebration. Along with 20 April, Hitler's birthday, these holidays also marked the occasion for initiation ceremonies for the Nazi Political Leaders and the HJ and BDM, as well as career promotions. The Nazi rank and file were also required to participate regularly in rallies, roll calls, demonstration marches, and hour-long 'morning celebrations'.

Beyond the Party membership, the Nazis invented a variety of festivals specifically developed in accordance with the perceived needs of individual segments of the population. On Mothers' Day, the Nazi state celebrated the contributions to the national struggle for existence made by German women. Initiation ceremonies, neo-pagan solstice fire celebrations, Christmas gifts collected during the WHW charity drives and a host of other festivities regaled the nation's youth. German and Nazi festival culture became part of the school curriculum. Apart from the 1 May celebrations, the Nazis, in conjunction with German employers, introduced to the workplace the 'factory comradeship

evening', and 'factory roll call'. Topping-out ceremonies regularly attended the completion of building projects. Ever eager to make a virtue of necessity, the Nazis transformed funerals for industrial disaster victims into state occasions. For especially deserving workers, there existed the opportunity to take part in excursions to the *Oktoberfest* or other folk festivals arranged by the KdF. In an obvious attempt to dislodge the religious domination of rural culture and to stem the steady '*Landflucht*' to the cities, the Nazis instituted 'village community evenings'. More broadly, Nazis lent their support and usually their direction to local anniversary celebrations such as the septcentennial festival in Berlin in 1937.²⁸ Even family celebrations, birthdays, christenings, weddings and funerals, were not spared the attempt to render all celebration public and in accord with the Nazi cultural ethos. To these must be added a host of traditional celebrations, ranging from wreath-laying ceremonies to ship launches, on which the Nazi state left its distinctive imprint. In sum, as this by no means exhaustive list suggests, the dominant feature of Nazi festivity was its sheer magnitude. Indeed, as Schmeer noted, seldom did a day pass in the entire period of the Third Reich, that the national media did not record an occasion worthy of commemoration and celebration.²⁹

Consonant with its diverse origins, Nazi festivity encompassed a multiplicity of forms. Generally speaking, form followed function as the Nazis sought to develop and institutionalize a variety of festivals

²⁸See Gerhard Weiss, "Panem et Circenses: Berlin's Anniversaries as Political Happenings," in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidrun Suhr (Minneapolis and Oxford, 1990), 243-52.

²⁹Schmeer, *Regie*, 68, 120.

whose purpose was to mobilize popular support for their regime, reinforce existing popular nationalistic sentiment, and serve as a powerful, visible demonstration of a unified political will by drawing together all segments of the German population in the joyous celebration of the 'national community'.³⁰ Accordingly, the diverse forms of Nazi festivity congealed into a uniform style of presentation shaped by modern technology and intended for a mass audience. Yet, while the Nazi festival was intended as a transparent expression of the ideal 'national community' based on the formula 'one people, one state, one leader', the conception of the *Volkgemeinschaft* itself varied depending on the different ideological orientations of the respective Nazi organizations responsible for the creation of the distinctive festival culture of the Third Reich. That so much of Nazi festivity acquired the character of a mass propaganda demonstration derived, in the main, from the central role assumed by Joseph Goebbels.

Director of the *Reichspropagandaleitung* (Reich Propaganda Section-RPL) of the NSDAP since January 1929, Goebbels made propaganda a central feature of state activity with the creation of the RMfVP on 13 March 1933.³¹ In June, Hitler vaguely defined the ministry's scope of activity by giving Goebbels complete control over the "spiritual direction of the nation".³² In September Goebbels extended his influence

³⁰David Welch emphasizes the role of propaganda in reinforcing existing attitudes. See *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London and New York, 1993), 5.

³¹Schmeer, *Regie*, 29. See also Richard Taylor, "Goebbels and the Function of Propaganda," in *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations*, ed. David Welch (London and Canberra, 1983), 36-37.

³²Quoted in Schmeer, *Regie*, 38, and Welch, *Third Reich*, 23.

over the cultural life of the nation with the creation of the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture-RKK). Together these three offices constituted a symbiotic administrative structure that rendered Party and state aims practically indistinguishable, especially since many of the same officials held positions in the different organizations.³³ Offices existed in both the RPL and RMfVP for the conception and organization of festivals to which the RKK contributed musicians, theatre groups and other performers in the realm of popular culture.³⁴ From these central offices located in Berlin and Munich, policy and formulations pertaining to public celebration were communicated vertically downward to propaganda officials at the *Gau*, *Kreis* and *Ortsgruppe* levels. Although the local Party boss held nominal power over all administrative matters in his jurisdiction, propaganda officials retained a considerable measure of autonomy in carrying out policy

³³Welch, *Third Reich*, 24-25.

³⁴In the RPL, festival organization fell to Nazi functionaries in the Office of Active Propaganda (Office I) and the Office of Culture (Office IV). The former was responsible for the planning and organization of all propaganda actions ranging from the 'major events' like 1 May and Harvest Thanksgiving Festival to the electoral or plebiscitary rallies and WHW charity canvas held in the *Stützpunkt*, the lowest level of political organization of the NSDAP. Responsibilities included the formulation of programs for public celebrations, site selection and arrangements for all transportation and accommodation. In the parallel state administration of the RMfVP, meanwhile, festivals were the responsibility of Department II, the 'general staff' of the Ministry. From this centralized administration emanated all planning and organization of national holidays, state visits by foreign dignitaries, acts of state, rallies, state funerals and commemorative and initiation ceremonies across the Reich. In addition the department administered the Law for the Protection of National Symbols, which by controlling the public use and display of ceremonial components had a profound impact on the popular expression of celebration in the Third Reich. On the organizational structure of Goebbels's propaganda administration, see Schmeer, *Regie*, 28-40; Vondung, *Magie*, 49-51; Welch, *Third Reich*, xv, 24-29.

emanating from the central organizations under Goebbels's wing. The propaganda apparatus was also integrated horizontally as officials worked closely with similarly employed functionaries in the various Nazi ancillary cadres.³⁵

The creation of the new ministry was, as Goebbels claimed, "a revolutionary act of government" whose purpose was "to place the nation firmly behind the idea of the National Revolution."³⁶ Employing "the most modern methods", the "creative art of modern political propaganda" would bring about the coordination of Nazi state aspirations and the national will in accordance with the Nazi world view.³⁷ Nazi festivals offered Goebbels an especially congenial forum in which to combine propaganda and entertainment.³⁸ In *Die neue Gemeinschaft*, the authoritative Nazi journal devoted to public celebration and recreation planning, and in an endless stream of publications on individual Nazi celebrations, propaganda officials invented the tradition of a new festival culture that purportedly would exist for the next thousand years.³⁹ Since Goebbels conceived of the festival as merely one form of

³⁵In arranging festival events, propaganda officials coordinated policy through the Celebration and Leisure Office of the HJ, the Office Education-Training-Culture of the NSF, the Department of World View and Culture of the SA, the Main Office of the SS, and the Office for Education and Instruction of the RAD. See Schmeer, *Regie*, 33-34, 37.

³⁶Quoted in Taylor, "Goebbels", 35, 39.

³⁷Quoted in Welch, *Third Reich*, 19-20.

³⁸On the importance that Goebbels placed on the blending of propaganda messages and popular cultural entertainment, see Welch, *Third Reich*, 48.

³⁹The monthly journal covered the entire scope of festivity. Writers provided festival organizers with suggestions for model programs, suitable poetry, literary and oratory pieces drawn from the

an all-encompassing active propaganda, in practice he combined public celebration with two other modern forms of popular culture, radio and film, which also fell within the purview of the RMfVP. This had the effect of enhancing the festival's overall propaganda value in the guise of popular entertainment, and provided Nazi festivity with its modern performance-based form.

This same syndetic function of serious jollification animated the theory and practice of festivity in the administrative domain of Robert Ley, Goebbels's chief collaborator and rival in the cultural realm of celebration during the peacetime years of the Third Reich.⁴⁰ In his dual capacity as *Reichsorganisationsleiter* (National Organization Leader-ROL) of the NSDAP and leader of the German Labour Front (DAF),

written works of great Germans, living and dead, to be used in the preparation of speeches, ceremonial and ritual components, example illustrations and descriptions of site decorations, and musical and choral arrangements. They also furnished an ample supply of anecdotes and jokes to help create the appropriate mood whether solemn or light-hearted. A regular series of essays under the title "Our Celebrations" provided descriptions and explanations of traditional as well as Nazi festivia. Though largely an organ of the RPL, it also featured contributions from other NSDAP organizations and ancillary cadres. Among these were the Recreation Office of the KdF leisure organization and Main Training Office of the NSDAP, and increasingly Rosenberg's Office of Folklore and Ceremonial Planning. See *Die neue Gemeinschaft: Das Parteiarchiv für nationalsozialistische Feier- und Freizeitgestaltung*, Hrsg. von Hauptkulturamt in der Reichspropagandaleitung und dem Amt Volkskunde und Feiergusaltung in der Dienststelle des Beauftragten des Führers für die Ueberwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP, (Munich, 1937-1945), hereafter *DnG*. Also see Schmeer, *Regie*, 30, 157-58; Heiber, *Goebbels*, 187.

⁴⁰For a more comprehensive treatment of Ley's administrative control over popular festival culture in Nazi Germany, see Schmeer, *Regie*, 30, 35-37; and Vondung, *Magie*, 51-55. For a discussion of the creation and administrative agenda of the KdF and the often bitter struggle waged by Ley against his opponents in the NSDAP, see Ronald Smelser, *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labour Front Leader* (Oxford, New York, and Hamburg, 1988), 209-60.

Ley presided over a massive Party and state bureaucracy whose influence extended into public celebration. Though Ley shared the Propaganda Minister's proclivity for the staged mass spectacle form of indoctrination (as ROL he supervised the Nuremberg Party rallies), under his stewardship Nazi festivals promoted a greater level of active participation. As part of the goal to organize the entire leisure-time activities of the German people in the spirit of 'strength through Joy', the DAF boss intended public celebration as an effective means to familiarize Germans with the new Nazi cultural ethos and to galvanize support for the Nazi state. At the same time, a more immediate function of KdF-organized festivity was to mobilize workers and rural Germans through directed diversion and indoctrination and thereby to maximize domestic industrial and agricultural output. The promotion and subsidization of 'comradeship evenings' which brought together workers and employers or in rural areas the entire village in collective celebration was central to this purpose.

Fundamental to Ley's collectivist ideology was his conviction that celebration and work formed a unified whole animating the living spirit of the ethnically and culturally pure 'national community'.⁴¹ This reciprocal totality provided the guiding principle behind the

⁴¹See, for example, *Deutsche Fasnacht*, hrsg. vom NS-Gemeinschaft KdF, Amt Feierabend, in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Kulturstab der Reichsjugendführung, dem RNS und der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volkskunde (Berlin, 1938), 4-5, 8. This notion was by no means limited to the DAF chief. As one Nazi official in the NSLB, a sub-organization under control of the ROL, put it: "[o]ut of the will to work and struggle" emerged the will to celebrate and from the revitalizing energy generated in celebration came "the reaffirmation of the will to work and struggle". See Karl Seibold, "Die Grundsätze der Fei-ergestaltung im Schulungslager," in *FuF* (1936): 11.

unparalleled scope of activities pursued by the KdF leisure organization. In their leisure, German workers, farmers and the rest of German society were encouraged to share in the celebration of traditional Germanic customs, recast in the Nazi aesthetic mold, at festivals such as carnival, 1 May, midsummer, and Harvest Thanksgiving Day. To this end the Office *Feierabend*, a department of the KdF largely responsible for entertainment and amusement events, furnished a series of guidebooks in conjunction with various Nazi ancillary organizations covering a number of the major festivals celebrated in the Third Reich.⁴² Combining elements of seasonal folk festival, Nazi ceremonial, military drill, and political rally, the character of the festivals described in these pamphlets reflected the Nazis' preoccupation with the politics of celebration. Reinvigorated by the effervescent experience of collective celebration, Germans were expected to find renewed meaning and beauty in their working lives as members of the 'national community'.⁴³ Yet, it must be added that as an auxiliary department within Ley's massive DAF

⁴²*Deutsche Fasnacht* (see n. 40); *Deutsches Erntedankfest*, hrsg. von der NS-Gemeinschaft KdF, Amt Feierabend, Abt. Volkstum/Brauchstum, in Zusammenarbeit mit der RPL, Amt Kultur, der Reichsjugendführung, dem RNS und der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volkskunde (Hamburg, [1937]); *Nationaler Feiertag des Deutschen Volkes*, hrsg. von der NS-Gemeinschaft KdF, Amt Feierabend, in Gemeinschaft mit der RPL der NSDAP, Amt Kultur, der Reichsjugendführung, dem RNS, der Reichswerkscharführung und dem Frauenamt der DAF und der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für deutsche Volkskunde. Beratungstoff, 2. Folge (Berlin, 1938); *Sommersonnenwende*, hrsg. von der NS-Gemeinschaft KdF, Amt Feierabend, Abt. Volkstum/Brauchstum, in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Kulturamt der Reichsjugendführung, dem RNS und der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Deutsche Volkskunde, Gestaltung, Otto Schmidt und Wolfgang Hirschfeld (Berlin, n.d.); *Vorweihnachtliche Feier*, hrsg. von der NS-Gemeinschaft KdF, Amt Feierabend, Abt. Volkstum/Brauchstum (Berlin, [1938]).

⁴³On Nazi attempts to transform the work ethic and the compensatory function of organized leisure, see Joan Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate, 1800-1945* (Princeton, 1989), 312-75.

administration, the KdF symbolized the relative imbalance between work and leisure in the Third Reich.

Of marginal importance during the formative peacetime years of the Nazi regime, Alfred Rosenberg gained considerable influence over festivity in the later years of the war when Germany's declining fortunes allowed many of the more radical elements in the Party to step into the foreground.⁴⁴ Driven by a virulent anticlericalism, Rosenberg gained control over *Die neue Gemeinschaft* in 1941, where he proceeded to promote his own radical vision of an ideologically-infused festival culture steeped in Nordic ritual and mythology. Chief among Rosenberg's contributions to Nazi festivity were his *weltanschauliche Feierstunde* (ideological ceremony) and *Morgenfeier* (morning ceremony), which were conceived as ceremonial devices for the active indoctrination of the NSDAP rank and file. Another important festival form, the *Lebensfeiern* (life celebrations), encompassing birth, name-giving, wedding, and funeral ceremonies, was intended for the entire society. Each of these solemn ceremonial forms drew heavily on the formal structure of

⁴⁴Rosenberg's limited influence on the cultural life of the nation was based on his roles as editor of the Party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, from 1921 until 1937, leader of the Fighting League for German Culture, a racial cultural organization founded in 1929, and as a contributor to the 'Nazi Cultural Community', in 1937 absorbed by the KdF. In 1934 he adopted the official designation 'the Führer's Commissioner for the Supervision of all intellectual and ideological education and training in the NSDAP', an impressive title that bore little resemblance to his actual influence within the polycratic administrative system of the Nazi state. See Reinhard Bollmus, "Alfred Rosenberg: National Socialism's 'Chief Ideologue'?" in *The Nazi Elite*, ed. Ronald Smelser and Rainer Zitelmann (New York, 1993), 183-90. See also the same author's larger study, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner: Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem* (Stuttgart, 1970).

Christian liturgy whose demise they were intended to expedite.⁴⁵

In sum, the multiplicity and extensiveness of Nazi festival forms notwithstanding, all public celebration in the Third Reich shared a number of common elements, characterized by a consistently dualistic nature which reflected the essentially Manichean world view informing Nazism. As an intensified experience of collective effervescence, the festival acquired a purposiveness under Nazism whose aim, the creation of a racially and culturally pure national community, depended on the successful political mobilization of the Party membership and Nazi sympathizers, and the conversion or neutralization of political opponents. Conceived as a central form of active and indirect propaganda, in practice festivals served as a means of reinforcing existing popular nationalist sentiment through participation in celebration. The imposing spectacular form of the Nazi festival also served as a persuasive demonstration, to recalcitrant Germans as well as to the entire world, of the power of a unified state whose legitimacy rested on overwhelming popular support. Finally, it should be noted that, in general, the forms of Nazi festivals were constantly evolving throughout the Third Reich, not least due to the incessant power struggles waged among the Nazi leaders as they vied with one another for control over popular culture.⁴⁶

⁴⁵On Rosenberg's radical conceptualization of festival culture, see Vondung, *Magie*, 55-57, 65-69, 90-104.

⁴⁶That the Nazi festival had yet to reach its final incontrovertible form was clearly the standpoint of Hitler, who in October 1941 insisted on the need of the Nazi state to create an "impressive decor" and emphasized the importance of providing festivals with a style that would "remain in the memory". Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 102.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF FESTIVAL SPACE AND TIME

The need to establish legitimacy has confronted all agents of political change in the modern era. For states established under the banner of revolution this process is particularly acute. Though new governments have relied on a number of means to gain the consent of society, in the sociocultural sphere "the invention of tradition" has played a pivotal role in this process.⁴⁷ In ransacking history for a usable tradition new states redefined the past according to the ideological context of the present. The solemn celebration accompanying the transfer of Voltaire's remains and later those of Rousseau to the Pantheon linked the French Revolution to the tradition of liberty associated with the "enlightened century", the "century of reason".⁴⁸ Similarly, in their efforts to establish legitimacy for the fledgling communist regime, the Bolsheviks created a festival culture that dramatized the revolutionary tradition of Spartacus, the French Revolution, the Pugachev rebellion and the Paris Commune.⁴⁹ Hitler and the NSDAP, for their part, claimed legitimacy for the 'German Revolution' and the new Nazi state by staking out the tradition of nationalism. By affirming this tradition as their

⁴⁷Eric Hobsbawm defines "invented tradition" as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." See the introductory essay by Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto ed. (Cambridge, 1992), 1-14, 1.

⁴⁸See Bronislaw Baczko, "Enlightenment," in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA and London, 1989), 659-60.

⁴⁹Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 12, 46.

own, the Nazis revived nationalist ambitions that, since unification and the creation of the modern nation-state in 1871, were never far from the surface of German political culture.⁵⁰ German nationalism, moreover, was virtually synonymous with Prussian militarism, at least up to 1918, and both traditions were inextricably linked to war. As Hitler proclaimed in his 'Day of Potsdam' address, the German struggle for national liberation, symbolized in the achievements of Frederick the Great and Bismarck, as well as the 'Burgfrieden' of August 1914, had been betrayed in 1918 by the 'November criminals'. Accordingly, the Nazis could claim that the troubles plaguing the unpopular Weimar republic were the result of the ignominious break with the true course of German history. This extremely partisan interpretation of history allowed the Nazis to claim both a revolutionary break with the immediate past, while claiming legitimacy for the Nazi state by resuming the historical narrative of national destiny.

Yet the Nazis were not content merely to renew the reactionary monarchist national tradition. Once empowered, they set out to recast it in the mold of Nazi racial ideology.⁵¹ Transformed in the monumental

⁵⁰As Peter Fritzsche suggests, the Nazis tapped the political current of radical nationalism evident in the popular festivity attending Hindenburg's victory in the presidential election of 1925. See Peter Fritzsche, "Presidential Victory and Popular Festivity in Weimar Germany: Hindenburg's 1925 Election," *CEH* 23 (1990): 205-24.

⁵¹From the outset of his political career Hitler vehemently rejected the political aims of the reactionary national-conservatives bent on restoring the monarchy. In a speech of 1923 he stated: "One should not imagine that Nationalism is given expression by demanding or wishing that the old flags should fly again, that the old authoritarian state should be resurrected, that the monarchy should be reinstated or that the old circumstances should return in any way." Quoted in Rainer Zitelmann, "Adolf Hitler: The Führer," in *The Nazi Elite*, eds. Smelser and Zitelmann, 115.

revolutionary crucible of Nazism, reactionary nationalist sentiment became a forward-oriented racial nationalism based on the Social Darwinist principle of 'eternal struggle'. National destiny, in short, became Nazi destiny. This transformation of the nationalist military tradition was reflected in the gradual change in the outward forms of public celebration as the NSDAP gradually consolidated its power over the state. Popular festivals increasingly became a celebration of the triumphant existence of the Nazi movement itself. Based on the myth of national destiny, the formalization in popular celebration of the racial national-military tradition by the Nazis produced a conceptual revaluation of time and space that, mediated through the transformative power of modern technology, provided Nazi festivity with both its form and content.

Nazi ideologues recognized that new customs could not be artificially grafted on to existing traditions but had to develop "organically" out of the cultural needs and beliefs of a continually emergent nationally and racially integrated social community.⁵² According to NSLB official Fritz Kaiser, the Nazi movement had forced through a political revolution to establish the ideological principles of a new era "for all time". In other areas, social policy, law, and the economy, structural changes necessarily slowed from the quickened tempo of revolution to that of a "tenacious evolution". The decelerated pace of evolution, conforming as it did to the natural process of "organic" development, was imperative in the cultural sphere. The cultural tasks

⁵²Rudolf Backofen, "Feiern, Festgestaltung und nationalsozialistisches Brauchtum," in *FuF* 1 (1936): 25; Carl Wolf, *Weltanschauung und Kultur*, in *ibid.*, 7 (1938): 68.

of the present, Kaiser pointed out, would only begin to bear fruit with the coming and subsequent generations of German children.⁵³

Thus, the Nazis' conception of time was inconsistent and contradictory. Nazi writers readily combined linear time with its mythical counterpart. To convey a sense of stability against the chaotic flux and fragmentation of modernity, they found it convenient to speak in terms of temporal stasis in slogans such as 'the thousand-year Reich', or the 'eternal watch' of the sixteen martyred Nazis entombed in the twin *Ehrentempel* on the edge of the newly renovated Königsplatz in Munich as part of the 9 November ceremony of 1935,⁵⁴ or in the structural entropy of the architectural theory of 'ruin-value' developed by Hitler's chief architect, Albert Speer.⁵⁵ This static dilation of time, meanwhile, seemingly clashed with the dynamic quality of time encapsulated in the signification of Nazism not as a conventional political party but as an all-embracing movement. Whether it was the incessant marching that evoked a sense of a uniform militarized time, or the equally persistent appeals to the natural development over generations of festival customs among the German people, Nazi Germany was always painted in a state of becoming. This liminal quality conveyed the

⁵³Fritz Kaiser, "Grundgedanken nationalsozialistischer Kulturpolitik," in *FuF* 7 (1938): 72-73.

⁵⁴On the dramatic reenactment of the 9 November putsch in 1935, which combined the ceremonial march with the reburial of the 16 'martyrs' of the movement killed during the actual event, see most recently, Baird, *Die For Germany*, 49-63. Also see Schmeer, *Regie*, 101-5; Vondung, *Magie*, 155-71.

⁵⁵See Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, Collier Books ed. (New York, 1981), 56, 154. Also see Scobie, *Impact*, 93-96.

paradoxical sense of permanent revolution, of a political movement charged with the responsibility to bear the national tradition into the future in the creation of a new and great German culture.⁵⁶ Closely bound up with this dynamic quality of Nazism was the timeless quality of myth. Because the timeless mythical world of Nazi ideology lay beyond the conventional measuring of time historically, time itself was torn from its fixed moorings in the social and cultural life of the German people to serve the new self-styled masters of Germany's destiny.

One of the earliest attempts by the Nazis to recast time in accordance with the revolutionary dynamic of Nazism was the changes introduced into the holiday calendar. Though the Nazis publicly vilified both the French and October Revolutions, they followed both in introducing calendar reform to provide a celebratory context for the revolutionary new order.⁵⁷ In contrast to the radical restructuring of time envisioned by the men of the French Revolution, however, the carefully planned Nazi calendar of celebration was more moderate. As an initial attempt to win Germany's working classes over to the 'national community', the nascent Nazi state made 1 May an official state holiday, something Weimar politicians had failed to do.⁵⁸ Still, more than a full year passed before the Nazi government announced its first

⁵⁶Backofen, "Feiern", 23-24.

⁵⁷For calendar reform during the French Revolution, see Mona Ozouf, "Revolutionary Calendar," in *Critical Dictionary*, eds. Furet and Ozouf, 538-47. For the October Revolution see Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 7, 85, 152-55.

⁵⁸RGBl I, 10 Apr. 1933, 191. See also Heiber, Goebbels, 194.

comprehensive legal revision of the official holiday calendar.⁸⁹ Claiming that the Weimar parliamentary system had allowed federalism to flourish, resulting in a confusion of holiday laws administered by individual *Länder*, the Nazis intended the law to establish a uniformity of ceremonial public time as a temporal expression of the unity of the Reich and the German people. Presumably the highly regulated structure of public time that existed in the modern industrialized German nation in 1933 limited the potential for grand experimentation, since the new official holiday calendar represented a mediated settlement accommodating economic and religious interests in addition to the new political and cultural aspirations of the Nazi leaders.⁹⁰ Accordingly, the new law preserved the tradition of time structured on Christian chronology. Given the already comparatively large number of religious holidays, the Nazis evidently decided against a further reduction of the available

⁸⁹"Gesetz über die Feiertage. Vom 27 Feb. 1934", in RGBl. I, 28 Feb. 1934, 129. Under the new law the following religious holidays were given official status: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Day of Ascension, Whitmonday, Repentance Day, and the two Christmas holidays. In Protestant regions Reformation Day remained a holiday as did Corpus Christi Day in Catholic areas. The following month the state issued a decree establishing regulations for public activity on holidays. See RGBl. I, 17 Mar. 1934, 199-200.

⁹⁰A statement issued jointly by the RMdI and RMfVP declared the primary consideration to be the need for a universal law valid for the entire Reich. Nazi officials also claimed that the inconsistent observance of official holidays adversely affected trade, commerce, industry and public administration. Finally in justifying the inclusion of the most significant religious holidays in the new law, the Nazis explicitly acknowledged that religious sentiments remained deeply rooted in the popular consciousness. See BA, R 43II/1265/28-30, "Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feiertage," RMdI/RMfVP, 16 Feb. 1934.

number of work days.⁶¹ Hence, none of the three holidays commemorating significant dates in the history of the movement and commonly associated with the Nazi recasting of public time was made a statutory holiday. Consequently, as mentioned above, these holidays, 30 January, 24 February and 9 November, remained almost exclusively ceremonial affairs of the NSDAP.⁶² Only Hitler's birthday on 20 April, although never an official Reich holiday, inspired widespread public celebration under the direction of Goebbels.⁶³ Hundreds of thousands of Nazis as well as ordinary German workers, meanwhile, were given paid leave to attend the Nuremberg Party rallies held at the beginning of September, which, although predominantly a Party occasion, often had a profound effect on domestic and foreign audiences alike.

Rather than designate purely NSDAP celebrations as statutory holidays the Nazi government recast existing holiday traditions in the Nazi ideological mold. Established amidst considerable controversy in the Weimar era, 'People's Day of Mourning' was renamed 'Heroes' Memorial Day', and celebrated rather than solemnized in the spirit of national self-sacrifice.⁶⁴ The traditional socialist day of demonstration and

⁶¹Omitted from the new law were a number of religious feast days that had traditionally been observed as holidays whether enjoying legal status or not.

⁶²NSDAP as well as ancillary organization officials were released from their administrative duties for the day, but were expected to attend Party functions and celebrations commemorating Nazi holidays. See BA, NS 22/675, AO 77/38, Schwarz, 12 Dec. 1938.

⁶³See Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 57-9, 64, 72, 79, 140-41; Vondung, *Magie*, 78.

⁶⁴BA, R 43 II/1265/33, RMdI to Lammers, 20 Feb. 1934. Also see Schmeer, *Regie*, 83-87; Vondung, *Magie*, 76.

celebration, 1 May, became in 1933 the 'Holiday of National Labour'. The following year, in a deliberate attempt to divest it completely of any residual political meaning, the Nazis renamed it the "National Holiday of the German Folk", erected maypoles across the land and invested it with the tradition and customs of a seasonal spring folk festival. Finally, the Nazis snatched Harvest Thanksgiving Day from the Protestant calendar of feast days, generously refurbishing it with a thick patina of 'blood and soil'.⁸⁵

Other traditional non-legal festive days were also redefined according to Nazi ideology.⁸⁶ Mothers' Day, an American invention adopted by German business interests in the Weimar era, acquired rites of competition and, in effect, became an awards ceremony honouring those most dutiful in the preservation of the German race. Midsummer gained immense importance as a folkloric celebration of German youth, with its bonfire camp-outs and torchlight processions. The concerted effort to recast Christmas and the Advent season as a secular festival based on the Nordic celebration of light with the winter solstice as the axial holiday constituted perhaps the most symbolic of the Nazi transformations of the festive year. Finally, Nazi propagandists also attempted to revive folkloric customs associated with the Easter holiday and

⁸⁵Ibid. With the exception of 1 May, the other two holidays appropriated for the annual cycle of Nazi celebration retained their temporal location in the Christian calendar. Heroes' Memorial Day was celebrated on the fifth Sunday before Easter, hence on the second or third Sunday in March. The observance of Harvest Thanksgiving Day fell on the first Sunday following Michaelmas in accordance with Protestant tradition dating from 1570. This usually meant the first Sunday in October, although in Catholic regions it varied. See RGBI. I, 28 Feb. 1934, 129.

⁸⁶On the following, see Vondung, *Magie*, 79-81, 85-87.

recast it as a spring festival.

The Nazi calendar was largely institutionalized by 1934. A more radical restructuring of time envisioned by some elements within the Party, on the other hand, never materialized. An early anti-semitic measure, however, eliminated all references to Jewish holidays and festivals in the new German calendar, particularly within the administration.⁸⁷ Anti-religious elements in the Party, moreover, welcomed the opportunity to interfere in traditional religious holidays, both in Protestant and Catholic areas, that were not included in the new holiday law.⁸⁸ In December 1933, Wilhelm Frick, Reich Minister of the Interior, advised state officials to abandon plans already implemented within some official circles to replace the traditional names of the months with "new, purely German terms". Although Frick contemplated a new, neo-pagan Nazi nomenclature for the months of the year based on

⁸⁷BA, R 43 II/1256/4, RMdI to all Obersten Reichsbehörden and Landesregierungen, 27 Nov. 1933.

⁸⁸Among these were Epiphany, Joseph's Day, Peter and Paul Day, Mary's Assumption and All Saints' Day. For Württemberg, which encompassed both Protestant and Catholic regions, see the correspondence between church, NSDAP and government officials covering the years 1933-1938 in HStAS, E 130, Bü 1105. The observance (and non-observance) of Corpus Christi, although a legal holiday in predominantly Catholic regions, continued to be the subject of public and administrative confusion. See RGBl. I, 394-95, 19 May 1934; HStAD, Regierung Aachen 23150, RP-Aachen to RMdI, 3 Dec. 1934; *ibid.*, Polizeipräsident-Aachen to RP-Aachen, 6 Jan. 1935. In Bavaria, officials requested a change in the holiday law to reflect prevailing religious customs, since All Saints' Day was commonly observed by both Catholics and Protestants as a solemn family occasion for visiting cemeteries, while the observance of Repentance Day was of limited religious significance. See BA, R 43II/1265/77-78, "Gesetz zur Aenderung des Gesetz über die Feiertage vom 27. Februar 1937, Nov. 1935. Hitler and Goebbels vetoed the request on the basis that allowing individual Länder to regulate holidays would promote a "relapse" toward federalism. See BA, R 43II/1265/81, RMfVP to Lammers, 14 Nov. 1935.

Nordic mythology, the idea was shelved to avoid administrative "misunderstandings".⁶⁹ Hence, as a means to acquire political legitimacy, the Nazi reform of the holiday calendar reflected an opportunistic compromise between the 'revolutionary' cultural aspirations of the Nazi movement and the existing cultural order shaped by modern industry and traditional religious practice. That its moderation ultimately served to further Nazi state power politics was apparent in Hitler's remark during the war that in considering whether to preserve the Christian calendar or introduce a revolutionary one to celebrate the new Nazi era, he opted for the former since "the year 1933 merely renewed" the "link with a military tradition".⁷⁰

The Nazis resorted to more than calendar reform in their attempts to restructure public time. The festival experience itself offered the NSDAP a unique means to establish a new national rhythm of public life. Removed from everyday time and place, the Nazi festival, like all festivals, modified the experience of real and symbolic time.⁷¹ Through the spoken word, iconographic inventions, or the ritualized reenactment of historical events the Nazi festival extended the temporal frame backwards, linking it with the national tradition and the Party's own historical milestones, and forward to a future whose destiny was wholly controlled by the new political masters of Germany. At the same time, it compressed this dilated sense of mythical time into an

⁶⁹BA, R 43II/1256/5, RMdI, 16 Dec. 1933.

⁷⁰Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 164.

⁷¹On the exceptional frame of time and space as an integral component of the festival experience, see Alessandro Falassi, "Festival: Definition and Morphology," in *Time Out of Time*, ed. Falassi, 4.

experiential structure of an hour, a day, or several days as in the case of the Nuremberg rallies. This had the effect of intensifying the festival experience for participants and enhancing the meaning of the collective event for the individual. Though celebrating a past event or the promise of the future, the celebration constituted an event in and of itself as a self-dramatization of the Nazi movement. Accordingly, a reciprocal relationship existed between the actual event and its reconstructed commemoration. In the 9 November celebration, for example, participants and spectators were expected to make the unconscious connections by drawing renewed vitality from the "original powers" of the movement represented by the Hitler putsch (and the entire *Kampfzeit*) and at the same time from recognition of the great strides made by the movement in the decade that had elapsed since the actual event.⁷² As such the 9 November celebration clearly demonstrates the modern dynamic quality of accelerated time preferred by the Nazi 'movement'. Though the festival dramatized history in the context of the national tradition to provide a sense of permanence and continuity to the revolutionary Nazi state, its more urgent function was to demonstrate the remarkable progress made by the NSDAP in the conquest of society. Hence, the exceptional framing of mythical time served to resituate the Nazi regime in the historical process as the future-oriented guardians of the national destiny.

Analogous to the manipulation of public time, the revaluation of public space under Nazism combined traditional and innovative forms and

⁷²BA, R 78/2298, untitled and undated four-page circular issued to radio reporters on the occasion of 9 November ceremony in Munich in 1933.

styles of self-representation in the invention of Nazi traditions. As an exceptional event, the festival permits both the compression and expansion of space. Domination over the festival topography allowed the Nazis to compress their symbolic message into an integral, if monumental, spatial locus, thus enhancing its propaganda value. At the same time, the expansion of their dominion over the entire public space within the Reich allowed the Nazis to draw the entire German population into their ideological field of meaning. To create a sense of permanence and continuity with the national tradition, for example, the Nazis resorted to conventional spatial forms of festivity. In their extensive plans for the building of public monuments in homage to national historical figures and the dead of the Nazi movement, they revived the national mania for such statuary that swept Germany in the late nineteenth century.⁷³ To establish continuity with popular festival culture, the Nazis also appropriated traditional festival grounds for their own ceremonies. In Munich, for example, the Theresienwiese, the site of the annual *Oktoberfest*, was also home to the Nazi midsummer celebrations where a reported 200,000 festivalgoers attended the folk festival.⁷⁴

The restructuring of tectonic public space, which combined neoclassical lines with the German *völkisch* vernacular on a monumental

⁷³On the widespread construction of monuments and statuary dedicated to Kaiser Wilhelm I and Bismarck during the Wilhelmine era, see Thomas Nipperdey, "Nationalidee und Nationaldenkmal in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 206 (1968): 529-85; George L. Mosse, "Caesarism, Circuses and Movements," *JCH* 6 (1971): 167-82; Mosse, *Nationalization*, 47-68; Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *Invention of Tradition*, eds. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 264, 274-76.

⁷⁴BA, MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 3 Aug. 1935.

scale⁷⁶, not only served as an imposing monument to Nazi state power, but cast in stone and mortar the Nazis' claim to be the finest flowers and protectors of the cultural tradition of western civilization. Conforming to Hitler's "heroic" notion of architecture in general, this taste for the colossal also extended into public festival space.⁷⁸ To take but one example, the unparalleled immensity of the buildings and boulevards proposed for the Party grounds in Nuremberg was dwarfed by the approximately 16.5 square kilometers encompassing the festival space itself.⁷⁷ Such expansive dimensions were necessary to accommodate the more than one million celebrants who regularly participated in the biggest of all NSDAP political feasts. The massive scale of Nazi festival space effectively extended the vertical and horizontal axes which communicated the intended meaning of Nazi state power. Framing the festival space of the Luitpold Arena, flagpoles and banners of almost forty metres along with raised symbols of the swastika and stylized eagle rose high above the massed participants and spectators, forcing

⁷⁶Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 185-87.

⁷⁸Architectural plans for public buildings commonly incorporated disproportionately expansive ceremonial space, whether in large porticos, interior hallways and vestibules, or ornate staircases. See Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich*, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber (New York, 1979), 192.

⁷⁷The construction plans for the massive Nuremberg Party grounds included permanent parade grounds, granite podiums and stages, a huge Congress for indoor meetings, a stadium with a seating capacity for 400,000 and a broad boulevard linking the festival site with the city. Only the parade grounds (the Zeppelinwiese) and the monumental grandstand were ever completed. Construction of the partially completed new Congress Hall was abandoned in the winter of 1942-43. See Burden, *Party Rallies*, 56-63. From an architectural perspective, see Scobie, *Impact*, 69-72.

their perspective upwards in a powerful symbolic demonstration of the *Führerprinzip*. The arrayal of the uniformed mass traversing the broad expanse of the festival space, meanwhile, imparted a democratic, egalitarian sense of spatial order that corresponded to the *Volkgemeinschaft* ideal of an ethnically and culturally integrated society, united in the shared expression of the national will.

As important as the monumental aesthetic was to the formalization of festival space in the Third Reich, it paled in comparison to the sheer extensiveness of the celebratory landscape. Few if any populated areas in the Third Reich failed to renovate public space to accommodate Nazi festival events, even if it was often little more than a change in the names of streets and squares in recognition of the new political order. For organizers unsure of their talents for decoration, Nazi publications provided illustrated instructions for the preparation of the festival space in villages, towns and cities.⁷⁸ Consonant with their bourgeois and military cast of mind, the Nazis emphasized the principles of cleanliness and order in the formal arrangement of public festival space.⁷⁹ Accordingly, in practice, the formalization of festival space corresponded to the ideological norm of social organization. For example, in an effort to extend control over the cultural life of rural Germans, including all public forms of celebration, the Nazis intended village community houses to replace the church and tavern as

⁷⁸*Nationaler Feiertag des Deutschen Volkes*, 1st ed., 46-51.

⁷⁹*Ibid.* See also the 2d edition of the same publication, 85.

the spatial locus of rural ceremony, celebration and socialization.⁸⁰ Although never built in the numbers envisioned by Robert Ley, within whose ambit they fell, Nazi community houses were generally constructed according to vernacular styles such as the medieval half-timbered house or alpine chalet.⁸¹ Similarly, the introduction of comradeship evenings into the workplace resulted in the construction of 'comradeship houses' in some sectors of industry, primarily those connected to armaments.⁸² Impelled by their totalitarian objectives, the Nazis even attempted to invade the private space of the home. Nazi publications like *Die neue Gemeinschaft* provided suggestions and illustrations for suitable decorations to adorn the family home for special celebrations.

Above all, Germany's cities, which provided the large numbers of people required by the mass cultural aesthetic, attracted the attention of Nazi festival organizers. Hence it was not uncommon for Nazi propaganda officials to orchestrate a spectacular transformation of the public space of host cities into festival grounds. This was as true for Nuremberg as the city of the annual Party rallies as it was for Munich, 'the capital of the movement'. Typical of this transformation of a city into a festival stage was the renovation of Munich's central core for the celebration of the "Day of German Art" commemorating the opening of

⁸⁰Wilhelm Kircher, "Dörfliche Kulturarbeit," in *FuF* 7 (1938): 109-10.

⁸¹Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics*, 193-99. Miller Lane estimated that approximately a hundred such community centres were built in the Third Reich, considerably less than the number required to displace the churches in individual communities.

⁸²More economizing factories, meanwhile, simply renovated existing canteens. See *DBS*, 2: 798, 3 Aug. 1935.

the House of German Art in July 1937.⁸³ In the weeks before the pageant the entire central core of the city became a massive construction site. Workers dug deep pits at six metre intervals along the Ludwigstraße to accommodate flag poles for the upcoming event and for future festivities. Massive twelve metre long flags hung from each of the poles. In the area around the railway station alone over two hundred flag poles had been installed. At regular intervals above the parade route three flags were suspended from cables traversing the streets. Public transit shelters were removed to provide added space for the parade. Everywhere mighty flaming pylons had been installed and decorated towers were placed at strategic points across the city. Public buildings both inside and out were adorned with red and brown bunting and laurel-wreaths. Every household received candles, an estimated three million being distributed, to provide festive lighting on the first evening of the celebration. Spotlights illuminated all city memorials. Concerts took place at ten different public squares across the city. The exhibition grounds, ringed by a barrier of SS men, provided the stage for the reception of Reich government leaders on the evening prior to the commemorative event.

On the following day, the focal point of the festivities, the parade presenting "Two Thousand Years of German Culture" took place. More a martial than an artistic display, with historical figures and floats representing the development of two millennia of German military craft culminating with representative columns from the modern *Wehrmacht*,

⁸³The following report is provided in *DBS*, 4: 1075-79, 18 Sept. 1937. See also Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich*, 2-5.

SA and SS, as well as NSKK units, the parade provided a matchless example of the cultural distortion and excess attending the Nazi festival aesthetic. That evening the Nazis held a festive celebration for the artistic community in the exhibition grounds and the Englischer Garten, the large park in central Munich. Temporary dance floors were used for performances by costumed dancers for the paying spectators. Behind the House of German Art, a special reception took place for the cream of the Party and state. Selected guests from the world of music and art demonstrated their talents on tribunes constructed for the entertainment of the Party elite, who spent the evening toasting one another with endless glasses of champagne.

Doubtless much of the Party leadership preferred the urban landscape as the backdrop for their public and private celebrations. The ideological tenet of "blood and soil", despite its apparent centrality to Nazi propaganda, never gained full support among the Party leadership. In its most virulent form as an unequivocal condemnation of modernism, symbolized by the modern city and technological innovation, Richard Walther Darré, Heinrich Himmler, and, to a lesser extent, Alfred Rosenberg considered the doctrine of paramount importance to the new cultural order envisioned by the Nazi state. Hitler and especially Goebbels meanwhile paid only lip service to it in propaganda appeals to rural Germans.⁸⁴ Hence, nowhere was the transformation of the festival terrain more at odds with one of the more popular slogans issuing from

⁸⁴See Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics*, 155. Also see J.K. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-44* (London and Beverly Hills, 1976), 247-48; Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 337-43.

the ideological mill of Nazism than in the construction of the site on the Bückeberg for the annual Harvest Thanksgiving Festival. With the full complement of Nazi festivalia, including a mock battle exhibiting the latest land and air equipment and weaponry, spectacular fireworks and hundreds of swastika flags suspended beneath parachutes falling from the skies on the transient population of more than one million, it was an overpowering scene more reminiscent of a panoramic metropolis at war than an untrammelled pastoral landscape.⁶⁶

Consonant with the revolutionary forward-oriented trajectory of Nazi ideology, the transformation of public space signalled, as Hitler proclaimed on various occasions, a "new era" in which "new means of expression" permitted the German people to fashion "itself anew".⁶⁷ Fundamental to this new expressive capacity of public celebration in the Third Reich, as in all eras, was the extensive network of material components that filled the festival space.⁶⁸ In the attempt to transform public space in order to claim it as their own, the Nazis made use of a broad contexture of material and ritual components. The obligatory public gesture of the 'Hitler salute' signified the national unity of

⁶⁶For a detailed account of the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival see Schmeer, *Regie*, 87-91. Beginning with half a million celebrants in 1933, by 1937 the number had more than doubled to 1.2 million. While traditional folk customs were an integral component of the festival from its inception, like all Nazi festivity it became increasingly militarized after 1935 when the mock battles took place for the first time.

⁶⁷Quoted in Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics*, 189.

⁶⁸For an anthropological study of the compositional matrix as a constituent part of all festivity, see Richard M. Dorson, "Material Components in Celebration," in *Celebration*, ed. Turner, 33-57. Dorson examines the material objects found in seven different celebrations but not National Socialist festivals.

the 'People's Community'. Flags, standards, banners and bunting in black, white and red enclosed the Nazi festive space. Decorated trees, maypoles, wreaths, and garlands signalled the continuity of traditional folk customs with nature's festive cycle. Torches, bonfires, candles, fireworks and spotlights blazed beneath darkened ceilings and skies, luminous symbols of the rekindled national will. Uniforms in brown, black and field grey, medals, awards and decorations in all shapes and sizes, and traditional costumes adorned the festive body, and in the process encouraged cultural standardization and conformity. Food, drink and tobacco sated the sensuous appetite, proof of the Nazis' increasingly triumphant battle to end economic deprivation. Music, salutes, salvoes, oaths, speeches, the pealing of bells, and the silent solemnity of commemoration filled the festive air. Parades, military drill, sport and dance imparted synchronized motion to the celebratory dynamic. Together these material components and festive rites constituted the palette from which was painted the vibrant canvas of festivity in the Third Reich.

This complementary and largely derivative symbolic field was designed to engage Germans in the festive expression of Nazi political culture. Whether as active participants in popular celebration and ritualistic reenactment or passive spectators of the spectacular festive performance, the celebrants were inundated with a network of contiguous signs on a magnitude and frequency seldom if ever before realized. In addition, however, the growth of the leisure and tourism industries in the modern era had in effect divested most of the existing traditional folk customs and material components of any residual archaic meaning.

As part of the increasingly commercialized mass culture already flourishing in the advanced industrial society of inter-war Germany, such folk customs, which the 'blood and soil' exponents in the NSDAP revered in their desire to create a neo-pagan national culture, retained their value primarily as popular entertainment.⁸⁸ This symbolic transference occurred under Nazism even with some of its most antediluvian material components like fire and light.⁸⁹

From the torchlight parades celebrating Hitler's call to the chancellorship during the night of 30-31 January 1933, to the late afternoon of 30 April 1945 when the ritual burning of the corpses of Hitler and Eva Braun took place in the Chancellery garden before a handful of mourners, including Bormann and Goebbels, fire remained a ubiquitous sign of National Socialist festival culture.⁹⁰ Between these two ceremonial events, signifying the beginning and end of the thousand year Reich, occurred the initial ritual book burning ceremonies of 11 May 1933, the consecration of the fire inaugurating the "eternal guard" of the sixteen men who died as a result of Hitler's ill-fated putsch of 9 November 1923 on the anniversary of that event in 1935, the eternal Olympic flame carried to Berlin in 1936, *Kristallnacht*, the wanton burning and destruction of numerous synagogues throughout Germany

⁸⁸On the long-term transformation of folk culture into popular mass-consumer culture see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, passim.

⁸⁹For this reason it seems inappropriate to regard Nazi symbols and ceremonial rituals solely or even primarily as singular manifestations of the ritual action and objects of worship of a secular religion. Cf. Vondung, *Magie*, 155-99; Mosse, *Nationalization*, 16-17, 202-6.

⁹⁰The events surrounding the 'Viking funeral' of Hitler and Braun are recreated in Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, reprint ed. (London and Basingstoke, 1987), 226-35.

ordered by Goebbels before the assembled 'Old Fighters' in Munich's town hall during the annual 9 November celebrations of 1938,⁸¹ and the extensive use of luminous components like fireworks, flaming pylons, fire-wheels, bonfires and searchlights in annual Nazi celebrations like midsummer, 9 November, and Yulefest. Yet, even though fire in all its forms was one of the most visible images of public celebration in the Third Reich, it too was a borrowed object of festivity with a rich and varied tradition centred in religious, nationalist, student, and more recently socialist festival culture.⁸²

As with all material components adapted for use in Nazi festivity, however, the Nazis claimed incandescent symbols as their own. Fire was, as Nazi festival publications repeatedly proclaimed, an integral

⁸¹Elke Fröhlich, "Joseph Goebbels: The Propagandist," in *Nazi Elite*, eds. Smelser and Zitelmann, 57-58.

⁸²On the use of fire imagery in the Lutheran church see Johannes Burkhardt, "Reformations- und Lutherfeiern," in *Oeffentliche Festkultur: Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, eds. Dieter Düding, Peter Friedmann, and Paul Münch (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1988), 223-24. On the fireworks and ceremonial fires used in nationalist celebrations of liberation such as the Battle of Leipzig Memorial Celebration of 18 October 1814 and the National Festival that same year, which included in some locations the ritualistic burning in effigy of Napoleon, see Dieter Düding, "Das deutsche Nationalfest," in *ibid.*, 70-72, 77. The torchlight processions and bonfires central to German student patriotic celebrations are discussed by Peter Brandt, "Das studentische Wartburgfest vom 18./19. Oktober 1817," in *ibid.*, 96-97; and in the same volume, Wolfram Siemann, "Krieg und Frieden in historischen Gedenkfeiern des Jahres 1913," 300, 312. On the fireworks and torchlight processions that became a common feature of socialist festival culture, see Peter Friedemann, "'Wie munter und wie ordentlich wir unsere Feste zu feiern verstehen'. Gewerkschaftsfeste vor 1914," in *ibid.*, 379; Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labour in Imperial Germany* (Oxford, 1985), 99; W.L. Guttsmann, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (New York, Oxford, and Munich, 1990), 247.

component of the Nazi festive cycle.⁹³ Each celebration, moreover, carried with it different forms of incandescence and, consequently, distinct yet complementary shadows were cast on the field of meaning associated with the igneous display.⁹⁴ There was little doubt in the minds of Germans as to the symbolic as well as literal meaning of the ceremonial book burnings initiated by the Propaganda Minister, Goebbels, in Berlin and elsewhere in May 1933. It was a singularly Nazi festive and ceremonial response to a perceived problem. The spectacular pyrotechnic exhibition of destruction occasioned by the fireworks display, meanwhile, was a common feature marking the end of numerous festivals in Nazi Germany.⁹⁵ With their temporary incendiary display of noise, smoke and coloured lights inundating the acoustic, olfactory and visual fields of the festive event, fireworks provided an intense and dramatic message of the power and dynamism informing the political

⁹³Typical of such pronouncements was the claim made in a KdF guidebook on midsummer celebrations: "Festivals and celebrations rise and fall in the course of the great wheel of year and life. With it goes the flame. It shines in the candle at Christmas time, higher it flames at the spring festivals, on high blazes the stack of wood of the summer solstice, silently and in earnest remembrance it burns in the vessels and pylons of 9 November and then finally the lights on the Advent season wreath complete the ring." In *Sommersonnenwende*, 14.

⁹⁴Owing to his passion for the opera, Hitler understood the effect on the audience's mood of the dramatic contrast between light and darkness. For this reason he preferred evening rallies and festive events. Moreover it opened his eyes to the propaganda value of film which in the darkness of movie theatres had a similar effect. See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 474. See also Mosse, *Nationalization*, 194.

⁹⁵Roger Abrahams has suggested that fireworks represent the most direct and exciting sign of the ephemeral and destructive nature of festival in the modern vocabulary of celebration. See Roger Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebrations," in *Time Out of Time*, ed. Falassi, 180. Although Abrahams chooses as his subject the modern American festival, his interpretation of the meaning of fireworks in general extends beyond that context.

culture of the Third Reich. The message of explosive and dynamic energy presented by the firecracker also contrasted sharply with the message of permanence encoded in the eternal flames installed in the *Ehrentempel* on the Königsplatz as part of the 9 November commemoration in 1935 and above the Zeppelinwiese in Nuremberg beginning in 1937.⁹⁶ Similarly, the seven-nation tour of the eternal Olympic flame from Olympia to Berlin provided the resourceful Nazi propaganda machine with a vehicle to present to Germans and the world National Socialism as the direct descendant of the classical legacy.⁹⁷

Fire also assumed an important role in the concerted effort to displace the religious aspect of the Christmas celebration with a seasonal festival, whose origins, anti-religious Nazi writers claimed, were to be traced back to the ancient Indo-Germanic winter solstice. Largely restricted to the HJ and the SS, the winter solstice celebration was not intended, Nazi publicists maintained, to supercede the "family" Christmas celebration. Rather as one writer put it, "in the light of the blazing flames the oath is taken that they would never allow to be extinguished the fire that the Führer had set in their hearts".⁹⁸

⁹⁶Burden, *Party Rallies*, 60.

⁹⁷Detailed accounts of the Olympic flame publicity campaign are provided in Mandell, *Nazi Olympics*, 129-38; Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games*, 132-37. Leni Riefenstahl's elaborate arrangements for the filming of the Olympic torch run are reconstructed in Cooper C. Graham, *Leni Riefenstahl and Olympia* (Metuchen, NJ and London, 1986), 56-65.

⁹⁸"*Lichtfeier*". *Sinn, Geschichte, Brauch und Feier der deutschen Weihnacht*. Sonderheft der *FuF* (n.d.): 21. The text of a typical "Oath of the flames" was meant to effect a symbolic transformation: "We ourselves want to burn, want to be flames that warm and make glowing all things tepid and cold. Never will the sacred flame in us die out, we will always glow for Volk and Führer. Always since the beginning of the world light triumphs over darkness. As living torches we want to strike

Implicit in the description of the new Nazi winter celebration was the notion that devotion to the nation and its leader would eventually supplant religious worship. The winter solstice festival, moreover, celebrated "the victory of light over darkness, the truth over the lies" and the triumph of the Nazi beliefs over "the powers of destruction."⁹⁹ Echoing the secular sentiments of the Enlightenment, the anticlerical message implied in such assertions was self-evident.

More popularly, guidebooks offered suggestions for renewing traditions that accentuated the fire and light associated with seasonal rather than religious festivities. Customs such as the leap over the flames, the communal dance around the fire, and the singing of midsummer songs, in addition to the oath of loyalty to the Fatherland, Nazi writers maintained, had been reclaimed in the festival culture of the Third Reich by the summer solstice celebration which "renewed a deep meaning" consonant with the "original sense" of the celebration.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of these practices was to accentuate the sense of "inseparable community", particularly among young Germans who as the protectors of the "sacred flame" were expected to carry the luminous torch of Nazism "into the future."¹⁰¹

together into a single blaze, to work and struggle for one sacred goal: eternal Germany." In *ibid.*, 36. This oath is included as a feature of a winter solstice celebration recommended as a model for NSLB education camps in conjunction with the local SA.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Sommersonnenwende*, 11; and BA, NS 22/782, "Sommer-Sonnwende: Gestaltungsvorschlag für die Schulungslager des NSLB," in *Mitteilungsblatt für Fest- und Freizeitgestaltung im Schulungslager*, hrsg. Hauptamt für Erzieher, Abt. Schulung (May 1936): 2.

¹⁰¹*Lichtfeier*, 11-12, 21-22.

Whatever the neo-pagan symbolism attached to fire and light objects and rituals and to the broad variety of other archaic folk customs, the more attractive aspect of such customs presumably lay in their recreational value. The sociability and cordial rites of competition informing 'rituals' like the bonfire sing-a-long, the springing through the flames by couples, or costumed folk dances at midsummer celebrations sponsored by the KdF and other Nazi organizations suggests that the value of such festival customs rested in their attractiveness as a recreational form of popular entertainment, whatever their ideological content. Similarly, the arrayal of hundreds of torchlight bearers in the shape of a colossal living swastika no doubt entertained the massive crowd assembled at the spectacular solstice celebration of 1938 in Berlin organized by the RMfVP. Such spectacularly choreographed performances clearly demonstrate Goebbels's modern notion that propaganda had its greatest impact when disguised as popular entertainment. Finally, the one hundred and thirty searchlights used to form the 'cathedral of light' framing the Zeppelinwiese in Nuremberg combined the dramatic, symbolic effects of lighting with modern means of advanced technology. The brainchild of Hitler's favored architect, Albert Speer, the luminous columns projected skyward against the darkness reached a height of eight thousand metres before converging in an undefined glow.¹⁰² This luminescent architectonic space created simultaneously a sense of both enclosure and boundlessness and doubtless awed those present as much by its technical fluency as by any vaguely mystical effect.

¹⁰²Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 58-59.

Speer's 'cathedral of light', which he regarded as his most impressive and enduring architectural achievement, illustrates the central role assumed by technology in the Nazi festival. The unparalleled application of all available means of modern technology in the invention of a distinctive festival culture reveals the extent to which the Nazis like most Germans embraced the modern world of technology.¹⁰³ More than any other aspect of festival culture in the Third Reich, the functional and formal properties of advanced technology provided Nazism with its modern cultural face.

The crucial role that advanced technology played in the Nazi 'seizure of power' was emphasized by Hitler in a speech to the NSKK in Coburg on the occasion of a 'Führer roll call': "Without motor vehicles, without aeroplanes and without loudspeakers we would never have conquered over Germany!"¹⁰⁴ This fascination with modern technology continued unabated after 1933. In their transformation of modern technological components into symbols of national unity, renewal and power, Nazi writers and propagandists approached the level of obsession with science and technology embraced by Filippo Marinetti and the

¹⁰³On the cultural significance of technology for the modern mass-consumer society of the inter-war era in the form of popular motorcycle races, see Saldern, "Cultural Conflicts", 317-38. Also see, Fritzsche, *Nation of Fliers*, 4-5, 186-89. For a contrasting view, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984), 1-4. Herf posits a paradoxical reconciliation of modern technology and the irrational, antimodernist temper of romanticism that had gained currency among a growing segment of the German right and purportedly became institutionalized in the political culture of National Socialism. On the face of it, Herf's contradictory approach seems misplaced, reversing as it does the fundamental forward-oriented trajectory of the Nazi movement. Cf. Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 328.

¹⁰⁴VB, 303, 30 Oct. 1935.

Futurist movement so revered by the Italian Fascists.¹⁰⁶ During the referendum campaign of March 1936, for instance, Goebbels choreographed a series of airshows featuring the gigantic airships Hindenburg and Graf Zeppelin, undeniable symbols of the modern technological world. Everywhere their presence touched off wild enthusiasm especially in Berlin where in the company of the Führer hundreds of thousands crowded the amusement park to greet the arrival of the imposing dirigibles. Feted as a symbolic expression of national power derived from the Nazis' commitment to technological progress, the airships, and aviation in general, became a stock component of the symbolic network fashioned by the Nazis for their distinctive festival aesthetic.¹⁰⁸ Symbolically the airships extended festival space upwards, transforming it in the process into an event without horizon. Closing out the annual Party rally in Nuremberg beginning with the 'Party Day of Freedom' of 1935, the military maneuvers, which featured mock aerial battles fought with the latest aircraft and weapons, provided an unequivocal sign of the German mastery of the skies.¹⁰⁷ Like Speer's 'cathedral of light', the zeppelins and other types of military aircraft laid powerful claim to an unbounded cosmos. More ominously, the same Nazi sovereignty of the skies signified a sense of enclosure, reinforcing the repressive nature

¹⁰⁶See for example the reports on the microphone as a powerful "symbol of the new era", a symbol on level with the swastika itself, in *Deutsche Sender*, 18, Apr. 1935 and *Bayerisches Funk Echo*, 45, 1936.

¹⁰⁸Fritzsche, *Nation of Fliers*, 186-89, 189: "Both metaphorically and literally, technology was the projection of the nation and the priority of national identity."

¹⁰⁷For a description of the military maneuvers, see Burden, *Party Rallies*, 110-12.

of the Nazi police state.¹⁰⁸

Projects were also advanced which aimed to redefine conventional festival components in wholly modern terms through the incorporation of advanced technology. In October 1933 Max Esser, a Berlin professor, presented a scale model of his project "The Bells of German Unity" to Hitler. Deemed worthy of consideration by Goebbels, the project consisted of a series of bell towers to be located in seven cities with Berlin at the geographic centre. The German people would be invited to ring the bells on the occasion of national celebrations. As "an eternal, indestructible and visible symbol of the unity of the German Volk", Esser's design combined a turbid mix of religious, martial, folkloric, nationalist, revanchist, martial, and Nazi symbols that on the whole stressed the theme of national liberation. In a revised proposal submitted in 1936, a gilded eagle with the swastika clutched in its talons crowned the towers. Emphasizing the emotive power of the sovereign image, Esser declared: "Thus, it will be held visibly before the eyes of the people through this golden symbol of supreme power, that it will stand eternally under the protection of our great Führer and his National Socialist world."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Fritzsche, *Nation of Fliers*, 189: "Casting their shadow on all corners of the Reich, the airships also added to the dreadful sense that citizens were under surveillance from the air. The national union which the zeppelins helped tug together in March 1936 was as invasive as it was fraternal and patriotic."

¹⁰⁹Quotes from BA, R43 II/1265/3, "Die Glocken der deutschen Einigkeit," Max Esser, 11 Mar., 13 and 29 May 1933; R43 II/1266/10, revised edition with supplement of proposal "Die Glocken der deutschen Einigkeit," prefaced by Esser letter to Hitler, 29 Mar. 1936. For the complete texts of the proposals and accompanying correspondence between Esser, Lammers and Hitler dating from Mar. 1933 to May 1936, see BA, R43 II/1265/2-16; and BA, R43 II/1266/5-17.

The most intriguing aspect of the project, however, was its innovative incorporation of advanced technology. Indeed the fundamental symbolic function of the design, the acoustic representation of the abstract quality of unity, was inconceivable without an appreciation of the popular application of radio technology. Technology amplified the receptive field, both visually and acoustically. The illuminated swastika crowning the design extended the visual field beyond the normal crepuscular boundary. The dominant Nazi symbol would attract the viewer's eyes during the festive night while the rich tones of the bells would penetrate the listener's ear. More importantly, however, was the limitless extension of the acoustic field. Microphone, loudspeaker and radio technology permitted the bells to chime in unison in the ears of all Germans tuned into the radio broadcast of one of the several national festive events. With the capabilities of short-wave radio, the bell tolls, normally audible only to local residents, could conceivably be heard around the world. The capability of extending the symbolic message beyond its local boundaries through the medium of radio endowed a common object of celebration with the power to transcend time and space. By exploiting wireless transmission it was possible to break down the barriers imposed by geographical distances, thereby facilitating the momentary binding of celebrants in the festive occasion. Thus the power of Esser's idea rested on its potential to call together all Germans in common celebration. Beyond the festival participants and the potential national radio audience of sixty million, technical reproduction would allow the Nazis to extend the immediacy of festival events across the entire globe, demonstrating the strength of the new Nazi

state not only to uprooted Germans but also to foreign nations.¹¹⁰

Though Esser's "Bells of German Unity" were destined to join the sizable inventory of unrealized projects in the Third Reich, the basic idea behind the proposal, the conflation of traditional components of celebration with modern technology to symbolize the strength of German unity under Nazism, materialized elsewhere in Nazi festival culture.¹¹¹ Goebbels, for example, arranged an extensive mass-media propaganda campaign to publicize the massive bell designed for the Berlin Olympics in 1936.¹¹² The Nazi propaganda machine followed the 16,000 kg. bell, promoted as a "technological triumph", from its casting in a Bochum

¹¹⁰As Esser declared in his bid to revive interest in the project: "this close bond of the German Volk will be audible to the sailors and Germans living abroad as the heartbeat of the Fatherland. Also, it demonstrates to foreign countries the inner unity of the indestructible will of the German Volk. Thus these bell tones will occasion millions more German people to reflect on the loyalty of German blood." BA, R43 II/1266/14, supplement to the "Idea of the Bells", attached to letter from Esser to Hitler, 29 Mar. 1936.

¹¹¹Although no specific reason was provided for shelving Esser's project, presumably the elaborate and turgid vocabulary of signs, particularly the extensive religious symbolism and inscriptions, harbored little appeal to anticlerical Nazis whose conceptual framework of festivity favoured material components characterized by straightforward ideological simplicity. Additionally, given the polycratic nature of the Nazi administration it is not inconceivable that Esser simply failed to gain the necessary backing from anyone among Hitler's intimate circle. Certainly state secretary Hans-Heinrich Lammers, who acted as administrative mediator for Esser's project (see n. 109) and who was evidently most instrumental in bringing the proposal to Hitler's attention, never enjoyed this privileged status.

¹¹²The idea to include a special bell to inaugurate the first Olympic Games to be hosted by Germany originated prior to the Nazi takeover with the long-time president of the German Olympic Committee, Dr. Theodor Lewald. See Mandell, *Nazi Olympics*, 126-29, 147; Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games*, 117-19, with illus. of Olympic Bell, "guarded by members of the Labour Service, on its ceremonial journey to Berlin." See also Byrne, "Nazi Festival," in *Time Out of Time*, ed. Falassi, 115; and the photo of the Olympic bell with accompanying caption in *VB*, 271, 28 Sept. 1935, 306, 2 Nov. 1935.

foundry through its triumphant tour via rail and lorry across the country to its final setting atop the specially constructed Führer tower on the May Field. From its lofty perch, the Olympic bell not only summoned the youth of the world to participate in the rites of competition in the capital of Nazi Germany, but also heralded the triumph of the Nazi revolution to the German people and the entire world.

While products of advanced technology featured prominently in the comprehensive array of Nazi festal symbols, it was the potential of modern technology as a means of mass manipulation that attracted Nazi festival organizers. It is certainly no exaggeration to suggest that the formalization of the mass festival aesthetic under Nazism was unimaginable without recourse to the extensive railway system and mass media placed at the disposal of the NS state. Within the festival space itself powerful loudspeaker systems constructed for major national celebrations provided direction to the assembled multitudes.¹¹³ From the beginning the Nazis used the German railway system to convey the hundreds of thousands and even millions to their national festivals.¹¹⁴

¹¹³A sense of the size and power of such installations is conveyed by the alleged 400 million-fold amplification in the strength of the entire auditory signal from its source at the microphone through the 118 loudspeakers strategically positioned about the Tempelhof Field in Berlin, site of the 1 May celebrations. See the comprehensive technical report in *Deutsche Stunde*, 19, May 1935.

¹¹⁴For the Party rally in 1936, for example, the German rail system transported over one million participants in 3166 'special trains' to and from Nuremberg. See BA, R 43II/1210, telegram from Kleinmann to Hitler, 19 Sept. 1936. This represented a significant increase over the hundreds of 'special trains' that carried most of the 700,000 celebrants to the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival in 1934. See Schneer, *Regie*, 88. Hence, the celebration of technology provided a sub-text of the Harvest Thanksgiving festival in the sense that the technological inventions of the industrial age made the mass event possible.

Such feats of mass organization carried out with military proficiency were without parallel in the inter-war years and made a significant contribution to the popular appeal of the Nazi state presented for domestic and international consumption.¹¹⁵

Mass transport which in effect accelerated the process of cultural delocalization while at the same time allowing for the vast expansion of the festival space, had its corollary in the mass media. While the national and local press regularly provided comprehensive coverage of all festival events no matter how minor, the exploitation of radio and film by Nazi propaganda officials transformed the festival experience in the Third Reich. Goebbels considered the radio "to be the most modern and the more important instrument of mass influence" that existed, and expected it eventually to replace newspapers.¹¹⁶ He made similar pronouncements on the form and function of film.¹¹⁷ The mass-production of inexpensive radio sets, the *Volksempfänger*, produced a

¹¹⁵The procurement of special trains for Nazi marches and other Party events severely taxed the German rail system, with restrictions on such travel imposed during peak holiday periods such as Whitsun. See BA, NS 6/220/76-77, RS 44/36, Bormann, 19 Mar. 1936, with accompanying letter from Generaldirektor (Deutsche Reichsbahn Gesellschaft) to Reichsleitung der NSDAP, 4 Mar. 1936. During the war, Hitler emphasized the importance of technology and logistical planning that the Party rallies had for the war effort: "The Party Rally has ... been ... in many respects a valuable preparation for war. Each Rally requires the organisation of no fewer than four thousand special trains. As these trains stretched as far as Munich and Halle, the railway authorities were given first-class practice in the military problem of handling mass troop transportation." Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 528-29.

¹¹⁶Quoted in Taylor, "Goebbels", 33.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

domestic radio audience unmatched anywhere in the world.¹¹⁹

Radio served as a powerful means of sociocultural integration. Radio broadcasts transmitted regional cultural goods across the country, permitting Germans to enjoy and become familiar with distinctive local customs.¹²⁰ Extensive radio programs consisting of reports, broadcasts of speeches and fitting musical selections formed an integral component of every Nazi holiday celebration and were routinely prepared months in advance.¹²⁰ Although a high degree of uniformity imposed itself on the programs as directed by propaganda officials in Berlin, regional stations were given some latitude in programming, particularly in the sphere of local cultural entertainment. Yet while musical programs focused on traditional customs such as the program "Around the Maypole" featured during 1 May celebrations, after 1935 marches and military songs prevailed, a deliberate attempt to accustom the civilian population to the military way of life.¹²¹ To boost national consciousness 'historical commemorations' and, after June 1936, the 'historical calendar' were a daily feature of radio programming. These brief

¹¹⁹By 1939, with sales topping 3,500,000 units, a full 70 percent of all German households owned a radio set. See Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 2d ed. (London, Oxford, and New York, 1973), 49. In 1938, the RMfVP began what was to be the nation-wide installation of an all-embracing public loudspeaker system so that no German could escape the broadcast message of Nazism. According to Goebbels's plans 6,000 such units were to be erected in all populated centres in the Reich. See Heiber, *Goebbels*, 147-48.

¹²⁰VB, 25 Apr. 1936. Report on radio program for 1 May.

¹²⁰A series of radio programs for Nazi holidays are contained in BA, R 78/1174, 1175, 1176, 1178, 1179, 1180, 1182, 1183, 1186, 1188, 1189, 1190. See also BA, NL 94 Nachlass Darré II/36a.

¹²¹BA, R 78/1178, "Uebersicht über Programmvorschlge der Reichssender und des Deutschlandsender fr 1. Mai 1935." [n.d.].

ceremonies commemorated renowned Germans and Nazis as well as significant national historical events.¹²²

In the contrived form of Nazi festivalia nothing was left to chance. Nazi propagandists devoted as much attention to the style of reporting as to the form of the event itself. In mediating a Nazi festival for radio broadcast, rather than report on the events taking place, reporters were instructed to allow the event to speak for itself, allowing listeners to construct images in their own minds. To this end reporters were to assume the role of director rather than narrator. This more active form of listening was intended to draw the listener into the festival experience. To render the experience even more palpable and to help "guide the popular mood", reporters made every attempt to capture scraps of conversations and exclamatory cries emanating from the crowd and especially of the "naive and immediate" expressions from the mouths of children.¹²³ To fulfill the wish of every spectator to move freely about the festival space in search of a better view, reporters also frequently changed their vantage point and in a way imparted a sense of hyperreality to the total experience. In contrast to the reporting style of the "liberal epochs" which permitted the listener a certain critical distance, the Nazi form of reporting was intended to envelop the listener within an intense and pervasive ideologically-charged point of view. "All event horizons, time and space" were to be

¹²²For example programs from the years 1933-1939 see BA, R 78/1164-1173. Although care was taken to exclude all Jews from the commemorative lists occasionally slip ups occurred.

¹²³BA, R 78/2298, "Entwurf zu einer Reportage am 30. Januar." [n.d.].

imbued with the "electricity of the movement". For Nazi officials there could be no place for neutrality where those experiencing the event might have the chance for independent reflection.¹²⁴

Through the "magical dream" of radio transmission, Germans settled beyond the borders of the Reich could share in the creation of the *Volkgemeinschaft*.¹²⁵ On the occasion of the 1934 Party rally Nazi officials prepared a twenty-three page summary of comments on the radio broadcast sent by foreign Germans from around the world. Repeatedly the comments emphasized the excitement and immediacy produced by the clarity of the shortwave signal. Whether in Pennsylvania or China, people listened intently as even the sound of speakers drawing a breath could be clearly heard.¹²⁶ The invasion of the radio of the family home transformed private space. It delocalized individual experience and, as an instrument of social integration, permitted all Germans to participate in the immediacy of nationally shared festive events.

Film represented the most modern technical means of conveying

¹²⁴BA, R 78/2298, "Nationalsozialistische Reportagen" [n. d.].

¹²⁵RK, 31, 8 Sept. 1937.

¹²⁶As a listener in Sydney wrote: "Last night's transmission was perfect. We listened on 19m to the addresses, the march past of the troops, the acclamations of the people, the bands, guns etc. What a brilliant spectacle it must have been.... The broadcasts were so plain that the marching could be heard and the drums ... could not have been heard better were they in the room. The shouts of the troops and the movements of arms could be plainly heard." In BA, R 78/1181, "Reichsparteitag der Freiheit. Wie ihn das Ueberseedeutschum im Rundfunk miterlebte. Aus Zuschriften an den Deutschen Kurzwellensender November 1935."

the festival experience to the public.¹²⁷ For Goebbels, who eventually succeeded in centralizing the entire film industry under his direction, propaganda was all the more effective when concealed in the form of popular entertainment, a masquerade well-suited to the illusory world of motion pictures. Film fulfilled this function better than any other means of mass communication since in mobilizing and maintaining popular support for the Nazi regime, film provided the 'national community' with "the edification, diversion and relaxation needed to see it through the drama of everyday life."¹²⁸ In weekly newsreels and documentary films German cinema audiences had the opportunity to view virtually every major festival event as well as many local celebrations held during the Third Reich.¹²⁹ Indeed for the great majority of Germans it was their only opportunity to experience visually any of the major festivals staged by the Nazis. Permanently reproduced on film in the documentary *Für Uns (For Us)*, the dramatic 9 November ceremony in Munich in 1935 transcended its spatial and temporal boundaries, and in its new format served to expose a wider German audience to the seriousness of the

¹²⁷The most comprehensive work on film in the Third Reich is David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (London, 1983). See also Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London, 1979), 156-229. Neither provide substantive treatments of the subject of festivity, despite its widespread exposure in films of the Nazi era.

¹²⁸Quoted in Welch, *Third Reich*, 47.

¹²⁹Too numerous to list individually, the best source on the cinematic record of festivals made during the Third Reich are the newsreels and documentary films themselves. An inventory of the extensive film material held in the Bundesarchiv, Germany is catalogued (with brief description of contents of each film) in *Wochenschauen und Dokumentarfilme im Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv*, ed. Peter Bucher (Findbücher zu Beständen des Bundesarchiv, Band 8, Koblenz, 1984), 27-152, 282-368.

Nazis' commitment to the restoration of national glory as symbolized in the sacrifice of the sixteen Nazi 'martyrs'.¹³⁰ Less dramatically, the documentary film *Glückliches Volk (Felicitous Folk)*, which presented for public consumption martial and folkloric scenes of the military parade held in Berlin on 1 May 1937, the KdF-Volksfest at the Nuremberg Party rally and the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, conveyed the message that it was the singular fortune of the German people to be the beneficiaries of a state whose support and promotion of popular culture was unsurpassed.¹³¹ For many Germans the first opportunity to experience the imposing power of the Nazi movement came with the release of Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film of the 1934 Party rally in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens (Triumph of the Will)*. With its innovative camera techniques combining panoramic views with studied close-ups, the film offered a comprehensive perspective of the Party spectacle, altogether unattainable for actual participants. Likewise, certainly the best opportunity of experiencing or reliving the 1936 Berlin Olympiad arrived two years after the event in the form of Riefenstahl's four-hour documentary *Olympiade*. For the great majority of Germans who missed the national celebration of Hitler's fiftieth birthday directed by the irrepressible Propaganda Minister in Berlin, Goebbels distributed a film of the event as his personal gift to Führer and Volk.¹³²

If to a certain extent at least 'the medium is the message', the festival scenes recorded on film and presented for public viewing

¹³⁰See Baird, *Die For Germany*, 63-65.

¹³¹BA-FA, 125, *Glückliches Volk*, 1938.

¹³²See Terveen, "Filmbericht," 75-84.

transformed one form of popular entertainment into another, and in the process modernized the experience of the festival. By providing a visual record of the event, it was possible to reproduce any festival for public consumption at any time and place. This extension of its temporal and spatial horizon beyond the immediate festive event facilitated the trend towards the delocalization of autochthonous culture and its corollary, the increasing homogeneity of popular culture. Perhaps more importantly, audiences seated in the darkness passively viewing the moving pictures enhanced by the soundtrack or musical score, were deprived of a essential feature of festivity, the experience of sociability. Film transformed the subjective experience of collective celebration into a single objective set of images recorded through the camera lens for mass consumption. Edited to meet the requirements of RMfVP officials, motion pictures provided an optimal means of implanting the dynamic ideological message of Nazism in the popular imagination.

The Nazi state also provided extensive support for the development of television technology, the "most modern wonder" of its time.¹³³ Although television was initially regarded as a navigational technology for civil and military air traffic, Goebbels succeeded in convincing Hitler of its value as an instrument of propaganda and culture.¹³⁴ For the first time in 1937 several thousand Germans crowded into television

¹³³ RK, 31, 8 Sept. 1937.

¹³⁴ A Hitler decree of 12 July 1935 awarded control over the development of television technology to Göring's Aviation Ministry with a subordinate role given the Reich Post Minister. Following a series of correspondences between the RMfVP and the Reich Chancellery, Goebbels succeeded in forcing a second decree issued on 11 December 1935 giving him control over television broadcasts for the purpose of propaganda. The relevant documents are found in BA, R 43II/267a.

booths in Berlin, Potsdam, Leipzig and Munich to view dynamic images, both live and recorded, from the Party rally in Nuremberg.¹³⁵ For once the event corresponded to the superlatives of Nazi rhetoric:

The screen of the receiver in the Berliner television booth lit up. A slight flicker. Then the outlines became sharper. And then one saw it clearly. The Führer strode through the hall.... Applause engulfed him. We heard it exactly like the radio. However we had the picture before us. The same picture offering itself to the tens of thousands in Nuremberg permitted us to witness this moment and the following two hours. The Berliners sat in the small television booth without budging. To the last one, it was clear that they were experiencing something entirely extraordinary: a wonder--no a triumph--of technology that had succeeded in completely conquering space and time through the image, the optical impression.¹³⁶

The momentous event, the report observed, contained one obvious disappointment. Since it was carried live an event could never be repeated. Unlike film, television represented an instantaneous and unique experience rather than a visual record that could be preserved for future showings. While Nazi technicians admitted that the broadcast had not reached the level of performance achieved by radio, the immediacy of the experience offered by the medium of television offered unlimited potential.¹³⁷ By July 1939 plans had been formulated to bring television into the homes first of Berliners and later of citizens of all large cities throughout the country.¹³⁸

¹³⁵*Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 23 Aug. 1937; *DAZ*, 6 Sept. 1937; *VB*, 5 Sept. 1937, 7 Sept. 1937; *Der Angriff*, 8 Sept. 1937; *RK*, 31, 8 Sept. 1937; *Kreuz Zeitung*, 9 Sept. 1937; *Berliner Tageblatt*, 10 Sept. 1937; *Germania*, 12 Sept. 1937. The two-hour broadcasts took place three times daily in the morning, late-afternoon and evening.

¹³⁶*Kreuz Zeitung*, 9 Sept. 1937.

¹³⁷*RK*, 32, 15 Sept. 1937.

¹³⁸*DNB*, 1094, 26 July 1939.

In enhancing the role of traditional festive paraphernalia and in becoming an integral component of public celebration in Nazi Germany, technology transformed the festival into a mass experience of ideologically directed popular culture. Loudspeakers, radio, film, television and railways created a distinctly modern festival form. While technology facilitated the expansion of the festive event beyond its normal spatial and temporal boundaries, it also deepened the division between active participants and passive spectators, despite the contrary aims of Nazi festival organizers. To a large extent technology accentuated the process of commercialization and professionalization of conventional festival culture by transforming it into a performance-oriented form packaged as popular entertainment. Although Nazi Germany was not solely or even primarily responsible for this transformative process, since the development of the leisure and tourism industries long preceded the Third Reich, the unsurpassed application of mass media and transportation to the formalization of the festival experience in the Third Reich prefigured in form if not in content the post-war consumer culture.

* * *

Out of a patchwork of existing festival traditions the Nazis fashioned their own synthesis of political public celebration based on a popular cultural aesthetic and a dynamic style of presentation made possible through the extensive manipulation of advanced technology. As an exceptional event removed from everyday occurrence, the festival allowed the new political masters of Germany to transform the framework of space and time, reshaping it in harmony with the ideal of an ethnic 'national community', organized according to the 'leadership principle'. At the

same time, the support and promotion of popular folk festivals in the form of centrally directed mass entertainment, primarily through the KdF, provided the Nazi regime with the appearance of normality and in the process reinforced existing popular sentiment. In turn, this refashioned mass festival culture served as a giant screen on which the Nazis superimposed their dynamic image of a new, modern social and cultural order. Reproduced in print, radio and film, this festive reflection of the 'national community', with its dynamic and powerful images of mass enthusiasm for Hitler and Nazism, ultimately served the interests of Nazi state power politics by allowing Goebbels's propaganda machine to project for domestic and foreign consumption an intimidating image of a unified and popularly supported nation-state.

During the war, Hitler, recalling gentler times, confided that for him the annual Party rallies in Nuremberg represented "one huge family gathering".¹³⁹ Whatever such a statement reveals of what passed for Hitler's gregarious personality, it encapsulates the substance of the Nazi ideological conceptualization of the normative festival experience. Ethnically and culturally bound to the 'national community', Germans were expected to participate actively in the organized festival culture of Nazism. Negligence in this familial cultural duty was tantamount to political malfeasance. Yet cultural nonconformity continued to frustrate Nazi officials. As the following and subsequent chapters will demonstrate, Nazi festivals fell short of becoming an all-embracing modern popular cultural experience. As a festive image of the 'national community', Hitler's "family" was a dysfunctional one.

¹³⁹Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 528.

CHAPTER 2

FESTAL VARIATIONS: PUBLIC CELEBRATION AND POPULAR OPINION

"Seven days yearly Nuremberg was a city devoted to revelry and madness, almost a city of convulsionaries", wrote the French ambassador, André François-Poncet, describing the "atmosphere of ... mystic ecstasy and the sacred delirium" that possessed the hundreds of thousands of men and women gathered for the annual Party rally.¹ A British tourist attending the 1936 rally was so enthralled by the "play of phantasmagoria" that he conjured up images of "*companies of the chivalry of old Germany*" marching shoulder-to-shoulder with the brownshirts.² Recalling her visit as an impressionable fifteen-year-old German girl to Munich on the occasion of the 'Day of German Art' in 1937, Ilse McKee remembered the "pride and enthusiasm" that "filled her heart" as she caught a glimpse of Hitler during the parade.³ The overwhelming sense of collective

¹Quoted in Hans Peter Bleuel, *Strength Through Joy: Sex and Society in Nazi Germany*, trans. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (London, 1973), 92. William L. Shirer expressed similar sentiments after experiencing the 1934 rally. See *Berlin Diary* (New York, 1941), 18, 21, 23.

²Quoted in Angela Schwarz, "British Visitors to National Socialist Germany: In a Familiar or Foreign Country?" *JCH* 28 (1993): 504.

³Ilse McKee, *Tomorrow the World* (London, 1960), 33. For similar comments by other Germans attending the Party rallies in Nuremberg, see Hans-Ulrich Thamer, "Faszination und Manipulation", 353. The powerful collective experience of Nazi rally participants was an important aspect of the Nazi movement prior to 1933, that is, even before it acquired its mass proportions. See Albert Krebs's recollections of the 1927 Party rally in William S. Allen, ed. and trans., *The Infancy of Nazism: The Memoirs of Ex-Gauleiter Albert Krebs 1923-1933* (New York and London,

rapture conveyed by observations such as these have conveniently served historians seeking to explain the allure of Nazism for the German people. Typical of this viewpoint is the recent statement by Fritz Stern: "The great appeal of National Socialism lay in the Führer's unique form of demagogy and in the dramaturgy of National Socialist spectacle".⁴ Hence, political and popular culture coalesced in the Third Reich, creating a state of permanent intoxication in which Germans, willingly and en masse suspending disbelief, succumbed to the "hypnotic power of mass festivals" that combined "religious service and popular amusement" and in return revived "their lost sense of belonging and their collective camaraderie."⁵

While there can be little doubt that for many Nazis and committed followers of Hitler the numinous collective experience of celebration inspired genuine moments of almost mystical ecstasy or catharsis in the individual celebrant⁶, the impact of Nazi festival culture on German society as a whole is less certain. Existing studies that incorporate festivals into the broader subject of propaganda, and which focus primarily on Nazi techniques of control and organization, have implied rather than demonstrated the success of public celebration

1976), 60-61.

⁴Fritz Stern, *Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History* (London, 1988), 148. See also Mosse, *Nationalization*, 207.

⁵Fest, *Hitler*, 440.

⁶The Party rallies were as much an experience of catharsis for Hitler as for the assembled masses. See Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 244.

as a means of "mass integration and mass intoxication."⁷ Based on a careful and extensive examination of popular opinion reports assembled by internal government and Party agencies as well as those compiled by the exiled SPD (*Sopade*) through its underground network of agents dispersed throughout Germany, this chapter attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the popular response to Nazi festivalia in the years from 1933 to 1939.

Although the limitations of the admittedly fragmentary and subjective evidence permit only tentative conclusions, the image of festival culture that emerges from the following discussion reveals a far more ambiguous and varied experience than previous studies have allowed. Leaving aside the issue of resistance, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, the attempt made here to situate public celebration in its social context exposes the power but also the limitations of Nazi festivity as an instrument of social integration and political mobilization. While the German population displayed widespread enthusiasm for public celebration, such acclamation was at the same time frequently offset by ambivalence or open criticism. Evidently support for Nazi public celebration remained strongest among the lower middle class while at the opposite end ambivalence was most notable among Catholics, workers and rural Germans. This suggests that social divisions based on religious, status and class differences to some extent continued to shape attitudes in the Third Reich much as they had in the Weimar Republic, Nazi claims of the social harmony of the national community notwithstanding. It should be emphasized, however,

⁷See for example Bramsted, *National Socialist Propaganda*, 214.

that while the *Volksgemeinschaft* remained an ideal rather than the reality, the high level of enthusiasm for public celebration suggests that festivals, despite their exceptional quality, contributed to the overall popularity of the regime by providing it with a character of normality it might otherwise have lacked. Consequently, festival culture not only reinforced existing sentiment among Nazi supporters, it also helped dispel doubts concerning Nazi political legitimacy and served to isolate and neutralize any concerted opposition.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, moreover, while Nazism might have been as one historian has suggested "tyranny by wholesome popular sentiment", it was a popular sentiment firmly rooted in the modern sensibility of a technological world.⁸ At the same time the ambivalent and varied popular response to Nazi festival culture demonstrates the survival of cultural pluralism throughout the Nazi era as distinct social groups, whether reactionary or progressive, pursued their own cultural needs in the modern industrialized Nazi state. Though rural Catholics may have resented Nazi interference in religious holidays and celebrations, or the remnants of a progressive labour movement Nazi attempts to assimilate fully the cultural life of workers, both groups confronted a forward-oriented political culture that enjoyed substantial popular support.

As a sociocultural event, the festival gathers the community in celebration of shared values vital to its ideology, self-identity and

⁸Bleuel, *Strength through Joy*, 245. Bleuel regards such sentiment as fundamentally reactionary.

physical survival.⁹ As the previous chapter demonstrated, Nazi festival organizers recognized the functional value of the festival as a cultural instrument for self-representation and social integration. Under Nazism, according to a NSLB ideologue, public festivity constituted one of the two high points "in the rhythm of the life of a people" devoted to work and celebration.¹⁰ Given that Nazi and police officials were required to report regularly on the popular response to national celebrations, it is clear that the Nazis considered the festival vital as a means not only of social organization and political mobilization but also of measuring the level of popular approval enjoyed by the Nazi regime. Hence the efforts of the Nazis to promote and control public celebration were integral to their authoritarian form of political rule. Eschewing discussion or reflection, the performance-based, self-representational Nazi festival style was designed to present for public acclamation the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, epitomized in the ideal of the 'national community'. Nonetheless, the festival encompassed more than a Nazi monologue on public celebration. Rather, the symbolic field of action offered a public forum for dialogue among Nazis, ordinary Germans and the festival event itself. Limited by Nazi state control over all areas of the mass media, ordinary Germans found

⁹The cultural anthropologist Alessandro Falassi defines the festival as "a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview." See Alessandro Falassi, "Festival: Definition and Morphology" in *Time Out Of Time*, ed. Falassi, 2. Italics in the original.

¹⁰Karl Seibold, "Die Grundsätze der Fei ergestaltung im Schulungslager," in *FuF* 1 (1936): 11.

in the festival a convenient instrument to express private attitudes publicly. As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, the popular response to Nazi festival culture ranged from enthusiastic acclamation through selective participation to ambivalence and dissent.

* * *

Generally the popularity of Nazi festivals corresponded to the fluctuating levels of public approval of Hitler and the Nazi state. The popularity enjoyed by the Hitler government after the 'Day of Potsdam' continued unabated through the early months of the regime as the noisy promise of national regeneration brought Nazis and sympathizers into the streets in spirited celebration of Hitler's birthday on 20 April. Again on 1 May, less than a fortnight later, the process was repeated with the profuse display of flags, bunting and greenery, as well as speeches, parades and radio broadcasts from Berlin. The popular birthday celebration of the 'People's Chancellor' not only strengthened the bonds between the Führer and the millions of devoted Volk, internal reports claimed, but also served to isolate the unconverted and hostile elements of German society.¹¹ According to several reports, the 1 May celebration in Berlin and throughout the Reich signalled a powerful demonstration of the new unity of the national community in city and country, transcending class divisions; industrial workers joined farmers, employers, *Wehrmacht* and *Stahlhelm* soldiers, civil servants, police officials and Nazis in joyous celebration in cities, towns and

¹¹See Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 57-59. See also BayHStA, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 22 Apr. 1933, 6 May 1933.

villages across the nation.¹²

By October, however, some cracks in the wall of public acclamation had evidently begun to appear. Reports recorded lower than expected levels of participation by rural Germans in Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate in locally organized Harvest Thanksgiving festivals.¹³ Presumably the doctrinaire attempts to divest the traditional feast day of its religious content mystified not a few rural Catholics. Whatever the reason for the low turnouts in these predominately Catholic regions, indifference to the Nazi harvest festivities remained isolated. Even the normally critical *Sopade* analysts admitted that the Nazi Thanksgiving Festival was "perhaps the most striking expression" of popular affirmation of the regime.¹⁴

Though the alleviation of the unemployment crisis preoccupied Nazi officials at year's end, the fact that workers in some industries were required to work on holidays did little to ingratiate the Nazi

¹²BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 4 May, 1933, 19 May 1933; MA 106680, HMBRPvUF, 20 May 1933; MA 106682, LBRPvS, 22 May 1933. In typical 'carrot and stick' fashion the Nazis followed the national celebration of German workers by effectively smashing the organized labour movement the next day. On the destruction of the German trade unions on 2 May, see Eberhard Heuel, *Der unworbene Stand: Die ideologische Integration der Arbeiter im Nationalsozialismus 1933-1945*, Campus Forschung, Band 636 (Frankfurt and New York, 1989), 188-292; Heinz Lauber and Dirgit Rothstein, *Der 1. Mai unter dem Hakenkreuz: Hitlers 'Machtergreifung' in Arbeiterschaft und in Betrieben* (Gerlingen, 1983), 91-125. See also the primary documents and commentary in J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919-1945*, 2 vols. (New York, 1990), 1: 328-33.

¹³BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 19 Oct. 1933. Other reports recorded impressive turn-outs for the parades and other festive events marking the holiday. See *ibid.*, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 7 Oct. 1933; MA 106682, LBRPvS/N, 6 Oct. 1933.

¹⁴DBS, 2: 135, 6 Feb. 1934.

state with this significant segment of the German population. In Mannheim, workers forced to work on New Year's Eve staged work-stoppages resulting in a number of arrests and removal to the local concentration camp.¹⁵ At the same time, a reduction in overtime pay for Sundays and holidays prompted additional widespread dissatisfaction in the work force.¹⁶

By the spring of 1934, in some rural areas where the public mood was less sanguine than in the previous year owing to the prevailing economic crisis, local officials recorded carefully expressed complaints about the surfeit of festive and political events.¹⁷ Similarly, in more populated centres such as the town of Northeim apathy and indifference towards public celebrations staged by the local Nazi leaders was already manifest by 1934.¹⁸ Evidently one of the more widely observed Nazi holidays of the year was Heroes' Memorial Day. Whereas in later years it became a solemn 'heroic' celebration of the reconstituted military power of the Nazi state, its early popularity presumably rested on the fact that the combined religious and civic memorial services in homage to the soldiers killed in the First World War differed little in outward form from the 'People's Day of Mourning', its Weimar forerunner.¹⁹

The obvious gap between the small improvement in the economy and the grandiose claims of the Nazi government, particularly after another

¹⁵DBS, 2: 44, 6 Feb. 1934.

¹⁶Ibid., 50.

¹⁷BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 4 May 1934.

¹⁸Allen, *Nazi Seizure*, 255.

¹⁹BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 5 Mar. 1934.

severe winter of deprivation, tempered the public celebrations for Hitler's birthday in 1934.²⁰ Already the aggressiveness of anticlerical Nazi activists was beginning to exasperate many Catholics, who expressed their displeasure by disregarding the call to celebrate the occasion. In isolated incidents Catholics in the Palatinate region and elsewhere, heeding the counsel of local clergy, absented themselves from public events commemorating 'Hitler's Day' and neglected to adorn their houses with Nazi flags or displayed instead only the yellow-white flag of the Catholic Church.²¹

According to *Sopade* reports, industrial workers in Berlin preferred to attend private celebrations organized by local socialists than take part in the forced theatrics on the Tempelhof Field.²² On the other hand, the 'comradeship evenings' and similar events held in conjunction with 1 May celebrations and routinely throughout the year, while by no means wholeheartedly embraced, were as *Sopade* reports admitted not to be underestimated in their beneficial effect. Evidently workers took an extremely utilitarian view towards such 'evenings', which DAF officials in conjunction with plant owners introduced to the workplace in an attempt to blur the line separating work from celebration by bringing the dynamic rhythm of Nazi festivity closer to the shop floor. Attendance was relatively high if free food and drink were to be

²⁰See Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 64.

²¹BayHStA, MA 106675, MbRPvP, 17 May 1934. For his part in obstructing Hitler birthday celebrations, a priest in the village of Kirchsönbach in Lower Franconia received a three-month jail sentence. See MA 106680, HMBRPvUF, 8 May 1934.

²²DBS, 2: 107-8, 26 June 1934.

had, for workers regarded such occasions as compensation for low wages. If, however, workers were asked to volunteer monetary contributions, often in the form of a collection on the shop floor, attendance dwindled and invitations were ignored.²³ Occasionally this form of induced sociability was condemned out of hand, as in a report from an Augsburg match factory worker who declared the 'comradeship evenings' to be "a real swindle and entrapment of the workers."²⁴ Moderation characterized celebrations of 1 May in some rural areas in Silesia where many farmers resented the incessant Nazi demands for charitable donations as well as the Law of Hereditary Entailment.²⁵

Even so, as a *Sopade* report from East Saxony in the late spring of 1934 noted, festivals and parades, including those of 1 May, continued to serve as a "highly stimulating element" of Nazi propaganda. The enthusiasm whipped up by festive civic receptions for Hitler in cities throughout the Reich remained great, seizing even formerly indifferent segments of the population. Yet, again according to *Sopade* reports, festivals and parades were limited in their ability to arouse a "fighting spirit" among the populace. Evidently German workers availed themselves of the free entertainment events organized for the national holiday but resisted the more serious attempts at ideological indoctrination. The effect on public mood, moreover, was temporary as the popular euphoria brought on by celebration soon subsided in the face of

²³DBS, 1: 230, 21 July 1934.

²⁴DBS, 1: 677, 26 Nov. 1934.

²⁵DBS, 1: 51, 17 May 1934. On the mixed reaction of farmers to the Law of Hereditary Entailment, see Farquharson, *Plough and the Swastika*, chap. 8.

continuing economic hardship.²⁶

While German workers had plenty of reasons not to feel especially festive on 1 May, they were not alone in their dissatisfaction with the 'Nazi revolution'. The unfulfilled expectations of a 'second revolution' entertained by the SA led to rifts within the Nazi movement itself. On May Day in Bremen, a celebration in a public hall degenerated into a violent brawl between members of the *Stahlhelm*, Werewolves and other right-wing paramilitary organizations on the one side and SA and SS men on the other. The revolt spilled into the streets as SA men smashed department store windows and engaged in a stand-off with city police authorities.²⁷ May Day celebrations also gave vent to antagonisms between rival Nazi factions. In Bischofsheim in Lower Franconia, for instance, the local Nazi political leadership assisted by members of the RAD staged a brawl with a gang of SA men during a dance event.²⁸ Indeed, Party fortunes in the month prior to the 'Night of the Long Knives' were at such a low ebb that even fanatical Nazis, according to *Sopade* reports, had become notably modest or altogether negligent in the public adornment of their dwellings with

²⁶DBS, 1: 99, 26 June 1934. That economic hardship remained the defining feature of working-class existence throughout the Third Reich is convincingly argued by Timothy Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the 'National Community'*, trans. John Broadwin; ed. Jane Caplan; with a general introduction by Ursula Vogel (Providence, RI and Oxford, 1993), 128-50.

²⁷DBS, 1: 21-22, 17 May 1934; *ibid.*, 1: 145, 26 June 1934.

²⁸BayHStA, MA 105680, HMBRPvUF, 23 May 1934. The following day a number of residents assembled before the city council to denounce August Kretschmann, the instigator of the fight. As propaganda leader and city councillor Kretschmann was detested by the local community. For his responsibility in the unflattering incident, his Party membership was revoked and he was ousted from the city council.

flags and other NS memorabilia during official civic celebrations.²⁹

Internal opinion reports for the September 1934 Party rally in Nuremberg were almost unanimous in claiming that its impact on the population was enormous, substantially quelling any lingering anxiety and doubt raised by the Röhm purge. The powerful demonstration of Nazi political and cultural aspirations had not only reinforced popular support for Hitler and the NSDAP but moved even those elements in society that had hitherto remained indifferent to Nazism. The reports also claimed to notice that the spectacular display of Nazi power in Nuremberg had a sobering effect on the opponents of the movement.³⁰ Only the Stapo in Aachen reported that, despite the favorable impression of the rally, it had failed to alleviate the growing discord evident in large sections of the population as many Germans looked forward with apprehension to another winter of continued scarcity and increasing prices of foodstuffs and consumer goods. The report added that the increasingly infrequent public display of the 'German greeting' was attributable not only to the widespread incidents of Nazi corruption on the local level, but also to the unfavorable impression left on the NSDAP rank and file as well as ordinary Germans by the sight of luxury automobiles transporting the Party elite around Nuremberg and the preferential treatment given so-called guests of honour at the Party

²⁹DBS, 1: 100, 26 June 1934.

³⁰BayHStA, MA 106680, HMBRPvUF, 9 Oct. 1934; MA 106693, MBRPvP, 8 Oct. 1934; MA 106682, LBRPvS/N, 6 Oct. 1934; BA, R 58/1587, TbStapo-Bielefeld, 4 Oct. 1934.

rally.³¹ A further indication of a negative response to the events in Nuremberg was the rumour circulating in Munich claiming that the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess, had been killed during the rally.³² Little more than "a series of noisy demonstrations", the event, *Sopade* analysts insisted, was more a Hitler rally than a Party affair, a deliberate tactic used by the Party whose own popularity was sinking.³³ Doubtless the manufactured image of Hitler as a national leader above sectarian Party interests, as Kershaw has demonstrated, served as a powerful integrative force and was fundamental to the popularity of the Nazi state.³⁴

Although confidential reports from Lower Franconia and Swabia claimed that the festive atmosphere enveloping the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival signalled the unity of urban and rural Germans, in Lower Bavaria, government officials noted a further decline in the level of interest in the celebrations.³⁵ In Aachen, evidently, the comparatively abbreviated length of the parades met with considerable public approval.³⁶ Mounting public discord reached such levels in late 1934 that not even the normally 'unassailable' Hitler was safe from the rumour mill.

³¹BA, R 58/660, LbStapo-Aachen, 6 Oct. 1934. The declining popularity of the NSDAP resulting from the corruption and self-interest of local Party leaders, or 'Little Hitlers', is examined in Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 83-104.

³²BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 5 Oct. 1934.

³³DBS, 1: 470-71, 29 Sept. 1934.

³⁴Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 69-70.

³⁵BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 7 Nov. 1934; MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 6 Oct. 1934; MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 5 Oct. 1934.

³⁶BA, R 58/660, LbStapo-Aachen, 6 Oct. 1934.

Rumours circulated in and around Munich on the occasion of the 9 November festivities that on his way to the event Hitler had survived an attempted assassination, in which Magda Goebbels had been injured and others killed. Hitler himself was said to have suffered a nervous breakdown, turning grey overnight.³⁷ The following month, KdF subsidized vacations in addition to Goebbels's WHW charity drive to provide needy families with toys, clothes and cheer during the Christmas season probably did much to gain support for the regime.³⁸ Such practical initiatives also presumably helped to offset any negative impact among the churchgoing public resulting from attempts to create a Nazi Yulefest to displace the religious associations of Christmas.

In a plebiscite held in January 1935 in accordance with the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, the Saar population voted overwhelmingly to return the region to Germany. In response, according to numerous internal opinion reports, an enthusiastic and joyous population erupted in widespread and spontaneous public celebration. Everywhere NSDAP ceremonies, organized on the day of the plebiscite and again several weeks later with the official celebration on 1 March, featured the ringing of church bells, radio broadcasts of speeches by Hitler and other Nazi luminaries, followed by torchlight parades, fireworks and

³⁷BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 6 Dec. 1934. The culprit, according to one version of the rumour, was the son of General Kurt von Schleicher, who along with his wife had been murdered by the SS in the Röhm purge the previous June. Needless to say, Munich police authorities emphasized the need to combat such rumours to avoid causing anxiety among the populace.

³⁸DBS, 2: 176, 14 Mar. 1935.

communal celebrations lasting into the small hours of the morning.³⁹ Schools held short ceremonies and then dismissed classes for the national celebration.⁴⁰ Indeed, as a report from Cologne insisted, the return of the Saar and the ensuing festivities contributed more to the strengthening of popular unity and the lifting of the general mood "than a thousand Party rallies" could ever have done.⁴¹ Still, in what would become a constant refrain, for *Sopade* analysts, the claim was made that the national celebrations were less than genuine as they stemmed in part from a sense of "liberation from war psychosis". In addition, reports from Rhineland-Westphalia maintained, workers had been forced to participate in the organized factory celebrations of the Saar 'homecoming'. In any event, the euphoria surrounding the peaceful return of the Saar was, *Sopade* analysts insisted, quickly dissipated as the reality of everyday life provided new occasions for grievance.⁴²

Two months later, Hitler fulfilled one of his many pre-1933 campaign promises, the renunciation of the Versailles Treaty, with the

³⁹BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 9 Feb. 1935; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 8 Mar. 1935; MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 8 Feb. 1935; MA 106682, LBRPvS, 7 Mar. 1935; MA 106691, LBRPvOB, 7 Feb. 1935; MA 106693; BA, R 58/661, LbStapo-Aachen, 6 Jan. 1935; R 58/1572, TbStapo-Frankfurt/Oder, 4 Apr. 1935; R 58/1573, LbStapo-Königsberg, Apr. 1935; R 58/1574, LbStapo-Magdeburg, 4 Apr. 1935; *ibid*, LbStapo-Schneidemühl, Apr. 1935; StAM, NSDAP 557, "Report on the Saar celebrations," OGL-Prien, 6 Mar. 1935; StAM, NSDAP 557, STPL Zelle Fransdorf to the KL-Rosenheim, 3 Mar. 1935.

⁴⁰See the announcement by Nazi Education Minister, Bernhard Rust, in the *NS-Kurier*, 78, 15 Feb. 1935.

⁴¹BA, NS 22/716, Stimmungs- und Lb, GL Grohé, Cologne-Aachen, 7 Mar. 1935.

⁴²DBS, 2: 12, 6 Feb. 1935. Evidently even the Saar workers found something to complain about in the reduced wages due to deductions for festival activity and components such as torches, flags and Nazi decorations. See DBS, 2: 155, 14 Mar. 1935.

surprise announcement of the reintroduction of universal conscription. Combined with the Saar plebiscite, these two events represented the first of a series of spectacular foreign policy successes that would elevate Hitler to new levels of popular adulation.⁴³ They also signalled a transformation in the cultural realm of festivity. After 1935 Nazi celebrations acquired an even more aggressive and virulent form of nationalism that was given added menace through the militarization of the festival space.

Hitler's renewal of universal military service made its presence felt during the Heroes' Memorial Day commemorative ceremonies that immediately followed the announcement. According to various confidential reports, Germans marked Heroes' Memorial Day in solemn commemoration of the war dead.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the extensive media coverage given Hitler's review of the march-past of the reconstituted *Wehrmacht*, SA, SS and NSKK motorized corps, sent a strong signal about the new modern image of Nazi Germany.⁴⁵ While Hitler's birthday continued to find an adulatory audience throughout the years of peace, like most Nazi celebrations it too acquired an expressly military flavour beginning in 1935, after the Nazi leader renounced the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and ordered universal conscription in March of that

⁴³Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 71.

⁴⁴BA, R 58/1572/343, LBStapo-Halle, 5 Apr. 1935; R 58/1574, LBStapo-Schneidemühl, Apr. 1935; *ibid.*, LBStapo-Stettin, 4 Apr. 1935; BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 6 Apr. 1935; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 9 Apr. 1935; MA 106697, MbPD-Munich, 2 Apr. 1935.

⁴⁵VB, Nr. 78, 19 Mar. 1935. Images of the military march in Berlin also dominated the footage included in the weekly newsreel. See BA-FA, UTW 237/1935, Ufa-Tonwoche Nr. 237, 20 Mar. 1935.

year.⁴⁶

Certainly not all Nazi festival and ceremonial events found a resonance among the population or even among Nazis. The least popular of the Nazi holidays, the 'Day of the Founding of the Party', meant little to the general population--aside from the usual broadcast of Hitler's speech from the Hofbrauhausaal, the original site of the proclamation of the NSDAP--even in the national euphoria following the Saar plebiscite. Though it served as a day for the swearing in of the latest round of NS political leaders, evidently even Nazis wearied of the ceremony, especially when held out-of-doors. They criticized the length of the broadcast which carried a number of speeches in addition to Hitler's own.⁴⁷ Similarly, in early April police officials in Augsburg registered grievances among Nazis, including men from the SA and SS, who complained that extensive Party events, including ceremonies, were leaving them with little time to spend with their families.⁴⁸ Complaint about the disruption of family life provoked by the surfeit of Nazi festivities, moreover, was becoming a commonplace among parents by early 1935. Parents openly criticized NS festivities involving the HJ and BDM, such as the *Heimabende* held in the evening hours, which in

⁴⁶BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 7 May 1935, 8 May 1936, 8 May 1937; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 10 May 1935, 9 May 1936; MA 106682 LbRPvS/N, 7 May 1935, 6 May 1936, 7 May 1937; MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 May 1937; MA 106685, MbPd-Munich, 12 May 1937; MA 106683, LbRPvS/N, 7 May 1938; BA, R 58/661, LbStapo-Aachen, 8 May 1935; BA, NS 22/716, Stimmungs- und Lb, GL Grohé, Cologne-Aachen, 8 May 1935.

⁴⁷BA NS 22/716, Stimmungs- und Lb, GL Grohé, Cologne-Aachen, 7 Mar. 1935.

⁴⁸BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 Apr. 1935.

their view compromised the morals of the nation's young.⁴⁹

Numerous confidential reports compiled by the regime claimed that, with few exceptions, public enthusiasm for that year's May Day celebrations was again widespread, with festive greenery and maypoles as well as the ubiquitous Nazi flags observable everywhere. High points of the celebration remained Hitler's radio address and locally organized parades outfitted in the new, disciplined military style.⁵⁰ Though noting the salutary impact of the May Day celebrations on the population, other reports observed that the effect was temporary, since alarm over economic circumstances as well as the worsening international situation, particularly following the signing of the Franco-Russian Pact, continued to shape the public mood.⁵¹ Stapo officials in Münster observed that in comparison to the previous year the decoration of streets and houses and the display of flags was noticeably spotty.⁵² In astonishingly frank terms, the same officials and their counterparts in Berlin insisted into the bargain that the high level of participation across the country should not be regarded "as a barometer" of popular

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰BA, R 58/479, MbStapo-Frankfurt/Main, 5 June 1935; R 58/510, LbStapo-Osnabrück, 4 June 1935; R 58/479/21, LBStapoS-Düsseldorf, 5 June 1935; R 58/479, MbStapo-Frankfurt/Main, 5 June 1935; R 58/480, MbStapo-Hannover, 4 June 1935; R 58/1575/391, LBStapoS-Halle, 6 June 1935; R 58/1575/310, LBStapoS-Erfurt, 6 June 1935; R 58/1575/358, TbStapo-Frankfurt/Oder, 4 June 1935; R 58/1576/537, TbStapo-Königsberg, 8 June 1935; R 58/1577/676, LbStapo-Potsdam, June 1935; R 58/1577/623-24, LbStapo-Magdeburg, 5 June 1935; BayHStA, MA 106691, LbRPvOB, 12 June 1935; MA 106693, LbRPvP, 7 June 1935; MA 106675, MbRPvP, 10 May 1935; BA, NS 22/716, Stimmungs-und Lb, GL Grohé, Cologne-Aachen, 8 May 1935.

⁵¹BA, R 58/436, MbStapo-Aachen, 7 June 1935.

⁵²BA R 58/510, LbStapo-Münster, 6 June 1935.

opinion; considerable coercion had been employed to secure the cooperation not only of workers but of the professional middle class.⁵³

Equally discomfiting for NSDAP officials was the fact that despite significant participation of the population in May Day celebrations, in their view workers were failing to grasp the National Socialist 'meaning' of the festival. According to several Stapo reports, the abundant show of flags and public decorations and the high level of participation masked the reality that in many places, particularly where the Party apparatus was still insufficiently developed, the significance of the holiday had not yet been instilled in the people's consciousness. Workers regarded the celebration as a festival "by command" rather than as a communal celebration drawing "Führer and followers" closer together. For most workers such festivity amounted to little more than a free drinking binge courtesy of the local factory employer. Consequently the police officials insisted that "education and time" were required to establish 1 May as "an authentic popular festival".⁵⁴ Weak turn-outs in some rural areas suggested that here too the intended meaning of the day had yet to impose itself.⁵⁵

Aside from 1 May festivities, other Nazi attempts to win German workers over to the 'national community' through celebration met with a

⁵³Ibid.; BA, R 58/436, MbStapo-Berlin, [June 1935]. Aryan pharmacists who absented themselves from the festivities, for instance, were required to pay a fine of RM 30.

⁵⁴Quoted material taken from BA, R 58/480/11, MBdStapo, Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, [June 1935]. See also BA, R 58/510, LbStapo-Münster, 6 June 1935.

⁵⁵BA, R 58/510, LbStapo-Osnabrück, 4 June 1935; *ibid.*, LbStapo-Münster, 6 June 1935; R 58/1576, TbStapo-Königsberg, 8 June 1935; BayHStA, MA 106675, MbRPvP, 8 June 1936.

mixed response. In contrast to the generally positive reception of the 'comradeship evenings', one of the most ill-conceived ideas implemented by the DAF was the *Betriebsappell*, a factory roll-call consisting in unequal parts of sloganeering propaganda, ceremonial rally and military drill. Designed to restore the workers' sense of dignity in an increasingly alienating modern work place, as well as to elevate the awareness of their service to the people's community and to boost production levels, the *Betriebsappell* found little acceptance among workers, despite the efforts of Nazi labour officials and employers. Apprentices and other young workers, for instance, frequently resented being required to perform unpaid in choirs organized for the occasion. While they no doubt welcomed the gifts presented by employers at Christmas as an added gesture of goodwill, it was not uncommon for workers to be physically abused by watchful SA men or even fired for lassitude displayed during salutes or the singing of the national anthems. To workers the roll-calls seemed akin to "moral sermonizing" and "slave-driving". When held before working hours the calls incurred their indignation; when incorporated into the work-day the same calls found disfavour among employers. Conceived as a daily ritual when introduced across the Reich by 1934, they quickly receded to weekly then monthly events. In many cases they ceased altogether due to passive resistance on the part of workers and disdain on the part of employers.⁵⁸

⁵⁸DBS, 2:53-55, 63, 6 Feb. 1935; *ibid.*, 288-91, 12 Apr. 1935; *ibid.*, 558-60, 12 June 1935; *ibid.* 796-98, 3 Aug. 1935. See also Smelser, *Robert Ley*, 217. Evidently the workers' loathing of the *Betriebsappell* was exceeded only by their resentment at being forced to participate in marches organized by the factory cells of the DAF. See BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 Oct. 1934.

By 1935 it was also apparent that Catholics, particularly in rural regions, feared that the elimination of Catholic holidays represented an attack on their religion. Nazi involvement in the 'Church Struggle' had resulted in widespread discontent and open hostility towards local Nazi activists in Catholic strongholds, which manifested itself in higher than usual levels of participation in Corpus Christi and other religious processions and events.⁵⁷ According to Stapo authorities in Aachen, for example, not only were Germans, including many older Nazis, who had little previous contact with the church, now involving themselves in religious activities but even former Marxists were volunteering to carry the baldachin during Corpus Christi processions in June.⁵⁸ Catholics especially resented the banning of Catholic flags during religious holidays and processions of Catholic Youth associations as well as the pressure exerted by Nazi activists on local political officials wishing to take part in such events.⁵⁹ Similarly, in the view of government officials in Lower Franconia, the largely unprecedented observance of the Protestant holiday, Repentance Day, in Catholic areas signified a deliberate political tactic on the part of church officials intent on resisting Nazi incursions into the cultural

⁵⁷BayHStA, MA 106675, MBRPvP, 9 July 1935.

⁵⁸BA, R 58/662, 5 July 1935. Since the nature of Catholic protest in the form of the politicization of Corpus Christi processions and the like represented a higher form of dissent than is being examined here, they are discussed below in chap. 5. On the 'Church Struggle' and its impact on popular opinion in Bavaria, see Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, chaps. 4 and 5; and more generally, J.S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945* (Toronto, 1968), chap. 7 and passim.

⁵⁹BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF/A, 6 July 1935. See also Conway, *Nazi Persecution*, 172-74.

life of religious Germans.⁸⁰

By the summer of 1935 *Sopade* reports were registering complaints among Germans annoyed by the seemingly endless donations and collections associated with festival events at all levels of state and Party to which they were compelled to contribute. To ordinary Germans it appeared as if they were being called upon not only to build the monumental works associated with the Party grounds in Nuremberg, the Olympic park in Berlin or the Königsplatz in Munich, but to pay for them directly through donations.⁸¹ Workers too complained that their DAF contributions were being squandered on the Party grounds in Nuremberg.⁸² A further indication of public attitudes in the summer of 1935, particularly of workers, was the reaction to a series of industrial disasters, including a Ruhr mining cave-in in July and the U-Bahn construction site collapse in Berlin at the end of August. Nazi attempts to gain political capital by elevating the burial ceremonies for the victims into acts of state were evidently regarded by some as an "empty gesture of propaganda."⁸³ The admission that in some areas the mandatory "German greeting" had all but disappeared from public view, or worse, was used to ironic effect, a result partly of declining enthusiasm and partly of

⁸⁰BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF/A, 9 Dec. 1935.

⁸¹DBS, 2: 860, 3 Aug. 1935; and *ibid.*, 898, 21 Sept. 1935.

⁸²DBS, 2:903, 21 Sept. 1935.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 904. For reports on the state funerals for the "soldiers of work", attended by Goebbels, Ley and numerous other Nazi leaders, see VB, 201, 20 July 1935, 243, 31 Aug. 1935.

growing public discord, was also suggestive of the general mood.⁸⁴

Such incidents notwithstanding, the continued ability of the Nazis to maintain morale led at least one despondent Sopade agent to declare: "Fundamentally the Nazis are artists. It is an enormous achievement to hold together this broken down, dreadful people".⁸⁵ Part of the ongoing appeal of cultural life under the Nazis presumably lay in the subsidization of conventional festive activities in rural areas. According to a report from a village in Saxony, the so-called 'Nazification' of cultural life through the KdF often amounted to little more than the promotion and subsidization of traditional village beer festivals held in local taverns. Dressed up as though they were "going to carnival", participants were dropped off by bus at a local tavern where they ate, drank and "talked nonsense" before being picked up for the homeward journey.⁸⁶ The point must be emphasized that while Germans were encouraged to regale themselves in Germanic folklore and customs recast in the Nazi style, they did so as part of their free time in leisure and recreation. In practice, moreover, the only tangible difference, and one that should not be underestimated in enhancing the regime's appeal, was the not unwelcome state subsidization of traditional forms of popular festivity.

Sopade analysts insisted that although the young were most vulnerable to the dynamic activism of the Nazi celebration, they were

⁸⁴BA, R 58/510, LbStapo-Wesermünde, 9 June 1935; R 58/1578, LbStapo-Breslau, Liegnitz, Oppeln, 3 Oct. 1935; R 58/552, LbStapo-Cologne, 4 Nov. 1935.

⁸⁵DBS, 2: 664, 15 July 1935, report from Rhineland-Westphalia.

⁸⁶DBS, 2: 849, 3 Aug. 1935.

not simply taken in by the festival offerings of Nazism. A Sopade report from Silesia asserted that the effects of Leni Riefenstahl's Party rally film *Triumph of the Will* were by no means uniform. The report declared that after viewing the film a young boy stated, "Such rubbish I have never seen before in my life." In general the report suggested that the parades and demonstrations passed before youthful eyes like "a kaleidoscope" without leaving behind any deep traces.⁶⁷

Numerous anti-Nazi rumours circulated in the month before the annual Nuremberg Party rally in September 1935,⁶⁸ an indication that the mood continued to deteriorate among some sectors of the population. Nevertheless, according to several internal reports the 'Party Day of Freedom', the Nazi celebration of the return of the Saar and the renewal of Germany's military presence, had left a powerful impression on the German population. In the view of Erfurt Stapo officials, the great majority of Germans "saw in the massive event not as in previous years a purely outward demonstration or parade of the political army of the NSDAP but the symbolic expression of the unity of the entire folk". Of course, the greatest and most lasting impact was on those Nazis and non-Nazis attending the spectacle. Yet even the normally politically aloof

⁶⁷DBS, 2: 708, 15 July 1935.

⁶⁸Throughout August 1935 rumors circulated to the effect that before his death Hindenburg had secretly demanded the removal of Hitler and that the *Reichswehr* would demand the dissolution of the SA. These events were to take place following the upcoming Party rally. According to a member of the SS outfitted for special security during the Party congress such defensive operations were necessary in light of the increasing propaganda directed against the state and Party. It was not impossible, he was reported as saying, that in Nuremberg a terrace or grandstand might blow up or even that an attempt might be made on Hitler's life. See DBS, 2: 920, 21 Sept. 1935.

rural population had expressed a keen interest in the events in Nuremberg, a report from Lower Franconia insisted. Repeatedly the Stapo reports focused on the widespread interest in the military showcase, particularly the maneuvers of the tanks and aeroplanes, held on the final day of the rally. According to a report from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate, the population was astounded at the rapid pace of the rebuilding of the German army. The report insisted, moreover, that Hitler's rally speech proclaiming Germany's peaceful intentions had done much to allay the trepidation of a population living in a constant fear of danger of foreign invasion. In addition, the various reports maintained that the German people welcomed the anti-Jewish laws proclaimed by Hitler to close the rally and were only unclear as to magnitude of public antipathy towards the Jews permissible under the new laws. The laws, as a Stapo report from the Palatinate contended, had the effect of averting eyes from the petty troubles of everyday life and focusing them on the real concerns that served to unite a racially pure folk.** Only a few Stapo reports admitted that the events in Nuremberg were of limited effect as continuing economic concerns as well as the increasing international tensions caused by Mussolini's aggressive stance towards

**BA, R 58/1578, LbStapo-Erfurt, 5 Oct. 1935; BayHStA, MA 106672, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 Oct. 1935; MA 106675, MbRPvP, 9 Oct. 1935; MA 106680, MbRPvUF, 8 Oct. 1935. See also, *ibid.*, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 7 Oct. 1935; MA 106697, LbPd-Munich, 3 Oct. 1935; BA, R 58/1578, LbStapo-Breslau, Liegnitz, Oppeln, 3 Oct. 1935; R 58/513, LbStapo-Bielefeld, 3 Oct. 1935; R 58/529, LbStapo-Koblenz, 5 Oct. 1935; R 58/1579, LbStapo-Königsberg, [Oct. 1935]; *ibid.*, LbStapo-Köslin, [Oct. 1935]; R 58/529, LbStapo-Kassel, [Oct. 1935]; R 58/513, LbStapo-Berlin, [Oct. 1935]; R 58/534, LbStapo-Osnabrück, 10 Oct. 1935; BA, NS 22/716, Stimmungs- and Lb, GL Grohé, Cologne-Aachen, 10 Dec. 1935.

Abyssinia soon occupied the thoughts of the German population.⁷⁰

The extent to which such reports represented the 'official view' is demonstrated by the reports compiled not only by the *Sopade* but also by the *Stapo*. *Sopade* analysts claimed that despite the profuse media coverage, in general the Party rally found little resonance among the "broad masses".⁷¹ Similarly, *Stapo* agents in Aachen, Cologne and Frankfurt am Main admitted that the rally, its impact largely restricted to members of the NSDAP, scarcely affected the prevailing atmosphere of discontent.⁷² A *Stapo* report from Dortmund also noted declining public interest and enthusiasm as the obviously expanding power of the Nazi regime made itself felt among an increasingly compliant population that satisfied itself with a passive "wait-and-see" attitude.⁷³ From Hannover it was reported that in one region most Germans preferred to go for a walk rather than listen to radio broadcasts from Nuremberg and that a loudspeaker system blaring the same broadcasts in the Marktplatz went largely unheeded by passers-by.⁷⁴

Most Germans, *Sopade* reports insisted, considered the event nothing more than an attempt at diversion. Such festivals, they

⁷⁰BA, R 58/529, LbStapo-Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, 3 Oct. 1935; R 58/1578, LbStapo-Frankfurt/Oder, 4 Oct. 1935; R 58/534, LbStapo-Trier, 5 Oct. 1935.

⁷¹DBS, 2: 903, 21 Sept. 1935.

⁷²BA, R 58/513, LbStapo-Aachen, 7 Oct. 1935; R 58/529, LbStapo-Cologne, 18 Oct. 1935; R 58/514, Supplement to LbStapo-Frankfurt/Main, [Oct.1935]. The report from the predominately Catholic region of Aachen cited Nazi church policy and the absence of economic improvement as the primary reasons for the continued public discord.

⁷³BA, R 58/514, LbStapo-Dortmund, [Oct. 1935].

⁷⁴BA, R 58/529, LbStapo-Hannover, 1 Oct. 1935.

claimed, were a spent force no longer able to obscure reality.⁷⁶ The *Reichswehr* demonstrations held on the Zeppelinwiese struck many as nothing more than "histrionics".⁷⁶ Sopade analysts remarked that the radical features of the rally, the military exercises, the flag law and the measures against the Jews, were considered by a significant segment of the population as a clear sign of weakness in the Nazi regime. The proclamation of the Nuremberg laws, reports claimed, left much of the population disgruntled, despite the general lack of empathy for Jews. While some criticized the prohibition of the imperial flag, particularly older Germans and members of the *Stahlhelm*, who had seen in the Nazi movement the fulfillment of their national goals, the major fear of the middle classes was that the measures announced against the Jews would lead to foreign boycott of German goods or trade embargoes.⁷⁷ In a different vein, since a trip to Nuremberg was for many a welcome all-expenses paid holiday, the selection process, often subject to last minute revisions, led to considerable dissatisfaction among Nazis as well as workers.⁷⁸

⁷⁶DBS, 2: 903, 21 Sept. 1935.

⁷⁶DBS, 2: 1018-19, 16 Oct. 1935.

⁷⁷DBS, 2: 1019-21, 16 Oct. 1935. See also BA, R 58/513, LbStapo-Aachen 7 Oct. 1935; R 58/529, LbStapo-Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, 3 Oct. 1935; R 58/529, LbStapo-Koblenz, 5 Oct. 1935; R 58/529, LbStapo-Cologne, 18 Oct. 1935; R 58/671, LbPd-Munich, 3 Oct. 1935.

⁷⁸Non-Nazi workers as well as Nazis welcomed the opportunity to attend the Nuremberg Party rally as industrial plant and factory representatives, since not only did it mean free travel, accommodation, and spending money but also the payment of a week's wages. According to a report from the Ruhr district, for example, employers occasionally defied the recommendations of Nazi shop stewards and delegated socialist and Catholic workers to attend the rally. DBS, 2: 1018-19, 16 Oct. 1935. See also BA, R 58/513, LbStapo-Aachen, 7 Oct. 1935.

Poor weather forced celebrations of Harvest Thanksgiving indoors and dampened festive spirits in parts of the Reich in 1935. The festive mood was particularly muted in areas where local NS officials had fallen into disfavour.⁷⁹ In other areas, such as Upper Bavaria, Königsberg, Westphalia, Minden, and Trier reports continued to record the widespread popularity of the celebrations, particularly in rural areas, where those fortunate Germans attending the festivities on the Bückeberg returned enthralled.⁸⁰ According to reports from Erfurt and Augsburg, meanwhile, the speeches by Hitler and Darré fortified the public's trust in the Nazi leadership and its economic policy.⁸¹ Not all rural Germans responded with enthusiasm, however. Although Stapo authorities in Breslau reported that in general the population followed the Bückeberg spectacle with interest, they also touched on a certain indifference towards the Nazi event among Silesian farmers. Farm income from the harvest productions had failed to meet expectations raised by the Nazi agricultural policy with its system of fixed and subsidized agricultural prices.⁸² Magdeburg Stapo officials also noted the unevenness of the

⁷⁹BA, R 58/1580, LbStapo, Frankfurt/Oder, 31 Oct. 1935; R 58/1582, LbStapo Köslin, Nov. 1935; BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 Nov. 1935; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 8 Nov. 1935; MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 6 Nov. 1935.

⁸⁰BayHStA, MA 106691, LbRPvOB, 9 Dec. 1935; BA, R 58/535, LbStapo-Bielefeld, 4 Nov. 1935; R 58/566, LbStapo-Münster, 4 Nov. 1935; R 58/566, LbStapo-Trier, 5 Nov. 1935; R 58/1581, LbStapo-Königsberg, Nov. 1935.

⁸¹BA, R 58/1580, LbStapo-Erfurt, 4 Nov. 1935; BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 Dec. 1935.

⁸²BA, R 58/1580, LbStapo-Breslau, 1 Nov. 1935. For similar reports on rural indifference, see R 58/552, LbStapo-Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, [Nov. 1935]; *ibid.*, LbStapo-Koblenz, 5 Nov. 1935; *ibid.*, LbStapo-Kassel, [Nov. 1935]. In Catholic rural areas, church officials continued to hold sway over the population which contributed to the widespread apathy displayed

celebrations throughout the region. In many rural areas attempts to hold a parade failed as farmers, among them local NS farm leaders, boycotted the planned festivities. As one area burgomaster declared:

[T]he farmer has not yet realized, or will not grasp what he owes to the Führer. In light of the Harvest Thanksgiving celebration ... it has become clear that ... a large portion of the German peasantry looks upon the government and its measures with hostility while among our workers it is increasingly to be observed that understanding of the desires of the Führer is growing.⁸³

By November 1935 *Sopade* reports from Saxony were recounting the indifference expressed by the population towards state festivals and the indolence characterizing the display of flags.⁸⁴ Meanwhile in Munich the dramatic spectacle staged by the Nazis as a solemn tribute to the sixteen 'martyrs' killed during the ill-fated putsch of 9 November 1923 attracted a massive crowd of spectators awed by the enormous power of Nazi theatre at its most striking. Curious onlookers had begun to line the streets by mid-afternoon to catch a glimpse of the torchlight procession following Hitler's address to the faithful in the Bürgerbräukeller on the evening of 8 November. The sizable crowd notwithstanding, according to *Sopade* agents, the reaction of the onlookers was mixed. While many came away enraptured by the spectacular display, others complained of the financial burden that such events imposed on the

towards Nazi festivities. See *ibid.*, LbStapo-Cologne, 4 Nov. 1935; R 58/548, supplement to LbStapo-Wiesbaden, 5 Nov. 1935.

⁸³BA, R 58/1582, LbStapo-Magdeburg, 5 Nov. 1935. Similarly, a farmer from the Dübener Heath region in Saxony remarked to a *Sopade* activist that local residents had celebrated their traditional harvest festival in the warmth of familiarity long before the introduction of its Nazi successor, which "retained all the character of a compulsory affair." See *DBS*, 2: 1165, 11 Nov. 1935.

⁸⁴*DBS*, 2: 1265, 12 Nov. 1935.

working population.⁸⁶ Internal reports on the 9 November ceremonies held in Munich and on a smaller scale throughout the Reich insisted that the events found a deep and lasting resonance among the population.⁸⁸

The year 1935 represented a period of consolidation for the Nazi government. Though economic concerns--low wages, inflation, food and consumer goods shortages, and lingering high unemployment--remained the primary source of public discontent and continually threatened to undermine the popularity of the Nazi state,⁸⁷ those concerns were partially offset by Hitler's first of a spectacular series of bloodless diplomatic triumphs. At the same time, however, the national celebrations of Hitler's foreign policy successes were accompanied by a constant anxiety as each diplomatic success raised the potential for international retaliation and war.⁸⁸ Still, as the authority of the repressive Nazi state seemingly became more firmly fixed in the daily lives of Germans, it sanctioned even more radical measures and policies, that in turn

⁸⁶Ibid., 1266.

⁸⁸The reports maintained that not only were attendance levels at local events high, but Germans purportedly showed considerable interest in the extensive media coverage given the events in Munich. In BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 Dec. 1935; MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 6 Dec. 1935; MA 106672, MbRPvNB/OP, 9 Dec. 1935; MA 106675, MbRPvP, 6 Dec. 1935; MA 106691, LbRPvOB, 9 Dec. 1935; MA 106682, LbRPvS, 7 Dec. 1935, 6 Dec. 1936, 7 Dec. 1937; MA 106680, MbRPvUF, 9 Dec. 1935, 8 Dec. 1936; MA 106690, MbGestapo-Munich, 1 Dec. 1937. Nonetheless, police officials in Augsburg observed that some opponents of the regime sought to belittle the efforts of the 'Old Fighters' by comparing them unfavorably with the achievements of soldiers from the First World War. See MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 Dec. 1935.

⁸⁷Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 74.

⁸⁸Ibid., 122-23: "The fear of another war was a constant, open or subliminal, accompaniment to the national euphoria which greeted Hitler's triumphs, and it placed certain limits on the rejoicing."

commanded increasingly higher levels of compliance on the part of the German population. Also by the end of 1935 the Nazi festival structure had all but reached its final form with the spectacular Nazi (re)presentation of 9 November 1923. In the years to follow, the Nazis merely extended the festival structure in terms of both its size and scope. Yet bigger did not necessarily mean better and popular opinion regarding Nazi festivity remained mixed. In general terms public celebration articulated the mixture of jubilation and anxiety among the German population that accompanied Hitler's restive ambitions to restore Germany's world power status. Finally, the general weariness characterizing much of the population's mood towards NS organized festivity by 1935 continued until 1939 as the interminable sameness of Nazi celebration made it less and less able to attract and impress the masses who in any event saw their free time shrinking as the accelerated pace of rearmament demanded longer working hours.

The two Olympiads, the winter games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the summer event in Berlin, dominated the festival landscape in 1936. According to confidential government and police reports the German people intently followed both sport 'festivals', celebrating enthusiastically the success of German athletes which they purportedly attributed to National Socialist sport policy. In the opinion of state officials, the national celebration of the international winter sport festival did much to defuse existing popular discontent.⁸⁸ A *Stapo* report from Frankfurt/Oder emphasized, moreover, that at a time when

⁸⁸BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 6 Mar. 1936, 7 Sept. 1936; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 8 Sept. 1936; MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 7 Aug. 1936, 7 Sept. 1936; MA 106687, MbvBPP, 1 Mar. 1936; MA 106688, MbvBPP, 1 Sept. 1936.

local Nazi rallies were poorly attended and the 'German greeting' frequently neglected, the Winter Games contributed to the pacification of an increasingly nervous population.⁹⁰

Festivals also featured prominently as an instrument of Nazi propaganda in the few 'elections' held in the peacetime years of the Third Reich. In the Nazi orchestrated election campaign for the Reichstag in March 1936 following Hitler's daring march into the Rhineland, cities, towns and villages across Germany provided the civic stage for the dynamic and enormous capabilities of the Nazi state to mobilize popular opinion through profuse and spectacular festivity. The inaugural rally held in Munich was in the view of *Sopade* analysts a "showpiece of National Socialist festival orchestration." Widely publicized in the media, the rally gained added significance through the participation of thousands of Bavarians transported to Munich in lorries and forty special trains. Met at the railway station by a military band, visitors from outlying regions, like the residents of Munich, were

⁹⁰BA, R 58/1585, LbStapo-Frankfurt/Oder, 3 Mar. 1936. In contrast to the unmistakable elevation of public support for the regime following the widely acclaimed Olympics, the widespread media attention given Göring's lavish Opera Ball in Berlin did little to change the image of widespread Nazi corruption shared by much of the German population and from which only Hitler was exempt. In the view of the Darmstadt Gestapo, photographs splashed across the newspapers and in illustrated magazines showing the cream of German political, military and cultural circles cavorting amidst the opulent surroundings left a bitter taste in the mouths of many Germans still suffering acutely from economic need or those forced to work long hours for minimal pay in service to the 'national community'. See BA, R 58/663, MbGestapo-Darmstadt, 3 Feb. 1936. Similarly, the appearance of Party leaders in casual attire enjoying themselves at a spring festival held in the kurhaus in Bad-Homburg the following month aroused the consternation not only of Rhineland Germans but among the NS rank and file who recalled the stern, austere style of earlier Nazi festivities. See BA, R 58/663, MbGestapo-Darmstadt, 3 Mar. 1936.

blasted with the full force of the festive spectacle. Throughout the entire afternoon, uniformed marching columns filled the immediate area surrounding the railway station before proceeding to the immense rally on the Theresienwiese, location of Munich's annual *Oktoberfest*, where an estimated 300,000 curious onlookers had gathered to see and hear the Führer. The large beer halls nearby overflowed with festive merry-making. Enframed by a series of large spotlights the Theresienwiese was a "fantastic sea of light". High above the massive crowd a gigantic illuminated swastika acted as a beacon for national aspirations. Two hundred loudspeakers enclosed the entire festival space, making each syllable crisply audible to the admiring spectators and adding to the dazzling display of technological virtuosity. Following Hitler's speech, an SA torchlight procession proceeded into the city centre. Although some of the spectators grew cold and weary through the long ceremony and went home, while others resorted to building bonfires with torches reserved for the parade, and still others complained of the lavish expenditure on such occasions, the day's events no doubt contributed to the mobilization of popular opinion in support of Hitler. This was certainly the case for those brought to Munich at the Party's expense, who availed themselves of Munich's amenities, especially its numerous beer halls, before departing the following morning. As a celebration of Hitler's most recent diplomatic triumph, the rejoicing by millions of Germans during the electoral campaign signalled the popular acclamation of the Rhineland reoccupation, a public endorsement confirmed by the

unanimity of the electoral results on 29 March.⁹¹ Further public approval of the Rhineland remilitarization came in the strong turnout reported for Heroes' Memorial Day later the same month.⁹²

While Hitler's latest foreign policy success might have boosted the public's confidence in their political leadership,⁹³ it was insufficient in itself to annul criticism of other aspects of the Nazi regime, including its festival culture. Though reports filed by the Bavarian political police officials attested to the continued popularity of 1 May celebrations⁹⁴, other workers' celebrations like the universally detested *Betriebsappelle*, with few exceptions, continued to founder, were forgotten or disappeared altogether.⁹⁵ Whatever Ley's intentions to overcome the alienating nature of the punch-clock, the *Betriebsappelle* proved a complete failure, resented by both workers and their employers. On the other hand, other Nazi attempts to permeate the cultural life of workers were more successful. Rites of competition involving prizes and

⁹¹DBS, 3: 282-85, 2 Apr. 1936. On the varied public response to the reoccupation of the Rhineland, which ranged from jubilant and spontaneous celebration through torchlight processions, flag waving, and public assemblies (chiefly among Nazis) to relief that the action did not provoke military retaliation, see DBS, 3: 310, 2 Apr. 1936. For the nearly unanimous results (98.8 percent) and significance of the election of 29 March 1936, see Bullock, *Hitler*, 345-46.

⁹²BayHStA, MA 106680, MbRPvS, 6 Apr. 1936; MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 3 Apr. 1936.

⁹³On the low morale of the population after another particularly severe winter prior to the reoccupation of the Rhineland, and the temporary national celebration that erupted in the wake of Hitler's latest diplomatic triumph, see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 75-77, 127-28.

⁹⁴BayHStA, MA 106687, MbBPP, 1 June 1936.

⁹⁵DBS, 3: 496-98, 4 May 1936; *ibid.*, 714, 4 July 1936; *ibid.*, 1182-83, 6 Oct. 1936; *ibid.*, 1580-83, 12 Jan. 1937; DBS, 4: 344-48, 12 Apr. 1937; *ibid.*, 1692-93, 18 Jan. 1938.

awards, for example, played up the spirit of competitiveness, a fundamental social precept of the achievement-oriented Nazi worldview. In Bavaria, industrial workers formed factory gymnastic teams to compete at a series of regional KdF-sponsored folk festivals. This festival activity, an imitation of earlier, smaller events organized by Munich's working class, aroused considerable interest. Workers attended the fairgrounds to cheer on their friends competing for the top prize of a free holiday aboard a KdF ship.⁹⁶

Also in the month of May, the Nazis tailored the observance of Mothers' Day, a holiday initially established during the Weimar Republic largely as a result of efforts from within the business community, as a national celebration of the German family and motherhood.⁹⁷ Placed in the care of the NSV and NSF in addition to the KdF, the celebration of the traditional social role of women within the context of the family was a deliberate attempt to reestablish the ideal of the middle-class family against the disruptive process of social transformation engendered by the rapid pace of modernization in Germany since the turn of the century.⁹⁸ From early on, the Nazis also imbued the holiday with a martial and political flavour by singling out mothers whose sons had

⁹⁶DBS, 3: 882, 5 Aug. 1936.

⁹⁷BA, NS 6/216, directive from Hess, 3 May 1934. On the origins and development of Mothers' Day in the Weimar period, see Karin Hausen, "Mütter zwischen Geschäftsinteressen und kultischer Verehrung. Der 'Deutsche Muttertag' in der Weimarer Republik," in *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit: Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland*, 2d ed., ed. Gerhard Huck (Wuppertal, 1982), 249-280.

⁹⁸See Peukert, *Weimar Republic*, 105.

died in war or in service to the "national uprising".⁹⁹ According to a report of the Bavarian Political Police, the holiday evidently enjoyed considerable popularity among German women who no doubt enjoyed their brief moment on the nation's festival stage.¹⁰⁰

Nazi festival culture encompassed young Germans beyond the education system and Nazi youth groups. The traditional celebration on the occasion of induction into the military (or labour service), when rowdy gangs of young males roamed the streets drinking, singing, and harassing passers-by, had again become a popular event apparently encouraged by the Nazi state. Now, however, whereas such celebrations had earlier featured a great deal of spontaneous behaviour, the public revelry appeared more organized, with the line of command clearly discernible among the celebrants. In the countryside this rite of passage took the form of groups of young men drinking excessively and driving about the village in decorated vehicles singing patriotic songs.¹⁰¹ Such festivity doubtless proved especially popular since it corresponded to both the inculcation of nationalistic and militaristic values desired by the Nazi leaders and the more general need for rebelliousness and revelry among the young themselves.

As further evidence of the German population's diminishing

⁹⁹BA, R 43 II/1265, Reichsoberrevisor (NSV) to Hitler, 24 Apr. 1934.

¹⁰⁰BayHStA, MA 106687, MbBPP, 1 June 1936. Though Mothers' Day represented the most visible celebration of German women, in their nurturing role they were expected to instill the cultural values of the 'new order' whether in the course of everyday living or as part of festivals and ceremonies. See Auguste Reber-Gruber, "Die kulturelle Aufgabe der Frau," in *FuF* 7 (1938): 86.

¹⁰¹DBS, 3: 830-31, 5 Aug. 1936.

enthusiasm for celebration, Nazi leaders ordered local Party officials to pursue a more active role in enforcing the public display of flags and other Nazi emblems on national holidays. Hence in addition to the obligatory appeals announced through the national media, local *Ortsgruppenleiter* commonly sent out notices to all homeowners 'requesting' them to display flags on Hitler's Birthday, 1 May and other national holidays.¹⁰² Such increased levels of suasion clearly revealed the limited effectiveness of Nazi festivity since with the banishment of the imperial flag many Germans obviously preferred to leave their dwellings unadorned rather than decorate them with Nazi regalia.

As in previous years, confidential reports compiled by the government claimed to notice the deep impact of the 1936 Nuremberg rally. In the view of several of the reports the anti-Bolshevist theme prevalent throughout the event reinforced the status and prestige of the Nazi state as the sole defense against the 'red peril' of Stalin's Russia.¹⁰³ In the view of *Sopade* reports from Rhineland-Westphalia, Bavaria, Saxony and Silesia, on the other hand, the rally was all but ignored by the general population, the usual Goebbels's media blitz notwithstanding. That the Nazi would do better to give the people bread, fat and meat instead of speeches was a popular refrain among

¹⁰²DBS, 3: 542-43, 9 June 1936. Flags were normally made available through the local district office for a nominal price.

¹⁰³BayHStA, MA 106675, MbrPvP, 8 Oct. 1936; MA 106680, MbrPvUF, 8 Oct. 1936; MA 106672, MbrPvNB/OP, 9 Oct. 1936; MA 106682, LbrPvS/N, 9 Oct. 1936; MA 106697, MbvBPP, 1 Oct. 1936.

discontented Germans, *Sopade* analysts claimed.¹⁰⁴

By October 1936 it was becoming increasingly clear that efforts to bring rural cultural life into step with the modern Nazi dynamic were of limited effect. In some areas only the intervention of local officials forced any kind of popular celebration of the Nazi Harvest Thanksgiving festival as an ill-humored rural population struggled to cope with the failed harvest, labour shortages and other economic concerns that increasingly made life in the countryside more arduous.¹⁰⁵ The following month, officials reported widespread failure of church officials to comply with the flag regulations for the annual 9 November celebration.¹⁰⁶

During the year *Sopade* reports continued to compile a list of complaints regarding the 'comradeship evenings'. Of primary concern for workers was the suspicion that they were indirectly paying for the evenings through reduced wages or directly through small pay deductions.¹⁰⁷ Evidently such celebrations inflicted hardship on family life as well. It was not uncommon for male workers to spend much of their wages at the comradeship evenings as they tended to turn into massive drinking-bouts with little heed for the expense involved. Consequently, wives were

¹⁰⁴DBS, 3: 1109-11, 6 Oct. 1936. The reports also noted that the increasing curtailment of workers' delegates to the rally added to the growing ambivalence towards Nazi celebration among workers.

¹⁰⁵BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 Nov. 1936.

¹⁰⁶For example in the Palatinate region authorities recorded 74 Catholic and 82 Protestant churches and parsonages without flags. See BayHStA, MA 106675, MBRPvP, 7 Jan. 1936.

¹⁰⁷DBS, 3: 496, 4 May 1936.

often hard put to maintain the household until the next payday.¹⁰⁹

Still, though workers like the industrial plant managers saw through the speeches of DAF officials that formed part of the evening's carousing, the normally ample amounts of food and drink on hand produced a genuinely "festive mood". This was particularly the case in small plants where employers often stemmed from the same industry or trade as the workers. In large plants, meanwhile, socializing between workers and managerial staff was enhanced through dancing and other forms of entertainment.¹⁰⁹

NSDAP leaders commonly used the occasion of Nazi holidays to address the nation on important issues. In the week before Hitler addressed the *Reichstag* on 30 January 1937, the Nazi propaganda apparatus swung into full gear to urge Germans to listen to the broadcast. Germans were particularly encouraged to seek out one of the many venues offering 'communal receptions' with radios placed in factories, cinemas, schools and restaurants and taverns.¹¹⁰ Yet Hitler's focus on the

¹⁰⁹DBS, 3: 1184, 6 Oct. 1936.

¹⁰⁹DBS, 3: 496, 4 May 1936; *ibid.*, 734, 4 July 1936; *ibid.*, 1184-85, 6 Oct. 1936; DBS, 4: 342-43, 12 Apr. 1937. According to a *Sopade* report from Bavaria, the level of beer consumption at such events exceeded that of the Weimar period. See DBS, 3: 830, 5 Aug. 1936.

¹¹⁰DBS, 4: 143-48, 10 Mar. 1937. Never accorded legal holiday status, Nazi festal days such as 30 January remained little more than occasions for political speeches either by Nazi leaders on radio or by local officials in public buildings or squares. With the exception of Berlin where a Nazi torchlight procession past the Reich Chancellery consciously sought to recreate the experience of 1933, celebrations and ceremonies were few and organized on a "modest scale", with evidently only minimal attendance on the part of ordinary Germans, although Hitler's usual Reichstag speech met with an enthusiastic reception everywhere, according to official reports. Yet, while listeners came away from their radio sets gratified that Hitler had returned Germany to the ranks of the world powers, by 1939 it was clear that an increasingly anxious German population was tuning in to the Reichstag broadcast to be reassured of the Führer's 'will to peace'. See BA, R 58/1584, LbStapo-

Spanish civil war during the speech sparked widespread fears of imminent war, and intensified an already pervasive 'war psychosis' gripping the German population.¹¹¹ Similarly, from 1937 onwards, public anxiety over escalating international tensions evidently kept many away from official commemorative ceremonies on Heroes' Memorial Day, which had become little more than belligerent displays of German military power.¹¹²

In the spring of 1937, *Sopade* analysts reported that four years of dictatorship had significantly dulled the effectiveness of Nazi festivals and other mass events as an instrument of propaganda. They also insisted that the still impressive level of attendance at such events obscured a deeper and pervasive internalized apathy among the population, because the participation of ordinary Germans was achieved largely through force and extensive organization. As local festivals such as the celebration of the Nazi takeover in Bavaria on 9 March illustrate, moreover, Nazi festivals were becoming more and more exclusive affairs of the NSDAP and its ancillary organizations with only

Stettin, 5 Feb. 1936, R 58/1585, LbStapo-Breslau, 4 Mar. 1936; R 58/567, LbGestapo-Aachen, 10 Feb. 1936; BayHStA, MA 106672, MbrPvNB/OP, 6 Feb. 1934, 6 Feb. 1936, 5 Feb. 1937; MA 106675, MbrPvP, 7 Feb. 1936; MA 106676, MbrPvP, 10 Feb. 1937, 10 Feb. 1939; MA 106680, MbrPvUF, 8 Feb. 1937; MA 106683, LbrPvS, 8 Feb. 1938. In Berlin, as it had evolved by 1939, the program of events also incorporated visits of prominent Nazis to schools to coincide with a radio address (9 A.M.), Hitler's presentation to the winners of the National Prizes (11 A.M.), and a rally in the Kroll Opera (2 P.M.). See *Berliner Tageblatt*, 47, 28 Jan. 1939.

¹¹¹DBS, 4: 148-49, 10 Mar. 1937. On the prevalence of the 'war psychosis' noted by both *Sopade* and government reports in the final years of peacetime see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 130-39.

¹¹²BayHStA, MA 106680, MbrPvUF, 8 Mar. 1937; MA 106673, MbrPvNB/OP, 11 Apr. 1939.

limited participation of ordinary Germans.¹¹³ It was not uncommon, wrote one *Sopade* analyst, for members of the upper middle classes to leave town on the occasion of Nazi festivals and holidays.¹¹⁴

A number of internal reports continued to record widespread public enthusiasm for Nazi organized 1 May celebrations; the national holiday was gradually taking on the form and tradition of a seasonal spring festival combining the jollity of popular entertainment with the seriousness of the usual radio broadcasts of national addresses by the Party leadership. The reports also claimed that official local parades, which in effect had become military marches, attracted considerable public interest.¹¹⁵ Moreover, as more than one internal government report emphasized, the packed pubs and factory celebrations provided an outward indication of the integration of German workers into the national community.¹¹⁶ As an expression of the genuine *Volksgemeinschaft*, under National Socialism the former workers' holiday approached that of a "natural" *Heimatsfest*.¹¹⁷ In contrast *Sopade* reports insisted that the annual 1 May spectacle in Berlin, ostensibly an overwhelming public expression of support for Nazism, had little to do with the working population. The day had become a "great parade", inviting praise

¹¹³DBS, 4: 483-84, 8 May 1937.

¹¹⁴DBS, 4: 470, 8 May 1937. Whether this reflected opposition to the Nazi regime or merely a desire to escape the urban commotion surrounding such events is unclear.

¹¹⁵BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 10 June 1937; MA 106675, MBRPvP, 8 June 1937; MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 May 1937; MA 106682, LBRPvS, 7 May 1937.

¹¹⁶BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 May 1937.

¹¹⁷BayHStA, MA 106682, LBRPvS, 7 May 1937.

and admiration and enjoyed by spectators, but no longer "an affair of the masses".¹¹⁹ Similarly, the attempt to establish midsummer as a neo-pagan Nazi holiday evidently found little support among Germans beyond the Party and its ancillary organizations, particularly the SS and HJ. According to reports from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate, for example, midsummer celebrations were well-attended, although not necessarily by ordinary Germans.¹²⁰

The extent to which the Nazis had succeeded in neutralizing opposition to the regime was clearly evident in the police report on the three days of festivity marking the Day of German Art in July. According to Munich police authorities, the discipline and sense of community displayed by the city's population resulted in almost no arrests on political grounds.¹²⁰ At the same time the transparent display of Party privilege provided for many Munich residents, as a *Sopade* report noted, a sobering example of the proclaimed *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹²¹

Later in the year, widespread sources continued to attest to the intoxicating power of the massive Party rallies in Nuremberg. Even *Sopade* analysts recorded the mesmerizing effect on workers invited to take part in the event. For a group of Saxon miners the experience of marching in closed formation with Germans from all walks of life left a lasting impression of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹²² Apart from the effect

¹¹⁹DBS, 4: 809-11, 8 July 1937.

¹²⁰BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 9 July 1937.

¹²⁰BayHStA, MA 106685, MbPD-Munich, 7 Aug. 1937.

¹²¹DBS, 4: 1077-79, 18 Sept. 1937.

¹²²DBS, 4: 1226, 14 Oct. 1937.

on those attending the rally, however, *Sopade* reports testified to the prevailing mood of indifference that permeated a considerable segment of the population.¹²³ The use of modern technology that had come to characterize Nazi festivity could become a sort of public litmus test of the population's growing apathy. According to Bavarian *Sopade* reports on the Party rally of 1937, loudspeakers that in former years had blared speeches into the public space had largely fallen silent as the population wearied of the incessant marching, flag waving and speeches.¹²⁴

The Nazi state orchestrated elaborately choreographed celebrations for foreign dignitaries that seldom failed to impress. The Italian Fascist leader Mussolini, for example, on his visit to Germany in late September 1937 was treated to spectacular ceremonies in Munich and Berlin.¹²⁵ Confidential reports emphasized the lively participation of the population in the celebrations of Germany's renewed military power arranged for Mussolini's benefit. Intended for foreign audiences, the carefully orchestrated mass spectacles also served as a powerful symbol of the 115 million strong 'alliance' of the two Axis powers. Workers in Berlin, meanwhile, grumbled at being required to participate in the massive march and cordon on the Maifeld as part of the elaborate

¹²³DBS, 4: 1224-26, 14 Oct. 1937, reports from Bavaria, Silesia and southwest Germany. Even the internal government reports devoted less space and superlatives to recording its impact on the population. See BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 8 Oct. 1937. Besides the obligatory accounts of widespread popularity, the report mentions only the relief felt among the country's Catholics who had feared the introduction of "special laws" against the Catholic order.

¹²⁴DBS, 4: 1224-25, 14 Oct. 1937.

¹²⁵Bullock, *Hitler*, 361-62.

festivities.¹²⁶

That the church was becoming more and more a refuge of protest against anticlerical Party activism was evident in the reality that by 1937 attendance at Nazi organized local Harvest Thanksgiving celebrations was notably weaker than at comparable church ceremonies. Even in the Bückeberg region, which benefitted economically from the national festival, local residents complained of the dust and commotion from the motor traffic speeding down the dirt roads.¹²⁷ Evidently city dwellers seemed to enjoy the day's events more than rural Germans, perhaps as it allowed them an inexpensive opportunity to travel in the countryside.¹²⁸ For workers, at least, the year ended on a high note. Göring's decree mandating the payment of wages for the five holidays over the Christmas season, a concession that organized labour had failed to win under the Republic, was acclaimed by much of the work force as a major setback for capitalism.¹²⁹ Christmas celebrations held in the workplace, moreover, continued to provide the Nazi dictatorship with the opportunity to promote its peaceful intentions as well as the goodwill purportedly

¹²⁶BayHStA, MA 106680, MBRPvUF, 8 Oct. 1937; DBS, 4: 1219-22, 14 Oct. 1937. On the same visit, similarly staged celebrations in Munich invited criticism among the city's residents.

¹²⁷BA, NL 94, Nachlass Darré II, 36a, Erfahrungsbericht-Erntedankfest 1937, 9 Oct. 1937.

¹²⁸BayHStA, MA 106672, MBRPvNB/OP, 7 Nov. 1937. It was not uncommon for NSDAP members to request tickets to the event, since often the only means to secure paid leave from work was through official invitations. See Brohmann to Lettow, 2 Sept. 1937, in BA, NL 94, Nachlass Darré II, 36a.

¹²⁹StAM, NSDAP 522, Tätigkeitsbericht-Ortsgruppe Bernau am Chiemsee, 24 Jan. 1938; DBS, 5: 316-21, 9 Apr. 1938.

existing between workers and employers.¹³⁰

The *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938 marked the high water mark of Hitler's popularity in the peacetime years of the Third Reich. Yet the palpable war anxiety permeating the German population delayed the widespread celebration of the event until after it was clear that Hitler had once again staged a diplomatic success without international retaliation.¹³¹ Several weeks later, *Sopade* reports maintained that the excessive drinking and absenteeism accompanying the 1 May celebrations were partly attributable to the strains placed on German workers by the accelerated pace of rearmament as well as the increasingly worsening international situation. As *Sopade* reports claimed, the 1 May holiday had lost some of its lustre not only for much of the population but for the Nazis themselves. In Stuttgart, in contrast to the mass demonstrations of support for the regime symbolized by the well-attended parades its first two years, the official parade had become a "costume performance" with workers appearing only under compulsion. Festivities were restricted to factory celebrations where widespread drunkenness was the norm. Worker celebrations in Berlin, as in the *Reichsbahn* plant, attracted largely members of the DAF and the Party, despite the attendance by a number of Nazi leaders, including Hess, Ley, Goebbels and Göring. Here too the opportunity for excess consumption of food and

¹³⁰DBS, 5: 35, 17 Feb. 1938.

¹³¹DBS, 5: 260-69, 9 Apr. 1938. See also Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 130-32.

drink provided the chief attraction of the festivities.¹³² Like their public apathy towards loudspeaker broadcasts, ordinary Germans continued to use modern technology to express private dissent. There is little reason to doubt that many Germans felt the same as one 'Old Fighter' who, in turning off the radio as the Party rally began, proclaimed: "All the time Party rally, it's enough to make one sick."¹³³

By the end of 1938, in the wake of the Munich Crisis at the end of September, it was clear that extended working hours, the surfeit of Nazi festivity, and the tensions stemming from Hitler's restive foreign policy had combined to affect adversely the German people's mood for celebration.¹³⁴ Further evidence of the prevailing 'war psychosis' was furnished on Heroes' Memorial Day in March 1939, when, as a report from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate observed, public attendance at ceremonies "left much to be desired".¹³⁵ Despite widespread fear of war, Germans turned out in droves to celebrate Hitler's birthday on 20 April, which followed the annexation of the primarily German-speaking Memel region and the successful occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Internal government reports on the popular celebrations

¹³²DBS, 5: 464-48, 30 June 1938. Reports from Saxony and Silesia provide similar accounts of the waning interest in 1 May celebrations. However at least one internal government report from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate repeated the claim that popular enthusiasm remained high. See BayHStA, MA 106673, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 June 1938.

¹³³Reported in DBS, 5: 1328, 12 Jan. 1939.

¹³⁴Hitler's annoyance at the apathy shown by the residents of Berlin during the massive mechanized military parade that took place in the city on 27 September during the darkest hours leading up to the Munich Agreement is described in Bullock, *Hitler*, 465.

¹³⁵BayHStA, MA 106673, MBRPvNB/OP, 11 Apr. 1939.

surpassed the superlatives employed in previous years. The widespread public displays of loyalty, acclamation and gratitude signalled "a true popular holiday", a report from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate declared. In Swabia and throughout the country, festive crowds, flags and greenery, military parades, and in the evening, torchlight processions and fireworks displays animated the civic space down "to the last village" as Hitler again stood firmly as a "fixed pole in the political thoughts and feelings" of the entire *Volkgemeinschaft*.¹³⁶ The outpouring of devotion was all the greater since for the first time the day had been declared a paid legal holiday, much to the satisfaction of workers, as Sopade reports noted with obvious disappointment.¹³⁷ Official charity also enhanced the popular impact of the celebration. In Augsburg ten thousand invalided war veterans were invited as guests of honour to various events.¹³⁸ While the widespread enthusiasm and devotion displayed in flag-flying and decoration as well as the plethora of poems, songs and letters sent in to newspapers in homage to the 'People's Chancellor' were no doubt genuine, it must be added that the propaganda apparatus had been in full swing for a full two weeks prior to the holiday, distributing free decorations and unsubtly urging all Germans to express their gratitude to the Führer.¹³⁹

¹³⁶BayHStA, MA 106673, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 May 1939; MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 8 May 1939; MA 106676 MBRPvP, 10 May 1939, MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 10 May 1939. The quotes are from the first two reports.

¹³⁷DBS, 5: 435-53, 10 May 1939.

¹³⁸BayHStA, MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 8 May 1939.

¹³⁹DBS, 5: 435-53, 10 May 1939. See also Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 140-41. Similarly, confidential reports claimed that popular participation in 1 May celebrations remained strong. See BayHStA, MA 106673,

Perhaps owing to flagging enthusiasm among German women arising out of increasing anxiety over the prospect of war, the Nazis introduced a new twist to Mother's Day in May 1939 with the ceremonial bestowal of Mother's Crosses of Honour. According to internal reports from Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate the award aroused joy, pride and gratitude among the recipients. "The will to bear children," the report offered, "is without doubt stimulated by this distinction." Indeed, the only complaint was that only a portion of the recipients could be accommodated during official ceremonies.¹⁴⁰ The introduction of this pseudo-military rite in the 'battle' for the preservation of the German race was an ominous sign of things to come.

* * *

Speaking before a group of RKK officials in November 1936, Goebbels proclaimed:

The creation of our great National Socialist celebrations ... is one of the most important elements of our modern cultural life. The Nuremberg days, the First of May in Berlin, the peasant conclave at Bückeberg Mountain are many things to those who have the good fortune to experience them, and one of the things they are is an unforgettable artistic vision. On such occasions there arises out of the unconscious and thus out of our creative wellsprings, a clear, modern, and simple

MbRPvNB/OP, 8 June 1939; MA 106683, LbRPvS, 7 June 1939; MA 106681, MbRPvUF, 12 June 1939. Given the ambivalent character of May Day celebrations in previous years it is doubtful that it changed all that much in 1939. Unfortunately no reports on 1 May were filed by *Sopade* agents as they were busy relocating in Paris after a hasty exit from Prague following the German invasion in March.

¹⁴⁰BayHStA, MA 106673, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 June 1939. Hitler considered the Mother's Cross to be the finest of Nazi decorations since it was awarded without regard for social position. See Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 137.

ritual; here a tradition established itself.¹⁴¹

Whatever the spontaneity of public celebration in the Third Reich, there can be little contention that, as an "artistic vision" of the modern forward-oriented ideology of Nazism, the Nazi festival was unsurpassed in its spectacular dramaturgy. While numerous observers have testified to the profound impact of the spectacular mass festivals on participants, their effectiveness as an instrument of social integration and political mobilization was more ambiguous. Hitler and the Nazis may have succeeded in winning over the majority of Germans to the notion of the 'national community',¹⁴² but the expanding powers of the repressive police state apparatus leaves no doubt that neither propaganda nor festivals and other Nazi 'carrots' sufficed to achieve the desired level of popular support for the Nazi regime. Clearly, as the 1 May events, 'comradeship evenings' and other forms of Nazi festivity illustrate, Germans participated in public celebration to the extent that it corresponded to their own sociocultural needs for merrymaking and sociability, or to enhance the sense of belonging to the greater good of the *Volkgemeinschaft*. In other words, public celebration in Nazi Germany was most effective where it corresponded to sociocultural needs and values shared by much of the German population. While Germans, for the most part, willingly attended dances and other forms of popular entertainment associated with Nazi festival culture, the increasingly

¹⁴¹Quoted in Heiber, *Goebbels*, 201.

¹⁴²That the Nazis succeeded to a significant degree in gaining at least passive support for the 'national community' is the contention of David Welch, "Manufacturing a Consensus: Nazi Propaganda and the Building of a 'National Community' (*Volkgemeinschaft*)," *Contemporary European History* 2 (1993): 1-15.

military form of official parades and ceremonies evidently found little resonance in the general population. This selective form of popular participation is further demonstrated by the Nazis' own admission that in spite of the reported popularity of such public celebrations not only was there an element of coercion involved but farmers, workers and other social groups had failed to grasp the intended 'meaning' of the Nazi festival in the spirit of the 'national community'. Similarly, Nazi attempts to interfere in religious ceremony and celebration were greatly resented by churchgoing Germans, particularly in Catholic regions, where Corpus Christi processions became transparently political demonstrations against the anticlerical policies of the Nazi state. Finally, in the process of appropriating traditional apolitical festival forms of entertainment, Nazi organized celebration evidently lost some of its ideological content. While this presumably did little to expedite the creation of the 'new order' of a militarized 'national community' envisioned by the Nazis, evidently it did help to establish a sense of normality in the cultural life of Nazi Germany which presumably helped defuse a significant amount of social discontent, and allow the Nazi leadership to pursue relatively unhindered its state power political objectives.¹⁴³

¹⁴³On the importance of Nazi festival culture in contributing to the sense of normality in the Third Reich, see Frank Trommler, "Between Normality and Resistance: Catastrophic Gradualism in Nazi Germany," *JMH* 64, supplement (December 1992): S94. See also Ulrich Herbert, "Die guten und die schlechten Zeiten," in *Die Jahre weiß man nicht, wo man die heute hinsetzen soll.* "Faschismus-Erfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet: Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930 bis 1960," ed. Lutz Niethammer, 3 vols. (Berlin and Bonn, 1983), 1: 67-96. On the process of apoliticization that occurred with the Nazi 'coordination' of middle-class social and cultural organizations, see Koshar, *Social Life*, 245, 263-71.

Still, there existed intrinsic features of Nazi festival culture that militated against the creation of the 'national community'. Doubtless, some segments of the German population such as workers, farmers, youth, and women enjoyed the national attention focused on them on their designated day of celebration,¹⁴⁴ which, in reciprocal fashion, may have sharpened their sense of national awareness. Yet at the same time the individuation of festivals into a series of celebrations staged for distinct social groups, despite Nazi assumptions to the contrary, presumably helped sustain existing social divisions. In a similar vein, the self-representational festivals celebrated primarily by the Nazis themselves apparently contributed to the widening gulf between the NSDAP membership and German society. Moreover, the stylized performance-based structure of Nazi spectacles, particularly those staged by Goebbels inadvertently constructed an undefined barrier between active participation and passive spectating, thus creating a further obstacle to total social integration. This was most evident in the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival which, with its more than one million ornamental bodies amassed atop the Bückeberg and military maneuvers exhibiting the latest in modern weaponry, bore scant resemblance to the pastoral traditions of rural German culture.

In sum, the reconstruction of popular opinion in the Third Reich is beset with difficulties primarily because the Nazi Party monopolized public opinion through its extensive propaganda machinery and, at the same time, because the repressive political culture of Nazi Germany

¹⁴⁴J.K Farquharson suggests that this was the case for rural Germans. See *Plough and the Swastika*, 207.

effectively served to impair if not entirely stifle public criticism of the regime. Nonetheless, while conclusions must remain tentative, the admittedly subjective and spotty evidence does suggest that in themselves Nazi festivals were incapable of galvanizing and maintaining public support for the Nazi state, although they did enjoy a significant level of popularity. The high degree of active and passive support achieved by the Nazi state resulted from disparate factors. Fundamental to the appeal of Nazism for the general population was the carefully manufactured image of Hitler as the 'charismatic' national leader. Also of importance was the success achieved by the Nazis in overcoming the economic crisis that had signalled the death knell for the Weimar republic.¹⁴⁵ Here, too, festivals played a role. Before turning to an examination of the 'festival industry', however, it is necessary to widen the frame of reference to include an examination of Nazi attempts to 'coordinate' traditional forms of popular festivals.

¹⁴⁵Where enthusiastic support for Nazism was less forthcoming, the police state apparatus, whose competence was enhanced by the active complicity of numerous Germans in the form of voluntary denunciations, ensured acceptable levels of compliance. On the active complicity of the German population in denouncing incidents of racial nonconformity to the Gestapo, see Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1990).

CHAPTER 3

THE CELEBRATION OF POLITICS: FESTIVALS AND POPULAR CULTURE

While the elaborate theatrical spectacles staged by the Nazis seemingly dominated the festive landscape of the Third Reich before 1939, more traditional popular festivals--carnival, sharpshooting and folk festivals--preserved and even increased their popularity among the German people. Though tempered somewhat by the growing 'war psychosis' after 1935/6, the popularity of such festivals profited from the economic upswing fueled, in part, by rearmament and Nazi work-creation programs, which thinned the ranks of the unemployed, boosted levels of discretionary income, and, consonant with Hitler's increasing prestige, presumably created a more congenial mood for celebration. Contrary to the obligatory accounts in the popular media, however, which created a dynamic image of ever growing popularity, signifying the public's unbounded affirmation of Hitler and the Nazi state, the popular response to these festivals was more complex. While carnival parades in Munich and elsewhere attracted ever larger crowds of onlookers, carnival celebration evidently lost something of its vitality after 1935 due to the encroachment of the KdF organization, which usurped much of the public space and time devoted to the season of celebration. Expanding state controls on festival behaviour also contributed to this development. Where the heavy hand of Nazi cultural policy was less intrusive, meanwhile, such as was the case with Munich's *Oktoberfest*, popular

enthusiasm for traditional festivals flourished.

In part, this ambivalence informing popular festivity in the Third Reich stemmed from the transformative effect of modernity, with its 'industrialization' of the cultural sphere. As a nascent mass consumer society, with its growing demands for recreational goods, took shape in the inter-war period it supported a 'culture industry' that manufactured an increasingly standardized array of cultural commodities and entertainments which in turn eroded comparatively fixed regional cultural barriers.¹ National Socialism, itself a product of modern mass political culture, accelerated this process by gearing it to a preoccupation with the creation of a forward-looking, ethnically and culturally pure national community under the banner of German *Kultur*. The Nazis promoted and administered mass cultural standardization as an effective means to create a homogeneous community of the people based on culturally shared values that transcended class, status and regional differences. To this end, popular festivals, which they rescued from the doldrums of economic depression, provided them with a useful

¹The concept 'culture industry', signifying cultural manipulation from above, was coined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1947 to differentiate it from the prevailing term 'mass culture' which defined a popular culture rising spontaneously from the masses themselves. Several of Adorno's critical studies on the culture industry are conveniently collected in Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited with an introduction by J.M. Bernstein (London, 1991). On the emergence of mass consumerism in the Weimar Republic and its importance for the rise of the NSDAP as a modern mass political movement, see Peukert, *Weimar Republic*, 161-90. For a discussion of popular festivity as a form of leisure activity promoted by the tourist industry, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 126-60; and Berthold Hamelmann, *Helau und Heil Hitler: Alltagsgeschichte der Fasnacht 1919-1939 am Beispiel der Stadt Freiburg* (Eggingen, 1989), 309-14. See also Rita Link and Doris Wandel, "Die Mainzer Fastnacht und ihre ökonomische und politische Ausnutzbarkeit," in *Analyse eines Stadtfestes "Die Mainzer Fastnacht"*, ed. Herbert Schwedt (Wiesbaden, 1977), 56-67.

cultural commodity. After all, a comparatively harmless escapism not only satisfied consumer needs for gratification and allowed participants to "let off steam", but also offered a popular framework in which to publicize National Socialist ideology.² Autochthonous festivals with their attendant customs, rites and dress were to be elevated to the level of a nationally shared festive event. The 'coordination' of popular festivity, however, seems to have been affected by local circumstances to an extent that allowed regional festivals to preserve something of their distinctive character, a character whose structural vitality had, in any event, been transformed by the modernization process.³

Yet as popular civic celebrations with strong roots in the cultural life of the local community, such festivals had evolved forms and meanings inconsistent with Nazi principles. Hence it was necessary for the Nazis to reinvent festival tradition by purging 'undesirable' components of popular celebration. Through the proliferation of legal measures and organizational permeation, the Nazis effectively eliminated or neutralized the parody of domestic and national politics, as well as excessive and potentially subversive behaviour, commonly associated with carnival celebration. Ousted, too, from festival space were beggars,

²Compare Utz Jeggle, "Fastnacht im Dritten Reich," in *Narrenfreiheit: Beiträge zur Fastnachtforschung*, ed. Hermann Bausinger et al. (Tübingen, 1980), 233.

³The extension of the KdF and other Party organizations into the festival culture of the nation followed closely the process of integration pursued by the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* institution in Fascist Italy. The Fascist revival of carnival and other folk festivals as a component of the politicized popular culture is examined in Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge, 1981), 210-16.

offensive sideshows and gambling. Meanwhile measures were taken to erase all religious and Jewish traces from festival culture--except as a source of mockery in carnival jesters' speeches and parade floats. At the same time, the Nazis moved to invest the festival experience with features expressive of their own cultural 'new order'. Prototypical of this new, thoroughly Nazi cultural experience was the KdF-*Volksfest*, a folk festival originally constructed as part of the Nuremberg Party rally, but which, in typically progressive administrative fashion, gradually took on an expanded role in the entertainment and supra-regional cultural acclimatization of Nazis and non-Nazis alike. Yet, whatever the ultimate fortune of individual festivals, none escaped the incursion of the Nazi state and its fanatical obsession with remaking the cultural fabric of the nation.

POPULAR FESTIVALS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Despite the concerted effort by the Nazis to weave folk festivals into the fabric of the politicized popular culture, ordinary Germans continued *en masse* to celebrate carnival and folk festivals throughout the years 1933-1939 and into wartime. For many Germans the suspension of traditional social norms during celebrations remained an attractive feature of carnival and other folk festivals. Popular festivals provided an opportunity for innocuous and serious play, a chance to escape from the over-administered world of modern everyday life.⁴ Equally important was the relative abundance of food and drink at

⁴For a general analysis of the socializing function of carnival, festival costumes and other elements of folklore culture, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 152-57.

festival events such as the *Oktoberfest*.⁶ Still, while Germans continued to interrupt their working lives with periodic intervals of organized chaos, on the whole it is clear that where the repressive state apparatus was most apparent, as with carnival in Munich and elsewhere, popular enthusiasm for celebration was mixed.

Although newspaper accounts of carnival celebration, especially of the parade, featured the common refrain of bigger, better and ever more popular,⁶ other sources of popular opinion suggest a different reality. While the Nazis revived the *Fasching* (carnival) parade in Munich, and through the auspices of KdF promoted more carnival balls and events than ever before, this did not necessarily translate into growing public enthusiasm for the organized form of disorder characterizing carnival celebration in the Third Reich.⁷

As early as 1935, Munich police reports on the carnival celebrations observed that with few exceptions the three days leading up to Ash Wednesday, the high point of carnival festivity, had proceeded

⁶Folk festivals like the *Oktoberfest* provided an effective means to display the more immediate form of Nazi social welfare. During the *Oktoberfest* of 1937, for example, the NSV treated one hundred needy "comrades" to a meal and mug of beer, as well as RM 3 spending money and a complimentary ticket for the horse racing events. See Gerda Möhler. *Das Münchner Oktoberfest: Vom bayerischen Landwirtschaftsfest zum größten Volksfest der Welt* (Munich, Vienna, and Zurich, 1981), 167.

⁶For example, see *MNN*, 48, 17 Feb. 1935; *NS-Kurier*, 108, 5 Mar. 1935; *MNN*, 51, 20 Feb. 1936; 39, 8 Feb. 1937; 58, 27 Feb. 1938; 51, 20 Feb. 1939; *VB*, 51, 20 Feb. 1939.

⁷See the official programs for the Munich *Fasching* parades (1936-1939) in *StAM*, PD-Munich, 8240, 8241, 8242, and 8243. For a list of the 320 carnival events, including those organized by the KdF and other Nazi organizations, held during the *Fasching* season of 1939, see the official *Faschingskalender* published by the Verein Münchener Fasching, Dec. 1938, *StAM*, PD-Munich, 8243.

"completely quietly", with numbers of costume-wearers as well as consumption levels of food and drink notably lower than in past years.⁹ According to police reports the moderate tone of carnival festivities in 1935 was little changed the following year.⁹ By 1937, however, the form and character of carnival celebration had perceptibly altered. Summarizing the carnival season in Munich police authorities reported that "[i]n general the *Fasching* parade was certainly enjoyed, it was however not popular (*volkstümlich*). It was more a parade show constructed on an artistic basis." According to the report, the staged artificiality of the parade was not lost on the spectators:

In the main it was a matter of the spectators passively observing the *Fasching* parade. The connection between performers and spectators, the enthusiasm and joyous mood which should be produced, was absent.¹⁰

It must be emphasized, however, that while the extensive policing of carnival celebration had muted the spirit of license common to the *Fasching* experience, the urge to celebrate did persist among the citizens of Munich away from the formal Nazi organized parade. This was especially apparent among the young, who as Munich police reported "in most cases wantonly amused themselves among one another."¹¹

Reports the following year repeated the general assessment of the previous parade, stating that there "could be no talk of genuine

⁹See the various reports from districts 1-11, *Verlauf des Faschings* 1935, from March 1935, in StAM, PD-Munich, 8239.

⁹StAM, PD-Munich, 8240, police reports from districts 1-11, *Verlauf des Faschings* 1936, Feb. 1936.

¹⁰StAM, PD-Munich, 8241, PD-Munich, 15 Mar. 1937. See also Max Hafner, *Der Münchner Fasching* (Munich, 1953), 55-57.

¹¹StAM, PD-Munich, 8243, KdSP, Munich, 25 Feb. 1939.

enthusiasm" or of an "unbounded felicitous *Fasching* atmosphere".¹² By 1939, the final year of carnival, Munich police reports make it clear that the earlier propensity toward a performance structured festival had now become the norm.¹³ Clearly, the widening barrier between performers and spectators accelerated the trend toward festival as performance, a fixture of the modern landscape of popular culture.¹⁴ Meanwhile, in an examination of the transformation of the Munich *Fasching* into a theatrical presentation of Bavarian artistry, a local newspaper stressed its positive achievement as a living expression of the "new social order" and invited all Germans to share in the reconstruction of the German nation through carnival celebration.¹⁵

More the reflection of an ideal than of actual experience, German folk festivals traditionally served as exceptional events where consciousness of status, rank and class was momentarily suspended. Social interaction occurred on a comparatively level field as familiar

¹²StAM, PD-Munich 8242, KdSP to the PP, Munich, 24 Mar. 1938. That the popular enthusiasm for carnival celebration was waning was reinforced by the general absence of any incidents of untoward behaviour during the final three days of celebration.

¹³StAM, PD-Munich 8243, KdSP, Munich, 25 Feb. 1939.

¹⁴ The transformation of the modern carnival celebration into performance designed for popular consumption by passive spectators lured by the tourist industry has not escaped the attention of present-day festival organizers. See Bianka Stahl, "Formen und Funktionen des Fastnachtfeierns in Geschichte und Gegenwart, dargestellt an den wichtigsten Aktivitäten der Mainzer Fastnachtsvereine und -garden" (Ph.D. diss., Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, 1980), 416-18. On the impact of this trend from a socio-psychological perspective, see Friedrich Schmieder, "Psychologische und Psychohygienische Fragen bei der Fastnachtsforschung," in *Fasnet: Beiträge des Tübinger Arbeitskreises für Fastnachtsforschung* (Tübingen, 1964), 99-106.

¹⁵MNN, 43, 12 Feb. 1939.

forms of public discourse and gesture temporarily supplanted the formalities prevailing in everyday experience. As a *Sopade* report from Bavaria noted:

Fasching as well as the *Oktoberfest* offer the people of Munich a unique opportunity to have a good time. There a bourgeois and white-collar workers gather at the beer table with labourers, the worries of everyday life forgotten for hours.¹⁶

In Nazi Germany, by comparison, the visible signs of privilege and arrogance often displayed by members of the NSDAP and its ancillary organizations at festival events did much to eliminate this sociability of equality commonly associated with the cultural experience of folk festivals. Carnival balls, such as the Ball of the City of Munich, were not atypical in their guest list, comprising "the cream of the Party, the Reich, the state, the *Wehrmacht* and business".¹⁷ It was, a *Sopade* analyst suggested, reminiscent of the pomp associated with the celebrations of the imperial era. The sight of luxurious sedans transporting Party members to the many celebrations vied in the public mind with widespread reports that the city's Nazi chief burgomaster, Karl Fiehler, had ordered a half dozen costumes from one of the best tailors in the city.¹⁸ Such flagrant displays of privilege contributed to the contradictory nature of popular celebration in Nazi Germany. For the many fortunate Germans who took part in the KdF organized festival events the much touted *Volkgemeinschaft* gained added currency. For others,

¹⁶DBS, 3: 164-65, 9 Mar. 1936.

¹⁷StAM, PD-Munich, 8240, Obm to PD-Munich, 30 Jan. 1936. The memo concerned the need for special traffic arrangements to accommodate privileged guests.

¹⁸DBS, 3: 164-65, 9 Mar. 1936.

meanwhile, the growing artificiality and theatricality of the Nazi carnival celebrations, as well as the pompous display of social privilege, provided a glimpse behind the sham of Nazi festival rhetoric.

The decreasing enthusiasm that the people in Munich and other traditional carnival centres displayed regarding the pre-Lent celebrations developed in response to the expanding control exercised by the Nazis over all aspects of popular culture. Observing the transformed character of carnival in Munich, where even children's costume parties were subjected to state regulation,¹⁹ a *Sopade* analyst wrote:

In earlier times of to some extent well-ordered circumstances *Fasching* was truly a mad time, in which the little man could also have his pleasure. Whoever has not yet forgotten these times, can presently draw comparisons which are clearly indicative of the development of the political and economic situation in the Reich. Previously an unconstrained humour prevailed ... today a commanding military hurly-burly.²⁰

¹⁹Bavarian state officials were concerned lest improper conduct during celebrations have "undesirable effects" upon the health and disposition of Germany's children. Local police officials were made responsible for insuring that such events promoted the training of a "physical, spiritual and moral" German youth. According to the new guidelines only children of elementary school age and younger accompanied by adults were permitted to attend. The children were to wear "proper" costumes, that is, uniforms or insignia associated with Nazism were not permitted. "Unseemly behaviour" on the part of the children was not to be tolerated. As the music was to suit the character of a children's celebration, dance music was not allowed, likewise adults were to refrain from dancing with children or with other adults. Police and local authorities charged with the welfare of children were to be permitted entrance at all times to the event which in all cases was to conclude by 8 P.M. School authorities also retained the right to prohibit the attendance of certain individuals. See BayHStA, MInn 72 678, Staatministerien des Innern und für Unterricht und Kultus to the Regierungen, Munich, 29 Dec. 1933. By 1939 only the NSF, the BDM and recognized associations with youth sections were permitted to hold such festivities. See StAM, PD-Munich 8244, *Fasching 1939- Präsidial-befehl*", PP, Munich, 16 Dec. 1938.

²⁰The report added that although the rearmament program had considerably increased employment, low wages allowed only minimal participation in carnival events, many of which were organized and

In the official program for the 1938 carnival parade in Munich, meanwhile, Göring declared war on all "grumblers" and "grippers". "It is not the case," he stated, "that when someone criticizes the actions of a somewhat prominent Party comrade, he also assails the foundation of the state." Disparaging the pusillanimity displayed by some individuals, the Reichsmarshall exclaimed: "We do not want any cringers (*Duckmäuser*). We want a free, an open populace, that is content and possesses sufficient cheerfulness and a joy of life to enable it to perform the hardest of work."²¹ *Sopade* analysts, however, insisted on the illusory nature of the freedom and license ostensibly accompanying carnival celebration in the Third Reich. Commenting on the 1938 carnival season, a *Sopade* agent in Saxony reported that the entire operation was not only promoted on a large scale, but was deliberately organized with the intent to render the impression that "much again" was being permitted, that the Nazi authorities were willing to "shut one or occasionally both eyes" to open criticism of the regime. While it appeared that for once the Nazis were willing to open a "safety valve," the agent doubted that such conditions would prevail. Rather, as another analyst concluded, the entire

subsidized by the KdF. It maintained, moreover, that carnival festivities no longer functioned as a refuge from everyday concerns. The anxiety over the disturbing events around the world punctuated the conversation of revellers, effectively muting for many the festival spirit. See DBS, 4: 22-24, 15 Feb. 1937.

²¹Official Program of the Munich *Fasching* parade (1938), published by the Verein Münchener Fasching, in StAM, PD-Munich, 8242. The German word "*Duckmäuser*", has no direct counterpart in the English language. It is an epithet commonly used against those who display anxious behaviour in relation to anyone in a position of authority, especially those in uniform.

purpose was "the stupefaction and distraction" of the German people.²²

The criticisms levelled at popular festivity by the *Sopade* reports notwithstanding, it is evident that Germans attended festival events under National Socialism in numbers that equalled or exceeded those of any other period in modern history.²³ This widespread popularity of folk festivals, however, concealed the process of centralization and standardization--a process already developed before 1933 and greatly intensified during the Nazi dictatorship--that was gradually sapping the vitality of local festival culture.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL TENSIONS

In January 1934 Hermann Esser²⁴ wrote to the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior concerning the "so-called Bavarian evenings" frequently held in different parts of the German Reich and outside of the country. Not only were the performers on such occasions "often not even Bavarians", he complained, but through their "shortcomings", "excessive

²²DBS, 5: 141-44, 12 Mar. 1938.

²³As one historian, himself a leading member of a Munich carnival association during the Nazi regime, wrote: "In fairness it must be said that, on the whole, in the years 1933-1939 *Fasching* suffered no damage of any kind. On the contrary, it received an unexpected stimulus. The reason was, to be sure, not the joy in amusement and happiness, nor the willingness to oblige joking and humour, since the ... [Nazi leadership] had neither an understanding for such things, nor the intention to preserve them as such. They understood, however, the need to celebrate and tolerated and encouraged everything that contributed to the enthusiasm of the masses and thereby averted disillusionment." See Hafner, *Münchner Fasching*, 49.

²⁴As a prominent 'Old Fighter' Esser was appointed Minister of Economics in the Bavarian cabinet following the Nazi electoral victory there on 9 March 1933. To this post he added the offices of President of the Reich Tourist Association and Deputy-President of the Reich Committee on Tourism. See Bleuel, *Strength Through Joy*, 146-47.

exaggeration" and purported "authenticity", they conveyed a "completely false picture of Bavarian culture". Esser was particularly incensed by the numerous Bavarian brass bands in north Germany that at *Bockbierfesten* performed in poor imitations of Munich's *Oktoberfest* and *Fasching*, and parodied Bavarian drinking habits. All Bavarians, he insisted, repudiated the depiction of Bavaria in such ill-informed performances. Esser urged Goebbels to act through the RKK, especially the branches dealing with music and theatre, to eliminate such "degenerations". He regarded state licensing of performers appearing in native costume or in presentations of folk dancing and customs, as necessary to protect local cultural assets from exploitation by dubious promoters motivated solely by financial gain.²⁵

The campaign against the so-called "Bavarian evenings" suggests that the desire to prevent the unflattering depiction of Bavarian culture was less at work than was the desire of Bavarian Nazi officials to control what they perceived as local cultural goods. More generally, the desire for increased regulation of the cultural realm corresponded to the development of a commodified popular culture in the modern world of mass consumerism. Whatever the "authenticity" of autochthonous culture, it could be readily simulated and reproduced for audiences far beyond the boundaries of a given cultural region.²⁶ This export of *Heimat* fostered a self-conscious stylization of regional cultural goods with a corresponding dilution of localized meaning within the affected

²⁵BayHStA, M Inn 72678, Esser to the StMdI, 2 Jan. 1934.

²⁶On the effects of modern tourism and the 'dissolution' of local cultural horizons, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 39-54, 127-40.

communities. Such a process of cultural attenuation was exacerbated by the centralizing and standardizing trends of a modern tourism industry that was given added impetus under Nazism. To take one example, in an effort to boost local tourism, municipal officials in Mainz promoted the city's carnival in a widespread advertising campaign in 1926 that extended beyond Germany's borders. Under the Nazis, the development and organization of the modern tourist industry in Mainz as elsewhere reached new levels which further eroded local cultural values and went some way towards establishing a professional entertainment industry.²⁷ The centralized promotion of tourism, in which festivals featured prominently, assisted the Nazis in their efforts to weaken the local sentimental and patriotic identification with *Heimat* and to reconstruct these interrupted and atomised lines of contact on a national basis.²⁸

The Nazi preoccupation with organizational concentration at the expense of regional cultural interests was nowhere more apparent than in the attempt to conflate all aspects of carnival celebration under the wing of a single administrative body. In January 1937, leading Nazis

²⁷As one historian has written: "The [Mainz] carnival was in this manner soon reduced from folk and civic festival to spectacle, stage play and to folkloristic performance." Anton M. Keim, *11Mal Politischer Karneval: Weltgeschichte aus der Bütt. Geschichte der demokratischen Narrentradition vom Rhein*, 2d ed. (Mainz, 1981), 191. Also see Link and Wandel, "Mainzer Fastnacht," 56-68, and Franz-Josef Grosshennrich, *Die Mainzer Fastnachtsvereine: Geschichte, Funktion, Organisation und Mitgliederstruktur* (Wiesbaden, 1980), 138-39. For a similar analysis based on a study of the Palatinate region, see Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford, 1990), 214.

²⁸The successful appropriation of *Heimat* festivals by the Nazi regime is discussed in Applegate, *Nation of Provincials*, 18, 197-227. On the long-term development of *Heimat* and its incorporation in the modern tourism industry, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 54-60. See also Jeggle, "Fastnacht im Dritten Reich", 234-35.

from the Propaganda Ministry, the KdF leisure organization, and the WHW welfare organization combined with prominent carnival association members from across the Reich to establish the *Bund Deutscher Karneval* (BDK), with the president of the *Verein Münchener Fasching*, Max Reinhard, a committed Nazi, as its chief spokesperson.²⁹ While the *Gleichschaltung* of local and regional carnival associations had proceeded haphazardly after 1933, with local circumstances largely determining the limits of accommodation,³⁰ the creation of the BDK signalled a radical shift in Nazi policy towards centralized control of carnival activity. Although its impact was limited by the outbreak of war, it is clear that the BDK severely threatened whatever autonomy remained to local carnival organizations.³¹

For the Nazis, it was a relatively simple task to recreate local cultural traditions in a national setting, as they did with the KdF-*Volksfest* in Nuremberg, since the festival was a Nazi creation, unburdened by self-serving regional interests. The same cannot be said for traditional festivals with historical roots in the local culture, as the intensity of the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* of carnival amply demonstrates. The process of "coordination" of such festivals took place only gradually and incompletely. The transformation, for example, of the *Oktoberfest* from a celebration of Munich and Bavarian popular

²⁹For a detailed description of the BDK, see Hamelmann, *Helau und Heil Hitler*, 314-32.

³⁰Hildegard Frieß-Reimann, "Fastnacht in Rheinhessen: Die Diffusion der Mainzer Fastnacht von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart" (Ph.D. diss., Johannes Gutenberg Universität-Mainz, 1978), 114.

³¹Hamelmann, *Helau und Heil Hitler*, 327-32.

culture into the "Greater German folk festival", as Nazi propaganda proclaimed it in light of the *Anschluss* with Austria and the creation of the *Ostmark* in 1938, was never so complete as the Nazis implied and later historians claimed.³² Although the 125th anniversary *Oktoberfest* parade of 1935 took place under the official festival banner: "*Stolze Stadt--Fröhliches Land*", a motto which variously celebrated the city of Munich, Bavaria and Germany, the "delocalization" of the festival, its transformation into a national celebration, was readily apparent to all in attendance.³³ Yet, for all distortions of the historical imagery

³²See Gerda Mühler, *Das Münchner Oktoberfest: Brauchformen des Volkfestes zwischen Aufklärung und Gegenwart*, publ. dissertation, Neue Schriftreihen des Stadtarchivs Munich, Band Nr. 120 (Munich, 1980), 291-93. Mühler maintains that the delocalization of the festival was largely complete by 1935 and an accomplished fact by 1938. While she is right in insisting that the Nazis distorted the historical dimensions of the parade by downplaying the "bürgerlich" influence on the festival's development, her emphasis ignores the fact that much of the local colour of the festival survived during the Third Reich.

³³The parade comprised four parts of unequal length. The first section consisted of nine groups made up of numerous shooting societies, most of them members of the Bavarian Shooting Association. The second section, organized by the painter Albert Reich, and consisting of 26 different groups, presented a historical march through Bavarian culture from 1450 to the present, from courtly and military life in the Middle Ages, through the aristocratic and agrarian origins of the festival in 1810, and ending with a group from the BDM representing "Youth and Joy" and a group of workers from the RAD equipped with shovels. Formed under the motto "Bavarian Land in Tradition and Costume", the third section celebrated the Bavarian cultural heritage with 36 groups drawn from the diverse membership in the Reich Association of *Heimat* and Costume Societies. The perambulatory display highlighted the themes of the harvest and rural family life and customs through reenactment of celebratory events such as weddings, christenings, church consecration festivals and May dances. Inserted between the second and third sections were two groups consisting of a horse drawn wagon representing Munich's large breweries and a further wagon accompanied by three riders on horseback representing the Reich Food Estate. Finally another 36 groups selected from the local tradesmen associations with musical accompaniment provided by the NSKK-Motorstandarte 86, under the leadership of the DAF, formed the fourth section representing the city of Munich. Presumably the blending of Nazi and Bavarian cultural images effectively preserved

represented in the official parade, the festival itself retained much of its local Munich and Bavarian flavour up to 1938. Indeed it was not so much that the regime attempted to impose National Socialist ideological imagery on the *Oktoberfest*, which they of course did, but that local political leaders, most of them Nazis, endeavoured to augment the influence of Bavarian popular culture within the entire Reich. This reciprocity was clearly the message in Karl Fiehler's foreword in the official *Oktoberfest* commemorative program:

For a fresh draught of the Bavarian national drink ... everyone from all walks of life has harmoniously come together. Readily the northern German visitor allows himself to travel along with the Bavarian joy of celebration. It is small wonder that with such a good reputation in north Germany ... it is imitated everywhere. The new Germany, life-affirming and respecting of local custom, has gladly taken up the tradition of the *Oktoberfest* and deepened it in the spirit of genuine *Volksgemeinschaft*.³⁴

While it was politically expedient for leading Nazis to declare the *Oktoberfest* a national festival, draping swastika banners above the fairgrounds and in the large beer halls, as well as attending the festival, local officials were equally adamant in seeking both to preserve and extend local cultural traditions.³⁵ Indeed, in comparison

those of the latter while leaving no doubt about the extensive control exercised by the Nazis, especially since the entire operation of the *Oktoberfest* fell under the watchful gaze of Christian Weber, the NSDAP District President in Munich. See the official 31 page program of the parade, *Jubiläums-Oktoberfest-Festzug*, Hrsg. Komm-Rat Baumgärtner, (Munich, [1935]). Also see *Münchener Zeitung*, 268, 25 Sept. 1935.

³⁴Karl Fiehler, "Foreword" in *125 Jahre Münchener Oktoberfest 1810-1935 Festschrift* (Munich, 1935).

³⁵The importance of local interests should not be underestimated. The organization of the *Oktoberfest* remained the preserve of local political and business interests who were of course required to submit proposals to the regional office of the RMfVP. See for example the committee minutes for 125th anniversary parade in StadtAM, Okt 201a,

to the public ennui which increasingly greeted the gradual coordination of *Fasching* celebrations in the city, the adherence to regional tradition in all likelihood contributed to the continued and even growing popularity and success of the *Oktoberfest* during the Third Reich.

The measures taken by the various Nazi organizations to establish a new festival culture free of regional, denominational, and class differences and expressive of Nazi ideology were uneven, often contradictory, and ultimately incomplete. The gradual extension of regulation and control over celebration was the only constant in the Nazi response to the changing character of modern popular culture.

PURIFYING THE FESTIVAL SPACE

In September 1934, the national economic organization *Wirtschaftsgruppe Ambulantes Gewerbe* (WAG) became the exclusive representative for the branch of trade that included the promotion and organization of folk festivals in Nazi Germany. The purpose of the extension of the control of the WAG over the itinerant industry was to centralize the regulation and operation of folk and other types of popular festivals throughout the Reich. While economic considerations predominated, operators were

"Protokoll", Landesstelle Munich-Upper Bavaria of the RMfVP, 21 June 1935; and StAM, PD-Munich, 8254, "Niederschrift über die 2. Sitzung zwecks Durchführung des Jubiläums-Oktoberfestes", 13 Sept. 1935. The committee consisted of members of the Munich city council and administration, Dr. Oeckl from the RMfVP-Landesstelle Upper Bavaria, representatives of the participating costume societies, shooting associations and tradesmen, the artistic director, Albert Reich, as well as officers from the SA, SS and *Wehrmacht*. Among the Nazis, Christian Weber proved most resilient in placing his personal stamp on the festival. He "renewed" the traditional association of the festival with horse racing, first with the introduction of a competition involving SS mounted troops as well as a formal horse racing program in 1934. See the official program, *Jubiläums-Oktoberfest-Festzug*.

also to insure that the arrangement of the festival site corresponded to the concept of a "German folk festival".³⁶

Differences of opinion arose, meanwhile, over exactly what constituted a "German folk festival". For Nazi officials 'German' and 'National Socialist' were obviously synonymous. To divest the celebration of carnival of any lingering religious associations, for instance, Nazi and other writers adopted the common use of *Fasnacht*, rather than *Fastnacht*, with its obvious reference to the Pre-Lent celebration. They went to great lengths to 'prove' the apocryphal and derivative semantic nature of the word *Fastnacht*. Carnival, or *Fasnacht*, these writers maintained, had its origin in the fertility festivals celebrated in the obscure depths of ancient Germanic culture, which, in turn, culminated in the Nazi movement.³⁷ This pedantic semantic purification of carnival had its corollary in the progressive administration of popular festivity and the cleansing of the public festival space. In a series of measures designed to facilitate the standardization of the festival experience, the Nazis aimed to recreate civic celebration according to the racial and cultural homogeneity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Under Nazism, the new folk festival, as a newspaper report on the preparations for the 1939 carnival season in Munich stressed, was a cultural event that integrated the entire community in celebration, from members of the business

³⁶BayHStA, Minn 72 678, "Richtlinien der WAG für die Veranstaltung von Volksfesten," Hans Heck, Leiter der WAG, 2 Jan. 1936.

³⁷According to a KDF brochure carnival had nothing to do with fasting, rather the "real sense of the word" signified: "The vital forces burst forth." See *Deutsche Fasnacht*, 11-15. For a detailed analysis of the semantic shift in the conception of carnival in south-west Germany, see Hamelmann, *Helau und Heil Hitler*, 279-81. Also see Keim, *Politischer Karneval*, 190-91.

community, to children, women, academics, artists, as well as Nazi and state officials.³⁰ In practice, however, the NSDAP, as a truly mass political party, found it difficult to range across the varied social and cultural terrain of festivity. While it was comparatively easy to exclude marginal groups from the festival space, the integration of all members of the ethnically pure 'people's community' proved to be a much more complex process. The multivalent role imposed on the popular festival as a social safety-valve, as a fun fair for the gratification of consumer needs, and as an instrument for ideological education proved ultimately contradictory. The problem created by the aggressive festive behaviour of German youth illustrates the difficulties confronting the Nazis in their attempt to recast the festival space.

In 1935 Goebbels proclaimed that "the entire youth of all Gaue of Germany" were to celebrate the German Youth Festival of 22 and 23 June as a "German folk festival". In Reutlingen, a small city south of Stuttgart, a four day folk festival organized by the local WAG was scheduled to begin 22 June 1935. On 19 June the NSDAP district propaganda leader wrote to the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior complaining that a folk festival, which offered Germany's youth nothing more than entertainment in the form of an amusement park, shooting galleries and similar fare, was inappropriate in the sense intended by the Reich Propaganda Minister. To insure that the youth festival correspond to a form "worthy" of National Socialism, he requested that the folk festival "at the very least" be prohibited from operating during

³⁰MNN, 316, 12 Nov. 1938. Also see Link and Wandel, "Mainzer Fastnacht", 65-68; and Jeggle, "Fastnacht im Dritten Reich," 234.

the celebration of summer solstice.³⁹ This antinomy stemming from the division of play into its serious and innocuous forms continued to shape Nazi policy concerning festivity throughout the Third Reich, and was no more acute than in the Party's stance vis-à-vis German youth.

Adolescent behaviour during carnival became the focus of attention among segments of society who were more concerned with public morality than the political appropriateness of popular festivals. By the final year of carnival celebration it was clear that police efforts to curb the excesses of adolescent revelry, bordering on aggression and delinquency, had proved unavailing. Adolescents, police authorities reported, were stopping vehicles and pulling down streetcar cables. Teenage youths roamed in groups, climbing onto the roofs of vehicles, joyriding on running boards and fenders, and jumping on and off moving streetcars. For police officials and many private citizens such youthful behaviour exceeded acceptable norms of civic morality and "had nothing more in common with *Fasching* fun".⁴⁰ Such impulsive behaviour, moreover, contrasted sharply with the organized and disciplined camaraderie of the Hitler Youth.

Similarly, although a certain relaxation of sexual norms was a common feature of carnival, incidents of sexual mistreatment continued to spoil the festivities for many German women.⁴¹ During the final

³⁹HStAS, E 150/03, Bü 760, KPL-Reutlingen to the Innenministerium Württemberg, 19 June 1935. The response of the Ministry to the propaganda leader's request is unrecorded.

⁴⁰StAM, PD-Munich, 8243, KdSP, Munich, 25 Feb. 1939.

⁴¹Munich police officials were instructed to put an end to improprieties against women as well as all instances of rude behaviour. See "Präsidialbefehl- Faschingstage 1935", 27 Feb. 1935, in StAM, PD-

three days of carnival in Munich in 1935 a police report charged that females had been "practically attacked" and "utterly abused".⁴² According to police officials immature male teenagers had ganged up on and indecently molested women and children. Surrounding women and girls they grabbed under skirts and tore clothes from their bodies. Elsewhere young women were dragged into passageways and thrown to the ground.⁴³ Carnival celebrations in subsequent years resulted in similar complaints.⁴⁴

Evidently aggression and violence, a mainstay of everyday life in the Third Reich, was also a familiar feature of folk festivals in Nazi Germany. When violent acts did occur the Nazi uniform not infrequently served as provocation, as in a drinking locale on the final evening of the carnival season of 1935 when a fight broke in the early morning between civilians and Austrian SA members.⁴⁵ Similarly, in anticipation of increased attendance at the 1936 *Oktoberfest*, especially

Munich, 8239.

⁴²StAM, PD-Munich, 8239, Polizeibezirk 3, "Verlauf des Faschings 1935," Mar. 1935.

⁴³Not only were women of all ages subjected to sexual abuse but police authorities also observed "immoral" incidents involving homosexuality and pederasty. See StAM, PD-Munich, 8241, Referat 41 to Referat 23, PD-Munich, 15 Mar. 1937.

⁴⁴StAM, PD-Munich 8242, Vormerkung- Staatliche Kriminalpolizei Leiststelle, Munich, 1 Mar. 1938.

⁴⁵StAM, PD-Munich, 8239, report from Polizeibezirk 5, "Verlauf des Faschings 1935," Mar. 1935. Presumably the ban on the wearing of SA uniforms in drinking locales or at any dance or other carnival events during the entire *Fasching* season stemmed in part from the potential incitation to violence and other unseemly behaviour that might reflect badly on state and Party. See StAM, NSDAP 222, Standartführer der SA Munich, Standartbefehl, 15 Jan. 1937.

of foreign visitors remaining in Germany following the Olympics, the Police President in Munich contacted Gau officials concerned about the potential for violence stemming from misbehaviour on the part of the Nazi ancillary organizations. Recalling the "unpleasant incidents" in the beer locales during the previous fair, the Police President requested that the leaders of the ancillary organizations urge their charges to distinguish themselves by a "strict manly discipline", albeit in such a way as not to detract from their enjoyment of the festival. Alert to the economic benefits accruing from the huge fair, he added that all incidents of picking quarrels or violence disrupted public order and damaged "the reputation of the capital of the movement, Munich, as an international tourist destination."⁴⁶

The *Gleichschaltung* of all elements of popular culture in Nazi Germany was mirrored in the process of *Ausschaltung*, the exclusion and marginalization of specific social groups from the cultural life of the nation. Folk festivals were not exempted from this process of enforced segregation. For instance, local political leaders went to great lengths to eliminate any religious representations during the carnival season.⁴⁷ Similarly, police officials remained on hand throughout the

⁴⁶StAM, NSDAP, 303, Stellvertreter des GL to the KL-Laufen, 3 Sept. 1936. Of course, violence, including killings, occurred without the provocation of Nazis. In 1939, on the final night of carnival, Ludwig Schadenfroh, a laboratory assistant, was killed in a fight with another man during carnival celebrations in a Munich cafe. See StAM, PD-Munich, 8243, "Erfahrungsbericht im Fasching," Pol. Revier, Munich, 23 Feb. 1939.

⁴⁷In Moosbach, a small community near Munich, for example, local authorities permitted a small *Fasching* parade on the condition participants not wear any uniforms or common clothing, or carry any flags, that were identifiable with confessional youth organizations. See StAM, PD-Munich, 8241, "Faschingszug in Moosbach", 9 Feb. 1937.

carnival season to root out all those considered dangerous to the state and all the "grumblers and gripers" who persisted in opposing the 'community of the people'.⁴⁹ While the Nazis tabooed the political parody of local and national political figures--a mainstay of carnival celebration especially during the Weimar Republic--carnival jesters' speeches and parade floats mocked communists, socialists, Jews and emigrants.⁵⁰ Similarly, the most significant change from the previous year in the public notice issued by the *Polizeidirektion* in Munich concerning the *Oktoberfest* in 1933 was the non-admittance of "persons of Jewish descent no matter what citizenship". Issued "in the interests of the maintenance of public security and order", the comprehensive ban was extended beyond visitors to include any Jews formerly associated with the organization and operation of the fair, including workers, artists and volunteers.⁵⁰ In 1935 the wording of the public notice was altered to embrace an even more extensive ban on "persons of non-Aryan descent".⁵¹

Beggars formed another social group targeted for exclusion from the festival space. From 1929 the depression, particularly severe in Germany, swelled the ranks of the unemployed and reduced many to mendicancy.⁵² Consequently, the control and elimination of beggars from the

⁴⁹Keim, *Politischer Karneval*, 204-6.

⁵⁰Link and Wandel, "Mainzer Fastnacht," 69.

⁵⁰StAM, PD-Munich 6923, Bekanntmachung über das Oktoberfest 1933.

⁵¹StAM, PD-Munich, 8254, Bekanntmachung über das Oktoberfest 1935, Schubert and von Oelhafen, 6 Sept. 1935.

⁵²For the treatment of beggars and vagrants during the Weimar Republic and Nazi eras, see Wolfgang Ayass, "Vagrants and Beggars in Hitler's Reich", in *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History*, ed. Richard J. Evans (London, 1988), 210-37. Also see

Oktoberfest was a problem carried over from the final years of the Republic into the Third Reich. In late August 1933, the Munich city council informed the operators of the large beer tents and other proprietors that the police and city administration would, as in recent years, "pay special attention" to the "nuisance of beggars" (*Bettlerunwesen*).⁶³ Worried lest the public nuisance of vagrants and beggars sully Munich's touristic appeal, the city council instructed security officials in June 1939 to turn all "obtrusive" hawkers of "camouflaged rubbish" where encountered over to the police authorities in "the interests of the reputation of the city and the fair".⁶⁴ Evidently, the presence of beggars and hawkers at festivals remained a problem for all concerned throughout the years of peace and even into wartime.

The extensive regulation of popular celebration governed not only the behaviour of celebrants but also the form of festival events. In November 1937 an article entitled "Misery as Folk Amusement" appeared in the newspaper of the SS, *Das Schwarze Korps*, denouncing the exhibition of so-called "natural wonders" or persons with physical "abnormalities" during the *Oktoberfest*. "Folk festivals", the writer stated, existed to "unite the community in the joy of being". Many of the folk festival sideshow attractions, however, revealed a "sinister

Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), 168-70, 173, 178.

⁶³StadtAM, Okt 240, Stadtrat-Munich, 31 Aug. 1933.

⁶⁴StadtAM, Okt 240, Stadtrat, Obm, 22 Aug. 1935; *ibid.*, Stadtrat, Obm to Richard Schottenhamel, 21 June 1939. The WAG was still complaining of the presence of street musicians, barrel-organ players, etc., "begging for hand-outs" in the approach routes to designated folk festival grounds. See RPL to P-K, 18 June 1943 in BA, NS 18/431.

speculation" on the part of operators hoping to exploit the "Philistine instincts" of fairgoers. Alluding to the prevailing racial biological ideology, the article added that hereditary illnesses should not serve as a "source of income" for the "deformed descendants" of afflicted ancestors. The physically deformed represented "an affront to the sound sense of the folk" rather than a source of popular amusement.⁵⁵

The article immediately attracted the attention of Munich political leaders who had raised concerns about the issue as early as 1935.⁵⁶ The *Polizeipräsidium* submitted an official report by its medical officer documenting the afflictions of the "abnormities sideshow". While he maintained that such sideshows offended the "normal aesthetic sense" of the German people, the medical officer advocated the prohibition of such exhibitions in the interests of a "racial hygienic propaganda" which he insisted was necessary in a "modern state". Consequently, he recommended that operators of shows of this nature be licensed by a medical board.⁵⁷ City council officials noted that no restrictions on sideshows were in effect for the *Oktoberfest*, but added that appropriate regulations would be introduced for future fairs, since in their opinion, "such pitiable creatures" should be accommodated in asylums and not be the object of "curious looks" from the folk festival

⁵⁵StadtAM, Okt 233, clipping from *Das Schwarze Korps*, 47, 25 Nov. 1937.

⁵⁶StadtAM, Okt 233, PP-Munich to the StMdI, 14 Dec. 1937. "Abnormities" sideshows featured prominently as a major attraction of the nationally celebrated 125th anniversary *Oktoberfest* in 1935. See 125 *Jahre Münchener Oktoberfest*.

⁵⁷StadtAM, Okt 233, Polizeiarzt, Gesundheitsamt-Munich, 4 Oct. 1937.

public.⁸⁸

Munich police officials, meanwhile, declared that such exhibitions, often displayed in an "unrealistic" and "somewhat erotic manner", were a matter solely of business interests, of "worthless speculative enterprises" appealing to "base instincts", and without scientific value. These sideshows did more harm than good to the goals of the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny, the report added, especially since spectators, partly due to the influence of alcohol, were incapable "of mustering the necessary seriousness". Emphasizing public education in hereditary and racial hygiene, Munich police authorities recommended that "in the interests of the new form of the 'German folk festivals'" a general directive be issued before the beginning of the festival season that would void local ordinances permitting hygiene and abnormalities exhibitions.⁸⁹

Not unnaturally, the campaign to eliminate sideshows featuring "abnormalities" soon drew the attention of Himmler, leader of the SS and German police. In January 1938 he directed all police officials in the Reich, as well as the Economics Minister and the RMfVP, to combat undesirable acts featured at sideshows appearing at folk festivals and

⁸⁸StadtAM, Okt 233, Referat 8, 9 Dec. 1937.

⁸⁹StadtAM, Okt 233, PP-Munich to the StMdI, 14 Dec. 1937. Besides the police authorities in Munich and Berlin the Reich Commission of the Folk Health Service in the RMdI had also rescinded clearance declarations permitting hygiene sideshows. Later that month Ernst Schubert informed the editorial board of *Das Schwarze Korps* that the municipal and police officials intended to review the policy regarding sideshows. Schubert stressed the desire of Munich's political leaders that "so-called abnormalities shows ... disappear from German folk festivals". See StadtAM, Okt 233, Schubert to the Schriftleitung der Zeitung "Das Schwarze Korps", 23 Dec. 1937.

amusement parks. Folk festivals should serve as a "genuine folk entertainment", the circular offered, which excluded exhibitions that "grossly" offended "the sound sense of the folk or contradicted the aspirations of the National Socialist state". Police authorities were ordered to forestall exhibitions of "revolting human abnormalities and congenitally ill cripples, inter alia so-called fish, crab, and bird persons, and hay-fed human animals". If the mental and physical health conditions necessitated it, persons displayed in sideshows were to be accommodated in sanatoria or nursing homes.⁶⁰

In addition to the display of physically and mentally challenged humans, the SS circular restricted other forms of inappropriate popular entertainment. It covered the exhibition of anatomical specimens unsuitable to the "sense of decency and morality" of the population or "inimical to the endeavors of the Third Reich". Among these were the presentation of the results of abnormal birth operations, sterilization operations, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases.⁶¹ Enlightenment on these subjects remained the responsibility of the appropriate state officials; their depiction was not suited to amusement parks and folk festivals. Himmler's circular signified a major escalation of state control over folk festivals in Nazi Germany. The campaign for the elimination of offensive "abnormalities" sideshows was featured in the national press. Newspapers emphasized that the RKK in conjunction with industry representatives had since the beginning of 1938 placed folk art

⁶⁰Stadt, M1 IP, no. 1624/ 81, "Schaustellungen auf Volksfesten und Vergnügungsplätzen", Runderlaß des RFSSuCdDP im RMdI, in Ministerial Blatt des RMdI, 26 Jan. 1938.

⁶¹Ibid.

in the foreground of entertainment at folk festivals. Consequently "abnormities", like "freaks" and so-called "natural wonders", would no longer form part of the attraction of the "new form of the German folk festival".⁸² Not surprisingly, there was no reference to the forced sterilization program which Nazi medical officials had implemented under the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny of 14 July 1933, yet there can be little doubt that they wished to avoid provoking the festivalgoing public with unadorned depictions of the sterilization and abortions performed on the "feeble-minded" and "congenitally ill". The SS intervention also presaged the 'euthanasia' program carried out with the onset of war in selected sanatoria such as Grafeneck and Sonnenstein.⁸³

Further efforts to cleanse the popular festival of its more unpalatable features involved the investigation of exhibitions displaying pictures of Nazi leaders, prominent German historical figures, and foreign statesmen. Nazi officials had already announced in the press in 1935 that they were relying on the tact of carnival organizers to refrain from displaying pictures and busts in the likeness of Hitler as well as symbols of the state and Party. Although not a law, non-observance of the "official view" was to be reported to local political or police authorities. Police officials were also to ensure that the two national anthems not be used to draw the public to places of amusement. Meanwhile, they maintained a watchful eye on waxworks

⁸²MNN, 35, 4 Feb. 1938. See also *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 60, 3 Feb. 1938; *Das Schwarze Korps*, 7, 17 Feb. 1938.

⁸³For a recent description and analysis of the sterilization and euthanasia programs, see Burleigh and Wippermann, *Racial State*, 136-67.

displays at folk festival and amusement parks throughout the country. Lacking "all sense of national dignity", according to the police authorities, these exhibitions featured wax figures of Hindenburg, Moltke and other national leaders alongside the mass murderer Kürten, the child killer Jünemann and the Siamese Monkey Woman.⁸⁴

Despite the economic hardship which their demise imposed on sideshow operators,⁸⁵ by March 1939 Munich city officials as well as the *Oktoberfest* commissioner's office affirmed that the diligence of police authorities had eradicated offensive sideshows from the folk festival.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Stadt, L80IE, Gruppe IV, Titel 3/no.4/539, Landespolizeiführer-Deimold to the Lippische Presse and to the Landräte, 22 Feb. 1935.

⁸⁵See, for example, the story of an unnamed Erfurt showman featured in a front-page article, "Ein Schausteller äussert sich zu dem Polizei-Runderlaß vom 26.1.1938", in the trade newspaper, *Anzeiger für Volks-und Schützenfeste*, 10, 5 Mar. 1938. While the Erfurt showman, who had been among the "travelling folk" since childhood and whose "anatomical museum" formed the basis of his family's life and livelihood, endorsed the necessity for the new regulations, he found much to criticize in their practical application by local authorities. In his opinion what passed for "unassailable" instructive anatomical exhibitions before the war had largely been sold to foreign interests during the period of hyperinflation, to be replaced by entertainments with morally objectionable attractions under the marquees: "Sex Shows", "Exhibitions for Men Only", and "In the Morass of the Big City". For many, increased state regulation of the folk festival made sense in light of this deplorable state of affairs. He was, however, critical of the Nazi designation "Danahyga" (German Anatomical-Hygienic Exhibition), which lumped his "valuable" exhibition together with dubious attractions featuring nothing more than several "boxes with poor specimens" depicting the ravages of sexually transmitted diseases, and "a few inferior pictures". Legitimate anatomical exhibitions, he insisted, were being unfairly conflated by the authorities with the many "shows of inferior value". His routine attempts to conform to the conditions vaguely stipulated in the SS decree all too often met with exhortations on the part of local authorities that the German folk festival belonged "to the courageous and constructive". Ambiguous statements such as these only intensified the sense of frustration of showmen caught up in the quotidian challenge of maintaining a place in the "new German folk festival".

⁸⁶StadtAM, Okt 233, Stöcklein, Städt. Verwaltungsinspektor, Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 16 Mar. 1939.

In keeping with the general excessiveness of the Nazi state, police and civil officials, once empowered to regulate folk festival attractions, embarked on a thoroughly radical transformation of the structure of the German folk festival. According to an official report prepared for the Munich city council, these changes were necessary in the interests of the new German folk festivals, of the "cleansing" of folk festivals of "old-fashioned" entertainments, and not least of all in the professional interests of German artists. Officials endeavoured to recast the form of performances in a mold consonant with the ideological precepts of the Nazi state. Misleading advertising by unscrupulous operators came under administrative scrutiny.⁸⁷ Antiquated shows had to make way for performances of quality which offered "salubrious humour". To this end, wholesome entertainment in the form of shows providing folkloric presentations, instructive content, skillfully simulated illusions, well-trained animal acts and copiously supplied menagerie operations would, the article added, continue to find an "appreciative and satisfied public".⁸⁸

Following the "cleansing" of the offensive sideshows, the Nazis next targeted games of chance for elimination from the new German folk festival. According to an article in the August 1938 trade journal of

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid. In addition to the ethical and aesthetic aspects of the new German folk festival, prevailing business practices were subjected to the official policy. Competition among show-booth operators was not to be based on personal relationships. Nor was any consideration to be given businesses with long-time associations with any given folk festival. Rather selection was to proceed according to strict guidelines with formal applications required of potential bidders for festival show-booths.

folk festival operators, "gambling under the sign of the money bag" had no place in the reorientated "festivals of the people". Healthy competition rather than greed should provide the motive for festival games.⁶⁹ The article, denouncing gambling as popular entertainment, focused on its corrupting effect on the young. It also cited its deleterious effect on the spirit of community. The "slow systematic fleecing" of the festival public, where operators of gambling booths earned as much money in twenty seconds, the average duration of a single game, as a sedulous cleaning woman in two hours, or a pair of soldiers in a couple of days, achieved "absolutely nothing" for either festival patrons or the community at large, the author insisted. Those who would defend the gambling booths had failed to grasp the "true essence" of a folk festival. The working Volk, according to the article, desired something else from its festivals, including the sheltering of children from "unhealthy influences". The article called on festival operators to promote the folk festival as a civic space offering popular and wholesome entertainment for the entire family.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Das Deutsche Wandergewerbe, 33, 12 Aug. 1938. Clipping in StadtAM, Okt 221.

⁷⁰Ibid. The young especially were to benefit from the reorientation of the folk festival as a "place of the child". The folk festival encouraged the child to be a "little sovereign", able to find "true happiness" through his or her "natural instincts". That the natural instincts of children for play were to be set firmly in the modern technological world was evinced in the photograph of a "modern children's carousel" accompanying the article. Rather than nostalgic or fairy tale elements, the children's amusement ride featured automobiles and bicycles, modern modes of transportation. Presumably festival operators felt that the children (and parents) would be more attracted to and feel more secure with modern amusement rides constructed with modern materials and features and with both the safety and amusement of the children in mind.

That the festival industry seemed to be courting favour with the regime is suggested by a subsequent article in the same trade journal in the spring of 1939 concerning the exploitation of games of chance at fairs in Moravia.⁷¹ The article, which appeared the day following the march of German troops into Prague on 16 March, clearly reflects the influence of foreign political events on the world of the German folk festival. Seemingly vindicating in a small way Nazi charges that the Sudetenland Germans were being unduly exploited in their homeland, and also reflecting the continuing national animosity towards Poland, the author maintained that itinerant Polish lottery booth operators from Breslau (Wroclaw) were regularly extracting money from the pockets of Sudetenland Germans. In Munich the concerns raised by the article prompted city officials to charge that games of chance represented a "cancer" for the folk festival, the containment of which could never receive sufficient attention.⁷²

The issue of gambling at folk festivals soon fell within the purview of the SS. On 24 April Himmler issued new regulations regarding games of chance at popular amusement events. The decree, valid for the entire Reich, sought to overcome the confusing and often conflicting jumble of laws and regulations obtaining at the *Land* level, many of them dating from the years immediately following the First World War.⁷³ The

⁷¹StadtAM, Okt 221, Schubert to Weber and Semmelmann, 20 Mar. 1939.

⁷²An excerpt from the article appearing in *Das Deutsche Wandergewerbe*, 11, 17 Mar. 1939 is quoted in a circular issued by Schubert to Weber and Semmelmann on 20 Mar. 1939, contained in StadtAM, Okt 221.

⁷³"Mitteilungen an alle Aufsteller von Spielautomaten," Schakulowski, Leiter der Fachgruppe "Automatenaufstell-Gewerbe", [24 July 1939], in StadtAM, Okt 221.

new regulations also aimed at creating a more wholesome environment for consumers of popular entertainment at folk festivals and similar events. Evidently game-booth operators adhered to the new decree since officials found it necessary to ban only one game in the months immediately following its implementation.⁷⁴

In their efforts to cleanse the festival space of what they perceived as its less palatable features, it is clear that the Nazis envisioned the modern folk festival as a form of wholesome family entertainment.⁷⁵ From the viewpoint of the culturally and ethnically pure *Volksgemeinschaft*, which the Nazi vernacular often referred to as a single family, the folk festival afforded an opportunity for sociability and light-hearted diversion from everyday life. Yet as the action against the hygiene exhibitions demonstrates, the Nazis were not about to allow 'serious' subjects such as pseudo-scientific racial biology to remain in the hands of festival operators. Ideological education in the realm of popular festivity remained the preserve of the Party. The censorship of carnival jesters' speeches as well as the overseeing of

⁷⁴Ostensibly a game of skill, "Russian skittles" had acquired notoriety long before the introduction of the new regulations in 1939 as numerous instances of "deceitful maneuvers" to alter the conditions of the game in the operator's favour had led to its ban in many areas including Munich as early as 1922. A renewed effort to ban the game began in 1939. See Dezernat 2, Abt. Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 10 July 1939; Der RP to the Landräte und den Vorstand der Landratsaussensstelle Reichenhall, Obm-Munich, Ingolstadt and Rosenheim, Bürgermeister Freising, Landsberg, Bad Reichenhall and Traunstein and to the PP-Munich, 16 Oct. 1939; and Dezernat 2, Abt. Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 23 Oct. 1939, in StadtAM, Okt 221.

⁷⁵For this reason, Himmler banned women's boxing matches from folk festivals and other civic places, since such violent performances involving females were not only an affront to public decency and morality but were inconsistent with the place and dignity of women within the *Volksgemeinschaft*. See *Der Komet*, 2780, 21 Aug. 1937.

carnival parade floats which mocked enemies of the German state, or alternatively, celebrated Nazi values, were only a few of the more visible signs of state intervention in a process determined to neutralize all opposition and at the same time promote the social and cultural integration of the German people.

THE NAZI FOLK FESTIVAL: THE KdF-VOLKSFEST IN NUREMBERG

Although the onset of war in September 1939 seriously impaired the campaign to develop the new German folk festival, it is possible to establish the concept, structure and form of the National Socialist aesthetic of popular festivity. Aside from Nazi attempts to 'coordinate' traditional folk festivals such as *Fasching* and the *Oktoberfest*, the KdF leisure organization sought to establish a popular festival form that preserved local cultural traditions while at the same time recasting them in the monumental and dynamic style of Nazism. This process was nowhere more evident than in the annual KdF-Volksfest at the Party rallies in Nuremberg. In the course of its development, the KdF-Volksfest gravitated ever more towards a professional performance based structure that, in drawing together regional cultures for display, encouraged ideological indoctrination in the form of an experiential exploration. First held in 1933, the KdF-Volksfest formed a showcase of talent from all regions of the Reich, which outwardly provided little of the homogeneity purportedly characterizing National Socialist popular culture.⁷⁸ This contradictory feature, which stood at the centre of the

⁷⁸See Burden, *Party Rallies*, 108, 150. Burden devotes little attention to the KdF folk festival in his study of the Nuremberg rallies which narrowly focuses on their value as propaganda spectacles. Indeed he initially refers to a folk festival for the 1935 rally although it

festival, exemplified, on the one hand, the largely unrealized aims of cultural uniformity crucial to National Socialist ideology; on the other hand, the dislodging of the various regional cultures from their natural surroundings and their wholly artificial recreation in Nuremberg presumably blurred the edges of cultural variance. Although the music, songs, dances, and costumes may have differed slightly depending on the venue, for festivalgoers they were little more than variations on a common festival form, that of performance.

Initially occupying a single day of the week-long Nuremberg Party rally, the KdF folk festival gradually extended temporally and spatially and by 1938 lasted longer than the rally itself. Held on a Saturday, the 1936 folk festival, according to the official brochure, featured sport and games, music and dance, and film and fireworks. With numerous venues offering a variety of entertainments at fifty-eight separate facilities located throughout the Party grounds, it was, chief festival organizer Otto Geiger stated, an affirmation of the joy of life made possible by the achievements of Nazism. More than "honkytonk" music hall or amusement park, the KdF folk festival offered something for everyone.⁷⁷ Yet, despite the cultural diversity on hand, the estimated half a million festivalgoers were largely reduced to the role of

had been in operation since 1933. He later refers to a KdF "exhibition" which was a "new and well-planned propaganda feature" of the 1938 Party rally. From the rich program of festival events he devotes a sentence to the shooting galleries which emphasizes the martial flavour of the Rally while summarizing the immensely popular entertainment events in a second sentence. Given the fact that the duration of the KdF-Volksfest eventually exceeded that of the Party congress itself, this brevity fails to capture the diverse character of the rallies.

⁷⁷NSDAP HA, Reel 22/Fol. 425. The file contains an official program of events for the KdF-Volksfest held on 12 Sept. 1936.

spectators of the colorful performance. In one of the few areas made available for actual participation, the folk festival offered a number of popular games under the motto: "folk sport for everyone". These included sharpshooting stands, spike-driving, medicine ball tosses, tree-climbing games, wheel-barrow races, cycling, tug-of-war, skittles, and a jousting tournament. Three DAF-produced sound films projected onto a giant 10x12 metre screen were also on offer during the evening following the fireworks. Since many of the events occurred simultaneously it would have been impossible for visitors to take in the entire program. Yet the variety of the program ensured that few would leave unsatisfied. Clearly the multi-faceted structure of the KdF-Volksfest conformed to Robert Ley's assertion that a pessimistic outlook could never give "strength and energy" to a state and its people; national regeneration could only be achieved through a "boundless acceptance of life and the joy of living."⁷⁸

The 1937 version of the folk festival lasted seven days. It began on the second day of the Party rally and culminated with a typical flourish on the last day. Expanding in step with the DAF bureaucracy, that year's encampment of the KdF organization comprised 101 large tents situated on the Russenwiese. More significantly, the folk festival now occupied an official site, called the KdF-City, located on the Valznerweiher and accessible by streetcar and from all points within the Party grounds. The KdF-City had initially appeared in Berlin as part of the 1936 Olympiad facilities. In all, the area comprised fifty-five facilities including five immense entertainment halls where much of the staged

⁷⁸Ibid.

performances took place, three large beer gardens, several shooting galleries, numerous dance pavilions, a pair of amphitheatres, and a series of sport, music and dance stages. Compared to the single day festivals of previous years, the entertainment program changed only in style rather than substance, with much of the same types of amusements offered more frequently and in greater numbers. The predominant form of the festival remained that of a showcase of talents from every region of the Reich. Even the city of Berlin transported its 700th anniversary celebration to the Berlinerhalle, one of the five spacious entertainment halls. Indeed, the five halls were named after separate geographical and cultural regions of the Reich: Berlin, Bavaria, Franconia, the Rhineland and the Hansa. The performances held in them reflected the diverse popular culture of the distinctive regions revolving around presentations of music, dance and humour.⁷⁹

The KdF-Volksfest of the following year, which opened on 3 September and concluded on 15 September, for the first time exceeded the duration of the eight day Party congress, "The Party Day of Greater Germany", that began on 5 September. With its official opening by Robert Ley on 6 September, the folk festival, in effect, had taken on a life of its own, operating in conjunction with the more serious aspects of the congress, but also independently of it.⁸⁰ The thirteen day festival, with free admission to all events, welcomed not only Nazis but

⁷⁹See the official program, "Volksfest Kraft durch Freude in der K.D.F. Stadt am Valznerweiher," in NSDAP HA, Reel 22/Fol. 448.

⁸⁰For a report on the official inauguration held in the Frankenhalle including excerpts from the speech by Ley, see *Die KDF-Stadt, Sonderausgabe der Fränkischen Tageszeitung zum Reichsparteitag 1938*, 7 Sept. 1938, in NSDAP/HA, Reel 23/Fol. 460.

also served as a tourist attraction that in its size and duration rivalled the *Oktoberfest* opening twelve days later in Munich. Nuremberg DAF officials pursued a comprehensive advertising campaign in an effort to broaden the appeal of the festival.⁸¹ A radio broadcast crew attempted to capture for listeners something of the essence of the festivities.⁸²

A daily special edition newspaper, *Die KDF-Stadt*, provided feature reports on the enormous task of the construction of the festival grounds, which were "larger and more splendid" than ever, as well as on festival performers and the program of events.⁸³ Informative articles extolling the virtues and achievements of the DAF and the KdF leisure organization were also accorded considerable space in the four-page newspaper. Photos depicting the "advance troops of the coming millions" illustrated the importance of this "great event" for the Party congress. Several articles vaguely described the new form of the folk festival. Offering more than "fleeting enjoyment", or "brief intoxication", wrote editor Fritz Koberstein, the variety of performances on hand constituted a unique view of the diverse creativity of German culture. Through the celebration of "joy" and "beauty" festivalgoers were intended to find

⁸¹See RS 25/38, Gaupresse und Propagandawalter der DAF to the Kreiswaltungen der DAF, Gau Franken, 30 Aug. 1938; and RS 26/38, Kreisobmann der DAF Nürnberg-Stadt to the Ortswaltungen des Kreises Nürnberg-Stadt der DAF, 30 Aug. 1938, in NSDAP/HA, Reel 23/Fol. 460, "Reichsparteitag 1938-Volksfest".

⁸²*Die KDF-Stadt*, 10 Sept. 1938.

⁸³*Die KDF-Stadt*, 4 Sept. 1938. See also *ibid.*, 12 Sept. 1938 for a detailed report of the construction of the 200,000 square metres of the festival site, including the laying of 16 kilometers of wire for loudspeakers and microphones.

"renewed strength" for the struggles of everyday life and work.⁸⁴ Only the Nazis, declared Koberstein, had given paramountcy to the unity of leisure and work, the twin "sources of strength" of life falsely separated for centuries. Proof of the Nazis' commitment to reconciling work and recreation came in the form of the 16,000 KdF vacationers whose travel, accommodation, meals as well as complimentary coupons for food, drink and entertainment, were provided by the Nazi leisure organization.⁸⁵ Emphasizing the equality so often associated with festivity, the paper maintained that everyday "titles and privileges" were to be "checked at the cloak-room". All visitors, whether young or old, were "citizens" of the "joyous small city".⁸⁶ Of course this did not apply to the many guests of honour, normally Nazi leaders and visiting foreign dignitaries, invited to attend the "evenings of comradeship".⁸⁷

The entertainment packaged for consumption represented as in previous years a cross-section of Germany's varied cultural landscape, the major difference being that it presented more of it more often. The program centred on the same five great halls, representing regional cultural heritages as in the previous year. Measuring 16.5x17.5 metres the film screen was now the largest in Europe.⁸⁸ In purely quantitative

⁸⁴*Die KdF-Stadt*, 4 Sept. 1938.

⁸⁵*Die KdF-Stadt*, 10 Sept. 1938.

⁸⁶*Die KdF-Stadt*, 4 Sept. 1938.

⁸⁷The presence of any high Party functionary was dutifully reported in the festival newspaper. See, for example, the photo report on the visit by Walther Funk, the Minister of Economics, in *Die KdF-Stadt*, 8 Sept. 1938.

⁸⁸*Die KdF-Stadt*, 12 Sept. 1938.

terms the festival was an immense success. So diverse was the daily program of events that the official newspaper recommended multiple visits. An average of between 250,000 and 300,000 visitors passed through the gates daily between 4 P.M. and 1 A.M. for the entire festival with a record half-a-million people crowding the facility on the final Sunday of the Party congress.⁹⁹ By the end of the festival, the 120 shooting stands, one of the more popular attractions, had accommodated an estimated 116,400 persons who expended more than 350,000 rounds of ammunition in the process.¹⁰⁰ More than 150 athletic performances were featured daily.¹⁰¹ Beer flowed in abundance with one waiter claiming a record of 118 litres of beer served in a mere ten minutes.¹⁰² Indeed the quantities of food, drink and tobacco consumed by festivalgoers could only be compared to the totals of the internationally famous *Oktoberfest* in Munich.¹⁰³ For younger festivalgoers a *Kletterbaum* (climbing tree) tested strength and skill, for which the KdF provided more than two thousand prizes in the form of gingerbread, chocolate and toys.¹⁰⁴

The variety and profusion of festival events notwithstanding, noticeably lacking from the festival grounds was an amusement park, a

⁹⁹*Die KdF-Stadt*, 11 and 12 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰⁰*Die KdF-Stadt*, 13 Sept. 1938. While this number may seem impressive it should be noted that it represented less than 5 percent of the estimated 3 million festivalgoers.

¹⁰¹*Die KdF-Stadt*, 9 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰²*Die KdF-Stadt*, 4 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰³*Die KdF-Stadt*, 5 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰⁴*Die KdF-Stadt*, 9 Sept. 1938.

common feature of most folk festivals. The absence of such a comparatively frivolous festival attraction underscores the purposiveness of the KdF concept of leisure. Not content with providing merely escapist fun for the masses, the attractions at the KdF-Volksfest were designed to challenge both the mental and physical mettle of the individual. Consequently, games of chance had no place in the new German folk festival as it had evolved by 1938. The emphasis on performance, moreover, whether artistic or athletic, accelerated the modern trend toward festivity as presentation with its concomitant division between active participation and passive spectating.

Festivalgoers could, in a sense and according to their desires, experience the simulated offerings of a different cultural tradition on successive visits to the festival grounds during the Party rally. Like the modern Great Expositions in France during the fin de siècle or theme parks of the present day, the KdF-Volksfest at Nuremberg brought together within a specific space the strange and unusual attraction of (not-so-)far-off places, a mainstay of the tourism industry.⁹⁵ Moreover the public fascination for distant places could be appeased for a fraction of the cost, time and effort which actual travel entailed. The obvious goal was to overcome parochialism through familiarity and even newly-won friendship, to foster unity of purpose across regionally-

⁹⁵The universal Expositions as well as other forms of popular culture which catered to the demands of a rising leisure culture in late nineteenth-century France are examined in Charles Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Epoque* (New Haven and London, 1985), 53-221, esp. 119-146. Rosalind H. Williams analyses much of the same modern entertainment culture from the perspective of a growing consumer society in *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1982), 58-106.

bounded cultural borders, as a writer suggested in *Die KdF-Stadt*.⁹⁶ Describing the ideological meaning of the festival, a writer claimed that out of the dynamism of the Nazi "cultural revolution", of which the KdF-Volksfest was a crucial component, would emerge "a wholly modern, strong and free form of life."⁹⁷ According to the report, in the past year millions of *Volksgeossen* had visited festivals organized by the KdF and had found a "source of strength" in the experience and enjoyment of indigenous folklore and customs.⁹⁸ The end result of the vast expenditure of resources for the entire Party congress was a rejuvenated Party membership equipped with the necessary "will and strength" to follow the Führer "blindly".⁹⁹

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⁹⁶*Die KdF-Stadt*, 4 Sept. 1938.

⁹⁷*Die KdF-Stadt*, 8 Sept. 1938.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* That the celebration of folklore and traditional customs, often considered at best harmlessly nostalgic and sentimental by more culturally progressive forces, could be conceived as a thoroughly modern aspect of festivity is best illustrated by the numerous *Trachtengruppen* (traditional costume groups) that graced the festival landscape either officially as performers or simply as the exceptional costume of festivalgoers. As a KdF official argued traditional costumes were not relegated to the museum as cultural artifacts but in their adaptation to the modern technological world with its facility for mass reproduction they were not only made more accessible but were subjected to continual innovation and variation. Not historical authenticity but rather the individual's genuine affinity for a form of dress invoking a harmony "with *Heimat*, nature and vigorous living" was paramount in the celebration of cultural traditions. See *Die KdF-Stadt*, 11 Sept. 1938. The fact that the wearing of traditional dress was increasingly restricted to exceptional times such as festivals and other forms of popular entertainment clearly demonstrates the accelerated drift toward simulation and even artifice characteristic of modern popular culture. For an analysis of this as a long-term process, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 82-87, 145-46, 154-60.

⁹⁹*Die KdF-Stadt*, 13 Sept. 1938.

Amounting to more than escapism, mindless diversion or transient pleasure, the folk festival, like the annual cycle of Nazi public celebration, was conceived as a vital component of cultural life in the Third Reich. For the KdF, festivals and other popular cultural events were instrumental in realizing the unity of joy and work--the two sources of strength in life. As a "source of energy", public celebration in the Third Reich created "rebels of joy" who through work and enjoyment continually renewed their "affirmation of life", or so it was claimed.¹⁰⁰ While the KdF was only the most conspicuous NS agency devoted to the promotion and organization of leisure, the continued popularity of festivity in the Third Reich relied on the Nazi state apparatus, including national and local state and Party leaders, the SS and police officials, and the participation of lesser Nazis and ordinary Germans of all walks of life alike.¹⁰¹ As Robert Ley remarked during a speech directed to the German worker commemorating the official opening of the 1938 KdF-Volksfest: "Precisely because we have such hard daily

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 4 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰¹The utilitarian attitude adopted by Nazi officials toward carnival and other festive celebrations was not shared by all Party leaders. During *Fasching* season in 1939, Bormann instructed all departments and agencies of the Party, with the exception of the KdF, to refrain from holding and attending carnival balls as they contradicted "completely and fundamentally" the "character of the NSDAP." It is unclear whether Ley influenced Bormann's decree allocating festivity to the organized leisure of KdF sponsored events, or whether he was simply apprehensive about the possibility of unfavorable public reception of both the growing number of exclusively Nazi balls and the potential unseemly and excessive behaviour commonly associated with such events. It is probable that the gravity of international tensions, occasioned by an aggressive Nazi foreign policy, tempered the seriousness of Bormann's directive. With the threat of war a constant in the minds of most Germans, the appearance of costumed Nazis celebrating the frivolity of carnival season could only have reflected badly on the Party. See BA, NS 6/232, AO no. 28/39, Bormann, 30 Jan. 1939.

labour we know how to celebrate our festivals!"¹⁰²

Not content with present accomplishments, Ley insisted that the KdF-City and *Volksfest* erected for the 1938 Party congress was no more than a prototype, with other such "cities of joy" to be erected "everywhere" promising to the German worker all of the "beauty and joy" that the modern age could offer--more than any fair or amusement park could ever hope to achieve.¹⁰³ The future designs of the DAF leader notwithstanding, Hitler's self-imposed rendezvous with destiny reduced the relevancy of festivity, and changed the course charted by the new German festival up to the outbreak of World War II. Pushed to the periphery with the onset of war, popular festivals continued as a diversionary form of entertainment as the Nazis gradually abandoned their efforts to construct a centralized, homogeneous modern popular festival culture that successfully combined amusement and sociability with ideological edification.

Though Nazi attempts to 'coordinate' carnival celebration resulted in a corresponding decline in public participation, as a form of modern popular culture, folk festivals comprised one of the more attractive features of the authoritarian Nazi state. There is little reason to doubt that German families, as consumers of popular culture,

¹⁰²Excerpt of Ley's speech included in report of the DAF leader's visit to the festival site, in *Die KDF-Stadt*, 7 Sept. 1938.

¹⁰³Ibid. Ley's projection into the future of KdF 'Cities of Joy' throughout Germany as an enticement to popular support was underscored with the same-day exhibition on the festival site of two Volkswagens, another of the many unfulfilled Nazi promises. Although no other Cities of Joy were erected during the Third Reich, the full two-week program of the 1939 version of the KdF-Volksfest at the Party rally promised to be even more extensive than previously. See NSDAP/HA, Reel 23/Fol. 476, "Reichsparteitag 1939-Volksfest".

welcomed attempts to create a more wholesome environment for public celebration and entertainment by cleansing folk festivals of their less appealing features, Nazi racial motivations notwithstanding. Consequently, even more so than the Nazi festivals discussed in the previous chapter, more traditional forms of popular celebration provided public life in Nazi Germany with an outward sense of normalcy. This appearance of normalcy doubtlessly enhanced the notional *Volksgemeinschaft* by helping to defuse public criticism and, significantly, allowing the Nazi political leadership to concentrate on state power interests. Yet, at the same time, because traditional popular festivals were largely apolitical in character,¹⁰⁴ it must be questioned whether they assisted or hindered attempts to invest the 'national community' with the chauvinistic military ethos informing Nazism. Clearly, the structure of the *KdF-Volksfest*, with its numerous shooting galleries and athletic demonstrations, which the Nazis regarded as a form of military training, represented attempts to 'militarize' the festival space. Nonetheless, as this discussion of the popular culture 'industry' implies, traditional as well as the distinctively Nazi festivals contributed to the Nazi restoration of Germany's economic vitality after 1933. Accordingly, the role of the festival industry in the Nazi 'economic miracle' is the focus of the following chapter.

¹⁰⁴This generalization must be qualified in one important respect. As chap. 5 will demonstrate, for critics and opponents of Nazism, the symbolic field of action informing popular festivals, as for Nazi festival culture as a whole, served as a public forum for dissent.

CHAPTER 4

THE BUSINESS OF CELEBRATION: FESTIVALS AND THE ECONOMY

In the half year beginning 1 October 1935 and ending 31 March 1936 Bavarians, Germans and tourists from abroad celebrated the final week of the 125th anniversary *Oktoberfest* in Munich, followed by carnival throughout Bavaria and then the Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. During this period over 1.4 million tourists filled Bavaria's hotels, inns and pensions, staying an average of three nights. This represented a gain of 30 percent in numbers of tourists and 72 percent in the length of stay in comparison to the same holiday season of 1932/33. Those increases over the three year period suggest not only that more Germans were benefiting from an improving economy after 1933 but that consumers had more disposable income for leisure activities such as travel. At the same time, while the impressive rise in tourism in Bavaria cannot be attributed entirely to them, festival events doubtlessly played a significant role in attracting visitors. Summarizing the impressive increase in tourism and especially the impact of the Winter Olympics, where around one million tickets were sold for the individual competitions as well as the opening and closing ceremonies, a Bavarian state official declared:

From all over the world visitors came to this mighty event.... To be sure, the mass visit had extraordinarily pleasant consequences not only for Garmisch-Partenkirchen but also for the region and in addition for the capital and many other

areas of the state.¹

These comments suggest that, as an integral component of the tourism industry, festivals served the interests of both German consumers and the business community, and by extension the political interests of the Nazi regime.²

The festival industry mirrored general developments in the domestic economy. Clearly, part of the ongoing appeal of the Nazi regime was the visible improvement in the economy as the unemployment crisis gradually subsided, real wages and salaries increased, consumer goods became more abundant, and the comparatively high rate of upward mobility increased disposable income for a growing segment of society.³ Still, the production goods industry grew at a much faster pace,

¹StAM, NSDAP 92, "Statistik des bayerischen Fremdenverkehrs für das Winterhalbjahr 1935/36 (1 Oktober 1935 bis März 1936)," hrsg. Friedrich Zahn, Heft 2, Jg. 1936. Sonderabdruck aus der Zeitschrift des Bayerischen Statistischen Landesamt, 241-59. The boost to area tourism occasioned by the Winter Olympics is suggested by the 13.4 percent increase in the number of visitors to Bavaria in the winter season of 1935/36 over the same period in the previous year.

²There is no substantive treatment of the tourism industry as a whole during the Nazi period. On the KdF-sponsored holidays organized for German workers, see Hasso Spode, "'Der deutsche Arbeiter reist': Massentourismus im Dritten Reich," in *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit*, ed. Huck, 281-306. For an analysis and evaluation of the emergence and expansion of folklore, including folk festivals, as an important component of the German tourism industry in the modern era, see Bausinger, *Folk Culture*, 127-60.

³The production of consumer goods rose by 1.5 percent between 1928 and 1937 reaching 7.4 percent by early 1938. At the same time wages increased absolutely by 50 percent. Moreover while total income increased by 150 percent, middle-level income grew by 180 percent, suggesting that a greater share of Germans had more disposable income to support consumer-based industries. See Schoenbaum, *Social Revolution*, 99-100. It should be noted, however, that the living standard for workers increased only marginally with discretionary income levels estimated at 3.1 percent of net income. See Mason, *Social Policy*, 128-150, 144.

gradually drawing more and more workers from the consumer goods industry as the rearmament and autarkic policies of the Nazi state gained ascendancy.⁴ Nonetheless, despite attempts by the Nazis to limit and direct consumer spending, collectively Germans continued to follow the modern trend towards a mass-consumer society as the widespread popularity of the *Volkswagen* scheme illustrates.⁵ Accordingly, domestic popular entertainment, including festivals, flourished in Nazi Germany, presumably not least because it filled a growing void occasioned by the declining availability of luxury consumer goods.⁶ Since the exchange of gifts is an integral rite of the festival, moreover, the many celebrations throughout the calendar year provided the industry with the opportunity to pursue its protectionist aims, a corollary of the economic policy of autarky. Festive posters, for instance, promoted the protectionist interests of German business, trade and industry, especially

⁴Reflecting the ascendancy of the armament and autarkic economic policies of the Nazi state, employment grew by 150 percent in the production goods industry between 1932 and 1937. This stood in sharp contrast to the still impressive 40 percent increase in the consumer goods industries. See Schoenbaum, *Social Revolution*, 93. More recent research suggests that the claims of German rearmament on the manufacturing sector significantly affected the availability of consumer goods from 1933 onward. See Volker R. Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1982), 146-48. For a discussion that deemphasizes consumer demand as a contributing factor to Germany's economic recovery, see R.J. Overy, *The Nazi Economic Recovery 1932-1938* (London, 1982), 30-33, 62-64.

⁵On the limited effectiveness of Nazi propaganda efforts to influence the consumer habits of German women, for example, see Jill Stephenson, "Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife," in *Nazi Propaganda*, ed. Welch, 117-42.

⁶Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State 1933-1945*, trans. Simon B. Steyne (Oxford, 1993), 92; cf. Grunberger, *Social History*, 313-15. In general Grunberger denies that German society became more consumer-oriented under Nazism.

during the Christmas season and Mothers' Day.⁷

Moreover, the comparatively strong influence of big business early on in the direction of the economy gradually eroded as the Nazi Party and its ancillary organizations extended their control over all areas of national life. This process, however, did not reflect a smooth or sudden transition of control from one power bloc to another.⁸ Rather, a mapping of the festival economy reveals a constant yet shifting terrain of collaboration and conflict of interests between state officials and businessmen. This is not to suggest that the line between the two was clearly demarcated. On the contrary, the same process of conflict and cooperation characterized the actions of state officials at different levels and between regions and groups on the same level. Similarly, the concerns of small, medium and big business interests clashed more than they cohered. With a different agenda, consumer interest groups fought both government officials and the business community over the issue of adequate service during festival events. Finally, the festival industry thrived on a comparatively large, mainly itinerant,

⁷BA, Bildarchiv, 3/23/6. The poster designed for the Christmas season of 1933 featured the familiar image of an ornamented fir bough to contextualize the message to the German people to purchase "German goods only from German retailers". Less explicit in their protectionist messages but no less obvious in their intent, other Christmas posters exploited the commercial aspect of the holiday season by simply encouraging German consumers to shop in the spirit of "German giving". See posters 3/23/4 and 3/23/15 which also portrayed traditional Christmas images as frames of reference. Similarly, a poster for Mothers' Day depicting a small child clutching a bouquet of roses encouraged consumers to purchase German flowers as they were "fresher, longer-lasting" and "more fragrant". See 3/23/2.

⁸For a historiographical critique of the relationship between the Nazi state and the German business community, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 3d ed. (London, 1993), chap. 3.

and cheap labour pool. Yet, while workers were no doubt pleased with the jobs produced, they all too often found themselves the victims of both state regulations and the fluctuating demands of the market place.

However marginal the role of the festival in the economy of the Third Reich, its contribution to the overall amelioration of the economic crisis confronting the Nazi state from its inception in 1933 should not be ignored. The festival economy extended far beyond the immediate event itself. Each festival event, in varying degrees, engaged a significant component of the local service industry. Hotels and restaurants provided accommodation and nourishment for visiting celebrants. Often tourists, initially lured to the region for the festival event, found time to visit other area attractions. Workers in factories, large and small, manufactured the material goods designed for the festival industry: from the amusement rides, festival tents and vending stalls and even light bulbs, garlands ribbons and wreaths, which gave the festival its essential structural form, to the souvenirs and prizes that catered to consumer demand for nostalgia, competition and risk. Farmers, butchers, bakers and grocers supplied perishable goods for festive rites of conspicuous consumption, as did brewers and vintners, the consumption of whose goods intensified the festive mood. Festival advertising provided jobs for printers and artists. Tailors designed costumes, which in turn made up part of the inventory of retail stores, many of which specialized in the sale of festival articles. Performing artists, barkers, singers, dancers, musicians, magicians and sideshow 'freaks' populated the publicly visible ranks of festival employees, while carpenters, mechanics and a host of unskilled labour worked behind

the scenes to transport, erect, run, and dismantle the festival operation. Indirectly, the state, both on a local and national level, benefited from the festival economy by way of income gleaned from user fees, licenses and taxes as well as the myriad collection drives.

The limited sources available do not permit a comprehensive study of the role of the festival in the economy, which would anyway be beyond the scope of this work. But the evidence available does allow for the description and assessment of the changing economic ties between the state and the business community in the promotion of festival events as well as their impact on the lives of ordinary Germans. The instrumentalization of popular cultural events such as folk festivals assisted the NSDAP in its attempt to overcome the desperate economic conditions prevailing in Germany in 1933. Due to their recurring character, festivals provided a measure of stability to an ailing economy, especially after 1934. Folk festivals, both large and small, provided a stimulus to local economies, providing jobs for thousands of unemployed and underemployed. Additionally, they provided revenue for festival wares manufacturers and local vendors, as well as for individual municipalities. Unlike the mass spectacles staged by Goebbels and other Nazi leaders, folk festivals were largely the preserve of local authorities, especially, yet by no means exclusively, in communities where the festival had a long tradition. Finally, the commodification of the festival experience, the exchange of money for leisure-time entertainment, served as a means, however limited, for the Nazis in association with the business community to assuage the demands of a modern consumer society in an

economy increasingly deprived of consumer goods.⁹ This was especially the case after 1936 when the Nazi 'Behemoth' directed economic activity more fully towards rearmament and military expansion at the expense of consumer goods.¹⁰ Thus in a 'command economy' increasingly subordinated to the political norms and aims of the Nazi dictatorship, the festival industry initially aided the alleviation of unemployment and especially after 1936 served as an outlet for consumer spending. Together these two functional aspects of the festival industry served to mobilize popular support for the Nazi state, in turn strengthening its legitimacy and ultimately allowing Hitler to pursue his imperialistic ambitions.

REVIVING THE POPULAR FESTIVAL INDUSTRY, 1933-34

Hitler's assumption of the chancellorship on 30 January 1933 coincided with the carnival season in Munich, Mainz, Cologne and elsewhere. That Germans celebrated carnival at all that year was to a large degree a result of persistent lobbying by the *Gesamtfachausschuss für die Karneval-und Festartikelindustrie im Deutschen Reich* (United Trade Commission for the Carnival and Festival Wares Industry in the German Reich-GaKFIDR) and its chief spokesman, Lutz Richter. In pressing the

⁹As Rainer Zitelmann noted, Hitler's forward-oriented vision of a modern consumer society enjoying all the advantages of advanced technology was far from reactionary. See Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 316-31. See also Harold James, *The German Slump: Politics and Economics 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1986), 349.

¹⁰Reference to Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York, 1942), 240-96; Overly, *Nazi Economic Recovery*, 62. It should be noted however that the production of consumer goods grew throughout the peacetime period, declining slightly with the outbreak of war and only dropping off sharply in 1944. See Avraham Barkai, *Nazi Economics: Ideology, Theory, and Policy*, trans. Ruth Hadass-Vashitz (Oxford, New York, and Munich, 1990), 232-34.

state and national governments, especially the Reich Economics, Interior and Labour Ministries, to permit the public celebration of carnival during the early years of the depression, Richter and his associates stressed the calamitous consequences for an industry already burdened with the imposition of severe restrictions on, or outright prohibition of, carnival celebrations by state and local authorities. In supporting the position of the GaKFIDR to the individual *Länder*, responsible for decisions pertaining to the policing of the industry, the Reich Economics Minister insisted that an extensive ban on festivities would gravely intensify the plight of the industry and as a consequence lead to increased unemployment.¹¹ Although the exhortations of the industry prevented an absolute ban on carnivals, the scope of festival activity was narrowly circumscribed.¹²

¹¹Similarly Louis Brentel, spokesperson for the South German *Faschings* Industry, requested Chancellor Brüning to ascertain whether carnival celebrations would be allowed or not and in what form for the 1932 season. In his appeal Brentel, like Richter, emphasized the ruinous effect of the depression on an industry whose revenue had fallen 50 to 70 percent against the good seasons of previous years. He stressed that government indecision exacerbated the uncertainty prevailing within the industry. See Richter to RMdI, 11 July 1931; Brentel to Brüning, 23 July 1931; RMdI to the RWM, 8 August 1931; and RWM to the Landesregierungen, 24 August 1931, in StADt, L80IE, Gruppe IV, Titel 3/no.4/520-525. For a regional study of the often morally charged debate over the celebration of carnival during the Weimar and Nazi years, see Hamelmann, *Helau und Heil Hitler*.

¹²In February 1932, for example, the Westphalian regional government in Minden, invoking "the gravity of the time and the social plight," announced that carnival celebrations were to be curtailed if not abandoned. These restrictions, following the general policy set by the Prussian state, banned parades and public events except those held in closed rooms. The ban extended to the wearing of costumes and masks, the singing, playing or performing of carnival songs, poems or demonstrations and the customary rabble-rousing with festival objects such as confetti and the like in open public spaces. See StADt, M1IP, no. 1624/46, Pressestelle der Regierung, Minden, 2 Feb. 1932.

By 1933 the festival wares industry in Germany embraced more than 140 operations. As a seasonal and export industry it employed thousands in factories scattered across the country, with primary centres of operation in Prussia, Saxony, Thuringia and Bavaria. Several thousand more were employed indirectly in their homes. With few exceptions it was an integrally endogenous industry using only domestic products and labour in the manufacturing process. Consequently, the unilateral export trade, compressed into a few months of business transactions according to the fluctuating demands of the festival season, provided the Reich with significant amounts of much needed foreign currency.¹³

Despite its favorable export trade, the industry faced strong foreign competition, which, according to the *Verband Deutscher Karneval- und Festartikelfabrikanten* (Association of German Carnival and Festival Wares Manufacturers-VDKuF), threatened its continued viability. As a result, the VDKuF informed the Economics Minister that in order to preserve the industry it was imperative that the domestic market be maintained. This would insure both a stable market and work force, since production for the domestic market would offset the lull created by the seasonal export trade. Given the precarious conditions of the industry in 1933, the uncertainty fueled by numerous rumours concerning a possible ban on carnival had forced many dealers to cancel or sharply reduce orders, as most of the local associations and communities had abandoned plans to celebrate carnival. The reluctance of customers to place orders with retailers destabilized the entire industry, forcing

¹³HStAS, E130b, Bü 2649, VDKuF to the RWM, Berlin, 4 Aug. 1933.

lay-offs and reducing the hours of work for those labourers retained. Since the same products were manufactured for the export market as for domestic consumption, a reduction in domestic orders raised overall production costs. This in turn affected the competitiveness of German firms in the international market.¹⁴

The position taken by the various Reich ministries after 1933 differed little from that during the Weimar years. While Berlin encouraged the individual *Länder* to lift many of the restrictions on carnival activity in view of the continuing economic crisis, the final decision remained the prerogative of each state.¹⁵ In contrast to the Weimar era, however, Nazi support for popular festivals was enhanced by ideological precepts that promoted the cultivation of a popular culture ostensibly deeply rooted in the national folklore. In anticipation of the carnival season of 1934, for example, the Economics Minister requested on behalf of his counterpart in Thuringia, that where possible the individual *Länder* not restrict public carnival events. Stressing the need to prevent further burdens on public welfare funds, he directly invoked economic factors by emphasizing that the twelve costume factories in Thuringia not only employed significant numbers of workers, but also were situated in areas offering few other employment opportunities. The "support of the industry of carnival wares", a RWM official

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Stadt, MIP, no. 1624/532, Gottheiner (RMdI) to the RWM, 18 Aug. 1933; and *ibid.*, 531, Sarnow (RWM) to the Regierungen der Länder, 25 Aug. 1933. In the communication to the *Länder* governments Sarnow referred to the position taken by the RWM on 24 August 1931, stating that it was unchanged in view of the continued plight of the industry.

maintained, represented a "step in the right direction."¹⁶

In November 1934, Richter renewed efforts to engage the national government in the industry's conflict with local political authorities. He informed the Office for the Provision of Work in the Reich Labour Ministry (RAM) of numerous complaints from both employers and workers over steps taken by local officials, such as the chief burgomaster in Gelsenkirchen, who were determined to halt the sale of carnival and festival items.¹⁷ In the meantime the Interior Ministries of the two largest states, Prussia and Bavaria, announced that regulations regarding the carnival season would remain the responsibility of regional and local authorities. The announcement prompted VDKuF representatives to renew their pleas for a centralized policy to facilitate the stabilization of the industry. VDKuF officials requested the Labour Ministry to urge not only Prussian and Bavarian officials, but also their counterparts in Württemberg, Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, to lift restrictions on carnival activity.¹⁸

The gravity of the situation was not lost on the RAM, whose agenda for increased centralization of the federal administrative structure, in any event, coincided with the expressed desires of the festival industry. Less than a week following the receipt of the VDKuF's latest plea, a RAM official notified the Economics Minister that it advocated the "resuscitation" of the ailing industry, since without

¹⁶Stadt, M1IP, no. 1624/530, Mossdorf (RWM) to the entire Regierungen der Länder (except Thuringia), 25 Oct. 1933.

¹⁷HStAS, E130b, Bü 2649, Richter to the RAM, 8 Nov. 1933.

¹⁸Stadt, M1IP, no. 1624/537-538, Horn, Geschäftsleitung (VDKuF) to the RAM, 21 Nov. 1933.

government support it would fail, throwing thousands out of work. Lifting all restrictions on the celebration of carnival, the Labour Ministry official argued, would at the very minimum maintain the present level of employment in the industry for the winter, and possibly create further jobs. In supporting the industry's call to rescind all restrictions on carnival activities and for the Interior Ministry to impress upon the individual *Länder* the need for decisive action, the RAM official added that the harm of suppressing carnival celebrations extended beyond the festival wares trade to other areas of the economy.¹⁸

In September 1934, the Reich Economics Minister established the national economic organization *Wirtschaftsgruppe Ambulantes Gewerbe* (WAG) as the exclusive representative for the branch of trade that included the promotion and organization of folk festivals. Another decree in February 1935 further consolidated control of the itinerant industry in the hands of the WAG. In so doing the RWM issued guidelines regarding the staging of folk festivals throughout the Reich, with economic necessity listed as the chief priority. Henceforth folk festivals could be held only in areas lacking traditional fairs offering amusement attractions, shooting galleries or similar facilities and events. They were to be organized in the public interest by local WAG authorities

¹⁸StAdt, MiIP, no. 1624/536, Krohn (RAM) to the RWM, 27 Nov. 1933. A month later the RWM repeated its request that if possible state governments refrain from restricting carnival and similar events. The Ministry official added that the Trustee of Labour for the Economic Region of Central Germany and the Reich Association of Middle and Large Companies of the German Retail Trade also advocated a more permissive policy towards carnival celebrations. See HStAS, E130b, Bü 2649, Sarnow to the Landesregierungen, 27 Dec. 1933. The VDKuF renewed its appeal the following year to the RMdI, which repeated its previous announcement in accordance with the desires of the RWM/RAM. See StAdt, MiIP, no. 1624/76, RMdI to the Landesregierungen, 24 Nov. 1934.

(*Wirtschaftskammerbezirk*), with costs to both vendor and consumer to be kept to a minimum. To benefit the local economy, organizers were required to recruit where available local vendors belonging to the WAG who had been unable to secure space at other similar events.²⁰ The comparatively few solicitations by the industry in 1934 and their complete absence in subsequent years demonstrate that in its efforts to enhance its political legitimacy by expediting Germany's economic recovery, the Nazi government provided strong and early support for the festival industry.

THE FESTIVAL INDUSTRY AND THE 'BATTLE FOR WORK'

Throughout 1932, the Nazis campaigned on the slogan "bread and work". Once empowered, Nazi leaders were quick to realize that political legitimacy depended on the fulfillment of their promised economic mandate.²¹ While the new government introduced its first comprehensive economic program in June 1933,²² in the typically combative style of Nazi propaganda rhetoric the alleviation of unemployment was officially launched under the banner of the *Arbeitsschlacht* (battle for work) on 21 March

²⁰BayHStA, Minn 72678, "Richtlinien der WAG für die Veranstaltung von Volksfesten," Hans Heck, Leiter der WAG, 2 Jan. 1936. These guidelines replaced previous regulations of the WAG issued on 26 March and 12 April 1935.

²¹Barkai, *Nazi Economics*, 1, 106, 168.

²²For an examination of the Nazi 'economic miracle' in the initial phase of the regime that emphasizes the conflation of a number of factors in reducing unemployment, see Dan P. Silverman, "Fantasy and Reality in Nazi Work-Creation Programs, 1933-1936," *JMH* 65 (March 1993): 113-51. See also James, *German Slump*, 367-71; Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism*, 1: 356-58.

1934, the first anniversary of the 'Day of Potsdam'.²³ Although festivals generated considerable employment, conflicts did arise over job allocation. By August of 1934 the thoroughly 'Nazified' Munich city council, in collaboration with the DAF, had established regulations for employment at the *Oktoberfest* to ensure a more equitable distribution of wages among workers. Beer-tent and restaurant proprietors were required to register any double-wage earners with the local labour exchange.²⁴ The regulations were directed chiefly against the female working population. Festival restaurant and publicans were not permitted to hire any childless married persons having a gross family monthly income above RM 200.²⁵ It was imperative to adhere to these regulations "for political reasons", emphasized labour exchange officials, since it would be "simply inconceivable" if the *Oktoberfest* did not significantly reduce the number of unemployed.²⁶ Clearly, in Munich at least, local

²³Allen, *Nazi Seizure*, 269-74. Allen emphasized the psychological rather than the economic impact of the propaganda campaign surrounding the 'battle for work' in convincing Northeim residents that the Nazis had succeeded in ending the depression.

²⁴Professional musicians paid from the public purse, for instance, were victims of the regulations. The city council reminded beer hall and restaurant owners in August 1934 that such persons were not to be hired and that the labour exchange was available to provide a selection of capable musicians. See StadtAM, Okt 240, Munich city council correspondence, 10 Aug. 1934.

²⁵For every child the allowable base income was raised by RM 15. In addition, wives of civil servants or in reception of a state pension were to be at least initially excluded from the labour pool. See StadtAM, Okt 240, Stadtrat Munich, 10 Aug. 1934. The national campaign to reduce unemployment through the elimination of female "double-wage earners" had begun as early as August 1933. See Birgit Wulff, "The Third Reich and the Unemployed: National Socialist Work-creation Schemes in Hamburg 1933-4," in *The German Unemployed*, eds. Richard J. Evans and Dick Geary (London and Sydney, 1987), 291-92.

²⁶StadtAM, Okt 240, Arbeitsamt Munich, 29 Jan. 1935.

officials viewed folk festivals such as the *Oktoberfest* as a significant if momentary respite from the harsh conditions of the depression, providing temporary work for several hundred of the city's unemployed.

In all, of nearly seven hundred persons applying for work at the *Oktoberfest* through the city's labour exchange only forty-six were rejected. While the majority of those rejected, most of whom fell into the double-wage category, were content to allow others on public relief to gain employment, a few committed an "indefensible injustice" by defying the official decision. Labour exchange officials claimed that those finding work in contravention of their official rejection did so either because they were especially good patrons of the restaurant proprietors or because they had better contacts. They emphasized that the labour exchange was making every effort to ease the burden on the public welfare programs by gradually providing an ever greater supply of recipients of public relief to the *Oktoberfest*. To this end, action had been taken against operators in violation of the employment agreement with the labour exchange and the DAF.²⁷

By 1937, the labour exchange was able to claim that, with few exceptions, it had received the full cooperation of area businesses in its control over the comparatively large temporary labour market of between seven and eight hundred persons associated with the *Oktoberfest*. Authorities determined that only three operators had violated

²⁷Nonetheless owners continued to hire waitresses who ran afoul of these regulations. In October 1936 the labour exchange in Munich notified chief burgomaster, Karl Fiehler, that it had identified 23 waitresses who had not received official permission to work at the fair. A further five waitresses were discovered to have worked despite their applications being rejected by the labour exchange. See StadtAM, Okt 240, Arbeitsamt-Munich to Fiehler, 17 Oct. 1936.

regulations in hiring workers not officially registered. Of the three only one, the Wagner festival beer hall, had in its employ persons whose applications had been rejected by Munich's employment office. Presumably compliance on the part of festival proprietors had less to do with the threat of punitive fines than with a new policy that threatened operators with possible banishment from the festival grounds.²⁸

Nonetheless, several of the employers defended their hiring practices against the regulations imposed by Munich's labour exchange. In December 1936, Hans Wagner of the Wagnerbräu brewery complained to chief burgomaster Karl Fiehler that three women employed in violation of the official rejection of their applications were regular waitresses at the Hotel Wagner. Long-time hotel patrons had as in past years requested the presence of these waitresses at the festival beer hall. In addition, Wagner noted that he had employed three waitresses from the official list and had informed the labour exchange of the special circumstances obtaining at the festival beer hall.²⁹ Similarly, in the same month, the retention of three women in a chicken roastery, workers whose applications had been rejected as they violated the double-wage regulation, was defended as necessary for the successful operation of the business.³⁰ Clearly, the business community resented the incursions

²⁸StadtAM, Okt 240, Schubert to Christian Weber, 27 Jul. 1937; and Arbeitsamt Munich to Schubert, 12 Nov. 1937.

²⁹Ibid., Hans Wagner to Fiehler, 30 Dec. 1936.

³⁰In writing to Fiehler, the lawyer, Karl Götz, argued that in view of the crowded and demanding festive environment the skills necessary in preparing and serving the roasted chickens were such that only women with considerable experience could be hired. Additionally the women had built up a large number of regular customers over their many years of service in the same operations. Any diminishment in the familiarity and

of the state into what they perceived as their private affairs. While they were willing to comply to some extent with Nazi employment policies, the success of their operations remained their chief concern. Consequently, they were willing to defy state regulations in order to insure that expectations of familiarity and tradition commonly associated with the festival, such as the rapport between regular customers and waitresses, be maintained.

While female workers were often the victims of Nazi economic policy, their male counterparts occasionally engaged government authorities officials in their struggles against the business community. While not generally supportive of the Nazi dictatorship, workers had little recourse following the decimation of the trade unions which left them in a significantly reduced bargaining position vis-à-vis their employers. In September 1934 the Munich chapter of the League of German Master Carpenters wrote to the NSDAP faction in the city council complaining bitterly of the loss of employment resulting from the change in local hiring practices. In past years festival operators and brewery owners had contracted out the construction and dismantling of the fair buildings to the Munich carpenters. For the 1934 fair, however, three breweries, the Löwenbräu, Paulaner-Thomasbräu and the Franziskaner-Spaten, as well as the large tent housing Rössler's Oxen Roastery, had

quality of service, Götz emphasized, meant possible loss of customers. Although the roastery had employed several women supplied by the labour exchange, the lawyer added that in such circumstances it was impossible to follow regulations "to the letter", and that even Council President Christian Weber, himself a businessman and member of the *Oktoberfest* committee, had, on his visit to the roastery, agreed that there was little purpose in applying the official regulations in such a case. See StadtAM, Okt 240, Karl Götz to Fiehler, 30 Dec. 1936.

given the contract to a tent manufacturer in Augsburg, who in turn employed carpenters from the Stuttgart-based Deuter construction firm. The Munich carpenters accused Alois Rössler and the breweries of conduct destructive of the *Volkgemeinschaft*, a "slap in the face" to Nazi aspirations.³¹

The breweries cited economic necessity in defending their actions to Christian Weber. Due to the prohibitively high costs of replacing the outmoded festival beer hall with a new one, the breweries opted for the cheaper alternative, the rental of a tent. The owners turned to the established Augsburg manufacturer since no similar business existed in Munich. The breweries claimed that they had no knowledge of the hiring of Stuttgart carpenters until after the construction of the tent had begun. The breweries' spokesman added that the Augsburg firm had subsequently complied with the request that local skilled workers be hired in addition to the contracted workers out of Stuttgart.³² Complicating the issue, moreover, was the "propaganda" campaign in which the northern breweries had been engaged since the beginning of the year. The primary target of the campaign, waged under the motto: "Protect the local brewery", was, according to the breweries, Bavarian and especially Munich beer. Fearing a major blow to beer exports, the Munich breweries had entreated Hermann Esser to communicate their concerns to Hitler. This brought the decision in the name of the Führer that the northern breweries halt their campaign since Germany was

³¹StadtAM, Okt 240, Vereinigung der Zimmermeister und Zimmereibetriebe (Munich) to the Stadtratsfraktion of the NSDAP, 4 Sept. 1934.

³²Ibid., Aktienbrauerei zum Löwenbräu to Stadtrat Weber, 5 Sept. 1934.

to be viewed as a single economy without conflicting and competing regional interests. As a result, the breweries maintained that a rejection of the Augsburg and Stuttgart firms, falsely perceived as "local patriotism", would potentially damage the beer sales of Munich's breweries in those and other regions throughout Germany.³³

The demands of the market place notwithstanding, local Nazi officials concurred with the carpenters that any skilled workers needed for the *Oktoberfest* be drawn primarily from the local labour market.³⁴ A few days later the city council notified Rössler and the brewery owners of their support for the carpenters' complaint.³⁵ The carpenters' guild also enlisted the aid of both the chamber of handicrafts (*Handwerkskammer*) of Upper Bavaria and the labour exchange in Munich against the decisions made by Rössler and the three breweries. Emphasizing the need "to combat" the acute unemployment in the large cities "as defined by the Führer", the labour exchange requested that future hiring practices benefit Munich's jobless, since otherwise they would "be inconsistent with all the efforts and regulations on the side of the government".³⁶

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., Schubert to the Löwenbräu, Paulaner-Thomas and Spaten-Franziskaner breweries, and Alois Rössler, 7 Sept. 1934.

³⁶Ibid., Handwerkskammer of Upper Bavaria to Schubert, 10 Sept. 1934 and *ibid.*, Handwerkskammer of Upper Bavaria and the Arbeitsamt Munich to the board of directors of the Löwenbrauerei, Paulaner-Thomasbrauerei, Franziskaner-Spatenbrauerei and Rössler, 13. Sept. 1934. The Nazi government issued a new law in May 1934 prohibiting the hiring of non-local labour in areas of high unemployment. See James, *German Slump*, 396-70.

As the Nazi state gradually reinforced its political legitimacy, it asserted ever-expanding control over the economy. This was especially the case after the announcement at the Party rally in September 1936 of the introduction of the Four Year Plan, initially a collaboration of sorts between the NSDAP and the industrial giant IG Farben, which effectively shifted the emphasis of the economy towards production based on the twin policies of autarky and rearmament. Among the effects of the Four Year Plan was the reduction of the massive unemployment which the Nazis inherited in 1933 and a gradually mounting shortage of labour after 1937.³⁷ As in most sectors of the economy the consumer-oriented festival industry suffered from the general problem of labour deployment.

The problem of unemployed skilled workers that led to the protestations of the Munich's carpenters' guild in 1934 had, by 1938, reversed itself into solicitation on the part of festival operators for labourers to construct the buildings for that year's *Oktoberfest*. In August of that year, as the international political crisis accelerated, Munich administrative officials considered cancelling the fair because of the removal of carpenters from the building sites on the fairgrounds.

³⁷The debate remains unresolved over whether the Four Year Plan of 1936 represented a demonstrable shift in Nazi economic policy towards the "primacy of politics" with a concomitant diminishing of influence on the part of 'big business' as argued most forcefully by Timothy Mason and Richard Overy, or whether it should be viewed from a perspective emphasizing continued collaboration, in the process of accommodation of elite interests as other historians such as Peter Hüttenberger suggest. See Timothy Mason, "The Primacy of Politics--Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany," in Henry A. Turner (ed.), *Nazism and the Third Reich* (New York, 1972), 175-200; Overy, *Nazi Economic Recovery*, 58; and Peter Hüttenberger, "Nationalsozialistische Polykratie," *GuG* 2 (1976): 434. For a recent description and analysis of this debate see Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, chap. 3, esp. 41-42, 51-53.

The local functionaries turned to both Gau propaganda officials as well as Reich authorities. Although no official response came from Berlin, State Secretary Köglmaier suggested that the labour for the construction of the fairgrounds would not be assigned. As a result, the Munich officials recommended that they replace the reassigned carpenters with similar tradesmen from a local brewery and beer hall.³⁸

The following week representatives of Munich's brewery industry met to discuss the situation. Among other issues they discussed the proposal that one or another of the breweries be omitted from the fair. They also considered postponing the festival one week to allow the reduced number of workers time to assemble the fairground buildings. The brewery representatives recommended, moreover, that Christian Weber entreat Göring, as Reich Economics Minister, to declare the assembly of the *Oktoberfest* to be urgent. With Göring's support, they hoped, the provision of the necessary labour force would proceed apace.³⁹ Despite the concerns of administrators and businessmen, the annual fall celebration, with the full complement of beer halls, did take place, delayed, as in the previous year, by one week, opening on 24 September

³⁸StadtAM, Okt 240, Schubert, 12 Aug. 1938. The same day, Richard Schottenhamel, representing the Stuttgart firm in charge of the tent construction on the fairgrounds, appraised the difficult situation in a meeting with city officials. All available brewery workers had been assigned to the construction of the festival halls. Still, there were not, in his estimation, sufficient numbers on hand to guarantee that construction would be completed within the prescribed time. He added that the labour exchange had assented to the importunities of the breweries, allowing them to advertise for workers. It had also provided assurances that these workers would not in turn be called away and assumed responsibility for replacing ten workers already removed from the building site. See *ibid.*, Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 12 Aug. 1938.

³⁹*Ibid.*

and closing 9 October.

The increasingly exiguous labour supply also posed difficulties for the organizers of the *Oktoberfest* the following year. The earliest date for beginning the construction was set for 1 August following the closing victory celebration for Christian Weber's Brown Ribbon Derby horse racing event on 30 July.⁴⁰ Meanwhile labour exchange officials recommended to city administrators that the assembly of the large beer halls and restaurants commence as soon as possible since the reduced number of workers expected would require considerably more time than usual to complete their task. Seventeen July was proposed to Weber as an appropriate starting date. Citing the horse racing event, however, city officials upheld the original dates. As compensation, the labour exchange agreed to ensure that the requested number of workers, thirty carpenters and forty labourers, be assigned to the construction of the festival beer halls. Recognizing the single most important attraction of the autumn fair, he also pointed out that on the whole the celebration of the *Oktoberfest* required the full participation of the breweries with their festival halls.⁴¹

⁴⁰Ibid., Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 26 June, 1939. Two weeks later, brewery representatives appealed to city officials to insure that the labour exchange assign sufficient numbers of carpenters and workers to the fairgrounds. They also inquired whether municipal officials intended to pursue the issue of whether workers called up for either military or labour service would be granted leave to assist in the fair's construction or whether they should act independently in approaching the appropriate military officials. Schubert, however, informed the brewery spokesman Richard Wagner that the early release of conscripted brewery workers remained their own affair and that the city administration would not involve itself with the matter. See Ibid., Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 13 July 1939.

⁴¹Ibid., Schubert to Richard Wagner, Richard Schottenhamel and Christian Weber, 12 July 1939.

The assurances of city administrators that adequate labour resources would be supplied from the labour exchange were ill-founded. On 25 July labour exchange authorities notified Fiehler's office of "extremely overstretched conditions" involving the deployment of labour, and announced that the allocation of the seventy workers requested by the breweries was impossible, especially since the Deuter firm had already submitted its application for 115 skilled and unskilled workers for the assembly of three festival beer halls. Only industrial conscription, they suggested, could secure the necessary labour. They added, however, that procurement of carpenters was only possible if they could be diverted from civil and military building projects in the Munich area. Consequently, they informed the mayor's office that they would take the issue up with the president of the Bavarian State labour exchange in the hope that he might release some carpenters from Munich's civil building projects. The labour exchange authorities also recommended that the necessary labour be drawn from among Munich's municipal employees. Reflecting both the seriousness of the labour shortage in the summer of 1939 and their own increasing ineptitude, they concluded their correspondence by informing the mayor's office that it was possible to procure the necessary labour from places other than the labour exchange.⁴²

Following the labour exchange's lead, inquiries into the possibility that municipal workers might be placed at the disposal of the breweries yielded the response that although the celebration of that year's *Oktoberfest* was "a national-political necessity" it was

⁴²Ibid., Arbeitsamt Munich to Fiehler, 25 July 1939.

impossible to make available any of the tradesmen in the city's employ. Evidently, the city's supply of carpenters and labourers suffered under the same labour shortages as the private sector. In the end, the state labour exchange, through its extended area of operation, was partially able to alleviate the critical situation. Officials there came up with the plan to cut back building projects in outlying regions, permitting the reassignment of nearly fifty workers to building contractors in charge of construction for the *Oktoberfest*.⁴³

The adverse effects of the rearmament and autarkic economic policy which the Nazi state relentlessly pursued, especially after 1936, could not be more glaring than in the contrast between the authoritative position of the labour exchange in 1934 with regard to the prohibition of "double wage earners" and its relative impotence by 1939 in the matter of procuring workers for the fairground construction. It is also clear that as Hitler's foreign policy steered the nation toward confrontation and the growing threat of war, domestic economic activity had shifted unerringly in the direction of productivity. With insufficient numbers of workers to supply the demands of the industrial-military economy the needs of consumer oriented industries such as festival operations became increasingly relegated to the periphery.

CONFLICT AND COMPLIANCE IN THE FESTIVAL INDUSTRY

The difficulties faced by local communities stemming from the postponement of Munich's *Oktoberfest* by one week in 1937 clearly reveal the importance of the intricate network of folk festivals for local

⁴³Ibid., Schubert to Abt. III, Personal-und Organisationsamt, Munich and Christian Weber, 28 July 1939.

economies, especially in terms of employment and revenue.⁴⁴ During a Munich city council meeting in March of that year, brewery representatives insisted that due to the horse races scheduled for the end of July on the same grounds, the festival halls could not be erected in time for the usual opening day. They stressed that a delay of one week would extend the summer tourist season into mid-October which would be profitable for both the city and the tourism industry. Not surprisingly, Christian Weber, whose racing association controlled the horse racing event, also endorsed the delay. Only the fair operators opposed the postponement on the grounds of potentially unfavorable weather and the layover of one week between major festivals.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, in the city of Memmingen, one hundred kilometers west of Munich, a fair was slated for 12-16 October. Since 80 percent of the operators and vendors came from the *Oktoberfest*, which was now set to close down on 10 October, the time required to move the equipment and materials to Memmingen threatened the opening of that city's only fair. Consequently, the burgomaster of Memmingen appealed to Fiehler to adhere to the original dates of 18 September to 3 October. The postponement of the *Oktoberfest*, he maintained, was a matter of exceptional importance for the local economy since the fair attracted visitors "from far and near". Any postponement of the Memmingen fair, moreover, would in turn

⁴⁴See Fiehler's press notice announcing the postponement in, *VB*, 28 Mar. 1937.

⁴⁵*StadtAM*, Okt 239, summary of Munich city council meeting, 1 Mar. 1937; and *ibid.*, Christian Weber, *Renn-Verein Munich-Reim*, 11 Mar. 1937.

conflict with other area fairs in Leutkirch, Isny and Kempten.⁴⁶ In response to the burgomaster's request, Ernst Schubert, a city councillor in Munich, informed him that the new dates would remain in effect. He added that he foresaw no delay in the opening of Memmingen's fair since the necessary equipment would be dismantled immediately on termination of the *Oktoberfest* and transported early the following morning.⁴⁷

The concern of Memmingen's political leaders that the postponement of the large *Oktoberfest* could have a negative impact on their local economy further suggests that the folk festival was the scene of conflict not only between labour and the business community, but also between big and small capital. There can be little doubt that behind Schubert's response to the concerns raised by Memmingen's burgomaster was the conviction, not without substance, that the interests not only of Munich but of Bavaria and even the national economy were closely tied to the success of the *Oktoberfest*, the single largest traditional German festival, attracting visitors from around the world. Against the massive profits it generated for the brewery and tourism industries as well as state revenue through taxation and licenses, Memmingen's folk festival was of only marginal significance beyond the local community.⁴⁸

⁴⁶StadtAM, Okt 239, Bürgermeister-Memmingen to Fiehler, 3 Apr. 1937.

⁴⁷Ibid., Schubert to the Bürgermeister-Memmingen, 5 Apr. 1937.

⁴⁸The initial cause of the postponement of the renowned autumn fair, the "Brown Ribbon Derby" horse racing event organized by Weber, a notorious Nazi, is revealing of the power and influence of local Party leaders. For a scathing description of Weber's suspect business practices including the "Brown Derby" and "Aufgalopp", the erotic spectacle staged for Munich's carnival season, see Ernest R. Pope, *Munich Playground* (New York, 1941), 30-42.

The fruitless exhortations of Memmingen's political officials point up the at times bitter conflict between big and small business concerns. This often bitter competition for the festival public's money manifested itself in several ways.⁴⁹ Since the NSDAP had been the most vociferous defender of the small shopkeeper against the encroachment of department stores and other big business concerns, it was hardly surprising that the small business interests would turn to the state for assistance and support. Yet as was the case with much of the Nazi political mandate, its encouragement and protection of small businesses was at best ambivalent. Measures taken to serve the concerns of the nation's shopkeepers were contradicted by the comparatively free hand given big business interests.⁵⁰ In April 1934, for instance, Michael Stahl, a resident of Munich and regular visitor to the *Oktoberfest*, wrote to the city council sharply condemning, "in a National Socialist sense", certain perceived unfair business practices encouraged by Munich's large breweries. Representing the interests of the "weaklings"--the booth operators and other small vendors at the *Oktoberfest*--Stahl claimed that although the leasing of vending space inside the large beer halls was prohibited, it was no secret that for years the proprietors had acted in defiance of the law, receiving "very high

⁴⁹It should be noted however that all festival businesses, big and small, objected to the wide discrepancy in, and in their view generally excessive rates of, entertainment taxes charged by individual municipalities. See BayHStA, MA 107117, Reichsminister der Finanzen, 14 Mar. 1934. In contrast, Nazi holiday festivals were exempt from local tax regulations. See *ibid.*, Reichsminister der Finanzen, 22 Dec. 1933, 13 Apr. 1934, 10 Apr. 1935.

⁵⁰For a brief discussion of the treatment of small business under Nazism, see Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 1: 300-308.

prices" for the illegal leases. This gave the few vendors wealthy enough to pay for one of the unauthorized leases a decided advantage over those outside. Accordingly, "in the interests of the cleansing of the economic life on the one hand and for social reasons on the other", Stahl called for the "thorough" elimination of sales of tobacco and foodstuffs by vendors within the beer halls.⁵¹

Citing the Nazi slogan "*Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz*" (common good takes precedence over self-interest), Stahl offered what he considered an equitable solution to the problem. He suggested that the proprietors continue to offer beer and victuals "as in a normal business". Authorization for the sale of all remaining things as well as allocation of vending booths would become the responsibility of the state alone. The implementation of such a system would, according to Stahl, contribute to the "practical realization" of the National Socialist commitment to serve the public interest.⁵²

Despite Stahl's plea on behalf of small business, the situation persisted. In the years to follow the *Landesverband Bayerischer Kolonialwaren- und Feinkostkaufleute* (Bavarian Association of Grocers and Delicatessen Owners) presented its concerns to city officials. In February 1936, Joseph Wagner, as spokesperson for Munich's large breweries, dismissed the association's claims as unjustified. Defending the status quo, Wagner insisted that the distribution of vending stalls throughout the beer halls was necessary to avoid massive congestion in

⁵¹StadtAM, Okt 240, Michael Stahl to the Munich city council, 27 Apr. 1934.

⁵²Ibid.

the immediate area around the kitchen. He also deflected the suggestion that the normal practice of closing the beer halls when full prevented or discouraged patrons from leaving the building to purchase foods from outside vendors, since they only had to inform the doorpersons of their intentions and were readmitted unhindered. Moreover, Wagner suggested patrons of outside vendors normally purchased their victuals before taking a seat in the beer halls. For all these practical reasons, especially the need for traffic control within the buildings, the breweries intended to allow the existing arrangement to persist.⁵³

Complaints over the creation of local monopolies serving the Oktoberfest also reached the city council of Munich. In March 1936 members of Munich's bakers' guild complained that a single bakery had been contracted to supply baked goods to all of the large beer tents and restaurants within the fair grounds. The guild recommended that 'suspect' business arrangements be banned. Responding to the guild's petition, Richard Wagner, proprietor of the Augustiner beer hall and spokesman for Munich's breweries and festival proprietors, strongly opposed the proposal. It was imperative that the proprietors retain their control over the provenance and sale of baked goods within the festival halls, he insisted. Both Weber and the city council supported the position of the owners. While the city council was unable to decide on suitable compensation for the bakers' guild, members did express concerns about the fair becoming one large enterprise entirely controlled by a few of Munich's giant businesses.⁵⁴ As the plight of

⁵³Ibid., Wagner to Fiehler, 18 Feb. 1936.

⁵⁴StadtAM, Okt 240, Schubert correspondence, 5 and 12 Mar. 1936.

Munich's bakers' guild demonstrates, the relationship between government and big business often rested on compromise, an uneasy alliance preserved largely at the expense of smaller business.

Medium-size businesses also found themselves forced into confrontation with and accommodation to the Nazi state. Of the myriad laws that the Nazis promulgated in the period immediately following Hitler's assumption of power, few had a more deleterious effect on small and medium-size business than the Law for the Protection of National Symbols. Designed to prevent the proliferation of Nazi paraphernalia in the form of tasteless "kitsch", the law, proclaimed on 19 May 1933, proved to be as confusing as it was pernicious.⁵⁵ The case involving Walter Diecks is especially illuminating in this regard. Diecks, a manufacturer and mail-order distributor of festival articles based in Munich, found himself the target of zealous police officials whose responsibility it was to uncover infractions of the law. In February 1936 police officials in Munich confiscated thousands of catalogues displaying the festival wares of Diecks's mail-order business. It was not so much the "national decorations" offered for sale, such as illuminated balloon lanterns, pennants and garlands featuring the swastika symbol, that the officials found offensive, as that they were featured in a catalogue whose inventory included carnival wares. Though seldom of a "tasteless character", the appearance of decorations designed for

⁵⁵RGBl I, 19 May 1933, 285, in HStAS, E 130, Bü 1950. Since the blanket law specified few actual images, songs, personages and the like as protected, state officials determined infractions and handed down decisions on a case by case basis. Little consensus seems to have existed, moreover, among the various levels of government over what constituted an infraction against the national law.

"national celebrations" in a catalogue of carnival wares, according to police officials, offended "the sense of dignity of national symbols". In appealing the decision to the Bavarian Economics Ministry, Diecks insisted that as a member of the required trade organization he assumed that he required no further permission to offer national decorations along with his other wares. He added that similar decorations could be obtained in any stationery shop. As a NSDAP member, moreover, he had supplied ample decorations to various Party functionaries as well as to SA and SS Storm battalions. In June the police action was upheld, but with a reimbursement for the confiscated material awarded to Diecks.⁵⁶

Evidently Diecks continued to conduct business within the letter of the law at least until 1938. In May of that year another local distributor of festival wares, Theodor Einzinger, a Party member since 1930 and also a member of the NSKK, wrote to police officials concerning the confiscation of his company's catalogues in February 1936. Referring to the summer festival edition of Diecks's latest catalogue, Einzinger noted that besides the summer festival decorations and the usual carnival articles, the catalogue contained a half page devoted to decorations for national celebrations. He asked the Munich police authorities whether the interpretation of the law had in the meantime changed and whether objections to such direct-order advertising still existed.⁵⁷ Einzinger's query prompted police officials to renew their investigation

⁵⁶StAM, PD-Munich 6962, "Vollzug des Gesetzes zum Schutz nationaler Symbole 1299: Buchstabe D. (Fa. Walter Diecks, München Faschingsdekorationen, Enthält: 4 Kataloge 1936-1939), PD-Munich, 20 Feb. 1936; and *ibid.*, PP to Gutachterstelle zum Schutze der nationalen Symbole, Munich-Upper Bavaria, Oct. 1938.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, Einzinger & Co. to PD-Munich, Dienststelle 512, 5 May 1938.

of Diecks's business practices, resulting in the confiscation of all remaining copies of the summer festival edition of the catalogue. Following Einziger's lead, Diecks maintained that the same price lists and national decorations were to be found in the catalogues of other distributors in Erfurt, Berlin and elsewhere.⁵⁸

In January 1939, the Advisory Authority for the Protection of National Symbols for Munich-Upper Bavaria stated that in its view the displaying of objects used for the celebration of Nazi events and ceremonies in advertising leaflets featuring other items, such as club and association paraphernalia or carnival items, was to stop "once and for all". Since the combination of such offerings contravened the Law for the Protection of National Symbols, Advisory Authority officials recommended that for "so-called national decorations" a separate price list be printed and distributed. Moreover the special catalogues were to be reviewed to ensure that items were displayed in a "dignified" form and contained no objects that might be construed as "national kitsch".⁵⁹

The following month the police officials in Munich handed down their decision. They upheld the original confiscation, adding that

⁵⁸In August Diecks informed authorities that he had had 94,150 copies of the catalogue printed, half of which had been forwarded to his customers. The section displaying the line of national decorations had been included as a supplement to the catalogue of carnival articles. He had, he emphasized, distributed the same catalogue for the previous two years with no recriminations on the part of state authorities. The following month he stressed that the summer festival items were not intended to demean the national decorations featured in the supplement to the catalogue. See *ibid.*, Diecks to PD-Munich, 29 Aug. 1938; Diecks to the PP-Munich, 13 Sept. 1938.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, Gutachterstelle zum Schutze der nationalen Symbole for Munich-Upper Bavaria to the PP-Munich, 31 Jan. 1939.

Diecks would receive no compensation for the seized material.⁶⁰ In late March, the Munich police authorities brought the case to the attention of the Reich Propaganda Ministry in Berlin.⁶¹ From there the Reich Examination Board for the Protection of National Symbols determined, without explicit explanation, that a pin of a silver eagle with swastika flags offered for sale in two sizes in Diecks's catalogue fell under the category of kitsch. Consequently, the Board ordered the police authorities in Munich to confiscate the pieces still in Diecks's possession.⁶² In addition district authorities in Chemnitz were ordered to seize the same objects from their manufacturer in Buchholz. In total, police officials in Buchholz seized 158 of the silver eagles for which, according to the Herold stationery wares factory that had been producing them for five years, there had never been a great demand. Police authorities also imposed a ban on future production of the item.⁶³

While the Diecks case suggests that state and business interests occasionally collided, their cooperation was also a constant feature of the festival economy. Such collaboration manifested itself most clearly in the wine industry. In 1935 the Reich Food Estate and the DAF saw fit

⁶⁰In accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Authority, police authorities decided that "national decorations" were only to be offered for sale in the form of "special price-lists" and were to be presented in a "dignified" manner. See *ibid.*, PP-Munich, 18 Feb. 1939.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, PP-Munich to the RMfVP, 20 Mar. 1939.

⁶²*Ibid.*, Reichsleitung- Prüfungstelle zum Schutz der nationalen Symbole to the PP-Munich, 29 Mar. 1939. Of the 30 units ordered by Diecks only two had been sold. The remaining 28 were seized by the authorities with two, one of each size, forwarded to the public relations office for potential further action. See *ibid.*, Polizei Hauptwach-Munich to RP-Chemnitz, 14 Apr. 1939.

⁶³*Ibid.* RP-Chemnitz to the Bürgermeister in Buchholz, 30 June 1939.

to promote a wine publicity campaign to be held during the week of 19-26 October. A central feature of the promotion was the celebration of a 'Festival of German Grapes and Wine'.⁸⁴ Perhaps out of consideration for the weather the festival was repeated the following year a month earlier, 19-27 September, to assist the wine growers who were suffering severely under the burden of the economic crisis. An official publication of the Reich Food Estate stressed the social, political and economic importance of the festival publicity campaign.⁸⁵ In the Bavarian district of Rosenheim, as in many other areas, from the *Kreisleitung* downward, the organization of the festival engaged the coordinated efforts of all local Party and state leaders, including the Reich Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, RMfVP and KdF officials, District Farm Leaders and all area burgomasters. Business association leaders, representing the restaurant and grocery industries, as well as the Advertising Council of the German Economy, were also brought into the fold to ensure the success of the festival. Emphasizing the purely economic character of the festival, the NSDAP district office in Rosenheim stated that the Nazi movement had initiated the celebration for the purpose of boosting sales of German wine and grapes for the benefit of the domestic wine industry. Anticipating a potential

⁸⁴See the poster 3/23/10 in BA-Bildarchiv. As a promotion for the festival the poster featured a charcoal drawing of a wine filled goblet and a pair of hands breaking a small loaf of bread. The poster carried the caption: "Wine is the drink of the people". That wine was to be regarded as essential to the national diet as bread was the obvious message of the advertisement. Yet, while the imagery evoked the fruits of harvest, obvious, too, was the exploitation of religious imagery.

⁸⁵*Richtlinien für das "Fest der deutschen Traube und des Weines 1936" 19-27 September 1936*, hrsg. Reichsnährstand (Berlin, 1936).

conflict with the temperance campaign also encouraged by the Party, NSDAP officials declared its position was not one of promoting an increase in alcohol consumption; rather, it reflected the fact that wine was "a drink of the people (*Volksgetränk*)" and "should become the common good of all *Volksgenossen*".⁶⁶

Whether the wine festivals succeeded in stimulating domestic wine consumption is difficult to say. If the experience at the *Oktoberfest* is any indication, there was a significant increase in the consumption of wine products after 1935, especially of sparkling wine. During the four year period from 1935 to 1938, the number of bottles of sparkling wine consumed at the fair rose from 162 to 279, an increase of 72 percent (see Table 1).⁶⁷ At the same time the number of bottles of regular wine served rose by more than 37 percent and the number of glasses of wine (.25 litre) increased by almost 22 percent. While it would be inappropriate to suggest that either wine or folk festivals directly contributed to establishing wine as the "drink of the people", it is fair to say that during the festivals themselves, greater numbers of patrons were drinking more wine.⁶⁸

The above examples suggest that Nazi support of the festival

⁶⁶Ibid.; StAM, NSDAP 533, KL Rosenheim, RS 93/36, 1 Aug. 1936.

⁶⁷Richard Grunberger suggested that the five-fold increase in the national level of champagne consumption up to 1939 clearly signalled an expansion of social affluence. See *Social History*, 30.

⁶⁸Between 1932 and 1938 wine consumption increased by 53 percent on a national basis. Such a substantial increase suggests that state support for the wine industry, of which the wine festivals publicity campaign represented only the most visible component, met with considerable success. See Maxine Y. Woolston, *The Structure of the Nazi Economy* (Cambridge, 1941; reprint, New York, 1968), 221-2; Grunberger, *Social History*, 30, 208.

industry was by no means uniform. The impressive improvement in the economic fortunes of the wine industry and the continued monopoly of Munich's large breweries contrasted sharply with the bureaucratic entanglements suffered by independent businessmen like Walter Diecks or the itinerant vendors plying their wares at the *Oktoberfest* and other folk festivals. Additionally, as the concerns of the local political officials in Memmingen reveal, the interests of big business prevailed in Nazi Germany. What seems most evident, however, is that where the Nazis could gain the greatest political capital from the promotion and support of business interests, as with the wine industry or the internationally renowned *Oktoberfest*, support and publicity were readily forthcoming. In contrast, in instances where business interests clashed with political or ideological aims, as in the Diecks affair, state regulations imposed a financial burden. Evidently the 'primacy of politics' informed the festival industry as it did the German economy as a whole.

FESTIVALS, CONSUMERS AND THE 'COORDINATION' OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Although economic amelioration was of primary importance, public accessibility remained for the Nazis the basis for their encouragement and support of folk festivals. As a means to enhance the legitimacy of the Nazi state, folk festivals and other popular cultural events were to be made available to all Germans. This was especially the case with KdF-sponsored folk festivals.⁸⁸ To encourage a more congenial work environment the Nazi state encouraged employers to subsidize local

⁸⁸KdF festival organizers were to ensure that amusement facilities, the wares offered by vendors, as well as a fair pricing system corresponded to the ideological aims of the Nazi leisure organization. See *Nationaler Feiertag*, 103-6.

festivals and celebrations for their workers and families.⁷⁰ While the highly subsidized festival excursions and events organized by the DAF and KdF, normally in conjunction with local leaders of business and industry, were often welcomed by the working community, occasionally they could have an effect opposite to that intended. According to a secret *Sopade* report of September 1935, many factories in the Bayerischer Wald region had assumed the costs of rail fare to the *Oktoberfest* for their workers. Among these was a glass factory in Theresiental. Already suffering from low morale, the workers found renewed cause for criticism when the factory owner shouldered the costs to send 143 SA men by rail to the annual fair. Not only did the employer's action create "bad blood" among those not in the SA, but it also had the effect of maintaining "an artificial cleft among the workers", the report added.⁷¹ Such discontent was in no way restricted to workers. In the summer of 1937, for example, Bavarians complained of the 'business enterprise' character of a folk festival with amusement park held in Munich's Englischer Garten and Exhibition Park on the final evening of the Nazi art festival "2000 Years of German Culture". As a *Sopade* reporter wrote: "Pay, pay, pay, that was the motto of the evening."⁷²

NSDAP leaders never lost an opportunity to make political capital out of the massive Nazi job-creation programs such as the

⁷⁰See for example, *DBS*, 1: 230, report from Magdeburg on factory comradeship evenings, 21 July 1934; *DBS*, 4: 805-18, report on factory events, 8 July 1937.

⁷¹*DBS*, 2: 1077, 16 Oct. 1935.

⁷²*DBS*, 4: 1077, 18 Sept. 1937.

construction associated with the Party grounds in Nuremberg or the Königsplatz in Munich, the focal point of the 'consecrated' public space for the 9 November celebration.⁷³ Certainly the assignment of thousands of workers to the ongoing building project in Nuremberg contributed to the alleviation of the unemployment crisis.⁷⁴ Yet support for building projects devoted to the monumental expression of Nazi megalomania was evidently dwindling as least as early as 1935.⁷⁵ As consumers desirous of an improvement in the standard of living, Germans disparaged state celebrations primarily on economic grounds. Numerous *Sopade* reports reflected the widespread criticism among ordinary Germans over what they perceived to be the massive and in their view unwarranted expenditures lavished on spectacular Nazi celebrations.⁷⁶ Further resentment arose among ordinary Germans prevailed upon to contribute to the seemingly endless collections for Nazi projects, including festival related enterprises. The coercive nature of the Nazi collections recommended them to

⁷³DBS, 1: 296, 30 Aug. 1934.

⁷⁴Burden, *Party Rallies*, 57.

⁷⁵DBS, 2: 898, 21 Sept. 1935, report from Bavaria. Popular criticism became more pronounced with the escalation of Hitler's building project for the Party grounds in Nuremberg. A report from Bavaria in 1938, for example, estimated the cost of the granite street joining the Luitpold arena with the Märzfeld at RM 10 million. Such extravagance led Bavarians to question Hitler's sanity, comparing his building mania with that of Ludwig I. See DBS, 5: 1323-24, 12 Jan. 1939.

⁷⁶Certainly their criticisms were not unfounded. While it is impossible to calculate the overall costs of staging the national celebrations, since evidence is lacking, Hamilton T. Burden, basing his estimate on the calculations of the German economist, Henry Heuser, suggested that the Party spent approximately 20 million dollars on each of the Nuremberg rallies. See Burden, *Party Rallies*, 119-20.

the population even less.⁷⁷ Even the scarcity of basic foodstuffs was attributed to the excessive procurement for Nazi festivals. In 1936, for example, Berliners blamed an egg shortage among the general populace on the Olympic Games.⁷⁸

The impressive reduction of unemployment achieved under Nazism was offset by the comparatively low wages paid to workers. In Munich, for instance, the proprietors of the many restaurants and pubs in the city complained about reduced consumption of food and drink at carnival celebrations staged by veterans' and other associations.⁷⁹ Yet, if the *Oktoberfest* is any indication, the level of consumption of food and drink increased significantly during the peacetime years of the Third Reich. Total beer consumption increased 69.3 percent between 1933 and 1938, with the sales in the latter year almost equalling those of 1929, the highest level reached in the Weimar era (see table 2). Similar and

⁷⁷DBS, 1: 532-33, 6 Nov. 1934, reports from Hamburg and Saxony on collection initiatives of NSDAP and ancillary organizations to assist the sending of local Nazis to the 1934 Party rally; DBS, 2: 861, 3 Aug. 1935, report from Saxony on public indignation over coercive tactics applied by Party members for Hitler Birthday Fund, the 800th anniversary celebration for the city of Zwickau, and the Berlin Olympics; *ibid.*, 1439, 14 Jan. 1936, report from Baden regarding the demands on civil servants to allocate a percentage of their monthly salary to help finance the Party rally under threat of expulsion from the *Volksgemeinschaft*; DBS, 3: 163-64, 9 Mar. 1936, report claiming that the majority of the population and especially the workers were complaining of the high costs of staging the Winter Olympics; *ibid.*, 1109-10, 6 Oct. 1936, report on Party rally; DBS, 4: 1591-92, 15 Dec. 1937, reports from western Germany and Saxony on complaints from both the general population and NSDAP members over forced sales of Party badges and posters to finance Party rally; *ibid.*, 1668-69, 18 Jan. 1938, report from southwest Germany noting complaints over costs of Party rally and the "elegant luxury automobiles" in service during the Berlin Olympics.

⁷⁸DBS, 3: 691, 4 July 1936.

⁷⁹DBS, 4: 23, 15 Feb. 1937.

even more dramatic increases were recorded for the consumption of coffee, wine, sparkling wine and liqueur (see table 1). And hungry visitors to the fair of 1938 nearly doubled their intake of sausages from the lean depression year of 1932, ate nearly 400 percent more chickens and consumed almost three times as many oxen (see table 3). Whether the dissipation of tensions following the Munich Agreement at the end of September introduced an attitude of *non semper erunt Saturnalia* to the *Oktoberfest* of 1938, it is clear that the autumn festival provided a congenial environment for rites of conspicuous consumption.

While the Nazi regime managed to 'coordinate' the majority of voluntary associations,⁸⁰ the same community groups that had facilitated the movement's rise to power and the subsequent extension of its control, consumer associations did manage to voice their objections to what they perceived to be dishonest business practices. Although rather trivial, the demands of consumers for a full mug of beer at the *Oktoberfest* demonstrate their determined efforts to establish their rights in the market place. By 1935 state and police officials had extended by one hour, to 11:30 P.M., the operating hours of the fair, presumably for economic reasons. The authorities also allowed the sale of drink until 10:30 P.M., an extra half an hour beyond the limit of 1933.⁸¹ While festival visitors may have been able to stay longer and the beer hall

⁸⁰The importance of voluntary associations in the rise of the Nazi movement is the central focus of Koshar, *Social Life*, 179-271.

⁸¹StAM, PD-Munich 6923, Bekanntmachung über das Oktoberfest 1933; and StAM, PD-Munich 8254, Bekanntmachung über das Oktoberfest 1935, Oelhafen and Schubert, 6 Sept. 1935.

patrons allowed to drink more, the perennial complaint over the underfilled mugs of beer persisted after 1933.

In 1934 fairground inspectors acting on several such complaints determined that "a whole series of pourers" in almost all operations were guilty of underfilling beer mugs. Stern verbal warnings sufficed to rectify the situation in most of the cases.⁸² Following the inspectors' lead, the city council declared that before the commencement of the following year's fair, all festival publicans would be advised in writing of their obligations to the public.⁸³ On this issue at least festival officials appeared to be on the side of the consumer. Evidently, though, their vigilance was more apparent than real, as objections to the poor quality of service persisted.

A 1936 brochure of the *Verband zur Bekämpfung betrügerischen Einschenkens* (Association for the Struggle Against the Deceitful Pouring of Beer) estimated that the money which disappeared into the pockets of publicans and bartenders from the underfilling of beer mugs was enough to build around 145,000 houses for German workers, representing an appreciable drain on the national wealth. Association secretary Hans Meiler vowed that the organization, although "hated" by publicans,

⁸²In one operation, the Winzerer Fährndl, however, an inspector saw fit to order the immediate termination of employment for two servers. He later revoked the order as both were victims of long-term unemployment with large numbers of children dependents. A few other proprietors received written warnings for the same infraction by their employees. The inspectors suggested that the further introduction of glass mugs would end the abuse. They remarked favourably that one operation, the Augustiner beer hall, had turned to glass mugs exclusively while another proprietor stated his intention to use even more of the glass mugs the following year. See StadtAM, Okt 240, Bezirksinspektionen to Referat 8-Munich, 10 Oct. 1934.

⁸³Ibid., Munich city council memo, 17 Oct. 1934.

"mocked at" by the public and ignored or "caricatured" by the press, would pursue its goal--"the restoration of honesty and good faith in the bar trade".⁸⁴ However accurate Meiler might have been in his estimation of revenue generated from the underfilling of beer mugs, the persistent vigilance of his association in the Nazi era demonstrates that ordinary Germans continued to exercise some control over their rights as consumers in a political culture increasingly intolerant of the rights of the individual. Still, as the conditions during the annual *Oktoberfest* suggest, it is also clear that consumers as well as administrators continued to be frustrated in their efforts to impose consistency and quality of service on the restaurant and bar industry.

Besides the controversy over hiring practices, the issue of tent rentals for festival events illustrates the position of the state as broker between the business community and voluntary associations. In May 1933, a local shooting society complained to authorities in the Rhineland district of Düren that it would have to cancel its annual festival because it had been denied permission to erect a beer tent on the site. Beleaguered area restaurant and pub owners countered that the festival beer tent would draw away the already limited number of patrons still frequenting their establishments. Seeking a compromise between

⁸⁴See Barbara Krafft, "Der Kampf um die volle Mass," in *Das Oktoberfest*, 308. Acknowledgement that the authorities were in no position to act upon routine consumer complaints and establish some measure of control over the beer service industry was the impetus behind the founding of the 'Association for the Struggle against the Deceitful Pouring of Beer' in 1899 in Munich. The Association introduced its statute in 1904, with the expressed purpose "to check the, at present, prevailing excess of bad beer pouring practice--whether it be intentional or careless, or excusable for some reason at the time". Quoted in *ibid.*, 307.

the two interest groups, Düren officials agreed conditionally to uphold existing regulations revised in 1932, the basis of the initial ban, and at the same time introduced a new regulation permitting festival operators to lease dance tents provided that no suitable hall in the vicinity of the festival space was available and that local publicans be given the license to serve the festival public.⁸⁵ The following month the office of the state president in Aachen endorsed the local decision, adding that regulations carried over from the dismal Weimar period represented no rigid ban and that exceptions might be allowed provided that the festival itself was to be of a "folkloristic or traditional character" and that a "considerable rush" of people could be expected to attend the event.⁸⁶

While the new more liberal regulations were no doubt welcomed by restaurant and pub owners, and less so by the shooting societies, they caused further problems for state officials. In April of 1935 local members of the restaurant industry in Düren approached the regional administration requesting changes in the licensing for dance tents at shooting and other types of folk festivals. Rather than assigning the sale of alcoholic beverages to the highest bidder, they recommended that a set "fair" price be determined by the festival promoter and approved by local police authorities with the contract disposed of by lots among the interested local restaurant and tavern owners. A local government official endorsed the proposal to the mayor on the premise that festival events were held for the community weal and "the well-being of all

⁸⁵HStAD, Regierung Aachen 22756, Landrat, Düren, 27 May 1933.

⁸⁶Ibid., RP-Aachen to Landrat in Düren, 1 June 1933.

Volksgenossen". The promoter was also prevailed upon to maintain the lowest possible prices in order to insure that the festival be accessible to the entire public.⁹⁷

Ultimately the revised regulations favoured the publicans and restaurant owners, since shooting and other festival societies of thirty members or less were not allowed to erect a temporary dance tent.⁹⁸ Whether intended or not the new policies presumably affected the autonomy of such associations since they no doubt derived a substantial portion of their financial support from revenue earned during festival events. By depriving shooting societies and other voluntary associations of primary sources of income, and by giving or withholding state support, the regulation of the festival industry provided the Nazis with an effective economic and political means of 'coordination'.

* * *

⁹⁷The official advised that dance tents be permitted only where it was expected that existing festival buildings would be incapable of accommodating larger than normal crowds, as on opening day of shooting festivals when large numbers of shooting society members gathered following the traditional parade. The official also recommended that permission to erect a tent only be made provided that the promoter agree to rent one from a local business. Tents from outside the region would be allowed only in the event that they were unavailable locally. Similarly, wages and earnings from the event were to go "in the first place" to area artisans and rate-payers. Finally, local restaurant and tavern owners rather than operators were to be favoured in the lottery for the alcohol sales licence since they were in greater need of relief due to higher taxes and related costs. See HStAD, Regierung Aachen 22756, Schulte, Regierungsassessor, to the Amtsbürgermeister-Düren, 8 Apr. 1935.

⁹⁸Ibid., RP-Aachen to the Landrat in Düren, 1 June 1933. According to a state council it had become the usual practice of these men's associations to lease and operate dance tents for festivals in order to supply themselves with assorted alcoholic beverages for the entire year. State authorities intended that the new policy contained in the regulations formalized on 16 May 1935 would prevent such occurrences in the future. See *ibid.*, Landrat Schleiden to the RP-Aachen, 29 Sept. 1935.

As a subtext to the festival experience in the popular culture of the Third Reich, the 'business' of festivity was undoubtedly less instrumental than ideological affinity in promoting the need and shaping the character of the festival in Nazi Germany. Still, for government, business, and workers the festival provided a comparatively stable and convenient source of revenue and income. In a sense, especially in the early years of the Third Reich, when the economic situation was most severe and the demands on the relatively weak Nazi government to alleviate the crisis most acute, the festival served as both 'bread and circuses', providing business opportunities, wages and entertainment for ordinary Germans, as well as political capital for the Nazi state.

The commodification of the festival in the Third Reich was by no means solely a result of Nazi economic policies. Rather, it was part and parcel of the more general trend of the modernizing process and the gradual emergence of a consumer based economy in the twentieth century. At best, the support, both financial and ideological, given festivals in Nazi Germany by the state, promoted the development of a mass consumer culture, at least up to the outbreak of war in September 1939. As the German economy was increasingly geared towards armament and industrial production at the expense of consumer goods, especially after 1936, the festival event functioned as an attractive venue designed to satisfy demands of a nascent consumer society for rites of conspicuous consumption. Since the festival, moreover, is usually a repeated and always temporary event, its commodities in the main perishable, and its impact ephemeral, as a 'consumer good' it is especially suited to the disposable character of the modern consumer culture. As no appreciable

accumulation of material goods save for a few souvenirs and mementos derives from the festival event, the festival provided the Nazis with an ideal means to satisfy the needs of German consumers at regular intervals and, so long as the successful packaging of entertainment retained its popular appeal, to continue to do so indefinitely.

In the midst of the unemployment crisis in August of 1933, representatives of the VDKuF appealed to Schmitt, Goebbels and Goering to rescind the ban imposed on carnival events by the individual *Länder*. Imploring the Reich government to end the air of uncertainty pervading the ailing industry, the VDKuF stated:

The German carnival is a folk festival that for centuries has been frequented by young and old and through whose celebration hundreds of thousands live. It is necessary that this thoroughly German folk festival also be preserved for the future, for the joy of the German folk and the prosperity of the German economy. Space does not permit the listing of all economic circles having an interest in the celebration of carnival, through which in turn are created sufficient opportunities for employment.⁸⁸

The statement of the VDKuF makes clear the relative positions of the interrelated interests of business, state and consumer vis-à-vis the modern festival. As a commodity the festival served the economic interests of business and by extension the political aims of the Nazi state. Its viability however was in the end determined by the demands of ordinary German consumers for diversion, amusement and the opportunity for sociability. Yet while the economic aspect of the festival was important for the stabilization of the various forces in the modern consumer society emerging in the Third Reich, the varying

⁸⁸StAdt, L80IE, Gruppe IV, Titel 3, no. 4/534, VDKuF to RWM, 4 Aug. 1933.

terrain of collaboration and conflict charted above again demonstrates the ambivalent nature of public celebration obtaining in Nazi Germany. Despite the concerted efforts of the Nazis to organize the entire festival culture according to their ideological norms and objectives, ordinary Germans retained a measure of autonomy in pursuing their individual needs. While most Germans evidently found at least some appeal in the festival goods on offer in the Third Reich, the following chapter will demonstrate that others, their numbers impossible to determine, found in the festival a cultural instrument for public protest.

CHAPTER 5

DRAWING BOUNDARIES: FESTIVALS AND PUBLIC DISSENT

Customs and rites are common features of the morphology of festivals. As such they lend the festival experience a distinctive familiarity and thus predictability. While familiarity is certainly one of the more appealing aspects of festivity for celebrants it also presents the potential assassin with an ideal milieu in which to carry out his or her plans. Not surprisingly, festive events frequently gave rise to rumours of assassination plots involving Hitler and other Nazi leaders.¹ Though the high level of security at public celebrations attended by Hitler and other Nazi leaders presumably discouraged acts of resistance, as the attempt on the Führer on 8 November 1939 illustrates, festive events featured prominently in plans to bring down the Nazi dictatorship.

In 1938, Georg Elser, having decided that the Nazis were drawing Germany into another war, visited the Bürgerbräukeller during the 9 November celebrations in Munich to familiarize himself with the beer hall where Hitler spoke annually to the faithful to commemorate the

¹A rumour claiming that the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess had been killed during the 1934 Nuremberg Party rally made the rounds in Munich. See BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 5 Oct. 1934. A few months later rumours persisted in Munich involving an alleged shooting attempt on Hitler's life in late morning of 9 November in the vestibule of the hotel 'Vier Jahreszeiten'. According to the rumour the police had cordoned off the building and directed a thorough but unsuccessful investigation. See DBS, 1: 731, 10 Jan. 1935. Another rumour stemming from the same Nazi celebration also had Hitler surviving a failed assassination attempt on his way to the event. See chap. 2, 100-1.

anniversary of the unsuccessful putsch in 1923. Having acquainted himself with the lay-out, and being more determined than ever to eliminate Hitler, the skilled worker and former communist supporter returned a year later to install a home-made bomb in one of the beer hall's pillars. He finished the installation on the night of 5-6 November. Although Hitler had initially cancelled his plans to attend, in the end he did appear at the celebration set for the evening of 8 November. Perhaps sensing the danger in the predictability of tradition, however, he spoke earlier than usual and with uncharacteristic brevity, changes that expedited his departure only minutes before the bomb detonated, killing eight and wounding sixty-three others.² With the exception of the 20 July 1944 plot of the national-conservative opposition, Elser's attempt came as close as any to eliminating the Nazi leader, clearly demonstrating the potential of the festival space for assassination purposes. At the same time, the fact that Elser acted alone and with little consideration of political repercussions reveals the fundamental isolation and lack of organization characterizing much of the opposition in the Third Reich.

The extent and nature of domestic resistance in Nazi Germany have been much debated since the collapse of the regime in 1945. The

²Although there remains some controversy as to the actual circumstances surrounding the assassination attempt of 8 November 1939 there is little reason to doubt that Elser acted alone and that the war was incidental to his plans worked out during the 9 November celebrations of the previous year. See Michael Balfour, *Withstanding Hitler in Germany 1933-45* (London and New York, 1988), 122-24. At the same time that Elser paid his initial visit to the beer hall in 1938, a Swiss Catholic student, Maurice Bavaud, failed in his bid to shoot Hitler during the commemorative parade of 9 November. See Peter Hoffmann, *German Resistance to Hitler* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1988), 106-7.

very definition of the term resistance itself poses difficulties.³

Consonant with more recent scholarship on the subject, for the purposes of this study "resistance" will be taken in its broadest sense, reflecting the variegated nature of nonconformity, refusal, protest and resistance displayed by different segments of German society against the often brutal Nazi attempts to establish their modern form of total control over all aspects of public life.⁴

While Elser's failed assassination attempt was exceptional in that it represented one of few real acts of resistance carried out in

³The literature on the German resistance is vast. For a recent survey of the literature, see Leonidas E. Hill, "Towards a New History of German Resistance to Hitler" *CEH* 14 (1981): 369-99. Earlier studies tended to focus on the resistance activities of the national-conservative opposition. Typical of this narrow perspective is Peter Hoffmann's assertion that "the real hallmark of resistance" was "the attempt at a coup d' état". See *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945*, revised ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1979), x. More recently, Martin Broszat and other historians focusing on social conditions in the Third Reich have delineated a considerably broader range of oppositional behaviour involving a wider segment of the German population. See *inter alia* the various contributions in "Resistance against the Third Reich," *JMH* 64, supplement (December 1992); *Germans Against Nazism: Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich: Essays in Honour of Peter Hoffmann*, eds. Francis R. Nicosia and Lawrence D. Stokes (New York and Oxford, 1990); *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich*, ed. David Clay Large (Washington, D.C. and Cambridge, 1991); and the relevant sections in Broszat et al., *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, 6 vols. As Broszat wrote: "A revised definition of resistance that includes the less heroic cases of partial, passive, ambivalent, and broken opposition--one that accounts for the fragility of resistance and the inconsistency of human bravery--may in the end inspire a greater intellectual and moral sensitivity toward the subject than a definition that includes only the exceptional greatness of heroic martyrdom." See "A Social and Historical Typology of the German Opposition to Hitler," in *Contending with Hitler*, ed. Large, 25.

⁴This sliding-scale definition of dissident activity based on the relative degree to which such behaviour was public and to what extent it posed a threat to the Nazi dictatorship was suggested by Detlev Peukert, "Working-Class Resistance: Problems and Options," in *Contending with Hitler*, ed., Large, 36-37.

connection with festivities or ceremonies, other individuals and isolated groups, whether pursuing alternative modernist agendas or attempting to preserve traditional sociocultural values, seized the opportunity provided by the overtly symbolic form of the festival to express a broad spectrum of dissent. Public and private forms of celebration and ceremony provided workers and agents of the political left with a vehicle to oppose the Nazi regime through both violent and non-violent acts of solidarity. In the interests of institutional preservation, the clergy neglected to ring church bells or adorn their churches with the national flag in commemoration of national celebrations, a direct contravention of state decrees. Frustrated by the anticlericalism of Nazi activists, Catholics and to a lesser extent Protestants on occasion transformed religious pilgrimages and processions into political demonstrations. Townspeople, villagers and rural Germans, meanwhile, exploited festivity to confront local authorities with acts of civil disobedience. Taken together, such actions, whether deliberate or spontaneous, allowed many Germans to resist the attempt by the Nazis to make the festival sphere the exclusive dominion of Party and state. Yet, as the following discussion will make clear, the wide range of dissident activity was carried out by Germans who, in the main, either accepted or supported the Nazi state and many of its policies. Thus, the festival served individuals as a public site for opposition not to the National Socialist state as a whole, but to particular Nazi policies that in some way adversely affected their lives. As such, the dissident forms of behaviour described below fall into the sizable grey area between collaboration and resistance. It should also be noted that

while specific Nazi policies periodically incited nonconformist and dissident behaviour before 1939,⁶ in general opposition declined, especially after 1935-6,⁸ as economic conditions improved, Hitler's popularity increased, and the repressive police state apparatus expanded.⁷ Nonetheless, even if the festive protestations by the various social groups considered here failed as a direct challenge to the Nazi regime, they did serve as notification to the Nazis of the limits to which ordinary Germans, collectively or individually, were prepared to tolerate the revaluation of public life in accordance with the political and ideological norms and aims of the 'brown revolution'.

Despite the enormous efforts of the Nazis to integrate all Germans into the desired militarized 'national community', it is clear

⁶The outbreak of war altered the stakes of resistance dramatically since any opposition to the regime constituted a potential act of treason. For this reason resistance activity associated with the festival event is limited to the years 1933-1939. Elser's assassination attempt on Hitler is included in this study as the war was incidental to the formulation and preparation of the assassination plans.

⁸On the transition of resistance activity in response to the increasing consolidation of the Nazi regime, especially among workers and the political left, see Broszat, "Sociohistorical Typology," in *Contending with Hitler*, ed. Large, 26-29. Also see Peukert, "Working-Class Resistance," 35-45, in the same volume.

⁷For an analysis of the surveillance network established by the Gestapo with the complicity of the German people which made any form of open resistance a risky activity, see Robert Gellately, "Surveillance and Disobedience: Aspects of the Political Policing of Nazi Germany," in *Germans Against Nazism*, eds. Nicosia and Stokes, 15-31. That the carefully constructed image of the Führer, rather than the Party or its ideology, was the main attraction of the Nazi movement is the central argument of Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*. Accordingly, Sebastian Haffner has suggested that at the height of his popularity Hitler enjoyed the support of nine-tenths of the German population. See Sebastian Haffner, *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (Munich, 1978), 46. Although this claim may be exaggerated, there is no doubt that domestically Hitler was for a time one of the most popular of political figures in the twentieth century.

that a significant level of ambivalence continued to characterize popular attitudes toward Nazi festivity before 1939. Yet, while selective participation and apathy constituted the most extensive modes of festive nonconformist behaviour, there is substantive evidence to suggest that for a variety of reasons many Germans engaged in more than passive dissent from the regime through public celebration. For a small, indeterminate minority of Germans the festival provided a public forum for both violent and non-violent modes of nonconformity, refusal, protest, and, albeit far less frequently, active and open resistance to the arbitrary power wielded by the Nazis.

Dissent, often expressed in private circles, gained added risk when articulated openly in the festival setting. Such nonconformist and dissident behaviour involved symbolic as well as violent and non-violent confrontation. As with other forms of opposition, open confrontation cut across social groups, although workers and political agents of the left, church officials and their congregations, and townspeople and rural Germans were most active.⁹ Of these various forms of public

⁹German youth, as a distinct social group, constituted an additional source of opposition to the totalitarian drive of the Nazis, particularly through the HJ and BDM. Although not included in this study as such, it should be noted that young Germans were dispersed throughout the social groups treated here. Moreover, in their opposition to Nazi attempts to establish control over a nascent leisure culture in a modern mass consumer society, a segment of German youth formed youth gangs or attended outlawed jazz and swing clubs, cultural activities that signalled the continuation of the modern trend toward privatized forms of celebration already emerging in the Weimar era. For a survey of dissident youth culture in the Third Reich, see Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven and London, 1982), chap. 8. See also Matthias von Hellfeld, *Edelweißpiraten in Köln: Jugendrebellion gegen des 3. Reich. Das Beispiel Köln-Ehrenfeld* (Cologne, 1981); Daniel Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait," *Journal of Social History* 7 (1973): 26-50.

protest, violent opposition was the least common, potentially the most dangerous, yet evidently not the most effective, as the political left quickly found out in the months and years following the Nazi 'seizure of power'.

FESTIVITY AND WORKING-CLASS DISSENT

The earliest days of the Third Reich witnessed open confrontations between National Socialists and their political opponents as socialist and communist groups trespassed on SA and SS parades celebrating the 'Nazi revolution'. The political left paid dearly for this conventional form of opposition, with arrests, injuries and occasionally death the end result of their violent protest. Altercations between Nazis and communists were reported in Berlin, Hamburg, Essen, Lübeck, Hannover, and elsewhere as early as the day following Hitler's call to the chancellorship.⁹ In Wanne-Sidel four communists and one young woman were hospitalized following a violent confrontation with the police after they had purportedly shot at a Nazi torchlight parade. Similar occurrences involving communist shootings at Nazi torchlight parades were reported in Harburg-Wilhelmsburg and Pforzheim. All incidents involved serious injuries on both sides.¹⁰ In Breslau, meanwhile, a Nazi attack on a communist demonstration resulted in the stabbing of two Nazis and the death of one communist.¹¹

On 1 February, the police president in Berlin banned the KPD and

⁹MNN, 31, 1 Feb. 1933; NYT, 1 Feb. 1933.

¹⁰MNN, 32, 2 Feb. 1933.

¹¹NYT, 1 Feb. 1933.

its ancillary organizations from holding public rallies or parades. Fearing the threat of a general strike, the Berlin police president in announcing the ban referred specifically to the KPD organized "anti-fascist" mass rally slated for 3 February in the Lustgarten.¹² The ban effectively reduced the potential, at least from the political left, for organized public resistance to the newly-appointed chancellor. With the general attack on the KPD and SPD and their paramilitary organizations successfully completed by the summer of 1933, open and violent confrontations between celebrating Nazis and their opponents became isolated occurrences carried out by fragmented underground networks easily contained by Nazi thugs and the police. This insured that no threat to public security would arise from the Nazis' chief political enemies, especially after 1935-6 when organized resistance from the left all but ceased.¹³ Though limited in the main to workers and the young, who comprised the bulk of the socialist and communist undergrounds, violent outbursts of a dissident nature remained a sporadic feature of the festive landscape in the Third Reich.

The ineffectiveness of violent resistance notwithstanding, in

¹²MNN, 31, 1 Feb. 1933.

¹³On the ineffectiveness of resistance on the part of the political left, despite the continued existence of both SPD and KPD undergrounds during the third Reich, see William S. Allen, "Die sozialdemokratische Untergrundbewegung: Zur Kontinuität der subkulturellen Werte," in *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft und der Widerstand gegen Hitler*, eds. Jürgen Schmädeke and Peter Steinbach (Munich and Zurich, 1985), 849-66, and "Social Democratic Resistance Against Hitler and the European Tradition of Underground Movements," in *Germans Against Nazism*, eds. Nicosia and Stokes, 191-204; Horst Duhnke, *Die KPD von 1933 bis 1945* (Cologne, 1972); Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Die KPD im Widerstand: Verfolgung und Untergrundarbeit an Rhein und Ruhr, 1933 bis 1945* (Wuppertal, 1980); Allan Merson, *Communist Resistance in Nazi Germany* (London 1985).

the early years of the Third Reich when optimism among political opponents of Nazism was more prevalent, social democrats and communists employed a variety of means to remind workers of the Marxist tradition associated with 1 May.¹⁴ Among these were conventional tactics like the writing of Marxist and anti-Nazi graffiti, putting up anti-Nazi posters and distributing political pamphlets. In the Würzburg area, for example, local communists were suspected of painting inflammatory graffiti on highways and distributing propaganda leaflets on 1 May 1933.¹⁵ Subversive communist activity was particularly vigorous in Berlin with numerous pamphlets and posters distributed across the city and in factories decrying the Nazi demagoguery surrounding 1 May and calling on all workers to celebrate the holiday for themselves.¹⁶ In Hannover, meanwhile, Stapo authorities admitted their limited success in infiltrating the local SPD underground whose resistance activities included the widespread distribution of socialist pamphlets on 1 May.¹⁷ Resistance activity was not limited to the traditional labour holiday, however. In Munich suspected communists distributed propaganda leaflets

¹⁴Passive resistance continued to form part of the festival culture of dissent. Former communists and socialists often absented themselves from May Day obligations by booking off sick in the days prior to the Nazi celebration. See BA, R 58/1575/311, LBStapo-Erfurt, 6 June 1935.

¹⁵BayHStA, MA 106680, HMBRPvUF, 6 May 1933.

¹⁶BA, R 58/436, MbStapo-Berlin, [June 1935]. For reports on similar activity in Essen and Augsburg see DBS, 1: 77, 17 May 1934; BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Augsburg, 1 June 1935.

¹⁷BA, R 58/480/2, LBStapo-Hannover, 4 June 1935. In other areas, the Stapo officials claimed complete success in the elimination of 1 May leftist printed material from the public domain. See BA, R 58/1575/392, LBStapoS-Halle, 6 June 1935.

on the eve of the 9 November ceremonies in 1935.¹⁹ In an attempt to bring the Nazi terror to international attention, meanwhile, both leftist undergrounds were also active during the Olympic Games, distributing leaflets and newspapers to athletes and foreign visitors.¹⁹

Political activists also countered Nazi organized public celebrations with alternative festivities of their own making. Although police authorities kept a watchful eye on such festive gatherings and frequently raided places where they were held, presumably they did much to preserve solidarity. In 1934, factory workers in Berlin, a *Sopade* report claimed, had, despite extensive police surveillance, attended numerous socialist May Day festivities organized by hundreds of former SPD members around the city.²⁰ The following year also witnessed get-togethers disguised as coffee klatsches organized by the socialist opposition in Berlin as an alternative to the official Nazi celebrations. Despite the poor weather, depressed spirits were elevated by the singing of "unpolitical" songs.²¹ Gestapo officials, meanwhile,

¹⁹BayHStA, MA 106697, LbPD-Munich, 6 Dec. 1935.

¹⁹On the occasion of the Winter Olympiad, communists sent letters to German athletes in which they described the Games as part of the Nazi "fairy tale" presented for foreign consumption. A leaflet of the Socialist Workers' Sport International encouraging athletes to boycott the upcoming Berlin Games also surfaced in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, site of the Winter Olympics. See BayHStA, MA 106687, MbvBPP, 1 Mar. 1936. Police officials in Munich, meanwhile, came into possession of KPD and SPD subversive pamphlets and newspapers aimed at foreign visitors attending the Berlin Olympiad. Ibid., MA 106688, MbvBPP, 1 Sept. 1936.

²⁰DBS, 1: 107-8, 26 June 1934. Commenting on the hopeful atmosphere pervading the celebrations, the report added that recognition of the economic difficulties confronting the government had created a mood that was "in no way pessimistic" and which had filled the workers with the "hope of liberation."

²¹Ibid., 2: 415, 14 May 1935.

arrested communists in Berlin and Aachen for allegedly using New Year's and family celebrations as a cover for subversive meetings.²²

Workers and socialists also openly demonstrated against Nazism by attending funeral ceremonies for comrades killed by the Nazis. Such activity could and did lead to arrests and exposed families to potential danger. Five thousand men and women from Hamburg's working class were reported to have visited the grave of Adolf Biedermann, the former SPD Reichstag deputy, on Ascension Day in 1934, the day before the first anniversary of his death. The silent demonstration, a *Sopade* report declared, gained added political meaning by the presence of a great many flowers and a wreath complete with red bow and a garland of flowers shaped into letters representing discipline, action and unity.²³ Yet not only former socialist luminaries were singled out for such symbolic acts. Hamburg had earlier witnessed the springtime funeral of a former socialist which also became the occasion of a minor demonstration of solidarity and of renewed dedication to the values of social democracy. According to a *Sopade* report, the widow had refused an offer from the NSBO to lay a wreath for her husband. At the funeral itself, over three hundred socialists crammed the crematorium to pay their respects and listen to a local former SPD leader who closed his eulogy with a call for freedom and socialism. Those in attendance answered with upraised fists and a defiant shout of 'Freedom'.²⁴ In Ludwigshafen, meanwhile, a

²²BA, R 58/1586, LbStapo-Berlin, 28 Jan. 1936; R 58/567, LbGestapo-Aachen, 10 Feb. 1936.

²³DBS, 1: 108, 26 June 1934.

²⁴Ibid.

funeral service for a one-time SPD member was also well-attended by former socialists.²⁵ Luckily for the participants at these three occasions no police action was undertaken. Others were not so fortunate.

According to a *Sopade* report from Rhineland-Westphalia in early summer 1935, approximately two thousand people attended a funeral ceremony in Bochum to pay their respects to Fritz Husemann, a former leader of the miners' union. Also present were local Gestapo agents, who later arrested eight former members of the SPD as they were leaving the "impressive funeral rally".²⁶ Evidently the Nazis viewed the visiting of burial sites of former socialists with increasing suspicion. The planned anniversary visit of 2 September 1935 by hundreds of mourners to the grave of the *Reichsbanner* secretary in Breslau, who had been murdered by the Nazis, was disrupted by the arrival the day before of several Gestapo officials who demanded from anyone coming in the vicinity of the grave site proof of kinship to the deceased. The Gestapo agents remained on duty until the day following the anniversary, keeping mobile police units on hand in case of any confrontations.²⁷ The determined efforts by workers and socialists to attend such ceremonies, moreover, contrasted sharply with their notable absence from similar ceremonies for dead Nazi leaders; such as, for example the march in Lower Bavaria in March 1936, when twelve of a possible two hundred factory workers participated on the anniversary of Gauleiter Hans

²⁵BayHStA, MA 106675, MbRPvP, 9 Mar. 1936.

²⁶DBS, 2: 831, 3 Aug. 1935.

²⁷Ibid., 3: 79, 11 Feb. 1936.

Schemm's death.²⁹

Because German police forces had a long history of dealing with such underground tactics and were familiar with the organizational structures of the political left, they succeeded in all but eliminating any form of organized opposition from the formerly powerful mass movements of social democracy and communism in the years 1934-36.²⁹ Nonetheless, although reduced to little more than a skeletal organization, both continued to offer scattered resistance throughout the Third Reich, albeit more as a nuisance than as a threat to the Nazi dictatorship. During the night of 1 May in 1937, for instance, a letter criticizing the HJ was pasted onto the windows of the Munich office of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.³⁰ While such feeble and largely symbolic protestations posed little threat to the Nazi regime, particularly since Hitler was riding a prolonged wave of popularity, they presumably helped

²⁹Ibid., 3: 311, 2 Apr. 1936. Funerals for Party leaders were evidently among the least popular of Nazi ceremonies. For example, despite the garish anti-semitic propaganda spectacle organized around the rail car funeral procession for Wilhelm Gustloff, chief of the Swiss branch of the Nazi *Auslandsorganisation*, murdered by a young Jew in Davos, few flags, which were to be flown at half mast, were to be seen, except on public and church buildings as required by law. In Silesia, a *Sopade* report recorded, the Nazis organized a commemoration for Gustloff and had to commandeer at the last minute all available Party and ancillary organization members since only sixty-three civilians showed up in the 1500 seat auditorium. In a rage, the speaker, a local mayor, referred to the poor turnout as a "disgrace" for the city. Ibid., 3: 161-63, 9 Mar. 1936, reports from Bavaria, Saxony and Silesia. Perhaps even more disconcerting for the Nazis was the apathy, not only of workers but of Germans in general, towards Heroes' Memorial Day. Recast as a celebration of military values, the Nazi ceremony was, as a *Sopade* report for Lower Bavaria observed, mainly limited to war veterans and Nazi formations. Ibid., 3: 311, 2 Apr. 1936.

²⁹Allen, "Social Democratic Resistance," 192-93.

³⁰BayHStA, MA 106689, MbGestapo-Munich, 1 July 1937.

to preserve morale among the fragmented SPD/KPD undergrounds.

Although the political left failed to organize any effective resistance to the NS state, German workers found ways to publicize anti-Nazi sentiments. Here, too, more extreme forms of public protest gradually gave way to varying forms of nonconformism and dissent as the Nazi state strengthened its legitimacy and authority through its commitment to the restoration of 'law and order' and its success in overcoming the economic crisis. Among the many means available to German workers to vent their frustrations and criticisms of the NS state, the festival proved one of the most accessible and versatile, even if its effectiveness was limited.³¹

Of the many forms of nonconformity and dissent associated with the festival, the least challenging to the authority of the Nazi state was also the most prevalent. The partial acceptance of and indifference towards Nazi sponsored celebrations, especially of the national 'great events', was nonetheless significant, for by refusing to yield to the seductive spectacles dissident Germans retained a measure of control over their individual lives. Moreover, in assuming the role of spectators rather than participants, and thus sharpening the blurred line between state and society, these individuals and groups forged a bond of solidarity, however inconsistent and weak, in opposition to the

³¹The primary location of worker dissent was of course the work place, with absenteeism, slow-downs, stoppages, strikes and sabotage the routine forms of protest directed against the harsh working conditions obtaining in Nazi Germany. On Nazi controls in the work place and workers' efforts to oppose them, see *inter alia* Timothy W. Mason, *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen, 1975), and "The Workers' Opposition in Nazi Germany" *History Workshop Journal* 11 (1981): 120-37; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 101-44.

celebration of National Socialist political culture.³²

Since participation in the festival experience in the Third Reich was relatively voluntary, it made available to dissenting Germans one of the few means to express their objections, opposition or outright resistance to one or another of policies and practices of the Nazi regime. Consequently, in contrast to the series of national plebiscites sponsored by the Nazis, which invariably demonstrated very nearly unanimous support for state policies, the ambiguous response of German workers and other discontented social groups to the festival events staged by the NSDAP and its ancillary organizations is revealing. In October 1934 as the majority of Germans looked forward with apprehension to another winter of hardship, popular support for the Nazi regime evidently reached a low point. Noting the increasing restiveness of the population, Stapo officials in Aachen insisted that the declining frequency of the public display of the German greeting, as well as the meager attendance of the German people at Nazi organized events and rallies, signified a "certain resistance".³³ Secret *Sopade* reports from the entire Reich suggest that by 1935 the lustre had clearly worn off the Nazi celebration.³⁴ Not even the transitory celebrations associated

³²On the need to shift the 'historicizing' focus of resistance studies away from the individual and collective acts of opposition to the coercive and disruptive powers of the Nazi state towards the more general and continuous attempt to establish solidarity in fragmented societies, see Michael Geyer, "Resistance as Ongoing Project: Visions of Order, Obligations to Strangers, Struggles for Civil Society," in *JMH* 64, supplement (December 1992): S217-41.

³³BA, R 58/660, LbStapo-Aachen, 6 Oct. 1934.

³⁴Of the Party rally that year, for instance, the general consensus reached by *Sopade* analysts, based on the collation of numerous reports, was that it made little or no impression on the population. The

with the series of diplomatic triumphs beginning in 1935 with the return of the Saar overcame the increasing apathy displayed among the general populace towards the spectacular demonstration of Nazi power in Nuremberg.³⁵

Workers, especially former trade union members, were perhaps most notable in their apathy towards Nazi celebrations. A police report from Augsburg testifies to the dissent pervasive among many workers. During a DAF rally in the autumn of 1934 many of the workers forced to march and assume formation in the public square broke ranks and proceeded to fill area pubs. Instead of the forty thousand claimed by the local press, police estimated fifteen thousand, of which a third had already disappeared before the commencement of the event. Applause for the speeches came only from Nazis directly in front of the podium. Though police officials denied that such activity signified open opposition, they admitted that the enthusiasm of previous years had evaporated, to be replaced by the workers' customary inclination for criticism.³⁶

observations of a reporter describing the mood in the Rhineland is representative: "In Germany one is already so accustomed to such performances and knows the methods so precisely that they no longer dazzle." Even the festive return of the participants was greeted by a "distant and indifferent" local population. *DBS*, 2: 1018-19, 16 Oct. 1935. See also the report out of Saxony, *ibid.*, 1265, 12 Nov. 1935.

³⁵See the *Sopade* reports for the 1936 rally from Bavaria, Rhineland-Westphalia, Saxony and Silesia, in *DBS*, 3: 1109-11, 6 Oct. 1936; for the Party rally of 1937, see *ibid.*, 4: 1224-26, 14 Oct. 1937, reports from Bavaria, Silesia, Saxony, and southwest Germany.

³⁶*BayHStA*, MA 106693, LbRPvP, 9 Nov. 1934. Evidently workers in Berlin also absented themselves from Nazi-organized May Day festivities. See Alf Lüdtke, "The Appeal of Exterminating 'Others': German Workers and the Limits of Resistance," *JMH* 64, supplement (December 1992): S48.

Of the several festivals which the Nazis established or transformed, May Day celebrations were the most seriously contested by German workers and the SPD and KPD undergrounds. Though evidently increasingly divided in their loyalties, workers, spurred by the political underground, resisted Nazi attempts to transform 1 May from a political celebration of working-class culture into a 'national celebration of the German Volk'. In 1934 many workers complained of their involuntary participation in the organized mass celebrations of May Day normally imposed on them by way of threatened dismissal.³⁷ Nonetheless, by 1935 assessments made by *Sopade* analysts described an increasing apathy towards the Nazi sponsored celebrations in many industrial cities that might have reflected, as a secret report from southern Bavaria claimed, "the suppressed animosity of the working masses."³⁸ Similarly, in the entire Westphalian industrial area not a single enthusiastic Hitler or Nazi celebration took place either publicly or in the factories.³⁹ Even the threatened withholding of holiday pay failed to motivate many workers to participate in the Nazi celebrations in centres such as

³⁷DBS, 1: 208, 21 July 1934.

³⁸Ibid., 2: 658, 15 July 1935.

³⁹Ibid., 2: 657, 661, 15 July 1935. Not surprisingly, the Nazis found it difficult to attract unemployed workers, as in southwest Germany, where a local employment office found it necessary to distribute coupons for two complimentary glasses of beer and a few sausages conditional on participation in the May Day parade. Even with such enticements the leader of the employment office was to be seen running around that evening handing out more coupons among the unemployed so that the sausages would at least be eaten up.

Klingenthal and Zwickau in Saxony.⁴⁰

Political humour directed against the Nazi orchestration of May Day celebrations also formed part of the alternative culture of dissent. *Sopade* reports from central Germany declared that such anti-Nazi humour animated conversations among Krupp workers in Magdeburg in the days following 1 May.⁴¹ Workers reacted to this infringement on their civil liberties in ways that were potentially far riskier than the sharing of political humour, however. Symbolic protest was not unknown to workers. On 1 May 1937, for example, workers at a textile plant in Ettlingen, in southwest Germany, replaced the swastika flag with an old sack. Local police authorities, presumably owing to the solidarity of those workers involved, were unable to identify the culprits.⁴²

As previously mentioned, the introduction in 1934 of factory community and comradeship evenings and the factory roll-call within the ambit of the DAF and KdF brought the rhythm of Nazi celebration and ceremony ever closer to the work place. As with Nazi festivals in general reports of their reception by the workers were ambiguous. While many of the reports sent in to the *Sopade* suggested that, with the

⁴⁰Ibid., 2: 415, 14 May 1935. Such deliberate lack of compliance on the part of workers was not restricted to May Day celebrations. On the occasion of Goering's wedding celebration, with the exception of 13 "stalwarts", workers in a Berlin aircraft factory refused to participate in the forming of a cordon planned by industry leaders when it was confirmed that although they would be paid for their attendance, the day itself would be counted towards their allotted vacation days. Ibid., 425.

⁴¹For similar reports from Saxony, see *ibid.*, 2: 416-17, 14 May 1935.

⁴²Ibid., 4: 810, 8 July 1937. Although local authorities investigated the infraction, as of the filing of the report no arrests had been made.

exception of the roll-call which remained exceedingly unpopular, these innovations were accepted as a welcome respite from the dull and impersonal routine of factory work as well as compensation for lower wages, they were just as often viewed with suspicion and either grudgingly accepted, or avoided whenever possible.⁴³ By September 1935 *Sopade* analysts claimed that although such festive occasions had in the past not been without effect on the workers, the latest reports suggested that interest had begun to wane since the worker was able to see through the "red herring" and practise "passive resistance."⁴⁴

Work-related celebrations also gave rise to more active forms of refusal and protest. In Saxony, for example, a large hosiery factory, employing mostly women, held a community evening as part of its 1 May festivities in 1936 with food, drink, music and dancing providing for a festive atmosphere that lasted into the small hours of the morning. During the well-attended celebration an attempt to inject a small dose of propaganda, in the form of a speech by an employee reporting on his KdF vacation in Madeira, was whistled down; the speaker, as well as the director and plant leader who had gone to his aid, was forced to vacate

⁴³Absence was the usual form of nonconformity as a representative *Sopade* report from a small Bavarian shoe factory demonstrates. At the comradeship evenings arranged for the workers in the absence of the factory roll call, attendance had dwindled from 19 of 35 for the initial event, to 13 and 7 on the second and third evenings respectively. The shop steward cancelled the fourth event when only 6 workers appeared. See *ibid.*, 2: 59, 6 Feb. 1935. Similarly, in Dresden a comradeship evening held for the railway employees in the Crystal Palace with a capacity of 1,000 was so poorly attended that the *Sopade* reporter wrote: "The visitors could have played hide-and-seek in the large hall." *Ibid.*, 2: 562, 12 June 1935. Shirking among workers, despite the free handouts, was evidently also widespread in Berlin. *Ibid.*, 4: 810-11, 8 July 1937.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 2: 1070, 16 Oct. 1935.

the rostrum amid shouts and screams of drunken laughter.⁴⁵ Incidents of suspected sabotage involving loudspeaker systems in industrial plants before factory roll-calls also created a nuisance for Nazi labour officials.⁴⁶

Workers frequently expressed non-compliance and opposition through excessive use of alcohol, a direct snub, in part, to the sobriety campaign waged by the Nazis.⁴⁷ A *Sopade* report contended that never had there been so many drunken men in Magdeburg as during the May Day celebrations of 1935.⁴⁸ In Erfurt, Stapo authorities reported that workers, fortified by the effects of alcohol, sang 'The Internationale' at 1 May factory celebrations.⁴⁹ A *Sopade* report from northwest Germany, meanwhile, claimed that in city and countryside the day was marked by widespread drunkenness. Despite the extensiveness of such behaviour, *Sopade* analysts recognized that the motivation for such excesses stemmed from several sources. According to the same report from northwest Germany, most workers drank out of despair, getting "plastered" in order to "let off steam against the system". In the "official" festival locales and pubs heated squabbles degenerated in many cases into uncontrolled confrontation and skirmishes. Where

⁴⁵In the view of *Sopade* analysts, the Nazis aimed to obscure worker oppression through "beer, buttered rolls, and the opportunity to let off steam". *DBS*, 3: 721-23, 4 July 1936.

⁴⁶*DBS*, 5: 462, 30 June 1938.

⁴⁷Leonidas E. Hill, for one, has suggested that alcohol-induced expressions of dissent constituted subversive activity and thus a form of resistance behaviour. See "Towards a New History," 396.

⁴⁸*DBS*, 2: 416, 14 May 1935.

⁴⁹BA, R 58/1575/311, LBStapoS-Erfurt, 6 June 1935.

present, Nazis were often thrust into an adversarial role. Others, the report suggested, drank with purpose, maintaining a measure of self-control, only to throw "fuel into the fire" as the opportunity presented itself. Finally, there were others who may have feigned drunkenness as a "completely conscious criticism" against the Nazi regime. More significant, and presumably most satisfying to the *Sopade* analysts, was the fact that seldom did consequences arise from the altercations, since nowhere did voluntary denunciations occur. This apparent demonstration of worker solidarity was so complete that even where office staff raised complaints against individual workers, factory leaders refused to act.⁵⁰

A few months later, extensive drunkenness was again responsible for a confrontation between workers and members of the SS at a topping-out ceremony in northwest Germany following the construction of a large barracks installation. Taking part in the celebration were twelve hundred workers who, after a few hours of free beer, revealed their "real sentiments" by weakly humming through the national anthems, offering only scattered applause for several speakers and targeting armed SS guards for vituperation. The more inebriated the workers became, the *Sopade* report added, the more they expressed their "anti-fascist views." The report blamed the incident on the "genuine despair"

⁵⁰DBS, 2: 656-57, 15 July 1935. Public drunkenness was only one aspect of the "catastrophic mood" prevailing among workers in northwest Germany at May Day celebrations. Contending that twelve separate reports all observed the "first prominent symptoms of a resistance" based on a rejection of Nazi attempts to distort and exploit "the humanitarian, cultural and social claims of the socialist universal holiday", the *Sopade* analysts declared that workers had resorted to passive resistance, active sabotage and the peaceful boycott to reclaim this most important of celebrations for their own.

enveloping the workers.⁵¹ Evidently, such despair-driven drunkenness on the part of workers mounted throughout the peacetime years as *Sopade* reports for 1 May celebrations in Württemberg and Saxony for 1937 and 1938 indicate.⁵²

Violence between supporters of the regime and discontented workers occasionally arose as a result of excessive intake of alcohol at 'comradeship evenings'. A *Sopade* activist in southwest Germany reported that a large construction company employing more than one hundred workers arranged for a 'comradeship evening' to mark the completion of a section of the autobahn between Mannheim and Darmstadt. With plenty of free beer for the "famished" workers, the hall was soon a battleground, the speeches in praise of the national community lost in the tumult. Only the police called to the scene were able to bring the gathering under control. That proved short-lived, however, as the singing of the 'Horst Wessel Song' was matched by the loud humming of the 'Internationale'. This prompted further fighting, forcing an early termination of the evening's festivities as the riot squad returned to clear the hall.⁵³

Nazis were not the only targets of alcohol related violence committed by workers on festive occasions. Since workers tended to view government and industrial leaders with equal suspicion, they too were

⁵¹Ibid., 2: 1072, 16 Oct. 1935.

⁵²Ibid., 4: 809, 8 July 1937, and *ibid.*, 5: 462-67, 30 June 1938.

⁵³Ibid., 2: 1071-72, 16 Oct. 1935. The report did not record any arrests stemming from the incident. Undoubtedly part of the reason for the altercation were the notoriously bad working conditions associated with autobahn construction.

subjected to working class hostility. In the fall of 1935, during the week-long wine publicity campaign, festivals were held throughout northwest Germany. In the mining community of Datteln workers from the nearby Emscher-Lippe mine assembled for a day of sociability and entertainment, consuming countless bottles of inexpensive wine in the process. As the alcohol took effect, a huge fight broke out in the course of which the works leader along with the factory councillor were thrashed. The riot police were summoned to restore order. The next morning the factory leader called to account several of the miners, resulting in the dismissal of three of them. The entire episode, the *Sopade* reporter noted, demonstrated the venting of pent-up rage over the deplorable conditions at the mine.⁵⁴

Whatever the motivations for such dissident behaviour, the above examples suggest that large groups of men, emboldened by the effects of alcohol, could achieve solidarity in a festive setting, unleashing repressed animosity against their oppressors. Yet it is also apparent that the confrontational mood was for the most part transitory, dissipating as the intoxicating effects of drink and celebration wore off. That workers celebrated to excess with relative impunity, moreover, suggests that for political and industrial leaders the festival event functioned as a 'safety valve', a controlled venting of particular grievances by normally compliant individuals and social groups. These leaders accepted that this exceptional behaviour would be limited to the

⁵⁴Ibid., 2: 1333, 12 Nov. 1935. Violence also erupted among drunken workers with no apparent political motivation as was the case during a *Sommerwaldfest* organized by a large foundry in northwest Germany, where even wives were seen to be quarreling with husbands. See *ibid.*, 4: 1275, 14 Oct. 1937.

festive occasion itself; a compliant work force would return to the work place, its enmity expressed, dispersed and consumed in the momentary experience framed by the festival event.⁵⁵ Indeed, public intoxication as a form of civil disobedience was frowned upon by former socialists and trade union workers, who saw in the factory and DAF/KdF sponsored beer festivals a conspiracy to undermine the moral character of the worker. This was especially odious to such reformers who, as was the case at a state coal mine in Zauckerode in Saxony, had spent the decades prior to 1933 attempting to raise the spiritual, mental and moral well-being of the workers by promoting healthier outdoor activities in lieu of the customary intemperance associated with beer festivals.⁵⁶

While the Nazis too certainly desired disciplined workers,

⁵⁵That celebrations served to deflect and dissipate repressed hostility among the workers is revealed in a *Sopade* report from Saxony expressing resignation at the basic attitude of German workers: "They grumble in secret about poor wages, high prices, fat, butter and meat shortages, over the begging for the *Winterhilfswerk* relief program once more brought into action and so on. However, when it comes to comradeship evenings and the Herr Boss pays for a few glasses of beer and possibly throws a few cigarettes and cigars their way, then is all forgotten, the boss is toasted, and they are contented." *Ibid.*, 2: 1310, 12 Nov. 1935.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 4: 1276, 14 Oct. 1937. Similarly, describing the dwindling interest in 1 May celebrations on all sides, a *Sopade* activist in Württemberg wrote: "The actual May Day celebrations for the workers are restricted this year--like last year's--to factory celebrations, for which the employers spend less and less, and the workers depending on the situation and the prospect for material gain have sometimes more, sometimes less interest in the day. In contrast to our one-time May Day celebrations, which despite their inherent flaws, as a rule bore a militant character, and educated the worker in discipline and self-consciousness, one finds today on 1 May far more frequently the old enervating vice of actual wage-earning slaves, intoxication. That began already in 1933 and later became increasingly blatant. It is no wonder that today the social convictions of the employer are not infrequently measured by the size of the keg of free beer." See *ibid.*, 5: 464, 30 June 1938.

ideally they wanted workers amenable to the political norms and objectives of National Socialism. Short of that they were willing to settle for an obedient and pliable work force. Allowing and even encouraging workers to enjoy the convivial yet controlled atmosphere of an outdoor festival or an evening of camaraderie, usually at the expense of the employer or the state, succeeded in attracting many workers to Nazism and disarming many of those who maintained their distrust of the regime.⁵⁷ At the same time excessive drinking during festive events allowed many workers to escape from a political culture which aimed to inform all aspects of public life. As a form of protest, however, it was largely ineffective and perhaps detrimental to the cause of worker solidarity due to the wholly fleeting nature of the festive experience.

Fortunately for the Nazis, however, workers as a group often failed to rally behind individual expressions of dissent. With obvious dejection, *Sopade* analysts recognized the "careful and obedient reserve" of German workers that restrained them from complete rejection of the regime. Such behaviour revealed itself during an incident at a small May Day celebration in Hamburg. Following the singing of the 'Horst Wessel Song', many participants had abstained from giving the 'Hitler greeting'. A labourer was promptly called to account, beaten, and expelled from his place of work. The following day his unemployment benefits were withheld although no arrest ensued. His misfortune was met with complete indifference by those present at the celebration, who justified their own inaction by insisting that the man should have

⁵⁷Similarly, workers generally welcomed DAF/KdF organized leisure activities and programs to improve the material conditions of the work place. See Lüttke, "Exterminating 'Others'," S57-59.

conformed at least outwardly to the Nazi ritual.⁵⁸

The above incidents demonstrate the limits of confrontation permitted by police officials and political and industrial leaders with respect to festival behaviour on the part of the workers and the political left. The potential threat represented by the political mass movements of social democracy and communism attracted the full brunt of the Nazi terror apparatus immediately following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor; after 1935-6, those movements ceased to be a force for organized resistance. Largely apolitical nonconformist behaviour on the part of workers, meanwhile, though not condoned appears to have been at least tolerated in the controlled environment of the celebration. But violent confrontation could and did have serious repercussions as the Datteln wine festival episode reveals. The same incident also suggests that the actions initiated during the festival could occasionally have an enduring effect beyond its transitory borders, in this case by exacerbating existing tensions in the work place.

CELEBRATION, CEREMONY AND THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS DISSENT

Nowhere was the tangled web of relationships between German society, its institutions and the Nazi state more convoluted than in the religious sphere. As numerous studies of the activities of both the Catholic and Protestant churches during the Third Reich have demonstrated, not only was sustained opposition to the Nazi state virtually non-existent, but a high level of support for many of its policies existed among both clergy and parishioners. Where opposition did occur, moreover, it developed in

⁵⁸DBS, 1: 118, 26 June 1934.

response not to the Nazi regime as such, but to specific issues and policies emanating from the 'Church Struggle' waged by the more radical NSDAP activists and less frequently from moral outrage over particular Nazi practices that did not directly concern religious life. Thus the study of church resistance to Nazism is complicated not only by the ambiguous and complex nature of religious opposition but also by the difficulty in determining the diverse individual and collective motivations for that selfsame opposition. Nonetheless, it appears that a number of church officials and their coreligionists challenged Nazi authority on issues which directly threatened the existence of the churches and religious life, such as the 'crucifix action' in Oldenburg and later in Bavaria; and only rarely on issues that fundamentally compromised Christian values, as with the oft-cited campaign against the Nazi euthanasia program during the war.⁵⁹

⁵⁹The most ardent examination of Catholic complicity in the Nazi regime is Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York, 1964). For a more balanced study of the failure of the Catholic and Protestant churches during the Third Reich, see J.S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45* (Toronto, 1968). Also see Ernst C. Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler: Background, Struggle and Epilogue* (Detroit, 1979); Raimund Baumgärtner, *Weltanschauungskampf im Dritten Reich: Auseinandersetzungen der Kirchen mit Alfred Rosenberg* (Mainz, 1977). On the common ground of nationalism that attracted many Protestants to Nazism, see Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, 1985). On the ambiguous nature of church resistance, in addition to Conway's work, see Robert P. Ericksen, "A Radical Minority: Resistance in the German Protestant Church," in *Germans Against Nazism*, eds. Nicosia and Stokes, 115-35; Donald Dietrich, "Catholic Resistance to Biological and Racist Eugenics in the Third Reich," in *ibid.*, 137-55. For the most part, these studies focus on church officials rather than parishioners. For a study of religiously-motivated opposition among ordinary Germans, namely women, that emphasizes the single-issue form of dissent, see Claudia Koonz, "Ethical Dilemmas and Nazi Eugenics: Single-Issue Dissent in Religious Contexts," *JMH* 64, supplement (December 1992): S8-31. On the 'crucifix action'--the forced removal of crosses from public buildings by local Nazis--see Jeremy Noakes, "The Oldenburg Crucifix Struggle of

Accordingly, in the following discussion of religious dissent it is evident that whether in the case of clerical authorities, lay organizations or parishioners, the motivations for opposition stemmed primarily from a perceived need to defend the church and Christian liturgy against Nazi intrusions into religious life. Hence, while the absence of any concerted challenge by the church on issues such as the arbitrary juridical and terroristic police controls, the existence of concentration camps and persecution of minority religious sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses, and particularly the series of anti-Jewish measures, gravely compromised Christian values, clerical officials and their coreligionists nonetheless were determined to defend religious institutions and culture.⁹⁰ As was the case with German workers, moreover, while ceremonial opposition posed little direct threat to the Nazi dictatorship, it did constitute an often effective challenge to the forward-oriented aspirations of the Nazis to establish control over all aspects of public life. At the same time, while such dissent was largely depoliticized there is little reason to doubt that it helped preserve bonds of solidarity among like-minded Germans against the increasing reality of social atomization resulting from the forced

November 1936: A Case Study of Opposition in the Third Reich, in *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, ed. Peter D. Stachura (London and New York, 1978), 210-33; Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, 205-8, 340-57.

⁹⁰For example, police authorities observed that in most Catholic areas where religious and NS Harvest Thanksgiving festivals were held on the same day, the church events were not only better attended but based on the generous ornamentation were obviously more popular. See BayHStA, MA 106688, MbvBPP, 1 Nov. 1936. While such public expressions of cultural preference were seemingly apolitical in form if not in intent, they doubtlessly demonstrated to local Nazis, at least, the limits of their control over public life.

process of *Gleichschaltung*.

The clergy found direct ways to demonstrate their opposition to the anticlericalism of the Nazi regime, ways that involved primarily non-violent, symbolic acts of refusal and protest. The material components of Christian liturgical practices provided church officials with one such means to distance themselves and their congregations from the 'voluntary' celebrations of Nazism. A common act of refusal involved failure on the part of local church officials to comply with decrees ordering all bells to be rung in commemoration of Nazi holidays or ceremonial acts of state.⁸¹ It is apparent that from early in the Third Reich this form of disobedience was widespread since Party and police officials were routinely required to report any contravention of the decree. On the days marking the occasion of Hindenburg's death and funeral in the first week of August 1934, local Bavarian Nazi officials reported on numerous failures to comply with the funeral knell request. The standard explanation given by the individual parsons was that no directive, either from church or state authorities, had been received.⁸²

⁸¹See for example the report on the refusal of several evangelical churchmen to ring bells on 1 May in Bavaria, in BayHStA, MA 106687, MbvBPP, 1 June 1936.

⁸²In the resort community of Waging am See, for instance, a local church official, "well known" to the Party for his involvement in the Catholic Youth Organization, had neglected to ring the bells of the cathedral during the evening on the day of Hindenburg's death (2 August). This infraction gained added relevance since, as a local NSDAP official claimed, it had been noticed by the many vacationers in the resort town. Consequently, the Party official had sent two SA men in civilian attire to attend to the problem. The parish sexton explained that he had received no instructions to allow Party or SA members to ring the bells. The issue was promptly resolved since on the following evening and throughout the period of mourning the peal of the cathedral's bells were heard in the town. StAM, NSDAP 300, OGL-Waging am See to the KL-Laufen, 4 Aug. 1934. Similarly, local Party officials in the

The following summer, the Party issued confidential instructions to local officials requesting information regarding non-compliance with the directive requesting that bells be rung in celebration of the return of the Saar.⁸³ From the *Ortsgruppenleiter* in Prien am Chiemsee, Karl Stein, came the reply that in two local parishes, Rimsting and Hüttenkirchen, no bells were rung. In his report, Stein reminded the local *Kreisleiter* in Rosenheim that the church official in Rimsting, Expositor Schwertfirm, was an "exceptional opponent" of the movement. In Prien itself, the parson had acquiesced only after repeated urging, including requests from guests from the Saar.⁸⁴

In a similar vein, the Party saw the failure to raise the national flag, exclusively the swastika flag after the Reich Flag Law of 15 September 1935, in commemoration of state holidays and events as a visible defiance of the authority of the NS state. Often church officials neglected their duties regarding both church bells and flags on such ceremonial occasions. The report of a local Nazi official in Waging am See on the conduct of the local churches and population during the national mourning of Hindenburg's death, for example, noted that flagging in the Bavarian resort town had been scanty, adding that

district of Laufen reported that although most churches had complied with the decree in some parishes the bells had remained silent at least once during the national period of mourning for Hindenburg. See StAM, NSDAP 300, NSDAP STPL-Kirchanschörling to the KL-Laufen, 8 Aug. 1934, and *ibid.*, Ortsgruppenbereich Tittmoning, 5 Aug. 1934. The order for Hindenburg's funeral knell issued jointly by the RmdI/RMfVP and distributed to all police agencies is contained in StADt, MfP, Nr. 1624/53, Polizei-Funkdienst, Regierung Minden, 2 Aug. 1934.

⁸³StAM, NSDAP 557, KL-Rosenheim to OGL Karl Stein in Prien, (Strictly Confidential), 26 Mar. 1935.

⁸⁴StAM, NSDAP 557, OGL-Prien to KL-Rosenheim, 30 Mar. 1935.

swastika banners became more conspicuous only after the church bells had been put into service. However, the report also declared that a number of white-blue flags had been raised by known BVP supporters.⁶⁵ Church officials also failed to comply with Nazi flag ordinances on Heroes' Memorial Day and Harvest Thanksgiving Festival.⁶⁶ As with the defiantly silent bells, then, the failure to raise the national flag was regarded as an open and visible sign of opposition to the Nazi regime. The clergy, in particular, were the subjects of numerous arrests and fines owing to their defiance of the flag decree throughout the years before the war. This was especially the case for the 9 November Nazi spectacle in 1935, when police officials in Munich were instructed to lay charges against any religious officials violating the nation-wide decree ordering the raising of flags to full mast for 8 and 9 November on all public buildings, including churches.⁶⁷

In addition to their dissident activities on designated Nazi holidays, church officials and parishioners resorted to similar modes of

⁶⁵Even the sales depot of the local master of ordnance, a businessman and member of the *Stahlhelm*, sported the imperial colours rather than the swastika banner. Accordingly, the *Ortsgruppenleiter* asked whether action could not be taken against Franz Schrott, the person in question. StAM, NSDAP 300, OGL-Waging am See to KL-Laufen, 4 Aug. 1934.

⁶⁶As was the case with the Abbey and other churches in the Sigmaringen district. See StASig, HO235 St. Paket 155, Stapo-Sigmaringen, 2 Mar. 1934, 23 Oct. 1935.

⁶⁷Violations of the flag decree formalized by the RMdI on 25 Oct. 1935 was a common charge against the clergy as demonstrated by the inventory of judicial proceedings of over 230 religious officials contained in the files in BA, NS 6/327, [n.d.]. Penalties were normally fines and/or short jail terms. See also StASig, HO235 St. Paket 155 and StAM NSDAP 361. The instructions of the BPP regarding clerical violations of the flag decree for 9 November 1935 is found in StAM, NSDAP 522, BPP, circular, 8 Nov. 1935.

nonconformity to protest Nazi machinations with respect to traditional religious feast days. The display of non-Nazi flags, or alternatively, the inappropriate display of the Nazi colours also featured prominently as part of the "passive resistance" on religious days.⁶⁶ Presumably most discomfiting for anticlerical Nazi activists was the fact that evidently even Bavarian 'Old Fighters' not infrequently ignored religious holiday regulations by hoisting flags on the occasion of local religious ceremonies.⁶⁷ The observance of unprotected religious holidays, meanwhile, constituted for Nazi officials dissident activity in its own right. In November 1935, for instance, officials in Lower Franconia reported that Repentance Day, normally observed only in Protestant regions, attracted Catholics who commemorated the religious holiday with ceremonies whose intent was, in their view, transparently political.⁷⁰ In general the confusion surrounding the regulations governing (non)-statutory religious holidays aroused significant animosity in Catholic and Protestant circles. Particularly in rural areas, the population refused to abide by the Nazi holiday law that no longer protected traditional Catholic feast days like Mary's Assumption and All Saints' and All Souls' Days, or imposed restrictions on public activities on Repentance Day. Accordingly, it was not uncommon for rural Germans to attend church ceremonies rather than go to work, while Catholic businesses were encouraged to stay closed in observance of non-

⁶⁶BayHStA, MA 106687, MbvBPP, 1 Apr. 1936.

⁶⁷BayHStA, MA 106689, MbGestapo-Munich, 1 Apr. 1937.

⁷⁰BayHStA, MA 106680, MbRPvUF/A, 9 Dec. 1935.

statutory religious holidays.⁷¹

Among the many Christian holiday liturgical practices, the Corpus Christi processions provided the most formidable public display of religious solidarity against the Nazi regime. In Bavaria, Lower Franconia and elsewhere, Nazi authorities had instructed the Political Police to implement strict controls over religious pilgrimages and processions beginning in 1935.⁷² Yet, despite police intrusions, religious processions provided a relatively safe outlet for symbolic dissidence. During the well-attended procession of 1935 in Munich, leaflets were scattered bearing the text: "Christ our Führer!"⁷³ Internal government reports from Lower Bavaria and the Upper Palatinate related that Catholic and Bavarian flags, which in the view of state officials represented a direct expression of "opposition to the National

⁷¹BayHStA, MA 106672, MbrPvNB/OP, 7 Nov. 1937, 7 Jan. 1938; MA 106685, MbPD-Munich, 10 Nov. 1937, 6 Dec. 1937; MA 106682, LbrPvS/N, 6 Nov. 1937; MA 106676, MbrPvP, 8 Dec. 1937; MA 106680, MbrPvUF/A, 9 Dec. 1937.

⁷²See StAM, NSDAP 522, BPP, 9 June 1936. See also Conway, *Nazi Persecution*, 173. Religious pilgrimages and processions traditionally communally celebrated before 1931 had been exempted from the general prohibition of confessional events of a propagandistic nature included in a decree of 28 February 1933. See HStAD, Regierung Aachen 23145, Chief of the Gestapo to all state police authorities, 7 Dec. 1934; and the same report in BA, R43II/150/49-50. In Lower Franconia the enforced ban on the public display of Catholic flags as well as the ban on the participation of local political officials met with strong disapproval among area Catholics who regarded such measures as a deliberate attack on their religion. See BayHStA, MA 106680, MbrPvUF/A, 6 July 1935.

⁷³DBS, 2: 675, 15 July 1935. Participating in the procession were children, adolescents, social and charitable associations, religious brotherhoods and orders, student groups, clerical officials, civil servants and a number of city councilors, and parishioners. See the official program, "Ordnung für die grosse Fronleichnamsprozession in München am 20. June 1935," in BayHStA, MA 107290.

Socialist state", had to be torn down by police in several areas.⁷⁴ In Swabia few incidents of dissident behaviour were reported although nine members of a Catholic Youth organization were arrested for wearing uniform clothing.⁷⁵

Commenting on the 'Church Struggle' the following year, *Sopade* activists in Bavaria reported an even greater level of participation in the Corpus Christi procession in Munich than previously. The report attributed the impressive turnout to the various regulations forced on the proceedings by the Nazi government. The anticlerical thrust of such measures had the effect of turning a religious act into a "political demonstration" which attracted all opponents of the Nazi regime, for whom previously the procession had been a "minor affair". The Nazis attempted to block the participation of young Catholics, who normally walked in closed groups behind their teachers. The spiritual leaders, however, instructed the youths to attend the procession with their parents and disperse themselves among the adults. Also noted were numerous incidents in Munich and elsewhere in Bavaria and Lower Franconia where "courageous" Germans defied the flag law and the police by raising the Catholic flag. The ban on Catholic flags particularly upset Bavarians since prior to 1936 all public buildings had displayed them. Yet more restrictive regulations denied Catholic Bavarians the right to decorate their residences with greenery or flowers.⁷⁶

⁷⁴BayHStA, MA 106672, MbRPvNB/OP, June 1935.

⁷⁵BayHStA, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 6 July 1935.

⁷⁶DBS, 3: 764-5, 4 July 1936; BayHStA, MA 106680, MbRPvUF/A, 7 July 1936. According to a memo from the Munich police department, police officers were to refrain from taking legal measures against the display

In a deliberate attempt to downplay the obvious appeal of the Corpus Christi procession as a direct demonstration of opposition to the Nazi regime, the Munich police department released an official press report declaring that the procession, with the number of participants down to 7,000 from the previous year's estimated 25,000 and consisting mainly of youths and children, had proceeded without incident. Following the procession, the report stated, police officials had taken into custody participants who had contravened police instructions regarding public conduct during the event.⁷⁷ Not to be outdone, the district president of Lower Bavaria and the Upper Palatinate announced in the *Bayerischen Ostmark* that "colours and flags had not the slightest thing to do" with religion, since the ubiquitous swastika flag signified "that all Germans" felt themselves to be "members of *one* Reich". Consequently, any display of flags, streamers and garlands in church colours was to be viewed as a "rejection of the national renewal and unification".⁷⁸

Again in 1937, according to *Sopade* reports from Bavaria and southwest Germany, the well-attended Corpus Christi processions assumed the form of a "direct demonstration", with numerous infractions against the public flag order reported. Unlike in previous years, moreover, the

of individual Catholic flags. Prohibited however was the adornment of entire streets or public squares in the papal colours and the decoration of state buildings. See StAM, PD 6958, memo PD-Munich, 10 June 1936. Government reports from Swabia also noted the discontent among Catholics of the flag order although no infractions were recorded. See BayHStA, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 6 July 1936.

⁷⁷DBS, 3: 765-66, 4 July 1936; BayHStA, MA 106687, MbvBPP, 1 July 1936. The report also mentioned the comparatively strong turn-out of *Wehrmacht* officers and soldiers in several processions across Bavaria.

⁷⁸*Bayerischen Ostmark*, 132, 9 June 1936, quoted in DBS, 3: 766, 4 July 1936. Italics in the original.

participation of men was increasingly evident. The reports added, however, that attempts by the Hitler Youth to prevent the participation of the young were remarkably successful since the numbers of youths in the processions had conspicuously dwindled. The HJ had deliberately scheduled mandatory excursions to coincide with the processions.⁷⁹ In other areas, notably Konstanz, local Nazis officials had banned public prayer during processions, allowing only the singing of hymns. In Singen, city officials banned the music society, traditionally an important part of the procession. Due to poor weather the procession was postponed as was the custom to the following Sunday. On the day before the rescheduled event, however, the local Nazi district office banned it. The intervention of the archiepiscopal official in Freiburg forced a reversal of the ban, so that the procession could take place the following Sunday. Not to be outdone the local Nazi district office forbade, for reasons of traffic control, the use of the Reichsstrasse, the traditional route taken by the procession. The end result of all the "chicanery" was to cause considerable resentment among local Catholics who in contrast to their participation in earlier processions turned out in droves to express their discontent over the anticlerical policies of

⁷⁹DBS, 4: 1174-76, 18 Sept. 1937. BayHStA, MA 106672, MbRPvNB/OP, 9 July 1937. While police authorities were hampered in their attempts to prevent the display of Catholic flags by private citizens due to the absence of any law against such practices, they were more successful with respect to religious officials who were legally bound to raise the Nazi colours. For example, while authorities were forced to release a man held in detention for displaying a Catholic flag on Corpus Christi, a sexton in Eggenfelden, Alfons Gaar, received a one month jail sentence for displaying a swastika flag in a subordinate position to several Bavarian and Catholic flags. See *ibid.*, 9 July 1937, 8 Sept. 1937.

local NSDAP authorities.⁸⁰ In Lower Franconia, meanwhile, frustrated police and state officials renewed their plea for legal clarification of the flag law since the widespread displaying of the white-yellow Catholic colours continued to pose difficulties for police authorities. In confiscating the flags, the police were perceived by Catholics as simply doing the bidding of the Nazis.⁸¹ Nevertheless, reflecting the apolitical character of the majority of the religious demonstrations, internal reports from Swabia and the Palatinate recorded that, with the exception of two cases involving Catholic Youth associations in Augsburg, the Corpus Christi processions proceeded without incident. Evidently the enforcement of the flag law met with considerable success since while few Catholic flags were to be seen, Nazi flags abounded.⁸²

The ambiguous character of Corpus Christi recognized by Palatinate and Swabian officials became more pronounced elsewhere in the final two years of peacetime. Internal reports from Lower Bavaria and the Upper Palatinate, for example, noted that the remarkably high level of participation in the processions, especially in rural areas, was attributable to the adverse effect of the anticlerical measures of the NS state. While incidents of public disorder remained infrequent, state officials were uncertain whether the few that did occur were due to

⁸⁰DBS, 4: 1174-76, 18 Sept. 1937.

⁸¹BayHStA, MA 106680, 10 June 1937.

⁸²BayHStA, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 7 June 1937; MA 106676, MbRPvP, 7 June 1937. Whether the display of the Nazi colours signalled outward support for the regime or acquiescence to Nazi demands is unclear, particularly since the option existed of displaying no flags at all.

ignorance or malevolence directed at the Nazi regime.⁸³ Additional reports from Middle Franconia and the Palatinate also testified to the detrimental effect on public morale of the various anti-Catholic measures instituted by the Nazi regime.⁸⁴

Commotion even marred the normally solemn Corpus Christi processions of the Catholic Church. The extent to which Corpus Christi processions could assume the character of a violent demonstration and the stringent reactive measures which this could provoke on the side of the Nazi authorities are clearly illustrated by events in Heilsberg. In late May 1937, the Chief of the Reich Security Head Office, Reinhard Heydrich, reported to Hitler that the Corpus Christi procession in Heilsberg had erupted in riots. Uniformed members of the Catholic Youth associations had unlawfully carried a flag representing their organization and had resisted attempts by the police to intervene. According to Heydrich, the youths threw one police officer to the ground, whereupon they kicked and spat upon him. The youths had also spat upon and upbraided the burgomaster, who had come to the officer's aid. The police finally managed to confiscate the flag and arrest the ring-leaders. In addition, following the procession the local priest, Buchholz, along with three chaplains, led a crowd of two thousand to the town hall where they demonstrated against the police measures taken

⁸³BayHStA, MA 106673, MbRPvNB/OP, 7 July 1938, 7 July 1939.

⁸⁴BayHStA, MA 106681, MbRPvMF, 8 July 1938, 10 July 1939; MA 106676, MbRPvP, 11 July 1938, 9 July 1939. It should be noted, however, that adding to the general puzzlement of Nazi officials regarding the attitudes of Catholics vis-à-vis the state was the fact that levels of participation varied considerably according to place with both higher and lower levels reported in some areas, and no notable change in others.

against the Catholic youths, and allegedly prepared forcibly to enter the building. Before gradually dispersing, the assembled crowd chanted demands to release both the flag and those taken into custody. To "maintain the authority of the state" and prevent further incidents, Heydrich had several of the leaders, including those of the clergy, arrested and ordered the dissolution of the Catholic youth groups in question. He later ordered a ban on all activities of Catholic associations throughout the entire diocese of Ermland.⁸⁸

Aside from Corpus Christi processions, church officials and disaffected Germans transformed other religious processions and pilgrimages during 1937 into both an occasion for affirming religious faith as well as an open political demonstration against the 'Church struggle' being waged by the Nazis. In the Catholic city of Aachen, a sacred pilgrimage to view certain relics, held every seven years, took on a decidedly political flavour in the summer of 1937, as city officials rejected requests by church functionaries for the traditional traffic control measures for the several days of the event. Although no flags were to be seen in the city--residents refused to raise the national flag, the only flag permitted--the major religious event drew tens of thousands, filling the streets and public squares, and overwhelming the city's churches. Participants paid homage to each of the visiting bishops with repeated ovations and in the streets Catholic youths demonstrated with songs punctuated with the refrain, "Christ is

⁸⁸BA, R 43II/177a/4, Heydrich to Hitler, 27 May 1937. In all, nine men were convicted as a result of the Heilsberg Corpus Christi 'riot'. The sentences ranged from three years imprisonment for Buchholz to six months for several of the Catholic youth association members. See BA, R 43II/177a,/5, Heydrich to Hitler, 21 July 1937.

the new era", a direct affront to the Nazis' own revolutionary claims of the 'new order'. Notwithstanding attempts by police to close off certain streets and public areas around the main churches associated with the event, and despite calls from leading church authorities for peaceful cooperation, the assembled crowds occasionally erupted into violent clashes with the police and Nazis, with numerous arrests reported. In the view of one *Sopade* reporter, the closing procession of 25 July, while comprised only of men, lasted for more than an hour and provided an "overwhelming" demonstration of religious faith against the anticlericalism of the Nazi activists.**

In Upper Silesia, meanwhile, a pilgrimage to St. Annaberg in August, normally limited to Catholic youth organizations, became a massive display of solidarity in response to Nazi persecution. By word of mouth, news of the "pilgrimage rally" circulated throughout the region, attracting an estimated 80,000 participants by the end of the first week. Despite every attempt by the Nazis to sabotage the pilgrimage, including the cancellation of trains, which forced the local population to make their way on foot to the point of assembly, the number of participants approached 170,000 men and women led by Cardinal and prince-bishop Bertram. Powerless against such overwhelming numbers, SA and SS as well as Gestapo officials resorted to distributing

**DBS, 4: 1165-69. 18 Sept. 1937. In Speyer, meanwhile, Gauleiter Bürckel, fearing an outright ban as too risky given the volatile mood of the Catholic population, resorted to cordoning off the area around the cathedral as a neutral zone and then closing off all adjacent streets, effectively nullifying the procession planned for 15 August. The following day, Bürckel issued a summons to all NSDAP members to maintain the strictest of surveillance on all such public religious events as a potential threat to Party and state. Ibid., 1176.

communist pamphlets in an attempt to subvert the demonstration. Accordingly, church officials announced that all such pamphlets were to be handed over, unread, to the police. In the view of *Sopade* activists, the mass demonstration was a success, as numerous miners, communists, socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses and even Jews took part. Even attempts by local mining operators to counter the appeal of the pilgrimage by holding a mining festival complete with free beer and sausage proved inadequate. In the factories and mines workers spoke of the successful "party rally" against Nazism. Unable to prevent the huge demonstration of solidarity at St. Annaberg, the Nazis took their revenge following the event as isolated groups and individuals made their way home. Incidents of intimidation took place as police and SA prevented those returning from carrying church flags, organizing small processions, or even walking more than two abreast. Disobedience led to violent altercations. The organized manner in which the Nazis carried out their actions against the participants in the pilgrimage clearly demonstrated their desire to erase the impression of the St. Annaberg pilgrimage as a "mass rally against Hitler".⁸⁷ In all probability, however, their actions only demonstrated the growing hostility between Nazism and Catholicism, and the widening chasm between the state and a substantial segment of the German people.

As such actions on the part of Party, state and police on one side and religious officials and active participants on the other suggest, public space remained a site of conflict. The more the Nazis sought to regulate religious events into oblivion, the more determined

⁸⁷Ibid., 1176-77.

church officials and dissident parishioners became in demonstrating solidarity in opposition to incursions of the NS-state. And while such public demonstrations against the Nazi state failed to hasten its demise, they did allow ordinary Germans to assemble publicly, close ranks and momentarily reinforce bonds of solidarity that would ultimately outlast the Third Reich itself.

FESTIVITY AND OPPOSITION IN RURAL AREAS AND TOWNS

Following their first harsh winter under Nazism, Germans in towns, villages and rural areas expressed their dissatisfaction with economic conditions by turning their backs on NSDAP sponsored festivities.⁸⁸ In late April 1934, for example, a *Sopade* report from Bremen claimed that a SA propaganda march through several outlying villages met with largely "indifferent" faces and the occasional "weak" display of the 'German greeting' from among a rural populace annoyed with the increase in the price of eggs.⁸⁹ Still, the festival provided a forum for the public expression of opposition and resistance beyond apathy or passive forms of refusal. For ordinary Germans the political power centered in Berlin and Munich appeared increasingly unassailable and remote. The only access to the levers of political power rested with local authorities. Under favorable circumstances Nazi leaders and their charges shaped a localized political culture characterized by an uneasy tolerance of one another's limitations. In less than propitious circumstances, however,

⁸⁸On the deterioration in the public mood in the first half of 1934, primarily due to continuing economic problems, and its negative impact on the popularity of the NSDAP, see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 64-65.

⁸⁹DBS, 1: 53-54, 17 May 1934.

local Nazi officials, the numerous and generally loathed 'Little Hitlers', squared off with the community and its individuals in intermittent confrontation. This was especially the case in villages and smaller towns where politics operated according to a more familiar and intimate set of relationships.⁹⁰

It was at the local level that Nazism was most vulnerable to opposition since ordinary and often suspicious Germans looked upon local Party functionaries as all too human, untouched by the aura of myth encompassing Hitler, or the hubris of power surrounding much of the upper echelon of the NSDAP. In the town of Friedberg located near Augsburg on the border between Schwabia and Bavaria, for example, a beer tent, temporarily erected for a local folk festival in July 1937 served as the site for a momentary act of protest against a detested public official.⁹¹ The incident involved Hans Hack, the former Nazi mayor discharged from office in December 1935 evidently for political lassitude, and his successor, the tyrannical Franz Xavier Schambeck, a Party member backed by both the local *Kreisleiter* Wilhelm Miller and *Gauleiter* Karl Wahl. As Hack, in the company of his wife and several hangers-on, entered the festive beer tent in which Schambeck was already seated, applause erupted among the majority of the two thousand festivalgoers

⁹⁰See the discussion of the 'Little Hitlers' and their responsibility for the decline in the popularity of the NSDAP in Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 96-102. On the significance of societal bonds in smaller localities and their effect on Nazi attempts to infiltrate all aspects of public life, see Peterson, *Limits*, 404-5. Also see Walter Rinderle and Bernard Norling, *The Nazi Impact on a German Village* (Lexington, 1993), 154-64.

⁹¹The following account is taken from Peterson, *Limits*, 386-401, esp. 394-95.

while the band played a rousing march in his honour.⁹² On one level the incident in the beer tent signalled a public demonstration of the internecine power struggle between rival Nazi factions vying for public support. Yet on another level it clearly reveals the potential for spontaneity, a reaction congruent with the festival event. In a sense those present in the tent played a supporting role to the main actors in the drama. Presumably Hack's entry into the festive beer tent was, as another Party official maintained, a calculated incitement designed to exacerbate feelings about "the already miserable conditions in Friedberg".⁹³ That Hack had played upon the aroused emotional state of the celebrants to humiliate the *Kreisleiter's* minion seems obvious. Conversely, however, it also seems likely that the entry of Hack into the delimited and transformed space of the festival beer tent altered the behaviour and expectations of the assembled patrons. Elevated beyond simply an enclosed place 'to get away from it all', with Hack's presence the beer tent became an arena for spontaneous revolt. For many of the patrons assembled within the beer tent, Schambeck, as burgo-master, represented the authority of the Nazi state and any direct public attack on his person or character would normally have been dangerous. In the charged and exceptional atmosphere of a festival beer tent, the summer air thick with the pungent smells of tobacco, sweat and spilled beer, patrons, presumably emboldened by alcohol and reinforced by the dynamic of group solidarity, shouted and sang in support of

⁹²Quoted in *ibid.*, 395.

⁹³Quoted in *ibid.*, 394-95.

Hack.⁹⁴ The apparent display of enthusiasm for the former mayor was, however, short-lived. The fact that Hack later departed the tent unnoticed suggests that the apparently spontaneous and momentary outburst of enthusiastic support for Hack was less than genuine and that the real motivation for the revellers inside the beer tent was to seize an opportune moment indirectly to attack a despised local Nazi authority with limited fear of reprisal. Since both men were Nazis, differing only in their official attitude towards their public responsibilities, neither offered an alternative to Nazi authority; hence, the display of support for Hack remained muted, his festive entry a pyrrhic victory for both the ex-mayor and his transient supporters.

Beyond the festival event itself, the extensive network of festive symbols appropriated by the Nazis served discontented Germans with a particularly demonstrative means for the public expression of dissent. This was nowhere more apparent than in the challenge offered by conservative villagers to Nazi attempts to appropriate traditional arboreal symbols such as the maypole.⁹⁵ In early May 1935 in the Upper Bavarian

⁹⁴That the spontaneous display of support for Hack was more an oblique demonstration against Schambeck is further supported by the fact that Hack quickly faded into political obscurity. Moreover, police records reveal that Schambeck, who remained mayor until the end of the war, had to contend throughout with a population that displayed a general lack of obedience to local authorities. See *ibid.*, 395, 402.

⁹⁵In their ideological zeal to gain control over the broad range of festive arboreal components, including the maypole, Nazi writers and festival organizers followed a political tradition dating from the French Revolution and extending through nationalist and social democratic circles in Germany. For a typical example of the importance placed on festal trees by the Nazis see *Sommersonnenwende*, 14. Also see Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany* (Athens, Ohio, 1984), 94-96. On the insurrectionist role of maypoles, liberty trees and other arboreal symbols during the French Revolution, see Ozouf, *Festivals*, 232-61. On the festive use of tree symbols among

rural community of Daring near Laufen an incident involving the traditional decoration of the maypole resulted in considerable embarrassment for local Party officials. According to a local newspaper, a group of youths had clandestinely erected a maypole adorned with small white and blue flags, the royal colours of Bavaria, in open defiance of Reich Interior Minister Frick's flag decree. Later, again under cover of darkness, the maypole had been mysteriously bored and sawed through. Consequently, led by Max Kammerer, the *Kreisleiter* for the district of Laufen, local Nazi and police authorities decided, for "reasons of security" and of maintaining civil obedience, to retrieve the offensive maypole. As a result, it was removed by local NSDAP and RAD members and, according to Party spokesmen, burned in the public drill square in Laufen as part of the Nazi summer solstice celebration. If such "foolishness" recurred, the newspaper warned, the "most severe measures" would be taken against any "saboteurs of the NS Volksgemeinschaft".⁹⁸

A month later, in mid-June, Nazi authorities identified the seven persons purported to be responsible for the action. Lorenz Geigl and his son Josef, and Peter Eder and his sons Peter and Josef were farmers. A sixth member of the conspirators, Johann Prechtel, was also the son of a farmer. Rounding out the group was Daniel Marer, a thirty year old Capuchin initiate from the local monastery. With the exception

German nationalists and socialists, see Dieter Düring, "Das deutsche Nationalfest von 1814: Matrix der deutschen Nationalfeste im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Oeffentliche Festkultur*, hrsg. Dieter Düring et al., 76; Beatrix W. Bouvier, "Die Märzfeiern der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter: Gedenktage des Proletariats- Gedenktage der Revolution," in *ibid.*, 335.

⁹⁸*Rupertigau-Bote*, 11 May 1935; and StAM, NSDAP 358, Geschäftsführer Ager to Ortsbauernführer Wurm, 2 Aug. 1935.

of fifteen year old Josef Eder, the conspirators, ranging in age from twenty-two through fifty-seven, could hardly be considered youthful and the erection of the blue and white maypole a "dumb boyish prank", as earlier press reports had inferred. Additionally, the five youngest belonged to the Catholic Youth Association and all seven were formerly "radical" BVP members.⁹⁷ This symbolic expression of Bavarian patriotism in open defiance of the flag law was a matter of such importance that Kammerer himself had collected the local newspaper clippings and forwarded them to the Gau news bureau for circulation in the Munich press.⁹⁸ Later, Kammerer was able to write Otto Nippold, deputy to the Gauleiter in Munich-Upper Bavaria, informing him that the entire affair had been resolved.⁹⁹

In the absence of any evidence from the seven men themselves, it is impossible to determine the exact nature of their protest. Presumably, however, the obvious political reference of the white and blue flags expressed strongly held traditional and conservative values rooted in the agrarian and Catholic region of Upper Bavaria. Moreover, it is perhaps more than coincidental that the reality of the Nazi 'blood and soil' agrarian policy had begun to sour for German farmers around 1935. Relative farm income was declining as was the availability of hired farm

⁹⁷StAM, NSDAP 358, Geschäftsführer to Kammerer, 14 June 1935. Quote from *Rupertigau-Bote*, 11 May 1935.

⁹⁸StAM, NSDAP 408, Kammerer to Gau-Presseamt, 8 May 1935. Following their identification the leader of the Gau press office requested information regarding the seven men. Ibid., Gau-Presseamtleiter Munich-Upper Bavaria to KL-Laufen, 10 June 1935.

⁹⁹StAM, NSDAP 303, Kammerer to Nippold, n.d.

labour.¹⁰⁰

Yet the symbolic act of protest itself provided the spark for a broader and more excoriating form of opposition. While the local press declared that the entire population was in an uproar over the incident, the appearance of numerous rumours critical of the maypole's removal belied the official claim.¹⁰¹ These rumours, as much as the symbolic defiance of the erection of the Daring maypole itself, prompted Party officials to carry out an intensive investigation in order to apprehend the suspected youths. In late May, a Party official, after making the rounds in the area of Tittmonig, reported that he had been repeatedly questioned by local farmers regarding the truth of rumours claiming that the Daring farmers had taken their complaint over the removal of the maypole to Ritter von Epp, the Bavarian *Reichsstatthalter*, who had in the interim severely reprimanded Kammerer. Moreover, further rumours declared that Epp had as punishment demanded of the *Kreisleiter* that the maypole be returned to Daring. "There is no doubt" the report concluded, "that there is among certain circles the intention to spread this thing in order to undermine the authority of the *Kreisleiter*".¹⁰² As the scurrilous rumours persisted throughout the region, an alarmed NSDAP official feared that they might undermine Party authority,

¹⁰⁰See Schoenbaum, *Social Revolution*, 163, 170-71. The introduction of military conscription in March 1935 accelerated a trend damaging to farm owners already affected by the ever increasing demands on labour by German industry. The real downturn in the material well-being of German farmers, however, came the following year. See Michael H. Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 88-91.

¹⁰¹*Rupertigau-Bote*, 11 May 1935.

¹⁰²StAM, NSDAP 358, Geschäftsführer Ager to KL-Laufen, 29 May 1935.

comparing their circulation to a poison affecting the body politic, a biological metaphor popularized in the ideological discourse of National Socialism.¹⁰³ To protect those farmers who supported the movement from possible doubt and confusion sown by "professional calumniators", the NSDAP official suggested that some form of action be taken.¹⁰⁴ Charged with investigating the origins of the rumours, the Nazi District Farm Leader submitted a report in July stating that although the Daring maypole had long since been burnt, "slandorous scoundrels" continued to spread "the most foolish" of rumours throughout the countryside.¹⁰⁵ Citing the District Farm Leader's report another official suggested that unless those responsible for the rumours were taken into police custody, they would continue their attempts to smear and to slander Nazi officials.¹⁰⁶

Clearly, Kammerer and other Nazi officials perceived the spread

¹⁰³Ibid., Geschäftsführer Ager to KL-Laufen, 14 June 1935: "When one continuously injects poison into the back of the body of the Volk, there will come the time when even a healthy body again will slowly become poisoned."

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., summary of report by Ortsbauernführer Wurm von Berghan of 30 June 1935 contained in letter of Geschäftsführer Ager to the KL-Laufen, 2 July 1935.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., Geschäftsführer to the KL-Laufen, 2 July 1935. Although it is not clear from the evidence whether anyone was arrested for spreading rumours the Nazi district office did issue border crossing restrictions for Anton Thalbilcher, a local restaurant owner and former member of the BVP, whose son had been overheard in a local restaurant claiming that because of the scandal over the Daring maypole ashes Kammerer and Epp had argued vehemently and, as a result, "in the near future" Kammerer would be "dismissed". Thalbilcher managed at least temporarily to elude the ban issued by the district office and mayor of the city of Laufen for "political unreliability" by obtaining an authorization from the Block leader in nearby Leobendorf. See correspondence in StAM, NSDAP 384.

of rumours as a serious threat to their own political legitimacy. It is equally clear that the claims of both the rumours themselves and the threat which they posed were exaggerated. This exceptional sense of urgency surrounding the "Daring Affair" is perhaps understandable since the refusal to participate in the attempt to uncover the rumourmongers, the open reception and spread of such rumours in effect established the complicity of a significant portion of the regional rural population. The "Daring Affair"--the raising of the 'white-blue' maypole and the subsequent rumours which began to circulate following its removal--also demonstrates the effectiveness of festive symbols in articulating public protest extending far beyond the event itself.

The symbolic form of protest involving the maypole in Daring was not an isolated event. In July 1933, in the Swabian town of Ottobeuren, a Hitler Oak was cut down. A subsequent police investigation led to the arrest of 30 members of the local 'Bavarian Watch' organization. All were later released due to lack of evidence. The following year the tree's replacement was felled with a saw. In an attempt to break the collective shroud of secrecy, local authorities offered a reward of RM 500 for information regarding the incident, without success.¹⁰⁷ In a small community in Upper Bavaria, meanwhile, local inhabitants decorated a maypole with Bavarian flags. These were forcibly removed by members of the HJ and SA. In the ensuing confrontation a number of fights broke out and in retaliation several Nazi maypoles were cut down. A police

¹⁰⁷One man was later arrested. See BayHStA, MA 106682, LbRPvS/N, 20 July 1933, 18 June 1934, 3 July 1934. Consonant with nationalist festive rites, Hitler Oaks and Hitler Lindens had been planted in communities across Germany in the days following the 'Day of Potsdam' on 21 March 1933. See Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 55.

riot squad was called in to quell the tumult. The melee resulted in the arrests of several persons and the removal of the local burgomaster.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, in June 1936, the Bavarian Political Police reported that a maypole adorned with a swastika had been bored through. The perpetrators had decorated the maypole with a message of their own, a note expressing a popular Nazi slogan: "And yet we have won". The physical and symbolic damage was such that Nazi authorities promptly removed the maypole.¹⁰⁹

While it is difficult to assess the individual motives of the dissidents in each of these incidents of symbolic and in the one case violent protest, it does seem evident that in asserting their political views in the public sphere these Germans intended to discredit the authority of local Nazis. Admittedly, their actions, which involved some risk in terms of bodily injury or incarceration, posed scant threat to those who inhabited corridors of Nazi power in Berlin and Munich. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that for ordinary Germans such protestations at the local level signified the first and necessary step towards defeating the Nazi dictatorship itself. At the same time, it must be stated that each of these acts of opposition occurred in the early years of the Reich when the possibility of removing the Nazis seemed less remote. The absence of similar incidents after 1936

¹⁰⁸BayHStA, MA 106691, LbRPvOB, 12 June 1935.

¹⁰⁹See Peterson, *Limits*, 419. Since the symbolic field of meaning associated with the maypole included sexual references to male fertility, the cutting down of the Nazi maypole presumably made local Nazi officials the target of a temporary yet effective joke. The sexual nature of the ceremony surrounding the maypole is mentioned in Ernst Hanisch, "Opposition to Nazism in the Austrian Alps," in *Germans Against Nazism*, eds. Nicosia and Stokes, 182.

suggests that the usual combination of blandishment and terror succeeded in all but silencing the dissident voices from this quarter.

While the incidents of symbolic and non-violent confrontation in Daring, Friedberg and elsewhere illustrate the ability of ordinary Germans to retain some measure of control over their lives against the encroaching Nazi state, they should not obscure the reality of the shifting terrain between compliance and dissent as expressed in German towns and villages. As was the reality elsewhere and across all levels of society, opposition to Nazism took on various forms of nonconformity and protest. Since the Nazis had effectively manipulated the electoral process to their advantage, thus limiting its effectiveness as an instrument for political expression, villagers were forced to vent their criticism through other channels, such as the festival, which permitted a degree of latitude regarding voluntary and autonomous choices and actions.

* * *

While the majority of Germans participated in one form or another in the festival culture of the Third Reich, a much smaller and indeterminate group of ordinary Germans, chief among them workers, Christians, townspeople, villagers and farmers, found in the festival one of the few areas open to the public expression of solidarity in opposition to the Nazi regime. And while much of the protest was planned before transgressing the festive boundary itself, solidarity could erupt spontaneously and be all the more cathartic for its unplanned character, as demonstrated by an incident in a Bavarian town during a local ~~midsummer~~ celebration. As Party formations marched through the streets

the townspeople looked on apathetically. According to the *Sopade* reporter, the SA *Sturmabannführer* at the head of his charges commanded the people to salute the flags, before finally leaping from the rows of marchers to slap the face of a man in the crowd. The man, a crippled war veteran, chastised the would-be liberator of Germany for hitting a frontline soldier who had been wounded before he himself had gone to school. Presumably sensing the older man's attempt to maintain a measure of dignity before Nazi brutality, those assembled supported the war veteran, shouting "bandits" and similar epithets in the direction of the parade. Even the SA men laughed at the rebuff suffered by their leader.¹¹⁰ In the collective effervescence stimulated and enclosed by the celebratory frame, empathy for the man manifested itself out of a presumably shared experience. This display of empathy was, however, bounded by the duration and route of the parade; beyond its borders compliance, in all its forms, with the dominating political culture of National Socialism was the rule of the day.

Still, given the extensive surveillance efforts of the police state on festive occasions, it is clear that Nazis feared the festival as a potentially dangerous instrument to foment protest. As a public forum for opposition and resistance the festival provided ordinary Germans with a comparatively safe means to express their rejection, in total or in part, of the Nazi regime. While the exceptional character of the festival may have intensified the force of protest displayed during the event, at the same time its ephemeral nature may have limited the significance of any acts of defiance beyond the event itself. For

¹¹⁰DBS, 2: 946, 21 Sept. 1935.

this reason its effectiveness as a vehicle for opposition in the Third Reich remains uncertain. It can be said, however, that the festival experience in the Third Reich, despite Nazi efforts to the contrary, proved incapable of fully resolving the contradictions of competing social groups in a modern pluralistic society. Moreover, while the isolated examples described above might well be representative of the limited and tactical nature of opposition in the Third Reich, they should not obscure the reality that on the whole the majority of Germans, including the groups discussed here, actively collaborated with Nazism, not least by actively participating in its festival culture. With the outbreak of war, as the final chapter will demonstrate, the margin for dissident festive behaviour narrowed considerably, not least because opposition was redefined in terms of treason. Nonetheless, as the German war effort soured, nonconformity with respect to Nazi public celebration increasingly became the norm rather than the exception.

CHAPTER 6

CELEBRATION AND LIFE, CEREMONY AND DEATH: FESTIVITY AND WAR

The outbreak of war marked a caesura for festival culture in Nazi Germany as it had evolved up to 1939. As the threat of war loomed, the nearly completed preparations in Nuremberg ground to a sudden halt with a press announcement on 26 August cancelling the Party rally, ironically named the Party Day of Peace, slated to begin 2 September.¹ In Munich, meanwhile, chief burgomaster Karl Fiehler delayed a decision to cancel the annual *Oktoberfest* until 26 September 1939.² A couple of months later, Goebbels instructed Party, state and police officials as well as carnival associations to suspend celebrations in Munich, Mainz, Cologne and elsewhere.³ In the ensuing months and years other festive and ceremonial occasions as well as holidays were postponed, transformed or cancelled. Yet the war brought an end neither to popular festivity, nor to specifically Nazi forms of celebration and ceremony.

Generally, the changing character of popular festivity and Nazi celebration and ceremony paralleled the twisting course of the war itself. While the military success and the victory celebrations that

¹Burden, *Party Rallies*, 164.

²BayHStA, MA 106811, Fiehler to Siebert, 2 Oct. 1939.

³HStAD, Regierung Aachen 23477, "Karnevalsveranstaltungen im Winter 1939-40," RfSSuCdDP, 27 Nov. 1939; also see Reppert to BDK, Munich, 17 Nov. 1939 in StADt, M1 IP no. 1624/84-85.

followed did much to buoy the popular mood and cement the bonds joining Party, military and the German population, orders calling for the display of flags and the ringing of bells throughout the Reich to mark German military victories ceased with the beginning of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941.⁴ Preoccupied with more immediate problems of warfare, the Nazi leadership tolerated folk festivals as a useful popular distraction from the war. Popular enthusiasm for the formal Nazi celebrations subsided as the war dragged on and German losses mounted. Gradually, they became solemn, simple affairs, a pale shadow of their former monumental and dynamic expression of renewed national confidence. Ultimately, Nazi celebration gave way to solemn commemorative ceremonies for the war dead. Yet these were as often ridiculed and shunned by ordinary Germans as they were observed, with many if not most of the survivors turning to the familiar customs associated with religious burial.

The apparent preoccupation with death should not obscure the fact, however, that the Nazis continued to allow and even encourage festival activity affirming the celebration of life. In the grand design of Nazi propaganda, especially after the catastrophe of

⁴BayHStA, MA 106676, MbRPvP, 10 Nov. 1939; MA 106683, MbRPvS/N, 10 June 1940. See also Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 152, 155-56, 159-60. Popular enthusiasm for the victory celebrations was by no means unanimous. The journalist Joseph C. Harsh counted barely a hundred people assembled to celebrate the German victory over Paris on the Wilhelmplatz in Berlin on June 14 1940. Nevertheless, Hitler's triumphant return to the capital on 6 July brought the festive masses into the public squares and streets. See Terry Charman, *The German Home Front, 1939-1945*, foreword by Martin Gilbert (London, 1989), 62.

Stalingrad, the war was cast as an epic "Life or Death" struggle.⁵ In the field and on the homefront Germans fought for the preservation of German *Kultur* against the weak superficiality of the Western "pluto-crats", the cultural Bolshevism of the Soviets and the racial toxemia of the Jews. This myth-bound cultural mission found expression in the apocalyptic theatre of Nazi wartime festivity. Despite the waning of public celebration during the war, the flow of festival discourse grew more voluminous in publications like *Die Neue Gemeinschaft*, the Nazi journal devoted to festivity, as increasingly isolated Party and state officials continued to develop ever more radical ceremonial forms to be implemented following the expected German victory.

Germany's political leaders recognized that unlike in August 1914 there was little popular enthusiasm for war in 1939.⁶ From the beginning the Nazis attempted to ease the burden of war on the general population. Although of marginal importance to the war effort as a whole, celebration, ceremony and ritual were seen as an effective means of shaping German cultural life with the express purpose of winning public support for Hitler's war aims. Three basic principles guided the rationale behind the Nazi instrumentalization of festival culture. First, distraction, in the form of popular entertainment, played a valuable role in deflecting public attention from the war. Second, festive diversion supplemented the massive propaganda machine created by Goebbels, Rosenberg and the entire Party apparatus that was designed to

⁵Robert Edwin Herzstein, *The War that Hitler Won: The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History* (London, 1979), 77.

⁶Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 50.

control and manipulate public attitudes in support of the war. Third, police coercion intensified and as a form of social control was utilized by the Nazis for their power struggle against the churches in the cultural sphere of ceremony and ritual.

DIVERSIONARY ENTERTAINMENT: POPULAR FESTIVALS AND THE WAR

Issuing a weekly situation report on working conditions during the second month of the war, a local Nazi official in Regensburg related the "unusual occurrences" involving the annual parish fair, or kermis, held over the long weekend from 14-16 October 1939. All areas of the district reported that workers, especially from the rural villages had left work early or had failed to show up for work again until the festival's close. "It is difficult", wrote the Nazi official, "to get this very old festival, which is, in effect, little more than a drinking and eating binge, out of old Bavaria." As the outbreak of war had not diminished the appeal of a popular celebration that served to reinforce the bonds between church and community, the official declared that it would be necessary to relocate the annual Nazi Harvest Festival to the middle of October, to coincide with and eventually supercede other traditional autumn festivals such as kermis.⁷

The emphasis on cultural edification over diversionary amusement informing the attitude of the Nazi official in Regensburg illustrates the dilemma facing the Nazi leadership regarding popular celebration during the war. At the beginning of the war, folk festivals, if not encouraged by the regime, were at least tolerated. As early as March

⁷BA NS 5I/62, Stimmungsbericht der Kreisverwaltung Regensburg vom 10. 1. mit 17.10.1939, Kreisobmann Regensburg, 18 Oct. 1939.

1940 the RMfVP, supported by the Economic and Interior Ministries as well as Himmler's police forces, instructed its officials to ensure that popular festivals preserved the "traditional character" of a *Heimat*-fest.⁸ Later, Fritz Sauckel, Gauleiter in Thuringia, demanded a decision from Berlin regarding the celebration of sharpshooting festivals and similar events. Either popular festivals should be proscribed and festival operators compensated in some way, Sauckel averred, or such events should be "silently tolerated" with no announcements or advertisements allowed in the press.⁹ Noting the need for tact, since Germans would find it "unbearable" should advertisements for sharpshooting festivals and amusement park events appear among obituary notices for soldiers killed in the war, Nazi officials insisted that popular festival events would not be so widely celebrated as in peacetime, to prevent the "appearance of a frolicsome gaiety" among the populace. It was expected that police and Party officials would impose appropriate restrictions on popular festivities which in any event would be limited to daylight hours as a precaution against aerial bombing

⁸StadtAM, Okt 260/7, RfSSuCdDP to Kreispolizeibehörden and RP, 25 Apr. 1940; BayHStA, Minn 72 678, RfSSuCdDP to Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer, 24 June 1940; StadtAM, Okt 260/7, RMfVP to Reichspropagandaämter, 10 Feb. 1941.

⁹BA, NS 18 alt/695, Tiessler, 7 June 1940. An SD report of June 1940 also acknowledged the need for a central decree to overcome the administrative confusion surrounding the regulation, at the local level, of fairs and amusement parks. The report cited as the primary concerns influencing regional administrative decisions, the relative danger of air attacks, economic interests, local practices such as in Dresden where agricultural workers were normally granted a paid holiday to attend fairs, and the widespread view among the populace that such popular events represented an affront to the soldiers engaged in the Western offensive. Significantly the report demonstrates the conflicting attitudes of the general public towards popular entertainment during the early period of the war. See *MadR*, 1271, 17 June 1940.

attacks.¹⁰ Martin Bormann urged propaganda officials to ensure that advertising for popular festivals not appear in the press.¹¹ From early on, then, tacit acceptance rather than public endorsement and support characterized the new policy of the Nazi leadership towards popular festivity. Yet inconsistencies continued to plague wartime popular festivity despite this new orientation.

In July 1941, Hartmann Lauterbacher, *Gauleiter* for South Hannover, informed officials in Berlin that he had refused requests to hold sharpshooting festivals in the region, since in his view the homefront had no more right to dance than to celebrate sharpshooting festivals, which, he added, had developed into a far more popular form of amusement than the original events held by various sharpshooting societies prior to the war. In response, Nazi authorities in Berlin and Munich, including the Propaganda and Economic Ministries and the Reich Chancellery, advised that the festivals be allowed to operate for several hours daily. Meanwhile, the officials noted several problem areas attending the festival industry in wartime: the idleness of factories crucial to the war effort due to able workers busy travelling about during the festival season building carrousels and the like; the taxing of critical energy resources, of gasoline and electricity, necessary for the operation of the modern festival; the limited supply of beer which posed a threat to the restaurant industry; and because of the restrictions placed on metals and other materials, the inferior

¹⁰BA, NS 18 alt/695, Tiessler, 7 June 1940; *ibid.*, Vorlage für den Stabsleiter, 2 June 1940.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Tiessler to Friedrichs, 9 June 1940.

products being offered festivalgoers. Inadequate access to railway transportation also caused considerable problems for festival organizers as the war continued. For these reasons at least one Nazi official anticipated a prohibition of popular festivals following the conclusion of the Russian campaign.¹² Consequently, Bormann informed Lauterbacher that in view of the unprecedented Russian operation the duration of sharpshooting festivals be limited to two days, a compromise solution, which, in his view, necessarily placed the needs of war above that of any one group's economic interests.¹³

Meanwhile, a Nazi liaison official representing the interests of the festival industry in the Reich Theatre Chamber expressed doubts concerning the public's acceptance of the press ban. The folk festival, he declared, was a means of diversion and amusement for a broad segment of the population. It was, he claimed, a place where the "simple man" and his family might find "gaiety and a release" from the tensions of wartime life. He added that the folk festival meant the same for the

¹²ibid., Witt to Tiessler, 5 July 1941; BA, NS 18/431, Tiessler to Goebbels, 2 Apr. 1942. Stressing the continued need for "diversion" among the German people, especially in towns and rural areas, Tiessler, a Reich Chancellery official, recommended that platform cars be made available for several days of the month to facilitate the transport of festival equipment.

¹³BA, NS 18 alt/695, Bormann to the RWM, [22 July 1941], Bormann to RMfVP, received 22 July 1941. Not surprisingly, folk festival celebrations were closely tied to the changing fortunes of war. Unlike the previous year, when the folk festival season (July-Aug.) followed the successful invasion in the West, the launching of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941 carried over into the summer festival season. Thus it was generally accepted that the homefront refrain from all forms of public festivity until the end of the campaign in the East, for psychological reasons as well as for the alleviation of labour and material shortages. See ibid., Witt, Veranstaltungen von Schützenfesten, 16 July 1941.

"little man" as the cabaret and vaudeville theatre, for which no advertising ban existed, did for the "man of means". Defending the ideal of the class-transcending *Volksgemeinschaft*, the official recommended that these forms of popular entertainment be treated equally, whether the end result be either a lifting, or an extension of the ban.¹⁴

In August 1941, the RPL advised Lauterbacher that the policy of "silent toleration" jointly issued through Bormann and Goebbels in the previous year would remain the official view. As in the case of the decision to allow dance music on the German radio in response to the common practice of *Luftwaffe* pilots tuning in to English broadcasts of jazz music, Nazi propaganda officials based their decision on the need of the average man for diversion and amusement. Moreover, they emphasized the need of German women for diversion offered by popular forms of entertainment, whether the cinema, theatre or cabaret, as a release from the daily care of children, the endless standing in queues, and the constant anxiety brought on by the war. Alluding to the wholesomeness of folk festivals in contrast to more dubious forms of popular entertainment, they suggested that it was not "the most unwholesome" among German women who would seek temporary release from the burdens of life for herself and her children at a folk festival. The preservation of folk festivals was especially important for rural areas where, with the

¹⁴Ibid., Tiessler, *Volksfestveranstaltungen*, 28 July 1941. In response, Nazi officials, while recognizing that the concerns raised by the liaison official were not so altogether unreasonable, recommended only that advertisements for cabarets and vaudeville be treated in a manner consonant with the circumstances of the war. See *ibid.*, Witt to Tiessler, 13 Aug. 1941. For a discussion of cabaret under National Socialism, including revues performed in concentration camps during the war, see Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, *Studies in Cultural History* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1993), chap. 8 and epilogue.

exception of the occasional film shown by Gau authorities, there existed few opportunities for the "necessary distraction" through popular entertainment. As for the issue of labour shortages in the war-related industries, officials insisted that since a visit to a folk festival acted as a "nerve-strengthening tonic" for the German people, the labour resources needed to maintain the festival industry played an indirect yet crucial role in the war effort.¹⁵

So long as the German economy was not placed on a total war footing, Nazi officials attempted to accommodate the interests of the festival industry. Beginning in 1940 in Munich, for instance, as a replacement for the *Oktoberfest*, folk festivals took place in Schwabing, Romersdorf and twice yearly in May and late August on the Zirkuswiese. The city also retained the *Auer Dult* (a combination folk festival and flea market held three times during the year at the end of April, July and October), the *Magdalenenfest* and the Christmas market. Regarded as "emergency measures" for the troubled carnival and fair industry, the two-week folk festivals held on the Zirkuswiese, for example, provided a source of revenue for approximately 60 to 75 festival operators.¹⁶

¹⁵BA, NS 18 alt/695, RPL to Lauterbacher, 20 Aug. 1941.

¹⁶Popular festivals also provided income for the municipality. For example the city of Munich earned approximately RM 13,000 annually from the two folk festivals. See StadtAM, Okt 260/7, Schubert to Dienststelle Feldpostnummer L25238, Munich and Stadtkommandantur Munich, 12 Apr. 1941; *ibid.*, Schubert to Christian Weber, 3 Apr. 1941; StadtAM, Okt 260/2, report "Volksfestveranstaltung auf der Zirkuswiese, Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 9 June 1941; StadtAM, Okt 260/3, report "Volksfestveranstaltungen auf der Zirkuswiese," Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 3 Sep. 1941; StadtAM, Okt 260/6, report, "Volksfest auf der Zirkuswiese," Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 27 May, 1942; StadtAM, Okt 260/7, report "Volksfest an der Martin-Greif-Strasse," Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 20 Aug. 1942.

But since the number of folk festivals declined sharply during the war the spaces allotted operators were at a premium and many were forced out of the industry. Although festival organizers and civic administrators, as in Munich, attempted to distribute the available spaces fairly by considering only those operators who had been shut out of the lottery on previous occasions, those businesses fortunate enough to secure space rarely found profits coming up to expectations. Along with the perpetual bane of inclement weather, those in the festival industry commonly faced the drawbacks of shorter hours of operation, flooded fairgrounds, air raid warnings, food and beer shortages, increased incidents of theft, especially of foodstuffs, and a series of other war-related problems. Yet even if festivalgoers complained of rising prices for admission or the quantity and quality of rides and goods available, folk festivals continued, especially on weekends, to attract people in droves, including large numbers of *Wehrmacht* soldiers, "foreigners" and "riff-raff" of both sexes.¹⁷

Gradually reduced to the periphery of the cultural landscape in Germany after the outbreak of war, folk festivals and other forms of popular celebration all but disappeared after the failed assassination

¹⁷StadtAM, Okt 260/3, report "Volksfestveranstaltungen auf der Zirkuswiese," Dezernat 2, Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 3 Sep. 1941; StadtAM, Okt 260/6, report, "Volksfest auf der Zirkuswiese," Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 27 May, 1942; StadtAM, Okt 260/7, report "Volksfest an der Martin-Greif-Strasse," Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, 20 Aug. 1942. Ibid. Authorities in Munich occasionally fined operators for excessive pricing. Yet the opportunity to consume food and drink for a price in excess of allowable rations was without doubt one of the most attractive features of folk festivals during the war.

attempt of 20 July 1944.¹⁹ The failed coup, in effect, confirmed Goebbels's claim that the policy of total war, which he had announced in a rousing speech on 18 February 1943 in the Sportpalast in Berlin only to be subsequently mired in bureaucratic inertia, required prompt resuscitation.²⁰ It was Bormann, however, who issued the first of a series of restrictions on folk festivals following the attempted assassination. It was "more imperative than ever", he declared in a directive of 1 August 1944, that the "broad masses" be convinced of the virtue of the Nazi leadership. Unlike in peacetime when no objections were raised regarding the participation of prominent Nazis in folk festivals, the present situation required that "unflagging and unrelenting" work and not celebration govern the behaviour of NS officials. In no way were Nazi leaders to give the "false impression" that they had the "time and need" to attend popular entertainments.²⁰ Later in the same month, Goebbels, in his new capacity as 'Reichs Plenipotentiary for Total War', banned all folk festivals, family celebrations, and other forms of popular entertainment.²¹ Through this series of prohibitive

¹⁹Often public space that served as temporary sites of festivity were put to other use during the war. The city of Munich leased the eastern part of the Theresienwiese, site of the *Oktoberfest*, to the *Luftwaffe*. Following the wishes of Himmler, a small northern section was converted into a children's playground. See StadtAM, Okt 260/7, Schubert to Dienststelle Feldpost Nr. L25238, 15 May 1941; *ibid*, "Theresienwiese," Dezernat 2 Abt Wirtschaft und Verkehr, Munich, 6 June 1941.

¹⁹See Heiber, *Goebbels*, 288-90, 303-5.

²⁰The seriousness of Bormann's directive was underscored with the declaration that violators would be removed from office. See BA, NS 6/347, 128-129, AO 167/44, Bormann, 1 Aug. 1944.

²¹BA, R 43/665/55-57, "Lebensstil im totalen Krieg," RS Goebbels, [n.d. presumably Aug. 1944]. See also Heiber, *Goebbels*, 307. At the same time, presumably fearing that any outward display of Nazi excess

decrees on the cultural life of the nation, Goebbels aimed to demonstrate not only to the German people but to Germany's enemies that no sacrifice was too great to bring the war to a successful end.

HOLIDAYS IN TIME OF WAR

The careful balancing act between work and leisure performed by the Nazis through the course of the war with respect to popular festivals also characterized the Party's manipulation of the holiday calendar. Of all the elements of festival culture affected by the war, none had a broader impact on German social life than the disruptions visited on the holiday calendar. Since the observance (or non-observance) of holidays affected the entire population, including foreign workers and prisoners of war, Nazi functionaries paid considerable attention to the recasting of time during the war, releasing a continuous stream of decrees pertaining to the lawful observance of national and religious holidays. For the Nazis it was a matter of establishing a uniform holiday schedule throughout the Reich, allowing for optimal productive output for the war effort while at the same time recognizing the need for periodic pauses from work for the psychological well-being of the population.²²

and privilege at a time when ultimate sacrifices were being demanded of all Germans might provoke public antipathy, Bormann issued a directive ordering all Nazis to refrain from "festive, alcohol-animated" comradeship evenings. See BA, NS 6/347/125, AO 159/44, Bormann, 28 July 1944. In view of the ration restrictions and mindful of the need for public support, Party officials had made early attempts to eliminate the conspicuous consumption characterizing Nazi celebrations. In Feb. 1941, for instance, Bormann instructed NSDAP officials that for the duration of the war only single pot meals (*Eintopfgericht*) were to be served during banquets. See RVBl, AO A 6/41, 1 Mar. 1941, in BA NS 6/821.

²²Helmut Heiber, ed., *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP*, Veröffentlichung des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Teil I, II, and microfiche (Munich, 1983), 101 21375-81, RmdI, Dec. 1939; *ibid.*, 101

Although they were sensitive to public criticism, the measures introduced did little to win the support of the working population. Of the four statutory Nazi holidays--Heroes' Memorial Day, 1 May, Harvest Thanksgiving Day and 9 November--only 1 May and 9 November were fixed Nazi holidays to be observed on the day on which they fell, with the other two movable feasts falling on a Sunday. In 1942, however, with the war escalating, the Nazis postponed the 1 May holiday until the weekend so as not to affect work production. Moreover, in stark contrast to the massive display of national solidarity characteristic of 1 May celebrations before the war, and despite efforts by Nazi ideologues to revive popular May festival customs, the postponed observance of the Nazi holiday was, with the ordered closing of all factories, little more than a normal Sunday day of rest for German workers.²³ That same year, Party officials were required to work on 9 November, the most solemn of Nazi holidays.²⁴

To be sure, NSDAP propagandists published numerous essays, archetypal ceremonial forms, song collections, sample speeches and other

21432/2, RMdI, 24 Mar. 1944, henceforth IfZ, AdP-K (mf).

²³IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 101 21418-19, Bormann to Obersten Reichsbehörden, 1 Apr. 1942. Recognizing the ill effect on worker morale resulting from the postponement of 1 May, the Nazis restored the holiday to its fixed place for the final two years of the war. See BA, NS 8/190/104, RS, Bormann, 5 Apr. 1944. Proposals for the renewal of May festival traditions were included in *DnG* 10 (Mar. 1944): 132-35, 138-43, 145-53. For once, Goebbels expressed the sentiments of most Germans when he wrote in his journal: "What a difference from earlier 1 May [celebrations]. Then an intoxicating day of festivity, now a day of rest." In Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 4: 139.

²⁴IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 03410, AO 44/42, Schwarz (Reichsschatzmeister), 10 Dec. 1942. The order also encompassed the non-statutory Nazi holidays 30 January and 20 April (Hitler's Birthday).

items of festivity, expressly designed to animate the ties binding Führer and Volk, Party and Wehrmacht through the "simple yet dignified" observance of the non-statutory Nazi holidays.²⁵ Nonetheless, for the duration of the war, the Nazi holidays of 30 January, 24 February, 20 April (Hitler's birthday), and 9 November as well as Christmas and New Year became little more than occasions for speeches by Hitler, Goebbels, Göring and other top Nazis, broadcast over the radio, or filmed for later viewing by the moviegoing public. While the holiday speeches, according to internal opinion reports, often bolstered public morale at critical moments during the war, the effect was altogether evanescent.²⁶ When interrupted, however, they had a negative impact on the public mood. For example, Hitler's failure to speak on the occasion of 9 November in 1944 resulted in widespread rumours of his ill health and a

²⁵The structure of these hour-long NSDAP ceremonies, normally held in the morning or evening, combined an opening fanfare, marches, music and song, the oath to the Führer, speeches, recitations of poems and epigrammatic prose, and closing with the national anthems. Instructions and sample speeches for the 30 January holiday are found in *DnG* 37 (Jan. 1940): 5-6; *ibid.*, 8 (Jan. 1942): 5-8; *ibid.*, 8 (Dec. 1942): 687-704; *ibid.*, 9 (Dec. 1943): 587-92, 635-37; *ibid.*, 10 (Dec. 1944): 555-59. For 24 February, see *ibid.*, 8 (Feb. 1942): 54; *ibid.*, 9 (Jan. 1943): 19-27; *ibid.*, 9 (Dec. 1943): 603-8; *ibid.*, 11 (Jan. 1945): 8-11. For Hitler's birthday celebrations, which incorporated the initiation ceremonies for 10 year old German children into the Deutsche Jungvolk and Jungmädelsbund and which evidently retained something of their peacetime popular appeal until 1943, see *ibid.*, 51 (Mar. 1941): 13-19; *ibid.*, 8 (Mar. 1942): 131-41; *ibid.*, 9 (Feb. 1943): 104-5; *ibid.*, 10 (Feb. 1944): 108-17. See also Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 159, 197-98, 213-14.

²⁶BayHStA, MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 10 Jan. 1940, 8 Mar. 1940 9 Dec. 1940; MA 106676, MBRPvP, 12 Mar. 1940; MA 106684, MBRPvS, 8 Feb. 1941, 8 Nov. 1941; MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 9 Feb. 1941, 10 Mar. 1942, 10 Feb. 1943; MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 Mar. 1941, 9 Dec. 1941, 10 Feb. 1942, 11 Apr. 1943, 10 Nov. 1943; MA 106696, MBRPvUF, 8 Dec. 1943; MA 106696, MBRPvOF/MF, 7 Dec. 1943, 8 Feb. 1944, 10 Jan. 1945; MA 106696, MBRPvNB/OP, 10 Mar. 1945; MA 106696, MBRPvUF, 9 Dec. 1943, 13 Jan. 1944, 5 Feb. 1944, 9 Jan. 1945.

possible takeover by SS Führer Himmler.²⁷ Presumably the dislodging of these holidays from their fixed positions in the Nazi year also diluted their exceptional meaning for Nazis and contributed to the deterioration of public interest in NS organized celebrations.

Redefining traditional holidays as work days, even if only as a temporary wartime measure, sparked considerable anxiety among the working population. In December 1939, for instance, rumours were rife throughout the Reich that the Christmas and New Year's holidays were to be declared work days. According to an SD report, the rumours provoked considerable criticism among the entire population and especially among workers.²⁸ Similar confusion and unrest permeated the air in factories in the weeks before 1 May in 1940.²⁹ It was the manipulation of traditional religious holidays, whether lawfully recognized or not, however, that most inflamed public discontent.

Ostensibly, religious holidays fell under the regulatory command of the Four Year Plan.³⁰ Yet the measures introduced to restrict religious freedom in the observance of church holidays clearly exceeded any imperatives of economic production. Several months into the war, the Interior Minister, Wilhelm Frick, suspended the right of individual *Länder*, as well as the occupied territories of Bohemia, Moravia and the

²⁷BayHStA, MA 106696, MbRPvUF, 8 Dec. 1944; MA 106696, MbRPvOF/MF, 9 Dec. 1944; MA 106696, MbRPvNB/OP, 11 Dec. 1944.

²⁸MadR, 516, internal situation report no. 23, 1 Dec. 1939.

²⁹MadR, 973-74, internal situation report no. 74, 8 Apr. 1940.

³⁰In Protestant areas such as Saxony, Reformation Day (October 31) was also postponed to Sunday. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 101 21355, Dr. Stahn to RmdI, 3 Oct. 1940.

Warthegau, to establish statutes governing the observance of religious holidays.³¹ Consequently, several Catholic holy days lost their legal status and were considered normal working days.³² For the duration of the war official observance of Corpus Christi and Ascension Day, as well as the Protestant holiday, Repentance Day, took place either on the previous or following Sunday.³³

Meanwhile, Hans Kerrl, the Minister of Church Affairs, advised that any attempt to submit religious holidays to state regulation would be impossible to enforce.³⁴ Initially, Hitler seemed to agree with Kerrl, but later reverted to Frick's proposal as a result of the intervention of the Party's virulent anticlerical elements, namely Goebbels and Bormann.³⁵ As Kerrl anticipated, the disruptions visited on church festivals during the war met with varying responses among the populace. Prior to Frick's reorganization of the holiday calendar in the first months of the war, an SD report of November 1939 claimed that

³¹Ibid., 101 21383-84, RS, Frick, 6 Apr. 1940; *ibid.*, 101 21396-97, Frick to Reichsstatthalter in Warthegau, 27 June 1940; *ibid.*, Frick to Reichsprotektor in Bohemia and Moravia, 28 June 1940.

³²The holidays affected included: Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, St. Peter's and St. Paul's Day, Mary's Assumption, and All Saint's Day. The three holidays of Easter were not affected. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 101 21382, RS regarding Easter holidays, Frick, 18 Jan. 1940; *ibid.*, 101 21394, RS, Frick, 27 June 1940; *ibid.*, 101 21355, Dr. Stahn (Reich Ministry for Church Affairs) to Bormann, 3 Oct. 1940. The Nazis imposed particularly severe measures on the Catholic community in the Warthegau province in Poland. See Conway, *Nazi Persecution*, 311-27.

³³IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 101 21385-87, RS, Frick, 11 Apr. 1940; *ibid.*, 101 21355, Dr. Stahn to Frick, 3 Oct. 1940; RGBl Teil I, no. 54, 269, 17 May 1941, in HStAS, E 130b, Bü 1105; *ibid.*, RGBl Teil I, no. 122, 662, 28 Oct. 1941.

³⁴IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 101 21385-87, RS, Frick, 11 Apr. 1940.

³⁵Ibid., 101 21391, Kerrl to Bormann, 12 June 1940.

the postponement to Sunday of the Protestant Repentance Day was accepted throughout the Reich "without comment and with understanding"; despite concerns voiced among some circles of the Protestant clergy that such actions would result in the gradual disappearance of all church holidays. The report also expressed alarm over the potential effect on the national morale that a continuation of the practice might have.³⁶

The response of Catholic Germans, meanwhile, was generally more pronounced. In December 1939, reports from various Catholic regions observed that numerous workers had defied a state order declaring the Catholic feast day, Mary's Conception, a working day for those in war-related industries. Since it had never been officially recognized as a state holiday, the refusal to work gained added weight as a transparent and open act of disobedience by Catholic workers, most notably in Upper Silesia.³⁷ Additional reports suggested that the new holiday laws had resulted in isolated displays of discontent in Catholic regions.³⁸ Undaunted, Frick intended even more sweeping measures for the following year, despite Kerrl's reservations that excessive restrictions on religious practices would only arouse a storm of public condemnation. Alleging that the churches were defying the wartime measures by

³⁶MadR, 495, internal situation report of 24 Nov. 1939.

³⁷MadR, 568, reports from the Reich, no. 28, 13 Dec. 1939. As a result police authorities increased their surveillance of church officials suspected of prompting the work stoppages.

³⁸On the first Corpus Christi Day of the war, for example, much of the working population in Catholic areas acted predictably, viewing the rescheduling of the religious holiday as a deliberate provocation, with a significant number electing to defy Nazi regulations by refusing to work. See BayHStAM, MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 10 June 1940; MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 10 June 1940.

continuing to hold special ceremonies in observance of religious holidays on the day on which they fell, Frick prohibited holiday religious services during working hours. No fewer than seventeen days of the Catholic and Protestant calendars were affected.³⁹ Despite the general public disapproval of the measures and many instances of dissidence in Catholic areas during Corpus Christi in 1940, the Nazis chose coercion over accommodation. To compel farmers, agricultural workers and others to comply and to reduce the likelihood of sabotage, the Nazis introduced stiff fines and imprisonment.⁴⁰ Hence any grumbling or opposition could be regarded as unpatriotic acts of sabotage tantamount to treason.⁴¹

Still, while these coercive measures largely succeeded in forcing the compliance of the clergy in the observance of religious holidays, they failed to prevent worker absenteeism on religious

³⁹IfZ, *AdP-K (mf)*, 101 21356-58, RS, Frick, 12 Jan. 1941. Kerrl pointed out that many elderly religious Germans, especially women, who were not directly involved in the war economy, would be deeply affected by such an extensive attack on religious freedom in Germany. Moreover, he noted the absurdity of restricting religious ceremonies on holidays when it was normal practice for churches to hold services during working hours throughout the week. See *ibid.*, 101 21359-60, Schnellbrief, Kerrl, 25 Jan. 1941. Later in the war, Frick even proposed making Good Friday a work day but eventually dropped the idea. Frick intended to issue a decree making Good Friday and the Nazi holiday, 1 May, work days because of the relatively large number of holidays falling within a short period of time. In this way he hoped to deflect criticism that the measure represented another attack on the churches. See *ibid.*, 101 21409-413, Schnellbrief, Frick, 4 Mar. 1942. On the various Nazi religious holiday laws, see also Helmreich, *German Churches*, 322-23.

⁴⁰IfZ, *AdP-K (mf)*, 101 21402, Bormann to Lammers, 27 Apr. 1941; *ibid.*, 101 21405-06, Schnellbrief, Frick, 11 May 1941.

⁴¹Presumably public hostility was further exacerbated by occasional decrees temporarily forcing specific economic groups such as agricultural workers to work on Sundays and holidays. See, for instance the circular issued by Frick on 25 Feb. 1942 in HStAS, E130b/Bü 1105.

holidays.⁴² In rural areas fields often remained empty as farmers and agricultural workers, among them Poles and prisoners of war, devoted themselves to religious observance of Corpus Christi, Ascension Day, All Saint's Day and other festive days of worship.⁴³ Many Germans feared that the new laws were anything but temporary, believing that the Party intended to all but eliminate the observation of religious holidays after the war if not before.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, however bleak the prospect for freedom of worship, Germans in cities, towns and villages across the Reich expressed their religious sentiments on Christian holidays through profuse decoration of houses and streets, church attendance and, especially on Corpus Christi Day, active participation in processions.⁴⁵

⁴²Although most church officials respected the wartime holiday regulations, infractions were not uncommon among both Catholic and Protestant clergy. Police officials laid numerous charges and fines, especially after the passing of a new law on 15 May 1941, against a number of church officials for violations arising out of unlawful ceremonial on the occasions of Corpus Christi Day and Mary's Assumption. See BayHStA, MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 9 Sept. 1940; 11 Feb. 1942; MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 9 Sept. 1940; MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP of 8 Aug. 1941, 7 Sept. 1941, 8 Aug. 1942; MA 106684, MBRPvS, 10 Dec. 1941, 11 Aug. 1942, 10 Nov. 1943; MA 106696, MBRPvOF/MF, 8 Mar. 1944.

⁴³BayHStAM, MA 106684, MBRPvS, 8 Apr. 1941, 10 June 1941, 8 July 1941, 10 Apr. 1942, 8 June 1942, 9 July 1942; MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 Apr. 1941, 8 June 1941, 8 July 1941, 9 Dec. 1941, 10 Apr. 1942, 9 June 1942, 10 July 1943; MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 11 June 1941, 11 July 1941; MA 106696, MBRPvNB/OP, 10 June 1944; MA 106696, MBRPvOF/MF, 8 Feb. 1944, 9 June 1944, 6 July 1944, 8 Sept. 1944, 8 Nov. 1944.

⁴⁴BayHStAM, MA 106681, MBRPvUF of 11 July 1941, 13 Oct. 1941; MA 106684, MBRPvS, 10 June 1941, 8 July 1941, 8 June 1942. See also Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, 333-34.

⁴⁵BayHStAM, MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 July 1941, 8 Aug. 1941, 8 July 1942, 10 July 1943; MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 11 July 1941; MA 106684, MBRPvS, 9 July 1942, 9 July 1943. Although participation in Corpus Christi processions remained strong in 1944, women comprised the overwhelming majority of those attending the event. See MA 106696, MBRPvOF/MF, 6 July 1944; MA 106696, MBRPvNB/OP, 10 July 1944.

According to an SD report, moreover, by early November 1942, with the war still favouring the Germans, the widespread and spirited commemoration of All Saints' Day on 1 November, which conveniently fell on a Sunday, clearly showed that traditional religious customs remained firmly rooted among the Catholic population. The report added, somewhat paradoxically, that the Catholic holiday, along with the Protestant Memorial Day, was becoming more and more a day of commemoration for the familial war dead with a commensurate dissociation from the church. Yet since even the prohibitively high cost of cut flowers and wreaths failed to deter the commemorative decoration of graves, it is more likely that ordinary Germans when confronted with the dislocations of war found expression in traditional ways; that is, through a familiar culture whose constructs of space and time as well as many of its artifacts, were informed by religious convention. Many Germans, moreover, regarded the traditional religious commemorations attending All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day as an opportunity to shun the Nazi artifice of ideology, rites and customs commonly associated with the Heroes' Memorial Day in March and 9 November.⁴⁶

Similarly, despite the continued efforts of the Nazis to recast Advent and Christmas in the form of a popular national festival steeped in Nordic mythology and German folklore, the holiday season witnessed an extremely active church attendance, the congregations swelled by soldiers on leave.⁴⁷ While the Party invited all Germans to share in

⁴⁶MadR, 4546-49, report no. 341, 7 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁷BayHStAM, MA 106683, MbRPvS/N, 9 Dec. 1940; MA 106674, MbRPvNB/OP, 11 Jan. 1942.

the "German War Christmas" by attending NSDAP celebrations that combined festive decorations, music and song, poetry, and speeches, by contributing to official toy drives, as well as by adopting Nazi Christmas customs in the home, the religious sentiments of Germans during the holiday season were not diminished.⁴⁸ This trend, doubtless influenced Goebbels's decision to limit media exposure of the festive season from 1939 onwards.⁴⁹ Thus the efforts of the Nazis to hitch the wheels of their cultural struggle against the church to the requirements of economic production proved unsuccessful. Germans remained largely indifferent to state incursions into religious life.

THE RADICALIZATION OF NAZI FESTIVAL CULTURE

The shift in Nazi policy toward popular forms of festivity as a means of diversion and amusement coincided with the increasingly necessary emphasis on industrial production at the expense of holiday observance and celebration. Yet these parallel developments did not mean a wholesale abandonment of ideological principles informing celebration and ceremony in the life of the nation. Instead, instruction and edification in the

⁴⁸In its most radical form, the thrust of NSDAP propaganda with regard to Christmas, Easter and the entire cluster of religious based festivals remained committed throughout the war to the imposition of a Nazi popular culture constructed in part on their distinctive interpretation of pre-Christian Nordic mythology. For Nazi Christmas celebrations see, *DnG* 36 (Dec. 1939): 1-17; *ibid.*, 8 (Nov. 1942): 621-638; *ibid.*, 9 (Oct./Nov. 1943): 531-38, 543-60; *ibid.*, 10 (Oct./Nov. 1944): 450-51, 459-68, 477-79, 481-520, 527-41. For similar attempts to recast Easter and Whitsun as Nazi springtime festivals, see *ibid.*, 10 (Feb. 1944): 79-81, 86-88, 91-95; *ibid.*, 10 (Apr./May 1944): 202-5.

⁴⁹Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, 3: 672, 674-75. As he wrote in his journal on 18 December 1942: "It won't do for the people in these difficult times to fall too much for the sentimental magic of these festival days." In *The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943*, ed. Louis P. Lochner (Garden City, 1948), 250.

national folklore and customs shifted from the relatively reasonable intentions of the KdF to the increasingly fanatical ideas and aims entertained by Goebbels and Rosenberg. This transformation resulted in part from the intense and protracted power struggle waged among Goebbels, Rosenberg and Ley and mediated by Bormann as each sought to redefine their peacetime administrative empires according to the dictates of war.⁵⁰

Goebbels took the initiative in trying to bring all festival activity within his ambit. In January 1940 the RPL informed propaganda officials at the Gau level that while cooperation with other departments was to be encouraged, responsibility for the form and organization of festivity was to remain a task of the propaganda office.⁵¹ This provoked Rosenberg, who resented potential encroachment in the area of *Lebensfeiern* (life celebrations).⁵² As a result, in May Bormann addressed the issue for the first time in the war.⁵³ His solution, in the form of an internal order, in effect maintained the status quo in favour of Goebbels. In a private conversation with Hess, meanwhile, Rosenberg had been assured that the *Lebensfeiern* would remain his responsibility.⁵⁴ Rather than clarifying the issue, Bormann's initial

⁵⁰For a description and analysis of the administrative struggle over individual ministerial competence regarding festivals and ceremony, see Vondung, *Magie*, 55, 57, 62-69.

⁵¹IfZ, *AdP-K* (mf), 126 02204, Fischer to all GL, 22 Jan. 1940.

⁵²BA, NS 8/183/38-39, Urban to Friedrichs, 3 Feb. 1940.

⁵³BA, NS 6/820/110, AO A 60/40, Bormann, 7 May 1940, in RVBl, 20 May 1940.

⁵⁴BA, NS 8/184/192, "Aktennotiz über Rücksprache mit dem Stellvertreter des Führers am Donnerstag, 30.5.1940," Rosenberg, 31 May 1940.

attempt to define the contours of Nazi festivalia only served to exacerbate administrative tensions stemming from the competing territorial claims over public celebration.⁵⁵

Consequently, in August 1941, Bormann prepared another directive regarding the ministerial responsibility for the organization of NSDAP festivity. Seemingly designed to provide a uniformity of direction and purpose, the directive sought to end the internecine power struggle among Goebbels, Rosenberg and Ley. According to the new order, Goebbels retained overall responsibility for Reich and calendrical holiday celebrations. The Propaganda Ministry also retained responsibility for the formalization, regulation and supervision of all public ceremonies, including so-called morning and evening ceremonies as well as Party rallies from the Gau level down.⁵⁶

Rosenberg meanwhile gained complete control over the conceptualization and supervision of *Lebensfeiern* and *weltanschauliche*

⁵⁵See, for example, IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 00619-20, Rosenberg to Goebbels, 4 June 1940; BA, NS 8/172/179-80, RPL to Rosenberg, 14 June 1940.

⁵⁶The holidays within Goebbels's ambit included in order of occurrence: Seizure of Power Day, Heroes' Memorial Day, Nazi Youth Pledge, Hitler's Birthday, 1 May, Mother's Day, midsummer, Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, 9 November, Remembrance Day, Winter Solstice and Christmas (*Volksweihnachten*). See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00397-401, 117 00415-17, AO-A../41, "Zuständigkeit in der Feiargestaltung", Aug. 1941. The hour-long 'morning ceremonies' combined music, songs and speeches and often commemoration of Nazi heroes (Dietrick Eckart, Albert Leo Schlageter) under a single motif designed to fortify the ideological commitment to the war. Typical of this thematic ceremonial form were events organized around Hitler's oft-repeated phrase: "He who has faith in his heart, possesses the greatest strength in the world", or destiny-bound slogans like "German Volk, this hour is your hour". See *DnG* 8 (Nov. 1942): 595-615; *ibid.*, 9 (Jan. 1943): 35-40; *ibid.*, 9 (Feb. 1943): 96-106; *ibid.*, 9 (Mar. 1943): 174-82; *ibid.*, 10 (June/July 1944): 301-9, *ibid.*, 10 (Sept. 1944): 415-17.

Feierstunden (ideological ceremonies). The Office for Folklore and Festival Organization, likewise the RAD, formerly part of Ley's bureaucratic empire, were also placed under Rosenberg's control in matters of popular celebration. In a diminished capacity, Ley, as ROL and head of NSDAP training and instruction, was charged with the preparation of the public events of the Propaganda Ministry as well as Rosenberg's ceremonies within the Party. This meant that his administration would, in future, be limited to the logistical problems of transport and accommodation, the assignment of NSDAP political leaders and the preparations for roll-calls, special assemblies and marches. As a consolation, however, Ley maintained control over the organization of the Party rally in Nuremberg.⁵⁷

The ancillary Nazi organizations, especially the various youth organizations, were to place themselves at the disposal of Nazi festival organizers as they had in the past. They too retained control over their own celebrations and ceremonies but were to heed the guidelines and suggestions emanating from the ministries headed by Goebbels and Rosenberg. Festivities of NSDAP associations, especially the DAF for ceremonies in celebration of the release of apprentices, the awarding of the master title, or celebrations involving workers and managers, and the NSV for celebrations in hospitals and kindergartens, remained the

⁵⁷IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00397-401, 117 00415-17, AO-A../41, "Zuständigkeit in der Feiergusaltung", Aug. 1941. Bormann did however manage to maneuver himself into the position of leader of the Party rally committee (*Zweckverband Reichsparteitag Nürnberg*) in charge of construction on the site, following the death, in 1941, of Hans Kerrl, the committee's chief since its inception in March 1935. See BA, R43 II/1194a, Liebel to Lammers, 24 Dec. 1941; *ibid.* Bormann to Lammers, 20 Jan. 1942.

responsibility of their respective leaders. Still, they were required to respect the guidelines established under the direction of Goebbels and Rosenberg. Finally Ley's KdF leisure organization and the Central Office of Culture in the RPL were to coordinate their inventories of choirs, bands, orchestras, amateur theatre companies and other cultural groups which would be placed at the disposal of local propaganda and training officials. Further bureaucratic maneuvering by Goebbels, Rosenberg and Ley, which resulted in only minor changes, delayed the implementation of the directive until 23 May 1942.⁵⁵

In a sense, Rosenberg gained most from the new administrative arrangements, chiefly at Ley's expense. While Goebbels retained control over the 'major events' the demands for simpler and more solemn celebrations largely obviated the need for the Propaganda Minister's special talents for festival organization. Rosenberg, on the other hand, solidified his position in the area where the Nazis hoped to make inroads into the cultural sphere during the war. In the end, Rosenberg's ascendancy, coupled with the diminution of Ley's influence, resulted in a more radical conceptualization of festive forms for the duration of

⁵⁵IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00397-401, 117 00415-17, AO-A./41, "Zuständigkeit in der Fei ergestaltung", Aug. 1941; cf. AO A 25/42, Bormann, 23 May, 1942 in RVBl, 21/42, 27 May, 1942, in BA, NS 6/821/211. Among the extensive correspondence between Bormann and the other three between the draft of the order and its implementation, especially the rejection of Ley's suggestion that all cultural means be incorporated into his own KdF, see BA NS 8/193/18-22, Ley to Bormann, 2 Sept. 1941; IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00402-03, Rosenberg to Ley, 9 Sept. 1941; *ibid.*, 117 00392-96, Bormann to Ley, 23 Oct. 1941; *ibid.*, 117 00390-91, Ley to Bormann, 10 Nov. 1941; *ibid.*, 117 00386-87, Bormann to Ley, 3 Dec. 1941. In a rare occurrence, Ley was even forced by Bormann to revoke an order declaring his authority in the organization of all celebrations (including *Lebensfeiern*) within the NSDAP. See *ibid.*, 117 00287, AO 9/41, Ley, 3 July 1941; *ibid.*, 126 02645-46, Bormann to Ley, 10 July 1941; and Ley's response to Bormann on 17 July 1941, in *ibid.*, 117 00436-39.

the war. Meanwhile, Bormann's order revealed itself to be little more than an ineffective compromise. Administrative squabbles persisted and any cooperation among the three Nazi leaders was at best forced.⁵⁹

The war brought ever more radical attempts to shape public and private culture according to the aesthetic style of Nazism. Some, like Rosenberg's ideological ceremonies, were designed primarily for internal Party consumption. Others, such as the life celebrations, also a product of Rosenberg's office, targeted family celebrations at the expense of the churches. Goebbels on the other hand, focused his talents on public celebrations that spotlighted specific social groups such as women and the rural population. The massively choreographed spectacles arranged by Goebbels that had placed their stamp on festival culture in peacetime fell from favour after 1939. Goebbels nevertheless continued to organize public festivals on a more limited scale through the Central Office for Culture and his Propaganda Ministry. Conspicuous among these were his efforts to manufacture support for the war among rural Germans by accentuating the celebration of Harvest Thanksgiving Day beginning in 1942. "The meaning of the festival in the war" wrote a Nazi propaganda official, "is the honoring of the rural Volk as an especially important bearer of the struggle of the *Heimat*".⁶⁰ As conceived by Nazi propaganda officials, the day's festivities blended the ceremonial awarding of decorations to deserving rural Germans with informal family-centred

⁵⁹Meetings held between Rosenberg and Ley regarding celebrations within the Party educational curriculum for instance proved to be especially strained and unproductive. In IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 03191-92, Rosenberg to Bormann, 24 July 1942; BA, NS 8/194/131-34, Ley to Rosenberg, 18 Dec. 1942.

⁶⁰DnG 8 (Aug. 1942): 418-30, esp. 421.

celebrations based on rural traditions of the maypole, folk dances and songs, games, and excursions into the countryside. As with much of Nazi wartime festivity, a brief commemoration of the war dead was included among the day's events. To close out the festivities, rural Germans were expected to attend Nazi "village community evenings", commonly held in the local tavern, for a few hours of organized sociability and entertainment.⁸¹

Evidently the Propaganda Minister encountered numerous snags in his efforts to assemble a cast and audience for this pastoral theatre. Reports compiled by the SD suggest that the festive programs scripted for Harvest Thanksgiving Day in 1942 and 1943 met with nearly unanimous public disfavour. Though isolated cases of strong public interest in the NS harvest festivities were reported by SD officials, chiefly at the larger and better equipped events at the Gau level, the overwhelming majority of the reports collected from sources across the Greater Reich characterized the participation of the general population as deplorable. For some regions the holiday events were a "singular catastrophe". Festival organizers in rural areas stared from the stage of makeshift festive halls into a scattered audience consisting mainly of the membership of the NSDAP, HJ, BDM and NSF, many of the same people who drove the parade wagons, performed folk dances, sang and read poems and recited speeches. Normally only a handful of rural Germans showed any interest in the official celebration, in spite of the efforts of local

⁸¹DnG 8 (Aug. 1942): 418-30, *ibid.*, 9 (Aug. 1943): 393-419, 426-30; *ibid.*, 10 (June/July 1944): 260-62, 271-300. Rural propaganda officials were encouraged to arrange 'village community evenings' on a regular basis. See DnG 8 (Aug. 1942): 431-35; *ibid.*, 9 (May/June 1943): 278; *ibid.*, 10 (Aug. 1944): 388-90; *ibid.*, 10 (Sept. 1944): 397-401.

Nazis who commonly sent out personal invitations to each household in the area.⁸²

The SD officials listed several reasons for the population's lassitude toward the Nazi Harvest Thanksgiving Festival. Despite the committed efforts of Nazi propagandists to organize the festivity in accordance with the guidelines laid out in *Die neue Gemeinschaft*, shortages of organizational talent, materials, musicians and effective speakers created profound difficulties. Many organizers only received official guidelines at the last minute and were unable to arrange formal celebration. Typically, the report attributed much of the apathy to the lingering religiosity of much of the population as many Germans preferred to attend local church harvest festivities that often coincided or overlapped with the Nazi event. The report noted, with obvious disdain, the deliberate efforts of the clergy to celebrate the holiday with greater circumstance than usual. In contrast to the often unsuitable venues which the Nazis were forced to use for their own events, church altars overflowed with offerings from the harvest yield.⁸³

SD agents also were obliged to admit that the rural population was insufficiently versed in the meaning of Nazi Harvest festival customs. At the same time, they apportioned blame to the undue emphasis on Nazi customs and symbols to the detriment of rural traditions. Public

⁸²MadR, 4538-46, report no. 341 of 7 Dec. 1942; DnG 9 (Aug. 1943): 393-96. As early as 1940, Nazi harvest festivals in towns and villages consisted of little more than a symbolic acceptance by the local NS leader of the harvest crown or wreath followed by a simple meal and a round of beer for a handful of invited guests at the local tavern. See StADt, D 106/2600, "Erntedankfest 1940 auf Heberhausen", 11 Oct. 1940.

⁸³MadR, 4538-46, report no. 341, 7 Dec. 1942.

indifference was greatest where the self-representational Nazi festival was presented in too schematic a form. A surfeit of "kitsch" in the portrayal of rural customs, meanwhile, was blamed for the miserable lack of success in the countryside. The only aspects of the program that seemed to arouse the interest of rural residents were the conferment of awards and (monetary) prizes and the commemoration of the war dead through a roll-call. Yet even here a number of recipients complained they would have preferred to receive their distinctions before the local community rather than in the formal company of Nazi officialdom. The strongest criticism, however, was the obvious artificiality of the celebration that communicated little "real sense of a rural celebration". As a report from Westphalia declared: "A Harvest festival ... in the middle of a large city before residents, who in the main have never held a shovel or a sheaf in their hands, is, without farmers, a contradiction."⁴ Clearly, by 1942 few Germans were showing more than a passing interest in the contrived festive dramaturgy developed to such a high

⁴Ibid. As a result the report offered several recommendations designed to improve the effect of future celebrations. SD officials were highly critical of the last minute announcements of national rallies, such as Göring's Harvest Thanksgiving Day speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin, which necessitated the rescheduling of local festivities. They also advised that the churches be prevented from holding special celebrations on the official Nazi holiday. Since the festival was intended as a celebration of rural life and culture, the report emphasised that farming communities had to become more familiar with the mixture of old and new customs associated with the Nazi Harvest Festival. It was important, they added, that the farmer regard the Harvest Festival as "his festival" and he and his family should view themselves as more than spectators, as hosts and not guests of the celebration. Finally, recognizing the transparent theatricality of much of the ceremony, the SD officials stressed that for all festivals of a folkloric nature, care was to be taken that the representation of customs correspond to existing cultural traditions.

degree by Goebbels in the years preceding the war.⁸⁵

Whatever talent the Propaganda Minister displayed in peacetime for the grand spectacle, the need for such festivals largely evaporated during the war.⁸⁶ Although propaganda officials continued to churn out proposals and guidelines for festival programs in the pages of *Die neue Gemeinschaft*, there were few Nazi leaders left with either the initiative or experience to carry them out at the local level. Somewhat ironically, the celebrations achieved their greatest success in communities where, because of a dearth of staff and material resources obtaining at local Party offices, the preparations were largely given

⁸⁵Ibid.; *DnG* 9 (Aug. 1943): 393. The military setbacks occurring in 1943 aggravated an already bad situation, as SD reports for that year's Harvest Festival amply demonstrate. Reports from across the Reich depicted a national holiday marked by "a certain weariness and listlessness" not only among the general population but in part among the Nazis themselves. In rural areas especially, Germans burdened with the worries of everyday existence considered the time "too grave for such festivals". In many rural communities no festivities took place at all since local Nazis concluded that few would attend. In the cities, residents tended to view the celebration of rural customs as a Nazi event, an entirely artificial presentation, remote from the reality of urban cultural life. See *MadR*, 6005-15, SD-Berichte zu Inlandsfragen, 15 Nov. 1943; *DnG* 10 (June/July 1944): 260-61; and instructions for Harvest Thanksgiving Day channeled through the GPL (Munich-Upper Bavaria), 23 Sept. 1943, in *StAM*, NSDAP 553. See also Vondung, *Magie*, 106-7.

⁸⁶By 1943, few Germans were willing to believe in anything connected with the name of Goebbels. In his Harvest Thanksgiving Day speech broadcasted to the nation from the Sportpalast in Berlin, the Propaganda Minister dismissed the setbacks on the eastern front as a planned retreat and spoke at length of the revenge that Germany would soon exact on its enemies. While the speech may for a time have placated the fears and renewed the confidence of a population unnerved by the continuous stream of bad news filtering back from the east, as SD reports related it was also apparent that many Germans shared the sentiments of one individual who commented: "To me the weather report is more preferable than the most splendid speech of Goebbels". Quoted in *MadR*, 5852-54, SD-Berichte zu Inlandsfragen, 7 Oct. 1943.

over to area inhabitants.⁸⁷ Presumably less bound by the official festive forms drawn up in the increasingly isolated Propaganda Ministry, rural Germans, who had long since tired of the overtly political message of every Nazi celebration, paid tribute to the fruits of their labour according to their own unmediated pleasures.

Clearly, German farmers were not alone in turning their backs on Nazi celebrations. For the Party, the wartime celebration of Mother's Day gained added significance, with many wives and mothers contributing to the war effort by working outside of the family. The Nazis feared that the long and arduous hours spent in the factories would result in the women losing sight of the fact that the war represented a struggle for the existence of the German people, and that the life and future of the German family was at stake.⁸⁸ Through the cultural dynamic of celebration, the Nazis hoped to interrupt the everyday life of the nation's women, investing their lives with renewed meaning and as a result strengthening the commitment to the war effort. Observance of the commemorative day combined an official Nazi ceremony, held either on the Saturday evening or Sunday afternoon, with a family celebration in the home.⁸⁹ As a form of propaganda, moreover, the Nazis scheduled formal

⁸⁷MadR, 6005-15, SD-Berichte zu Inlandsfragen, 15 Nov. 1943. See also DNG 10 (June/July 1944): 260-61.

⁸⁸BA, NS 6/822/60, RVBl, 13 Apr. 1943, AO A 27/43, Bormann, 9 Apr. 1943. For a detailed discussion of the celebration of Mothers' Day during the war, see Baird, *Die For Germany*, 228-36.

⁸⁹Designed to create a joyful and life-affirming atmosphere, the Nazi ceremony took place at the more intimate level of the *Ortsgruppe*, in halls tastefully decorated with flowers and verdure, with the life rune prominently displayed and a choir to lead the assembled in song. For the ceremony the Nazis compiled a list of women deemed worthy of ceremonial commemoration, primarily through the bestowal of the Mother's

Mothers' Day celebrations opposite Catholic ceremonies for the young.⁷⁰

Despite the concerted efforts of propaganda officials, evidently Mother's Day held limited appeal for German women. Heavily biased reports by propaganda officials in southern Germany insisted that the NSDAP ceremonies met with public approval.⁷¹ On the other hand, in the region of Halle-Merseburg local propaganda officials admitted that although they had arranged festivities according to official guidelines, few women saw fit to attend since many of them viewed the awarding of the Cross of Honour medals as inappropriate. NSDAP officials complained that the dearth of material and organizers made it necessary to hold

Cross of Honour medal. Invited as 'guests of honour' were mothers who had been or would be decorated; mothers whose sons or husbands had died in battle; mothers who had lost children or family members as a result of aerial bombing attacks; mothers who had borne sons during the war and mothers specifically engaged in the war effort. Local Nazi leaders recited words in praise of the sacrifice of the nation's mothers and provided them with a souvenir document in commemoration of the special day. Reflecting the commitment of the NS state to the family, members of the HJ and BDM were released from their obligations for the day of celebration. They and other NS youth organizations assembled in the ceremonial hall to greet the guests of honour with bouquets of flowers. The young of both sexes were encouraged to visit elderly and infirm women in the community, bearing flowers and song. To add to the springtime joy of the occasion, propaganda officials proposed that the young form groups and parade through the streets of the community singing and dancing according to popular custom. Finally, after a quiet and intimate celebration within the family and relieved of all household chores for the day, German mothers were invited to attend a concert, theatre, movie or other cultural event to further distract them from everyday concerns. See *DnG* 8 (Apr. 1942): 184-99; *ibid.*, 9 (Mar. 1943): 144-66; *ibid.*, 10 (Mar. 1944): 155-58, 160-76; "Unsere Feier: Richtlinien zur Fest- und Feiargestaltung, Nr. 5/44, Muttertag 1944", (HKA/RPL, 31 Mar. 1944), 2, 3, in *StAM*, NSDAP 476. For local examples of Nazi celebrations, including theatre visits, see *StAM*, PD-Munich 8210, Sonderbefehl, KdSP, 15 May 1942; *StAM*, NSDAP 476, Schweiger (KPL-Ingolstadt) to Stadt Organisation, 17 May 1944.

⁷⁰*StAM*, NSDAP 476, Müller, (GPL-Munich/OB), 19 May 1944.

⁷¹*BayHStA*, MA 106673, MBRPvNE/OP, 9 June 1940; MA 106683, MBRPvS/N, 10 June 1940; MA 106696, MBRPvNE/OP, 10 June 1944.

mass ceremonies involving upwards of eight hundred women, a formal arrangement that diminished its popular appeal. It was, they contended, absurd to expect NSDAP officials to dispense floral bouquets to all mothers in the community when flowers were in scant supply. Consequently, they recommended that given the limited means of local propaganda officials, it would be more effective to invite only mothers actually receiving the Cross of Honour.⁷² Perhaps most revealing of the limited loyalty of the female population to the Hitler state were the incidents in conservative Catholic areas of Lower Franconia and Bavaria resulting from the 'crucifix action' of 1941, involving the Nazis' removal of religious crosses from the schools. In protest, crowds of angry women demanded the return of the crosses, with some handing back their Nazi decorations to police officials amidst shouts of: "If the crucifixes are removed from the schools, then we do not need any Mothers' Crosses".⁷³ Similarly, in a Silesian community women boycotted Nazi Mothers' Day ceremonies as a demonstration against the postponement of religious pilgrimages.⁷⁴

In his relentless search for more effective forms of wartime celebration, Mother's Day attracted the attention of the self-styled

⁷²BA, NS 6/106/21, Lage- und Tätigkeitsberichte der GPL-Halle-Merseburg, 19 June 1943.

⁷³BayHStA, MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 9 Nov. 1941; MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 Oct. 1941. See also Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 92. For a detailed description of the 'crucifix action' in Bavaria, see Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, 340-57. The Nazi confiscation of church bells produced similar public demonstrations by German women as they threw their Nazi decorations to the ground to protest the action. See MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 13 Dec. 1941.

⁷⁴Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 92.

Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg eschewed a proposal from within his own administration to merge Mother's Day with the Whitsun festival on ideological grounds. In his view, the Party was not yet prepared to replace the church holiday with popular Germanic and Nazi May traditions that would eventually allow for the emergence of an authentic German folk festival. Better, he recommended, to combine it with the Christmas holiday. He further suggested that instead of large ceremonies limited to a single day, deserving German mothers might be decorated in a simple ceremony on the birthdays of their children. Ultimately Rosenberg questioned the benefit of preserving a celebration that owed its existence to American commercial interests.⁷⁵ Still, Rosenberg's proposals for Mother's Day did not win approval in the Party Chancellery for at least two reasons. First, there was his failure to appreciate the popularity of Mother's Day among German women; and secondly, Bormann feared that the political and propagandistic effectiveness of the public Nazi ceremony in the promotion of a healthy racial and family policy would be lost if limited to the intimate circles of the family.⁷⁶ Bormann's criticisms aside, Rosenberg's views on Mother's Day reflect a level of fanaticism toward the preservation and extension of German culture that was scarcely matched by any of his Nazi colleagues. Through his radical approach to festivity, which combined elements of national folklore with Nazi propaganda techniques, Rosenberg aimed to eliminate all traces of Christianity from German

⁷⁵IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 04945-46, internal memo, Strobel to Rosenberg, 24 Nov. 1941; BA, NS 8/186/25-27, Rosenberg to Bormann, 28 Nov. 1943.

⁷⁶BA, NS 8/187/181-83, Bormann to Rosenberg, 29 Mar. 1942.

cultural life.

Of all the forms of festivity dreamed up by the Nazi elite for consumption by the Party rank and file none was as explicitly political as Rosenberg's so-called 'ideological ceremony'. Combining performance, lecture and musical selections in an "artistic unity", these ceremonies were expressly designed to indoctrinate, boost morale and stiffen the resolve of Nazis for the war effort and for the future. According to Rosenberg they would treat ideological concerns through the edification of the psyche, involving Nazis in participatory ritual rather than by less dynamic pedagogical methods of lecture and discussion. Through a ritual form incorporating art and learning, Nazis were to draw inspiration from great figures from the past as well as great deeds of the present.⁷⁷ Typical was the program slated for the first half of 1942. The six ceremonies commemorated the 230th birthday of Frederick the Great (January 24), the proclamation of the Party program (22 February), the German destiny (12 April), the 180th anniversary of the birth of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte with the motto: "from the strength of heart and soul" (10 May), and "the meaning of the war" according to Clausewitz (14 June).⁷⁸ With the exception of the summer months in which no ideological ceremonies were scheduled Rosenberg organized the events on a monthly basis between October 1943 and December 1944. While

⁷⁷IfZ, *AdP-K* (mf), 126 00601-3, Rosenberg to Goebbels, 6 Feb. 1942.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 126 03266, "Weltanschauliche Feierstunden Januar bis Juni 1942", [n.d.]. Another historical figure pressed into service for Rosenberg's ideological ceremonies was the conservative cultural critic Paul de Lagarde. See *ibid.*, 126 03315, Cerff to all GL and Kulturhauptstellenleiter, 11 Dec. 1941; BA, NS 8/186/1-7, Rosenberg to Bormann, 29 Dec. 1941.

the majority celebrated national virtues with slogans of "Freedom and Honour", "To the Glory of the Dead of 9 November", "Freedom of the Spirit", "Victory through Faith", "German Inwardness" and on 15 October 1944, the centennial of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's birth, "To be Gallant is Good", several others targeted specific social groups. Under the banners "Woman--Wife and Mother", "Plow and Sword", and "German Work" the ceremonies inspired Nazis in their mission to attract support among women, farmers and workers.⁷⁹

Rosenberg envisioned the ideological ceremony as a powerful ritual in the future showdown with the church. For Party ideologues the education system provided the optimum environment to instill the ethos of Nazism through ritual experience. To this end Nazi education officials were determined that secularized festive events, extending from namegiving ceremonies to marriage celebrations, become a crucial aspect of the learning process.⁸⁰ Rosenberg remained convinced that it was more important for the movement to perfect a unique ceremonial form within the closed ranks of the NSDAP before experimenting on the entire population as Goebbels did with his major propaganda events.⁸¹

When Hitler intensified the war effort in early 1943, work

⁷⁹BA, NS 8/242/237, Künkler (Hauptamt Kunstpflege) to Rosenberg, 11 Aug. 1943; *ibid.*, 156/205, Künkler to Mauer (P-K), 4 Feb. 1944. With permission of the RMfVP, the Nietzsche ideological ceremony became a national event with a speech by Rosenberg in conjunction with Gauleiter Sauckel's opening ceremonies for the philosopher's archive in Weimar. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 03903-4, Rosenberg to Bormann, 19 Feb. 1944; BA, NS 8/190/125-26, Bormann to Rosenberg, 23 Mar. 1944.

⁸⁰BA, NS 8/231/39-41, Otto Schmidt (Reichshauptstellenleiter für Lehrplanung) to Rosenberg, 8 Apr. 1940.

⁸¹IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 03313, Rosenberg to Bormann, 24 Jan. 1942.

duplication became an issue for the Party. Consequently Bormann urged Rosenberg and Ley to end their protracted power struggle that was causing considerable confusion and redundancy among the Nazi rank and file. Calling for the need for greater political education to meet the present war crisis, especially of NSDAP members who had joined after 1933, Bormann advised the two Nazi leaders to cooperate in the conceptualization and implementation of the ideological ceremonies; this he viewed as a crucial aspect of the ritual training necessary to instill the "unshakable spirit of struggle" that had inspired the movement in the years before 1933.⁸² Meanwhile, as the war thinned the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi leadership turned to the Party administration for recruitment. In February 1943 Rosenberg acquiesced in the closure of a portion of his bureaucratic empire. Counted among the important tasks deemed crucial to the war effort, the ideological ceremonies, entrusted to his newly-created 'war work staff', survived the recruitment of Nazi officials into the military ranks right up until 1945.⁸³

In the cultural experience of celebration, the ideological formulation and institutionalization of birth, marriage and death cere-

⁸²BA, NS 8/188/112, Bormann to Rosenberg, 5 Feb. 1943.

⁸³BA, NS 8/188/112, Rosenberg to Bormann, 17 Feb. 1943. Even after renewed staff cuts followed the renewal of total war after the failed assassination attempt of 20 July 1944 support for the ideological ceremonies remained intact. The Office of Folklore and Celebration continued to play a role in the events organized at the *Gau* level according to guidelines formulated under Rosenberg's tutelage. The Office was however instructed to dispense temporarily with any further clarification of ceremonial issues and to refrain from all future plans for celebration. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 126 04247, Rosenberg to Bormann, 15 Aug. 1944; BA, NS 8/191/149-51, Bormann to Rosenberg, 1 Sept. 1944; BA, NS 30/52, memorandum of Dr. Wagner (Hohe Schule/Aufbauamt) regarding meeting with Friedrichs (P-K), 13 Oct. 1944.

monies, or *Lebensfeiern*, represented the most comprehensive and radical attempt to permeate the entire cultural milieu of German society during the war. Convinced that popular culture was becoming increasingly secular in outlook, Rosenberg reckoned that these family celebrations represented "the only real connection of millions of *Volksgenossen* with their church organizations".⁸⁴ Despite the official policy of the Party that Nazi ritual and festival forms were not a substitute for church liturgy, the '*Gleichschaltung*' of 'life celebrations' represented for Rosenberg and other Nazi zealots an integral means to eliminate religious influences in German cultural life. For Rosenberg, Bormann and other Nazis it was vitally important that a vanguard of Nazis be instructed in the cultural practices of Nazism and fully prepared for the impending "ideological conflict" with the church.⁸⁵ To this end, *Lebensfeiern* provided an especially effective propagandistic mechanism for transforming abstract ideological sentiments into palpable experience.⁸⁶

⁸⁴BA, NS 8/185/12, Rosenberg to Bormann, 10 July 1941.

⁸⁵BA, NS 8/190/236-37, report of Stellrecht, 11 Aug. 1943.

⁸⁶In a confidential circular of May 1941, Bormann informed the *Gauleiter* as well as Nazi education officials that "in no case" was Nazism to represent "a substitute for church or religious activities". According to Hitler, Nazism was "a scientifically substantiated view of life" which rejected "all things mystic and cultic". Consequently, Bormann declared, Nazi celebrations were to preserve a character that corresponded to the laws of life founded on the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, and to serve the struggle of the German *Volk*. As a result, Bormann emphasized that all attempts to replace religious christening with NS naming ceremonies, or to substitute special *Lebensfeiern* for church confirmation of the young, or to displace confessional morning services with Nazi morning ceremonies were to cease. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00329-30, RS 65/41, Bormann to all GL, 29 May 1941; *ibid.*, 117 04639-42, Bormann to Schmidt (ROL-Leiter des Hauptschulungsamt), 10 Jun. 1941.

With Rosenberg supplying the inspiration and Ley the material means *Lebensfeiern*, became a formal component of the political instruction and experiential training of NSDAP members at all levels. The organization of *Lebensfeiern* took place on two levels--public Nazi ceremonies held ideally in 'NSDAP community houses', and informal family celebrations.⁸⁷ Particularly after he gained access to *Die neue Gemeinschaft* after June 1942, Rosenberg dedicated a significant portion of his administrative resources to creating a vast inventory of German folkloric customs, rituals, and artifacts in the creation of distinctive Nazi forms of birth, naming, marriage and funeral ceremonies and celebrations. Under his aegis, the Nazis accumulated a collection of basic programmes for these rites of passage that encompassed practically all segments of German society, Nazi and non-Nazi alike. They offered instructions and models for suitable birth and obituary announcements, as well as marriage invitations. They collected folk songs, dances and games for use in rural celebrations. They wrote essays on the meaning of festive candlesticks and wooden bowls. They even advised on appropriate selection of godparents and sponsors for newborns. Whether the birth of a baby in a RAD camp, the marriage of a weaver and his bride, or the death of a child, Rosenberg and his staff formulated a comprehensive ceremonial structure designed to envelop the festive life

⁸⁷BA, NS 22/914, memo to Selzner from the Sonderreferat für Gemeinschaftshäuser der NSDAP, 31 Jan. 1941. The emphasis on the family component of the *Lebensfeiern* came largely from Robert Ley who adopted the position that Nazis and *Volksgenossen* share equally in the celebrations, to confer with one another on all aspects of their form, content and location with the expressed purpose of remaking them as celebrations of the family. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 117 00418, Schmidt to Stürtz, GL-Mark-Brandenburg, 2 Sept. 1941.

of Germans from cradle to grave.⁸⁸

Ironically, Rosenberg insisted that initially it was important not to impose rigid prescriptive forms on *Lebensfeiern* as they would "stunt" the "organic development of celebration". He urged that the Nazis preserve only traditional customs still thriving in German cultural life and not try to revive ones that had fallen into disuse. His idea of a "celebration advisor" however found little acceptance with either Bormann or the individual *Gauleiter*. They feared that any Nazi official given the sole responsibility of overseeing all celebrations in the community would be viewed with suspicion by the population as a visible symbol of the "Party priesthood" competing directly with the local clergy. Consequently, regional and local Nazi functionaries retained primary responsibility for celebrations in their respective jurisdictions. Concurring with the proposals of the *Gau* officials, Bormann recommended a more pronounced role for registry office authorities, even suggesting that their formal activities be incorporated into the actual ceremonies attending birth, marriage and death. With the gradual introduction of secular elements, Hitler, Rosenberg and other leading Nazis intended to render religious ceremony superfluous in the minds of even devout Germans.⁸⁹

⁸⁸*DnG* 9 (Mar. 1943): 186-89; *ibid.*, 9 (Apr. 1943): 237-55; *ibid.*, 9 (May/June 1943): 318-19; *ibid.*, 9 (July 1943): 369-83; *ibid.*, 9 (Aug. 1943): 438-47; *ibid.*, 9 (Sept. 1943): 509-11; *ibid.*, 9 (Oct./Nov. 1943): 572-75; *ibid.*, 9 (Dec. 1943): 638-39; *ibid.*, 10 (Feb. 1944): 125-27; *ibid.*, 10 (Mar. 1944): 187-91; *ibid.*, 10 (Apr./May 1944): 250-55; *ibid.*, 10 (June/July 1944): 318-19; *ibid.*, 10 (Aug. 1944): 382-83; *ibid.*, 10 (Sept. 1944): 445-47; *ibid.*, 11 (Jan. 1945): 39-41.

⁸⁹*IfZ*, *AdP-K* (mf), 126 02767-02769, Bormann to Rosenberg, 2 Apr. 1941. Bormann also rejected Rosenberg's proposal to introduce "family books of the NSDAP", which were designed to obviate the need for parish

Unlike folk festivals and other forms of popular entertainment, *Lebensfeiern* gained added significance with the renewed commitment to total war in the summer of 1944. Yet although the Nazis placed considerable emphasis on *Lebensfeiern*, their efforts were unavailing. As with many Nazi wartime projects and policies, the time had passed when they might have had any positive effect on the population and on the outcome of the war. As an SD report from December 1943 clearly demonstrated, Nazi initiatives to penetrate the cultural sphere of family celebrations

records and further extend Nazi control over the cultural sphere. Since the registry office already fulfilled this function in part, Bormann considered a separate set of records solely for NSDAP purposes as redundant, and hence a waste of valuable human resources in a time of war. As a consolation, however, Bormann recommended that the ceremonial certificates and documents of the registry office be of an "artistic" quality commensurate with the solemnity of the occasion. Moreover the district Party leaders were to receive copies of the registry office documents so that they might keep a record of the "ideological stratification" of the local population.

During a meeting with Hitler in February 1944 Ley proposed that the celebration of *Lebensfeiern* remain the private concern of individual families. Hitler opposed Ley's suggestion, arguing that to win the masses over to Nazism it was necessary to take the initiative in providing the appropriate forms for such celebrations. In addition to the need for suitable venues to create a proper festive mood, he stressed the power of the word to render the celebration meaningful for participants. To gain the most from such solemn and festive events, Hitler suggested that ten or twelve epistles be written, preferably by himself, that would serve each individual occasion. Above all he emphasized that traditional festive events and customs be allowed to continue as they were the occasion for communal gathering. For this reason, he admitted that even the most "insignificant" of ceremonies, baptism, fulfilled its role in the social and cultural life of the nation, hence it or a similar ritual event would be necessary to win over the population, especially in the countryside. Accordingly, rather than create any definitive or permanent set of instructions for such celebrations, he stated that it sufficed only to point out positive experiences in the development of a distinctly Nazi form of celebration. Referring to the gradual development over the centuries of Catholic liturgy, Hitler stressed that nothing "artificial" attend Nazi celebration, that it be allowed to "grow slowly" and "develop organically". See BA, NS 6/776/105-6, Minutes of meeting between Hitler and Ley in the Führer's Headquarters, 5 Feb. 1944.

had suffered nearly complete failure. Whether this dismal showing could be attributed to the overly propagandistic nature of National Socialist celebration, or the lack of suitable civic space, or even the artificial mood created by the theatrical, musical and literary quality of Nazi festivity, as the report claimed, it was clear not only that marriage and funeral ceremonies were seldom organized at the local Nazi level, but the few that were rarely attracted attention outside the immediate circle of the Party. While the report doubtlessly exaggerated the "unlimited autocracy" of the church in 'life celebrations', since many non-religious Germans presumably celebrated birthdays and civil weddings chiefly as family occasions without church influence, the fact that fewer than one percent of all births, marriages and deaths were marked by Nazi forms of celebration and ceremony was obvious cause for concern among the Party leadership. In the region of Ansbach, for example, of 436 births recorded by the district registry office, a mere four were marked by Nazi celebration. Similarly, from among the 236 marriages registered, only eight couples turned to the Nazis to help celebrate the occasion. Finally, of 494 recorded deaths, in but one instance did the surviving family appeal to Nazi aid in administering last rites. While it would be hazardous to assume that the experience in Ansbach was representative of the entire nation (although similar percentile figures from Franconia and Middle Franconia suggest that it was more the norm than the exception), it is nevertheless clear that the ceremonial forms of Nazism had ceased, beyond the Party itself, to connect with the

cultural experience of celebration in wartime German society.⁹⁰

CEREMONIAL DEATH AND THE DEMISE OF THE NAZI CELEBRATION

It is hardly surprising that death would prove the ultimate testing ground for the permeation of Nazism into the cultural life of Germans.⁹¹ Yet the ultimate failure of the Nazis to dislodge the churches from the cultural realm of death did not result from a lack of administrative effort. Throughout the war and from a variety of bureaucratic posts in the Party, state and military, came a flood of ideas, policies and regulations regarding the organization of all aspects of death. From the elaborate solemnity enveloping the state burials of Nazi and military luminaries to the anonymity cloaking the burial of dead Russian POWs, from the plans for colossal memorials to the naming of streets and public squares after Nazi and military war heroes, the Nazis sought to reshape the cultural meaning of death in German society.

In *Die neue Gemeinschaft* and other publications devoted to Nazi ceremonial, NSDAP propagandists and ideologues delineated a Nazi eschatology of death. In its most extreme form, Nazi propaganda drew on Nordic mythology to manufacture an image combining death and immortality and symbolizing a natural rite of passage in the eternal life cycle.⁹²

⁹⁰MadR, 6114-6115, SD-Berichte zu Inlandsfragen (Rote Serie), 9 Dec. 1943. See also Vondung, *Magie*, 108-12.

⁹¹For a discussion of the mythical significance attached to death by the Nazis during World War II, see Baird, *Die For Germany*, chap. 9; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, chap. 10; Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 304, 330.

⁹²As one Nazi ideologue wrote: "To the most sublime ideas of our northern ancestors belongs their concept of death and immortality, and ranked among the most impressive features of their form of life is their relationship with the dead. In their bucolic view of the world, which beholds a meaningful order behind all manifestations of nature and

Nevertheless, while ideologists in Berlin and Munich invented a mythical basis for Nazi death rites, the enormous numbers of war casualties forced the Party to deal with death on a more material level.

Gradually throughout the course of the war, the Party attempted to broaden the appeal of its death ceremonies by enfoldng their Nazi contextual specificity in the field-grey of the nationalistic and militaristic heroic narrative. For example, Heroes' Memorial Day, the most significant Nazi holiday during the war, was largely a Party and military affair up to 1942, commemorating the soldiers killed in the two World Wars as well as those who had died in the service of the Nazi movement.⁹³ In 1943, the national ceremony gained added currency through the commemoration of the soldiers and officers of the Sixth Army lost in the debacle of Stalingrad.⁹⁴ According to the modified wartime script, Heroes' Memorial Day reflected the unity of Party, state, military and the 'people's community'. As such, it was not to be marked by mourning, but rather as an "expression of the strength and the

destiny, death is not the end in nothingness or even the paying of sins, but rather the antipole of life; death and life combine in dynamic unity. Birth is the gate through which a new member of the tribe enters into the light of human life to serve in this world. Dying is the other gate, the final test to pass into immortality." In *DnG* 10 (Aug. 1944): 350.

⁹³IfZ, *AdP-K* (mf), 203 02470-71, Reinecke (OKW), 15 Feb. 1941; BA, NS 6/821/177, 178, RVBl, 24 Feb., 1942, AO A 8/42, Bormann, 21 Feb. 1942. See also *DnG* 8 (Feb. 1942): 68-79.

⁹⁴StAM, NSDAP 553, "Sonderlieferung Nr. 2/43 zur Fest-und Fei-er-gestaltung, Heldengedenktag 1943," HKA/RPL, 20 Feb. 1943, 2. The brochure contained twenty pages of instructions, model speeches and programs for the organization of Heroes' Memorial Day events, and was distributed to all propaganda offices throughout the Reich. See also *DnG* 9 (Feb. 1943): 79-94; BA, NS 6/822/32, RVBl, 27 Feb. 1943, AO A 11/43, Bormann, 23 Feb. 1943.

tremendous will to victory of the German people". Symbolically, flags flew at full rather than the traditional half-mast. At the same time it was to be a solemn celebration in commemoration of the immense achievements and sacrifices of the war dead.⁹⁵

At the ceremonial apex, the act of state, with Hitler laying the Führer wreath and shaking hands with war invalids, took place in the early afternoon in Berlin and was simultaneously broadcast and filmed for later viewing as part of the weekly newsreel.⁹⁶ Throughout the Reich wreath laying ceremonies took place at the local war memorial in the morning, with the participation of military delegates if available; otherwise, uniformed Nazi leaders carried out the solemn program of marches, flag raising, speeches, music and salutes. In the afternoon, similar indoor NSDAP ceremonies in honour of the fallen soldiers were staged. While the speeches at the earlier ceremony focused on the achievements and sacrifices of German soldiers, common themes at the Nazi commemorative ceremonies accentuated death as a natural occurrence and pointed out the survival of man through his offspring.⁹⁷ By situating death in the natural cycle of seasons, humans and nations, the Nazis aimed to endow the deaths with greater meaning and consequently provide a deeper sense of consolation for the women, children and other

⁹⁵StAM, NSDAP 553, "Sonderlieferung Nr. 2/43 zur Fest-und Fei-
gestaltung, Heldengedenktag 1943," HKA/RPL, 20 Feb. 1943, 2. See also
Baird, *Die For Germany*, 225-28.

⁹⁶Ibid., 12; BA-FA, DW 655/1943, Deutsche Wochenschau Nr. 655, 14,
1943.

⁹⁷StAM, NSDAP 553, "Sonderlieferung Nr. 2/43 zur Fest-und Fei-
gestaltung, Heldengedenktag 1943," HKA/RPL, 20 Feb. 1943, 7-12.

surviving family members in the audience.⁹⁹ The bifurcated purpose of the speeches and the entire ceremony, especially with the references to Stalingrad, was to offer solace to the survivors and at the same time galvanize popular support for the war against Russia.⁹⁹

Reflecting the worsening circumstances of war, the Heroes' Memorial Day ceremonies for 12 March 1944 expanded to include commemoration of the civilian victims of air attacks.¹⁰⁰ An added feature of the 1944 program was the visit as an act of personal condolence by local Nazi leaders to the homes of families that had lost male family members in the war.¹⁰¹ For the final year of the war, propaganda officials insisted that the day be observed in an entirely soldierly fashion, especially in military hospitals and among the new recruits in the *Volkssturm*. Conscious of the depleted reserves of men and material, they advised that "where available", soldiers' choirs, music corps and string orchestras were to contribute to the solemn occasion.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Local Nazi leaders and members of the Party's ancillary organizations (HJ, BDM, NSKOV) were expected to ensure personally that surviving family members, especially wives and mothers, as well as invalided soldiers be present at the ceremonies as guests of honour. See *ibid.*, 5, 6.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁰*DnG* 10 (Jan. 1944): 42-47; *StAM*, NSDAP 553, "Unsere Feier: Richtlinien zur Fest- und Fei ergestaltung, Heldengedenkfeier 1944, Nr. 3/44," HKA/RPL, 5 Feb. 1944, 4.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 8. The solemnity of the occasion was further accentuated by Himmler's order forcing the closure of all entertainment events and venues that did not correspond to the "soldierly and heroic character" of the day. See *IfZ*, *AdP-K* (mf), 101 22611-12, *Lammers* to Kaltenbrunner, 5 Mar. 1944; *StAM*, NSDAP 553, *RGBI* Teil I, 1944, Himmler, 6 Mar. 1944.

¹⁰²*DnG* 11 (Jan. 1945): 26-34, 42-47.

The ceremonies attending 9 November although no longer a legal holiday after 1942, were like Heroes' Memorial Day, given added meaning as a commemoration not only for the Nazi dead, but for all German soldiers killed during the war.¹⁰³ In 1943, the Nazis expanded its scope to include civilian victims of the air war.¹⁰⁴ In his attempt to appeal to broader segments of the population, Goebbels entertained the notion of combining the Nazi celebration with the religious holidays of All Saints' Day and Sunday of the Dead.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to Heroes' Memorial Day, however, and with the exception of the elaborate state funeral vigil given the victims of the failed assassination attempt in the Burgerbräukeller on 9 November 1939, which featured a torchlight vigil before the Feldherrnhalle, this most solemn of Nazi holidays lost much of its allure even for members of the Party, Hitler's participation as late as 1943 notwithstanding.¹⁰⁶ By 1942 attendance was so dismal that Bormann issued orders in the name of the Führer making attendance mandatory for all leading Nazis.¹⁰⁷ The observance of 9 November waned to such an extent that in 1942 it was limited to a national 'morning

¹⁰³DnG 8 (Sept. 1942): 492-502.

¹⁰⁴DnG 9 (Sept. 1943): 463-72; *ibid.*, 10 (Aug. 1944): 337-44.

¹⁰⁵Nazi ideologists justified the idea by claiming that in the Indo-Germanic pre-Christian cultural tradition, November, the month of mist and fog, as well as the entire period extending from the end of harvest to the winter solstice was regarded as the time of death festivals. See DnG 10 (Aug. 1944): 354-57. See also Baird, *Die for Germany*, 70.

¹⁰⁶The entire program of events are provided in the Sonderbefehl-KdSP, 10 Nov. 1939 in STAM, PD 8207. For a description of the state burial of the victims of the Burgerbräukeller bombing that emphasizes the theatricality of the occasion, see Baird, *Die for Germany*, 69.

¹⁰⁷Baird, *Die For Germany*, 70.

celebration'.¹⁰⁹ In 1944 the usual festival site in Munich remained empty as the holiday was postponed until 12 November when it was combined with the swearing-in ceremony of the *Volkssturm* in the individual *Gaue*.¹⁰⁹ This may have been a calculated attempt to reclaim some semblance of the former emotive vitality of 9 November in the political culture of the Third Reich. Clearly however, the multiplication of meanings attached to the 9 November ceremony in the course of the war, along with its diminished importance in the Nazi calendar, severely impaired its symbolic power as a commemoration of sacrificial death.

The recasting of the holiday calendar was but one component in the Nazi cultural edifice of death ceremonial. At the top of the Nazi racial hierarchy of death ceremonial stood the Party and state burials bestowed on top Nazis. Fritz Todt, Reinhard Heydrich and Gauleiter Josef Bürckel and Adolf Wagner, among other members of the Nazi elite, were given state or Party funerals.¹¹⁰ These occasions, which featured in addition to the usual Nazi formations, *Wehrmacht* honour companies and music and flag corps, typically lasted up to four days.¹¹¹ Occasionally, as in the case of Todt, the Nazis recorded these solemn occasions on film and showed them to captive audiences in movie houses throughout the

¹⁰⁹IfZ, *AdP-K* (mf), 102 01183/7, SD-Leitabschnitt Düsseldorf, Aussenstelle Solingen-Niederberg, 6 Nov. 1942.

¹⁰⁹BA, NS 6/98/39, RS 367/44g, Bormann, 1 Nov. 1944; *ibid.*, 98/40, RS 369/44, Bormann, 1 Nov. 1944. For the swearing-in ceremony of the *Volkssturm* in Munich see BA, R55/559/335-38, Krämer (RPL), 7 Nov. 1944.

¹¹⁰BA, R 43II/1201b/102, Bormann to Lammers, 6 June 1942; BA, NS 8/190/98, Bormann to all Reichsleiter and GL, 14 Apr. 1944; BA, NS 8/191/73-76, Rosenberg to Bormann, 1 Oct. 1944.

¹¹¹See for instance the state funeral for Adolf Wagner which required a twenty page program of events in BA, R 55/1330, 56-76.

Reich, either as part of the weekly newsreel or as the subject of an entire documentary film.¹¹² By insisting on the participation of Party, state, municipal and *Wehrmacht* officials, the Nazis presented for popular consumption a forced image of solidarity among the various leadership blocks, and especially between the Party and military.¹¹³

The stately funerals accorded Nazi luminaries stood in stark contrast to the burial of Russian POWs who occupied the lowest end of the Nazi racial hierarchy. For reasons of hygiene, Russians who died in POW camps were wrapped in inexpensive tar paper and buried without ceremony, in undecorated mass graves or in remote sections of existing cemeteries.¹¹⁴ For Russian and other POWs pressed into service in military flak units or in other areas of the war effort, death rites came in a "simple, dignified form" without music or salute. In the presence of German soldiers and other POWs of the individual units, the naked bodies were laid to rest in "the plainest" of coffins and buried in special POW cemeteries or in existing cemeteries according to local circumstances. Nazi and *Wehrmacht* officials also made provision for religious customs including cremation and the placement of the body according to Islamic faith. They also emphasized that burials of

¹¹²Goebbels included Todt's funeral in the *Wochenschau* of 19 Feb. 1942. See BA-FA, DW 598/1942. His funeral was also the subject of the short (15 minutes) documentary film entitled *Abschied von Dr. Todt* which featured commentary and images from the guard of honour, state act, funeral parade, death march and burial of Todt in the Invaliden cemetery in Berlin on 12 February, 1942. See BA-FA, 780.

¹¹³BA, NS 6/340/11-12, RS 6/43, Bormann, 12 Jan. 1943 with accompanying OKW decree from Reinecke, 31 Dec. 1942; BA, NS 6/338/285, Bormann to Tiessler, 6 Apr. 1943; BA, NS 6/821/234, RVB1, 7 July 1943, AO A 40/42, 3 July 1942.

¹¹⁴BA, NS 6/335/145, memo of RMdI, 27 Oct. 1941.

Germans and POWs should not occur simultaneously.¹¹⁵ Whatever the form, the burial of POWs took place away from the inquisitive eyes of ordinary Germans. Civilians were not permitted to attend the closed ceremony, nor were the burials to be recorded in any form by the press, radio or film.¹¹⁶ In contrast, the burial of British and American airmen shot down on German soil was initially carried out according to full military honours and ceremony, according to rituals established in the First World War. Only later in the war as the air attacks magnified and casualties figures mounted did the burials take place in a more muted fashion concealed from public view. This style was intended to avert the wrath of a population enraged by Allied "Terrorangriffe".¹¹⁷

Between these two extremes fell the bulk of the Party's work in administering last rites to its own rank and file, as well as soldiers and eventually the increasing numbers of civilians killed by enemy aerial bombing.¹¹⁸ Reflecting the escalating numbers of war dead after Stalingrad, the ceremonies, initially named "Tributes to the Heroes" (*Heldenehrungsfeiern*), acquired the more solemn appellation "Tributes to the Fallen" (*Gefallenehrungen*). Despite the change in terminology, the

¹¹⁵BA, NS 6/339/217-219, secret directive from Reinecke (OKW), 11 Dec. 1942 attached to secret RS 62/42g from Bormann, 28 Dec. 1942.

¹¹⁶BA, NS 6/339/66-67, AO (secret), Reinecke, 24 Mar. 1942.

¹¹⁷BA, NS 6/344/115,116, secret RS 40/43g, Bormann, 29 July 1943, with attached OKW AO of 12 July 1943.

¹¹⁸From the outset of hostilities against Poland, the Nazis sought to meet the requests of the military to provide dignified funerals and burial grounds for the war dead. On the occasion of military funeral marches Nazi 'honour delegations', for instance, acted as a substitute for the *Wehrmacht* in places lacking a military presence. See BA, NS 6/331/69-70, AO A 37/40, Bormann, 18 Mar. 1940.

conceptualization of these ceremonies was accorded the usual administrative alacrity as the Party recognized that the official commemorations held on Heroes' Memorial Day and 9 November were inadequate to dispose of the daily inventory of war dead.¹¹⁹ Whether ceremonies were held indoors or out, in villages or in cities, Nazi officials provided instructions for the selection and decoration of ceremonial sites, the design of obituary notices, memorial tablets and books, suitable musical selections, poems and speeches as well as standard ceremonial forms for the solemn occasions.¹²⁰ Besides the formal NSDAP ceremonies, Nazi propagandists offered suggestions for family commemorations that might be practiced not only on the two official memorial days, but also at Easter, midsummer, Harvest Thanksgiving, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Advent and Christmas. They also advised that tributes to the war dead be adopted as a specific form of *Lebensfeier*.¹²¹

¹¹⁹DnG 8 (Sept. 1942): 503. In keeping with his policy that broadcasts should provide light-hearted diversionary entertainment (aside from the routine news bulletins), Goebbels refused to entertain suggestions that the radio be used as a medium to extend Nazi death ceremonies beyond the two commemorative holidays. See BA, NS 18/328, Tiessler, 2 Dec. 1941.

¹²⁰DnG 44 (Aug. 1940): 3-29; *ibid.*, 9 (May/June 1943): 289-304; *ibid.*, 10 (Jan. 1944): 35-39; *ibid.*, 10 (Feb. 1944): 123-24; *ibid.*, 10 (Mar. 1944): 185-86; *ibid.*, 10 (Apr./May 1944): 237-43; *ibid.*, 10 (June/July 1944): 311-17; *ibid.*, 10 (Aug. 1944): 374-81; *ibid.*, 10 (Sept. 1944): 428-44; *ibid.*, 10 (Dec. 1944): 562-74, 589-91. The Nazis issued a comprehensive set of guidelines covering the proper conduct of local NS leaders in announcing deaths to surviving family members. Local NS-officials were encouraged to engage members of the NSKOV, NSF, NSV, DAF and other Nazi organizations to strengthen social and cultural ties to the community. Rather than relying exclusively on instructions and proposals emanating from the Party centre, the guidelines allowed and even encouraged local Nazis to shape their actions in the realm of death rites on a case by case basis. See BA, NS 6/338/313, AO A 77/42, 1 Nov. 1942.

¹²¹DnG 9 (Mar. 1943): 183-5; *ibid.*, 9 (Apr. 1943): 229-35.

Among the major concerns for Nazi officials was the problem of establishing appropriate burial sites and war memorials.¹²² In the summer of 1940, Hitler cut short protracted discussions over the erection of war memorials, ordering that all such activity cease until the conclusion of the war.¹²³ Nonetheless, in March 1941 Hitler, perhaps more confident of a quick victory, appointed Wilhelm Kreis, a professor of architecture, to the position of General Building Inspector in charge of the construction of war graves under direction of the OKW.¹²⁴ According to plans drafted by OKW officials, the cemeteries, designed to contain at least one thousand graves, would exist "for all time" as "a place of pilgrimage for the entire Volk", an educational "shrine" for the young, and a symbol of the "enduring, indivisible comradeship and community" of the soldiers themselves.¹²⁵ Kreis provided local Nazi officials with a variety of instructions and sketches to assist them in the construction of war graves and memorial

¹²²Although initially the Nazis allowed the transport of bodies for purposes of family burials, by November 1940 Hitler had issued a ban on all transportation of bodies of soldiers killed in the war. This ban spurred plans for the creation of designated war graves, either as an extension of World War I soldiers' cemeteries or entirely new sites. The burial of soldiers in war graves far from their homeland caused considerable problems for the Nazis. As families made pilgrimages to Poland to pay their respects to loved ones they created an unnecessary burden on the railway system. As a result, less than a year into the war, the Nazi government placed a ban on travel to Poland for such purposes. See BA, NS 6/331/29, Reinecke (OKW), 17 Oct. 1939; BA, NS 6/331/26, AO A 11/40, Bormann Feb. 1940; BA, NS 6/820/115, Bekanntgabe B 34/40, Bormann, 7 June 1940; BA, NS 6/335/67, Keitel, 13 Nov. 1940.

¹²³BA, NS 6/820/160, Bekanntgabe B 67/40, Bormann, 18 Sept. 1940.

¹²⁴BA, NS 6/346/24, RS 38/44, Bormann, 14 Feb. 1944. See also Mosse, *Nationalization*, 38, 72, 190.

¹²⁵BA, NS 6/322/90-91, OKW, 22 Nov. 1940.

sites.¹²⁶ There existed plans for a Soldiers' Hall for deserving military officials and soldiers, and Hitler announced that halls of honour were to be erected in Berlin, Munich and elsewhere to accommodate the remains of other Germans who had served the Reich.¹²⁷ For some leading Nazis, special memorials were to be constructed in recognition of their contribution to the Nazi movement. Fritz Todt, the builder of the nation's network of roads and highways, was to be interred in an imposing memorial high on the Irschenberg along the autobahn between Munich and Chiemsee.¹²⁸ Yet as with the majority of their plans for celebration and ceremony, material shortages prevented the Nazis from implementing these grandiose projects to honour the war dead with magnificent cemeteries and memorials, forcing Hitler to order the postponement of all such construction until the end of the war.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the Party also saw fit to issue wartime regulations governing the use of non-military cemeteries. While public cemeteries remained open to all forms of burial, the purpose of the new regulations

¹²⁶DnG 9 (Sept. 1943): 499-508; *ibid.*, 10 (Jan. 1944): 48-51; *ibid.*, 10 (Sept. 1944): 428-44; *ibid.*, 10 (Dec. 1944): 562-71. Later in the war Kreis's responsibilities were extended to include the design of special NSDAP war memorials. See BA, NS 6/346/24, AO 38/44, Bormann, 14 Feb. 1944.

¹²⁷BA, R43 II/1267a/144-145, 6 June 1942. Hitler later decided that the wives of honored Germans would be buried next to their husbands. See BA, NS 6/338/24, "Decree of the Führer regarding the burial of prominent Germans," Hitler and Bormann, 19 June 1942.

¹²⁸BA, R43 II/680a/5, Bormann to Lammers, 6 June 1942.

¹²⁹BA, NS 6/348/11, RS to all GL from Bormann, 9 Sept. 1944. The NSDAP also drafted decrees on public rituals attending war memorials. One such decree required Nazis, soldiers and civilians to remove all headgear and salute when passing the Unter den Linden memorial in Berlin and other similar commemorative monuments. See BA, NS 6/821/231, AO A 36/42, Bormann, 26 June 1942.

was to allow for secular burial rites in church graveyards and to impose burial restrictions on Jews by permitting local authorities to deny Jews access to public ceremonies in communities having separate Jewish cemeteries.¹³⁰ The enforcement of the right to secular burial in church cemeteries became increasingly important as the war progressed and the lack of resources to construct special war graves to accommodate the escalating number of war dead became evident.¹³¹ In the end, the territorial disputes over burial sites waged between Nazi and church officials clearly illustrate the relatively weak position of the NSDAP in its commitment to the ceremonial of death.

The centuries-long association of death with God and church in the minds of ordinary Germans proved stronger than any temporary secular ideology, even one as imposing and resourceful as National Socialism. Evidently the Nazis enjoyed some success. Certainly, numerous popular opinion reports compiled by Nazi officials recorded the favorable reception among the population for Heroes' Memorial Day ceremonies and

¹³⁰BA, NS 6/332/80, RS, Bormann, 8 Dec. 1940; BA, NS 6/332/81, Pfundtner (RMdI), 31 Oct. 1940; BA, NS 6/334/129-130, RS 69/41, Bormann, 22 May 1941.

¹³¹The absence of adequate resources is clearly demonstrated by the changing orders regarding the burial of air raid victims. Initially, Germans who had fallen victim to air attacks were, on request, to be buried in the special war cemeteries along with dead soldiers, as their sacrifice was considered by the Nazi state as being of equal value. See BA, NS 6/821/128-129, RVBl, 13 Oct. 1941. As a further gesture, the Nazi government introduced the practice of laying a Führer wreath during the funeral ceremony of deserving civilian victims of the air war. See BA, NS 6/342/68, RS (confidential) 126/43, Bormann, 27 Aug. 1943. Late in the war, in February 1944, Bormann issued a directive prohibiting the burial of civilian victims of air attacks in mass graves. The directive also instructed Party members not to prevent families from burying family members killed in aerial bombing raids in family plots. See, BA, NS 6/346/17, AO 26/44, Bormann, 9 Feb. 1944.

to a lesser extent those of 9 November.¹³² On the other hand, the often candid reports of the SD, as well as some propaganda officials, reveal that, on the whole, the more frequently held church commemorations attracted a much higher level of attendance from the earliest months of the war. For this reason, the Party began to monitor the level of religious influence on death rites early in the war. An SD report of July 1940 complained of the vagueness of official policy regarding memorial ceremonies for fallen soldiers. The summary report emphasized that in Protestant and Catholic areas throughout the Reich memorial ceremonies served the churches as an effective and impressive means of propaganda. Aggravating the situation, the report noted, was the confusion of local political leaders stemming from a lack of central direction. Whereas in some districts NSDAP officials allowed different organizations, such as the *Kyffhäuserbund*, to participate in the religious funeral ceremonies, attendance by Nazis and members the Party's ancillary organizations was proscribed in others.¹³³ This chaotic situation led, throughout the war, to considerable discontent among members of the organizations involved as well as the general population.¹³⁴

¹³²BayHStA, MA 106673, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 Apr. 1940; MA 106683, MbRPvS/N, 9 Dec. 1940; MA 106674, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 Apr. 1941; MA 106684, MbRPvS, 10 Apr. 1942, 10 Dec. 1942.

¹³³MadR, 1427-1428, report no. 110 from 29 July 1940. The report also mentioned that for the first time SD agents had observed church involvement in the creation of memorial war graves.

¹³⁴BayHStA, MA 106673, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 Aug. 1940; MA 106684, MbRPvS, 8 Nov. 1941, 9 July 1942. Also detrimental to local Party fortunes was the frequent situation whereby the political leadership prohibited participation of veterans organizations in church commemorations while at the same time offered the community no alternative NSDAP ceremony. The absence of any formal burial cast some doubts among the people regarding the loyalty of the regime to its soldiers. Local NS leaders

A follow-up report in November confirmed the sizable increase in the number of churches holding memorial services for the war dead. Even more vexing for security officials was the fact that the churches continued to introduce new and varied forms of ceremony, such as funeral processions from the residence of the deceased to the church, which left "almost without exception" a "powerful impression" not only on the churchgoing public but on a broad segment of the population. Local Nazi leaders as well as leaders of ancillary organizations such as the Hitler Youth and the NSLB openly criticized the administrative conflicts and organizational confusion attending Party attempts to hold commemorative celebrations. The postponement of Nazi ceremonies in honour of the war dead until after the war, the 'official' policy emanating from Berlin, was disparaged by local Nazis with closer contact to their respective communities who perceived the need for the public expression of grief, a void effectively filled by the church commemorations. It was important, they declared, that the Party "do things differently than the churches". Through celebration whose "nature" was designed to uplift rather than dishearten, the Nazis might "weld together" the national community and fortify the "will to sacrifice and struggle".¹³⁵ Indeed reports from

observed that where no Party ceremony for the local dead was planned, normally due to the lack of resources, Nazi participation in the church ceremonies redounded favourably upon the continued respect of the people for the NSDAP. Consequently, the report referred to the recommendations of local Nazi officials in Stuttgart for official uniform guidelines governing the participation from within Party circles. See BayHStA, MA 106684, LbRPvS, 8 Nov. 1941; MA 106673, MbRPvNB/OP, 8 Aug. 1940.

¹³⁵MadR, 1732-34, report no. 138, 4 Nov. 1940. The report was assembled from local observations of events in, among others, Munich, Beyreuth, Stuttgart, Darmstadt, Kassel, Düsseldorf, Weimar, Karlsruhe, Augsburg, Vienna and Innsbruck.

communities where local Nazis officials staged formal commemorations for the war dead pointed out that the events had left a favorable impression on the population, although they were obliged to admit that attendance at church memorial services was much stronger.¹³⁶

Reports compiled in the months following the attack on Russia confirmed that while NSDAP commemorations seldom attracted an audience beyond Nazi circles, the "spontaneous" attendance at church memorial ceremonies by Germans from all sections of the population remained solid.¹³⁷ Consequently, the absence of any national regulations governing ceremonies for the fallen soldiers prompted another review of the situation in October 1941. Local SD agencies recorded the growing complexity of the conflict between the Party and the churches. While SD officials insisted that both the surviving family members as well as the majority of the population disapproved of special ceremonies, preferring to postpone such commemorations until after the war when they could be celebrated in a worthy manner, they remonstrated against the continued activity of the churches, especially in Catholic regions, to reinforce and expand religious traditions in the consciousness of ordinary Germans. They reported that church officials persisted in recasting memorial services and special masses as commemorations for individual soldiers killed in the war, despite an official prohibition of such ceremonies. Not only were the churches appropriating military symbols such as steel helmets, crossed rifles, and swastika flags for their

¹³⁶BayHStA, MA 106673, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 Aug. 1940.

¹³⁷BayHStA, MA 106674, MBRPvNB/OP, 8 Aug. 1941; MA 106681, MBRPvUF, 13 Oct. 1941.

memorial ceremonies, the SD officials declared, but were also succeeding in extending their cultural influence through the participation of the *Wehrmacht* and NS-*Reichskriegerbund* war veterans' association, even though in some instances various *Gauleiter* had issued orders banning the participation of the latter organization in closed formation at all church events.¹³⁸ Moreover, from Catholic regions rumours circulated to the effect that Party ceremonies, especially Heroes' Memorial Day and 9 November, were conceived as nothing more than a "counterweight" to the "predominant" church ceremonies.¹³⁹

Generally, the report conveyed the growing concerns of a Party fully cognizant of its deficient position vis-à-vis the churches in the ceremonial realm of death:

If the Party has renounced until now carrying out scheduled celebrations for the fallen, the churches have--as uniformly indicated from all reports--exploited the war situation to extend and consolidate still further their already leading position in the thought and habit of the population in this

¹³⁸*MadR*, 2884-87, report no. 230, 20 Oct. 1941; StAM, NSDAP 577, Kreiskriegerführer (Schongau) to all Kameradschaften of the *Kreiskriegerverbandes*, 31 July 1941. The incident in Schongau, in which a local war veteran placed a notice in an area newspaper inviting all war veterans and soldiers to attend a church memorial service for a dead soldier, suggests that their participation was entirely voluntary, presumably motivated by a sense of duty, and in no way due to any deliberate campaign on the part of the German churches to strengthen their position in the cultural life of the population. See StAM, NSDAP 577, Gaukriegerführer to the GL (München-Oberbayern), 12 July 1941.

¹³⁹*MadR*, 2884-87. In Protestant areas, the church normally restricted commemorations for the dead soldiers to the Sunday service during which letters from the front were often read aloud. Occasionally, as in a report from Hamburg, a Protestant ceremony consisted of the decoration of altar and catafalque with flowers, a eulogy of the dead soldier's accomplishments, words of consolation to the surviving family members followed by a hymn and the singing of the national anthems.

sphere.¹⁴⁰

In typical fashion, to combat this alleged clerical propaganda the Nazis resorted to fining or imprisoning churchmen for what they perceived as anti-Nazi sermonizing during commemorative services for the war dead.¹⁴¹

To press the need for effective action to counter the predominance of the churches in the burial of the dead, the SD prepared a report on the popular response to the Nazi-organized Heroes' Tributes. As reflected in the widespread popularity of church commemorative ceremonies, the need for such public commemorative events had become glaringly apparent during the course of the war. More importantly, however, SD analysts claimed that the marked advantage of the church in the execution of death rituals had less to do with the religious convictions of the German people than it did with "conventional practice" and the persistence of customs attached to village life. Hence, implicit in the transparent appeal of the SD officials to the Nazi leaders, the characterization of church commemorative ceremonies as "popular gatherings" meant for the Party the potential of winning over the increasingly secularized mass of people to the celebration of death according to the

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 2887. SD agents listed as primary concerns for the NSDAP, especially in rural areas, the lack of suitable spaces and capable persons for commemorative events staged by the Party. Additionally, the more efficient communications system of the clergy allowed local church officials to receive news of war deaths from their counterparts in the military and prepare in advance of Party leaders church commemorations for the dead, their families, and the entire community. Church ceremonies were often preceded by visits of condolence by local clergy which further ingratiated the church in the social and cultural lives of the community. Ibid., 2885, 2888-89.

¹⁴¹BayHStA, MA 106674, MbrPvNB/OP, 8 Sept. 1942; 10 Mar. 1943; MA 106684, MbrPvS, 10 Dec. 1942.

precepts of Nazi ideology.¹⁴²

With obvious approval, the report declared that the commemorative events organized by Nazi propaganda officials, where executed in worthy form, had met with a "most appreciative" reception among the populace. Yet while the report emphasized the generally favorable response to the NSDAP events, especially where the *Wehrmacht* was involved, it contained strong criticism of the uneven quality of organization and presentation. Above all, the report claimed, success followed those events where NSDAP officials provided "the personal touch". Whether personal invitations to the survivors or the reading aloud of letters from individual victims, such private and public gestures of empathy presumably helped maintain Nazi influence in the community. Conversely, in apportioning blame for poorly attended events, the report cited the dearth of organizational talent among local Nazis, whether manifested in the paucity of speaking talent, or the ill-conceived inclusion of official Party affairs during the commemoration. A further problem was the absence of appropriate venues. The use of dance halls, school rooms, or cinemas was hardly conducive to the solemnity of the occasion, SD officials duly noted. In contrast to earlier reports espousing the official policy of deferral of such ceremonies until war's end, SD analysts stressed the need for immediate action to take advantage of an alleged secularization of death rites, to elevate the position of the Party at the expense of the churches in the cultural

¹⁴²*MadR*, 3830-36, report no. 291 of 15 June 1942.

life of ordinary Germans, as well as to boost public morale.¹⁴³

A subsequent report prepared in October 1942 posited further success for the commemorative ceremonies arranged by the Nazis. At the same time it conceded that the religious commemorations of the war dead continued to hold sway over the population, especially in rural areas and among elderly Germans. Apparently contradicting the assertion of the previous report, that the religious significance of commemorative ceremonies was on the wane, the latest report admitted that the dominance of the churches in the matter of funeral rites corresponded to the "psychical demands of the war" among both the soldiers and those left behind in Germany to face the grim reality of wartime life. The Nazis recognized that in purely psychological terms the Christian beliefs in eternal life and reunion in the hereafter made it much easier for church officials to console surviving family members during the initial shock and pain of separation. Against the formidable appeal of these metaphysical beliefs, the Nazis offered consolation in the form of a patriotic spirit of individual sacrifice. Moreover SD officials feared that the willingness of the churches to provide funeral rites for the war dead gave the impression that the horrors of war had driven many soldiers back to the church. Perhaps even more discomfiting for the Party was the news that devout Nazis, including members of the SS, were frequently not only attending church commemorations but calling on

¹⁴³Ibid. Commenting on the uneven quality of the events, reports variously spoke of the "surfeit of celebration" and "increasing numbers in attendance", as well as those that "left much to be desired", were "appallingly bad", or met with "next to unrivalled indifference". See also *DnG* 9 (Apr. 1943): 229-35.

family members to serve the church.¹⁴⁴ Finally, as an implicit criticism of the impersonal nature of Nazi wartime ceremony, SD agents conceded that the people's rejection of the mass 'Heroes Tributes' arranged by the Party "for technical reasons" was fully understandable in view of the attention given individual ceremonies by the churches.¹⁴⁵

Convinced of the dire need to confront the churches' dominion over death rites with suitable Nazi ceremonies, SD officials prepared an unduly favorable report on the public's reception of the expanded 9 November celebrations of 1943 which they claimed had met with "extraordinary" success. As an "affair of the entire *Volkgemeinschaft*", the occasion had brought together not only local Nazi organizations but a large section of the population.¹⁴⁶ Yet the numerous and varied criticisms scattered throughout the report suggest that the level of success was somewhat less than the SD officials claimed and that significant obstacles existed for Nazis responsible for the 9 November

¹⁴⁴*MadR*, 4311-16, report no. 325, 12 Oct. 1942.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.* In contrast with the wealth of human, financial and material resources of the churches which provided religious burials without cost to the surviving families, the increasing demands of the war economy as well as the need to maintain the stability of a society at war hindered the ability of the Nazis, especially at the local level, to attach a "personal note" to NSDAP ceremonies for soldiers fallen in action.

¹⁴⁶SD officials attributed the success of the event to the comprehensive organization emanating from the central authorities; namely the uniform guidelines and examples provided in *DnG* which assisted preparations at the local level, the extensive press coverage and the personal invitations extended to surviving family members of the dead, and the generally high quality of prominent Nazi speakers. The report did however recommend the need for specific guidelines for rural 9 November ceremonies, since the dearth of adequate public venues, speakers and musicians posed special difficulties for local Nazis attempting to accommodate the formal programs set out in *DnG* and aimed at a largely urban audience. See *MadR*, 4638-46, report no. 348, 7 Jan. 1943.

ceremonies, problems that in the main stemmed from the deteriorating war situation. While ineffective speakers continued to thwart the endeavors of organizers in some regions, the most persistent and troublesome problem was the diminishing availability of suitable public space.¹⁴⁷ More than any other problem, SD authorities recognized that, in comparison to the churches, the venues available to the Nazis for purposes of celebration were wholly inadequate due to the devastation of public spaces by Allied aerial bombing. Narrow, dark, smoke-filled restaurants and taverns, sport gymnasiums or "prosaic" schoolrooms, all too often sparingly decorated, were no match for the traditional sacred space of Germany's tens of thousands of churches.¹⁴⁸ The war, moreover, had not only put any civic building projects on hold and brought destruction to countless buildings formerly used for Party celebrations before 1939, but many of the material components used in celebration, from flags to military

¹⁴⁷MadR, 4641-45, report no. 348, 7 Jan. 1943. The ineffectiveness of Nazi speakers appears to have derived as much from lack of credibility as it did from any absence of individual talent. While SD officials criticized speakers who substituted long-winded political propaganda for genuine human empathy, they also observed that where listeners discerned a discrepancy between the words and lifestyle of the speaker, the event failed to achieve the desired result. Consequently, the report recommended that only men with combat experience be employed as speakers.

¹⁴⁸Ibid. The shortage of adequate venues was so acute that in a district in the Hochschwarzwald region comprising 59 municipalities only 3 possessed civic spaces suitable for Nazi celebrations and ceremonies. In other areas 9 November ceremonies were held in Protestant parish halls and in pubs in which beer service continued throughout the commemorative program. The Nazis also used confiscated church buildings for other celebrations such as 'Seizure of Power Day' and Heroes' Memorial Day ostensibly with support of the local population as was the case in Mehlsack in East Prussia. See IfZ, AdP-K (mf), 202 00090-91, Inland I D-Auswärtiges Amt to Krüger in P-K, 20 Aug. 1943.

vehicles were either lost or put to other uses.¹⁴⁹

Implicit, also, in the SD report were fears that a surfeit of public commemorations for individual soldiers would be a constant reminder of the growing number of deaths and hence would weaken the resolve of Germans at home. This was at least the suspicion of many Germans who attended 9 November commemorative ceremonies in which the local Nazis omitted from the program the roll call in honour of dead soldiers.¹⁵⁰ Yet the pressure on local political officials to ensure the success of Nazi commemorations for the war dead occasionally contributed to their failure. This was especially the case when overzealous *Blockleiter* harassed surviving family members of the dead who had declined invitations to attend the ceremonies as guests of honour. Such actions on the part of local Nazis resulted in the community's regarding the 9 November ceremony as a compulsory Nazi event.¹⁵¹ Concluding their report, SD officials criticized the overtly theatrical form of many of the 9 November commemorative events. In their view the meticulously choreographed spectacles celebrating the series of triumphs of Nazism which had inspired Nazis, awed ordinary Germans, and impressed the world before 1939 were out of place in

¹⁴⁹*MadR*, 4641-45, report no. 348, 7 Jan. 1943. The use of damaged material components evidently detracted from the overall effect of ceremonies and celebrations. Instances such as the use at a local 9 November ceremony of a damaged bust of Hitler, with parts of the nose, eyes and ears broken off, presumably did little to enhance the Nazi cause.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.* Even when the roll call formed an integral part of the program as was normally the case, the occasional omission of names greatly upset those in attendance, especially surviving family members. Presumably due to bureaucratic oversight, such incompetence could only have hastened the deterioration in the standing of local Nazi leaders.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

wartime. At a time when the civilian population was reminded of death on a daily basis, ordinary Germans craved simple yet dignified ceremonies, which the churches had provided for centuries. Authentic commemoration and not propagandistic theatrical presentation was needed to preserve the credibility and legitimacy of the Nazi state which had, in effect, to be constantly reasserted.¹⁵²

SD officials compiled a final report on church commemorations for the war dead in March 1943. The report focused on new developments in the form and reception of such ceremonies. While the Protestant churches generally restricted themselves to unassuming ceremonies for fallen soldiers in their parishes, according to SD officials, the Catholic church had used "extraordinary imagination" in the creation of its commemorative ceremonies and consequently exercised "a deep and lasting influence" on surviving family members and the resident population. To the many traditional material components and rituals associated with Christian liturgy, such as flowers, candles, choirs, altars, prayer and processions, had been added established military

¹⁵²As one reporter wrote: "The atmospheric semi-darkness of the room, the focus on the Iron Cross, the flaming vessels above atop the columns, as well as the carefully tested and psychologically exactly calculated course of events, were not lacking in effect. The ceremony was regarded as "very good". Indeed, it had, as conversations with those in attendance revealed, the effect of a theatre performance. One had ... the feeling ... that it was a matter of conscious orchestration.... The magical effect of an invisible good speaker, of a drum roll, the exactly calculated rise and fall--especially of searchlights etc.--has little to do with a real ceremony. One does not achieve the genuine experience by way of skillful orchestration and illusion." Ibid., 4645. That local theatre halls commonly provided the space for much Nazi celebration during the war only accentuated the sense of theatricality. Nazi officials in Detmold, for example, used the local Landestheater for Heroes' Memorial Day ceremonies. See StADt, D.106. 2600, Standort-Sonderbefehl, Menzel, 9 Mar. 1943.

icons including the Iron Cross, steel helmet, and crossed rifles.¹⁵³

While the incorporation of martial symbols into Catholic commemorations rankled SD officials, even more galling was their appropriation of recognized forms of NSDAP ceremonies. The ceremonial roll call of the names of dead soldiers, the singing of the SA-inspired 'Song of the Good Comrade', the personal accompaniment of surviving family members to special places of honour, and the presence of military delegations, all integral components of Nazi ritual and ceremony, were now contributing to the Catholic church's "psychological exploitation" of an emotionally vulnerable population exposed to the hardships of war. The final addition to the liturgy developed by the Catholic church in its commemoration of the war dead was the creation of special soldiers' graves, memorial tablets and altars in recognition of the sacrifice of death for "*Heimat* and the Christian faith". Together the mixture of established religious beliefs and customs with symbols and practices not normally associated with Christian liturgy further enhanced the role of the churches, especially that of the Catholic church, in the cultural life of war-ravaged Germany.¹⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, in contrast to their earlier report on the 9 November ceremonies, SD officials admitted once again that for entire parishes, predominantly but by no means exclusively in rural areas, the "unusually strong participation of the population" in Catholic memorial services for the war dead and its effects on the attitude of the German people reflected the "unconditional observance of an old and deeply

¹⁵³MadR, 4874-75, report no. 363, 1 Mar. 1943.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 4875-78.

rooted Christian belief and custom".¹⁵⁵ Yet unlike previous reports, no explicit recommendations were made to expand the influence of Nazism in this cultural sphere. Presumably the gravity of the report was intended to serve as a warning to Nazi leaders that inaction in the cultural realm of death would be tantamount to defeat. In any event, as Germans continued to attend religious memorial ceremonies, the escalating urgency of the war for Hitler and his generals after Stalingrad forced to the periphery any concerted activity on the part of the NSDAP in the cultural battle for the souls of the dead and the loyalty of the living.¹⁵⁶

LAST RITES: NATIONAL SOCIALIST FAMILY EVENINGS

The final form of celebration that the Nazis dreamed up was the 'National Socialist family evenings'. Designed to fill the gap left by the significant curtailment of theatre, concert, cinema and other forms of popular entertainment, the Party elite promoted the family evening as a meaningful festive experience that would fortify the Nazi cultural construct of the national community.¹⁵⁷ To counter what Bormann considered to be the systematic attempt by Germany's enemies to exploit the

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 4878-79. The report is drawn from observations made in Stuttgart. Other reports from Bielefeld, Nuremberg and Salzburg also emphasized the increasing level of church services for the war dead. This was especially apparent where Nazi commemorative ceremonies remained infrequent, normally honouring several war dead at a time.

¹⁵⁶BayHStA, MA 106696, MbrPvNB/OP, 10 Dec. 1944. Presumably the Nazis found it disconcerting that the Catholic church continued to hold commemorative services for soldiers whose families neither belonged to the religious community, nor encouraged such public ceremonies. Yet when the surviving family members accepted invitations to attend, according to local Nazi officials, they were visibly moved by the ceremony. See MA 106696, MbrPvOF/MF, 9 May 1944.

¹⁵⁷BA, NS 6/84/4, Rosenberg to Bormann, 14 Feb. 1944.

fragmentation of family life for their own political aims, the leader of the Party Chancellery emphasized the need of the NSDAP to ensure that the family, the "germ-cell of the *Volk* and the life-supporting foundation of the state", remain a "bulwark of German tradition, German pride and the German will to life". The Nazi family evening celebration, Bormann explained, offered an invaluable supplement to the educational, propagandistic and cultural mechanisms of social control currently relied on by the Party to maintain public support for the war. He envisioned the event as a big family celebration, with invalided soldiers, soldiers and RAD workers on leave, and evacuated Germans invited to share in the festivities. The family evening would "informally and unobtrusively" bring together German families and simultaneously expose them to Nazi political culture. Although invested with deep ideological significance, in substance family evenings differed little from all of the other festival forms drawn up by Nazi ideologues. Held every four to six weeks under a different theme, the event combined short political speeches with musical interludes.¹⁵⁸

In the absence of any direct evidence from Nazi public opinion

¹⁵⁸StAM, NSDAP 553, RVBl, 12 Apr. 1944, AO 74/44, Bormann, 3 Apr. 1944. What set the family evenings apart from other Nazi celebrations was the allocation of administrative responsibility. Obviously Bormann intended the family evenings to expand his control over the entire Party apparatus as well as to overcome the bureaucratic infighting between Ley, Rosenberg and Goebbels. To this end he insisted that the organization of the family evenings, whose conceptualization and stimulus originated in the Party Chancellery itself, combine in a meaningful and powerful manner the individual talents of education, propaganda, and cultural officials from the highest ranks of the Nazi administration down to the lowest level of the Block community. All officials and members of the NSDAP and its ancillary organizations, moreover, from the NSF to the BDM-Work "Faith and Beauty" were called on to participate in the Nazi celebration of the German family.

gatherers, it is impossible to determine the effectiveness of the family evenings in realizing Bormann's cultural and political objectives. Yet since it is clear from numerous SD reports that the limited resources at the Party's disposal were wholly incapable of meeting the demands of existing Nazi celebrations long before 1944, it is doubtful whether this latest form of festival activity ever progressed beyond the Party administration itself. And even if there were attempts to implement Bormann's proposal, they would have encountered the same obstacles facing all other forms of Nazi wartime celebration.

More than anything else, proposals like the family evenings illustrate the complete isolation of the central NSDAP administration from the everyday concerns of the German people. While Hitler continued to dream of a modern post-bellum future of material luxury where the entire cultural life of the Germans would be permeated with the Nazi ethos, Rosenberg, Goebbels, Ley, and Bormann along with their respective administrative staffs, persisted in the development of festive and ceremonial forms designed to inspire the will and spirit of struggle among Nazis, soldiers, and ordinary Germans alike. The archetypal rituals and customs contained in *Die neue Gemeinschaft*, as well as the mass of orders and decrees pertaining to celebration issuing from Berlin and Munich to a hopelessly overburdened Party apparatus, clearly reveal the increasing remoteness of the political leadership at the highest levels not only from the rest of German society, but from much of the membership of the NSDAP and its ancillary organizations. Indeed, by 1944 apathy towards official NSDAP celebrations among Party leaders had become so pervasive that Bormann was forced to issue a decree bearing

Hitler's signature, the only such document pertaining to festivity signed by the Führer during the war, ordering the mandatory participation of *Reichsleiter*, *Gauleiter* and Nazi association leaders in formal ceremonies arranged for 30 January, 24 February and 9 November.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, right up to the bitter end the Party administration in Berlin remained committed to its ceremonial obligations. In February 1945, Bormann instructed all levels of the Party leadership to remind members of the BDM of their responsibility, as in previous years, to decorate the nation's war graves in a simple yet dignified manner for the upcoming Heroes' Memorial Day celebration.¹⁶⁰

In late 1943, as part of the ongoing project to document customs and rites for use in Nazi organized *Lebensfeiern*, *Die neue Gemeinschaft* featured a photograph ostensibly taken at a rural birth ceremony. The photograph depicted a farming couple presenting their newborn to the family livestock in a bonding ritual signifying the tradition-bound attachment to the soil.¹⁶¹ Appearing as it did when German armies were already on the retreat and vast numbers of Germans were being evacuated from bombed-out cities on a daily basis, the photograph might be regarded as pure Dada were it not for the seriousness with which it was intended. As it is, the photograph illustrates the total isolation from reality of Nazi propagandists and ideologues situated in Berlin and Munich. Increasingly caught up in a surreal world of their own making, those Nazis responsible for recasting the cultural life of the nation

¹⁵⁹BA, NS 6/347/153, Verfügung 7/44, Hitler, 9 May 1944.

¹⁶⁰BA, NS 6/353/50, RS 90/45, Bormann, 19 Feb. 1945.

¹⁶¹DnG 9 (Oct./Nov. 1943): opposite 561.

persisted in constructing an elaborate network of rites and customs corresponding to the cultural ethos of Nazism. Yet in their attempt to reify such popular slogans as *Blut und Boden* and *Volkgemeinschaft* through the collective experience of celebration, Nazis like Goebbels and Rosenberg developed an incongruous festival structure that had little chance of success in a modern culture turned upside down in the crucible of war.

* * *

Some time after the end of the war the French sociologist Roger Caillois argued that war occupied the same role in modern societies as the festival in primitive society. Yet whatever parallels can be drawn across space and time, the comparison is inadequate. To be sure, war and festivity draw from a similar morphology. Both share rites of passage, competition, and above all destruction.¹⁸² Yet as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, in a modern world of which Nazi Germany was a part, festivity assumed in war as in peace a heterogeneity of form and function. Wartime festivity offered something for everyone: amusement, sociability, condolence, joy of victory, hope and despair in the face of defeat, and a variety of other desires and emotions that define the human condition in time of war. Nevertheless it is clear that not all forms of celebration fared equally well during the war. In its cultural mission to win the population over to the political ethos of Nazism, the Nazi movement foundered as much on the imposing edifice of customs and traditions firmly fixed in the German cultural experience,

¹⁸²Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1959), Appendix III, "War and the Sacred," 163-80.

as it did from the circumstances of war.

In contrast to the attitude among many Nazis who felt that there were more significant matters than celebration, families and church officials recognized that life continued despite the upheaval and devastation of war. As the world conflagration raged, women gave birth, couples married, people died. Meanwhile, as they had for centuries, people continued to observe these exceptional occasions in celebration and ceremony. On the other hand, a number of leading Nazis, Rosenberg, Goebbels and Bormann among them, regarded Nazi circumspection and initiative in the cultural sphere of festivity as vital to the preservation and success of the movement. Yet plans like those to erect 'community houses' to provide public space for celebration, as with much of the Nazi festival structure, proved to be themselves constructed of no more than the paper on which they were drawn, casualties of the unyielding exigencies of war.

The momentum of the war which slowly yet decisively turned against Germany brought with it more demands for sacrifice on the part of the civilian population. The intensification of total war in July 1944, and the paramountcy given the war industries, sharply curtailed popular and private celebration. The introduction of the compulsory sixty-hour work week effectively ended any notion of leisure time, a prerequisite of celebration.¹⁸³ Bombed out cities offered few venues for public assembly. Extensive food rationing, the closure of much of Germany's brewery industry, and the confiscation of much of the wine harvest for use in the armaments industry removed another integral

¹⁸³BA, NS 6/348/15, RS 234/44, Bormann, 10 Sept. 1944.

prerequisite of feast and celebration, an abundance of food and drink.¹⁸⁴ By late 1944, a fatigued, cold and hungry population had little cause or desire for festivity. For the survivors, the violence of war had long since buried the triumphant celebration of Nazi Germany under the ashes and rubble of an unimaginable devastation.

Yet perhaps the ultimate failure of Nazism to permeate the cultural layer of celebration was less the result of the war than it was of the conceptualization and configuration of the distinctly Nazi festival form. From the first days of the Reich, the Nazis elevated celebration to a national frame of reference. Driven by the rhetoric of national glory, the Nazi state invited, cajoled and coerced Germans to join in the celebration of Nazism that persisted well into the war. In a modern mass political culture that placed self-abnegation at the centre of the human experience (even while it valorized individual achievement), festivals assumed the character of grand spectacle separating hundreds of thousands of participants from an even greater number of spectators and recombined them in a monumental and dynamic symbol of the popular will. The meticulously organized mass of participants was largely relegated to the role of a moveable theatrical prop, assembled for the approval of domestic and foreign audiences reading the newspaper, listening on radio or sitting in movie theatres. Except in the case of the Party elite, seldom did the Nazi celebration focus on the individual. When the war brought an end to the mass

¹⁸⁴For the closure of breweries, see BA, NS 6/349/26, RS 418/44, Bormann, 29 Nov. 1944. See also the secret circular detailing the requirements of the armaments industry for 100 million litres of wine in BA, NS 6/352/49, RS 467/44, Bormann, 20 Dec. 1944.

spectacles, forcing the Nazi elite leadership to concentrate its efforts on the more prosaic level of familial rites of passage their efforts proved unavailing.

Whether they were prepared to invoke the name of God to beguile the religious, or attempt to overcome the gulf dividing spectators and participants through the introduction of a common repertoire of songs to accompany specific celebrations, the Nazis became unwitting victims of their early monumental success in the realm of public celebration.¹⁸⁵ Cathartic when projected on the vast screen of a national revolution, the Nazi form of celebration faltered at the intimate level of the family photo album. Hitler, for one, envisioned mass weddings involving one or two hundred couples.¹⁸⁶ In July 1942, during one of his many informal evening monologues, Hitler boasted that he had already provided instructions to expand dramatically the festival space encompassing the Party rallies in Nuremberg after the war. The enlarged area would hold two million and more people, with the German Stadium able to accommodate an incomparable four hundred thousand people.¹⁸⁷ Less ambitious Germans and even a significant number of Nazis, meanwhile, turned to the traditional forms of ceremony provided by the churches, and to the intimacy, spontaneity and sociability of celebration found only among family and friends.

¹⁸⁵These were two of the recommendations offered by SD officials. See *MadR*, 6116-18, SD-Berichte zu Inlandsfragen (Rote Serie), 9 Dec. 1943.

¹⁸⁶IfZ, *AdP-K* (mf), 126 04947-48, Dr. Strobel to Rosenberg, 13 May 1944.

¹⁸⁷Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, 529.

CONCLUSION

Like other self-proclaimed modern revolutionaries before them, the National Socialists responded to the problem of how to establish political legitimacy and attract popular support in part through the creation of a self-representational festival culture. Selectively drawing from the polysemous festival discourse informing European political culture since the French Revolution, the Nazis formalized a performance-based celebratory culture whose purpose was to galvanize popular support for the new state and communicate the desired values, norms and objectives of their ideology. Through the initial influence of Hitler and primarily under the proficient direction of Goebbels, the Nazi festival was intended to provide a dynamic and powerful expression of the 'new order' of a militarized 'national community'. To this end, the Nazis sought to restructure public space and time in accordance with the image of a forward-oriented mass political movement impelled by the national-military heroic tradition. Accordingly, they institutionalized a new holiday calendar which represented less a revolutionary break with the past than a compromise solution based on the needs of a modern industrialized society, its institutions, and the Nazi state. As such, they grafted a number of Nazi holidays onto the conventional Christian calendar, and at the same time appropriated existing holidays such as the working-class May Day and the agrarian religious Harvest Thanksgiving, reinventing them in accordance with the national community

ideal. To accommodate the vast numbers of people required to convey the notional *Volksgemeinschaft*, meanwhile, the Nazis orchestrated a series of national festivals constructed on sites unprecedented in their monumental proportions. These colossal festival spaces were in turn reconstructed on a reduced scale in every community throughout the Reich, inviting all Germans to share in the celebratory performance of Nazi aesthetics.

The conceptualization and formalization of this celebratory mass culture, moreover, was inconceivable without the exploitation of advanced technology. More than any other component of Nazi festivalia, technology, both as a means of mass communication and as an integral festive symbol, provided Nazi festival culture with its wholly modern thrust. Loudspeakers, microphones, radio, film, railways, aeroplanes and other products of the modern world of technology transformed the festival experience, providing it with unprecedented capacities of immediacy and reproductiveness that permitted its extension far beyond the immediate surroundings. Particularly through its reproductive capacity modern technology facilitated the process of cultural commodification, the promotion of cultural goods for public consumption, mainstays of the modern entertainment, leisure and tourism industries. Under Nazism this process of cultural commodification, with its attendant delocalization and professionalization of autochthonous culture, was most evident in the state promotion of the folk festival industry. Although increasingly 'coordinated' within the ambit of Ley's KdF leisure organization, popular festivals comprised one of the more salient forms of popular entertainment offered for public consumption in

a mass consumer society increasingly deprived of consumer goods.¹ In contrast to the Weimar Republic, moreover, the Nazi state provided early support for the ailing festival industry. Though of modest importance to the Nazi economic recovery as a whole, the revived festival industry provided thousands of jobs, including the ongoing construction of the Party grounds in Nuremberg, and much-needed foreign currency in the form of the festival wares export trade and tourism revenue. A further modern trend, the increasing monopolization of the culture industry by big business, also appears to have been enhanced under Nazism. In Munich at least the large breweries consistently profited from the support of the Nazi-dominated city council in matters concerning one of the city's foremost tourist attractions, the annual *Oktoberfest*.

Despite the concerted efforts to create a 'new German folk festival' in the form of ideological edification disguised as wholesome family entertainment, the promotion of public celebration under Nazism doubtlessly reinforced its political legitimacy by providing the regime with a semblance of normality that found a genuine resonance among a population that had experienced two decades of almost uninterrupted political, social and economic upheaval since the outbreak of war in 1914. Yet despite their extensive efforts to control all aspects of popular culture, the Nazis failed to establish uniformity in the sphere of public celebration. Because the Nazi Party monopolized public

¹This transitional form of Nazi popular culture was perhaps most apparent in the tensions informing youth culture as young Germans selected for public consumption the cultural 'goods' made available by NS ancillary agencies like the HJ and BDM, the churches, as well as swing clubs and other modern forms of popular culture. See Geyer, "Resistance as Ongoing Project," S228.

opinion through its extensive propaganda machinery, and at the same time the repressive political culture of Nazi Germany effectively served to impair if not entirely stifle public criticism of the regime, the reconstruction of popular opinion in the Third Reich remains at best tentative. Nonetheless, the evidence available suggests that festivals were restricted in their power to galvanize popular support for the Nazi movement. Ultimately, as Kershaw has amply demonstrated, the legitimacy of the Nazi dictatorship rested with the perceived image of Hitler, the charismatic leader of the nation and the centre of all National Socialist festivity. The early optimism of opponents of the regime gradually but inexorably gave way to resignation as Hitler's popularity soared with each foreign policy triumph, even if that popularity was tempered by an increasing fear of war. Additionally, Hitler's image as the preserver of law and order in the face of widespread fear of social and political chaos, especially the threat of communist insurgency that gripped much of the population and acted as a "negative reinforcement", certainly played an important role in the high level of public acquiescence.² Equally important, the powerful outward expression of support routinely confirmed in the series of festival events presumably contributed to the widespread compliance of the vast majority of Germans. Yet despite the seemingly overwhelming pressure to conform, a minority of Germans, especially in Catholic strongholds, in working-class enclaves, and in the more intimate and traditional surroundings of towns, villages and rural areas, succeeded in celebrating Nazi festivals on their own

²DBS, 2: 904, 21 Sept. 1935; *ibid.*, 3: 972, 9 Sept. 1936; *ibid.*, 4: 162-63, 10 Mar. 1937.

terms, and in the process revealed the limits of their obedience and loyalty (or absence thereof) to the Nazi dictatorship. This degree of cultural autonomy manifested itself in various ways: compliant indifference, selective participation, wholesale rejection, symbolic and violent protest, and, far less frequently, active resistance. Nevertheless it must be emphasized that with the exception of the political left, which in any event ceased to offer any effective form of organized resistance following its nearly complete elimination by 1935/6, festal opposition in the Third Reich assumed the form of incidental and isolated dissidence in response to one or another Nazi policy rather than against the National Socialist state as such.

The outbreak of war precipitated a rupture in the structure of Nazi festival culture as it had evolved up to 1939. As with the last minute postponement of the Nuremberg Party rally, the Party Day of Peace, most noteworthy was the departure of the major festival events from the national stage. Although popular festivals continued in the form of local fun fairs and the like, exigencies of war, especially after the debacle in Stalingrad, gradually pushed public celebration to the periphery of German cultural life. The talents of Goebbels, the pageant master of the Third Reich, were required elsewhere, particularly in the reproduction of the valiant war effort in radio reports and weekly newsreels. The war also forced the postponement of the collectivist ambitions of the Reich's recreation director, Robert Ley, who turned his attention to housing construction and to concocting plans for the post-war social agenda. Thus marginalized, public celebration encountered the peripheral figure of Alfred Rosenberg, who wasted little

time in imposing his radically doctrinaire neo-pagan and anticlerical notions on formal festival culture. As the dream of the 'thousand-year Reich' unravelled in unsurpassed brutality, Rosenberg held court over his shrinking patch of hard-won turf in the increasingly hermetic and surreal playground of the polycratic Nazi state. Playing out their fantasies of Nazi 'life celebrations' that would effectively render all celebration public, Rosenberg and his acolytes formulated battle plans for the imagined final showdown with the churches for the rights over the entire cultural life of the nation.

As the war situation worsened and casualties mounted, festive jollity gave way to ceremonial solemnity as Nazi Germany began the onerous task of burying its dead heroes. Here the Nazis came into direct conflict with the churches whose traditional dominion over the souls of the dead had survived intact even when other areas of religious life had succumbed to the centuries-old secularization of European culture. Like the war itself the Nazis' challenge to religious funeral liturgy proved to be an insuperable battle they were destined to lose. Not surprisingly, the extensive monumental edifice of Nazi festival culture failed to survive the dehumanized destructive forces of modern warfare unleashed by NS state power ambitions. Today only the Führer-tribune in Nuremberg survives as a testament to Speer's theory of ruin-value, as well as a scattering of other buildings once the site of Nazi pageantry. More ominously the outward form of Nazi festivalia persists in the brutal imaginations of neo-Nazi groups who have exhumed much of the original NSDAP memorabilia as an expression of disaffection before the hard cruel face of modernity.

* * *

On 11 November 1945 at precisely noon hour, sirens pierced the air in war ravaged cities across Germany. In factories and houses work came to a halt, men in the streets doffed their hats, and Germans everywhere bowed their heads for two minutes of silence--in commemoration of the victims of war.³ A year later, the autumn air in Munich filled with the jollity of Bavarians attending the city's first fall festival since the end of the war.⁴ The desire for celebration, whether solemn or light-hearted, had survived the unspeakable crimes of the Nazi terror. More significantly, however, these two festal events, though different in intent, signalled the beginning of the process of 'historicizing' the Nazi past, a process that has become the focus of much recent historical debate.⁵ The first constituted an act of remembering to forget, the second a forgetting to remember. As a means of public communication, festival and ceremony, like motion pictures and other forms of popular culture, reach a significantly wider audience than do the writings of

³*Neuen Westfälischen Zeitung*, 6 Nov. 1945; StAdt, D.106.2600, Bürgermeister-Detmold, 9 Nov. 1945.

⁴*Das Oktoberfest: Einhundertfünfundsiebzig Jahre Bayerischer National-Rausch* (Munich, 1985), 47.

⁵The literature on the subject of the 'historicization of the Nazi past' and the ensuing 'Historikerstreit' among German historians is too extensive to be fully documented here. For two thoughtful surveys of the subject in English, see Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York, 1989); and Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1988). On the reconstruction of the Nazi past in post-war popular culture, see Alf Lüdtke, "'Coming to Terms with the Past': Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany," *JMH* 65 (1993): 542-72. For a discussion of war memorials and commemorative ceremonies in post-war divided Germany, see Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, chap. 10.

historians and as such offer a greater opportunity for confronting the Nazi past. Nevertheless, the potential for reinventing Nazism as a morality play with its routine cast of victims, heroes and villains, (a tendency among historians that sparked Broszat's initial plea in the early 1980s for a 'historicizing' or 'normalizing' of the Nazi past⁶) is even greater in the sphere of public ceremony. While the celebration of Nazism in the form of displaying Nazi memorabilia or the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and memorials remains the preserve of the disaffected radical right in Germany, the commemorative focus on the victims of Nazism and war or the heroes of German resistance by German officialdom in its search for a 'usable past' constitutes an equal distortion of the historical reality. German society was certainly no "seething mass of discontent and disillusion" as Robert Gellately has rightly pointed out in criticism of studies by Kershaw and others that emphasize social nonconformity.⁷ Equally misleading, however, is the depiction of a society gripped in the collective throes of a supposed mystical bond between Führer and Volk, united by the driving-force of an arcane secular religion, and willingly submitting to the 'national will'. The reality lies somewhere between these two extremes, as the relation between state and society remained in a constant state of flux at least until the late stages of the war. As the present study has suggested,

⁶Broszat's somewhat elusive views on the need for 'historicizing' or 'normalizing' the Nazi past, which in effect amount to a shifting of attention away from politics and ideology and towards the complex experience of everyday life in the Third Reich while at the same time situating Nazism in the ongoing process of German history, are summarized in his *Nach Hitler: Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte*, eds. Hermann Graml and Klaus-Dietmar Henke (Munich, 1987).

⁷Gellately, *Gestapo and German Society*, 257.

in a repressive authoritarian state that eliminated all public spheres for pluralistic debate, any attempt to interpret popular opinion is further complicated by the difficulty in assessing individual motives. After all, outward conformity in the holiday display of flags did not necessarily express inward conviction. Ultimately, then, acclamation or dissent rested with the individual and any assessment of popular opinion must remain provisional. What can safely be said is that where the Nazis succeeded in transmitting their symbolic message on a wavelength in tune with the rhythms of popular culture they attracted a broad and sympathetic audience. It is also clear, however, that for some the broadcast frequency of Nazi celebration remained comparatively narrow, as listeners tuned in only occasionally to programs of their liking. Still other more remote listeners, their numbers impossible to determine, chose alternate frequencies or tuned out altogether.

This study of Nazi festivity also suggests that the emphasis on the reactionary, archaic features of Nazism needs to be reexamined. By situating Nazism firmly within the ongoing process of modernity it retains a relevancy beyond historical discourse as it continues to challenge the understanding of a not so distant present. Nazi festivals developed in response to the peculiarities of modern mass culture. With the resources of the modern state at their disposal, the Nazis were able to impose their forward-oriented vision of an undifferentiated ethnic and national culture on a public sphere that had become increasingly pluralistic under the Weimar Republic as established institutional cultures like that of the church and the labour movement vied with the cultural forms of an emerging mass consumer society. On this account,

the mass aesthetic informing the state-controlled Nazi festival culture represented both a continuation and a temporary rupture with the fragmented public sphere of the Weimar era and served as a transitional phase in the development of the mass consumerism that has shaped post-war popular culture in Germany and elsewhere. Far from being reactionary, the conflation of the nationalist and militarist mass movements in Nazism offered an alternatively modern political solution to the economic and social upheaval engendered by the seemingly chaotic, fragmented and meaningless flux of modernity in the wake of Imperial Germany's catastrophic defeat and dissolution in 1918.

Ultimately the varieties of festive experience in the Third Reich served to conceal the criminality of the Nazi dictatorship. The celebration of the 'national uprising' that began with the numinous torchlight procession past the Reich Chancellery on 30 January 1933 renewed itself in collective rejoicing at the annual Party spectacles in Nuremberg, detouring across the Theresienwiese for the Oktoberfest on the road to war, and eventually wound its way across a landscape dotted with thousands of war cemeteries before reaching its secluded and uncereemonious end in the ashes of Auschwitz.

* * *

While this study has ranged more widely than previous ones across the broad and varied landscape of public celebration in the Third Reich, it is nevertheless regrettable that spatial requirements have precluded a more comprehensive treatment of the subject. A full understanding of the celebratory experience in the Third Reich would require additional research in a number of different areas. A more thorough analysis of

the impact of Nazi festival culture on specific segments of German society, including women, the elderly, the young, and ethnic minorities, might shed light on the nature of the social basis of support for Nazism. Greater attention to the popular response to Nazi festivalia on the local level would serve the same purpose. The conclusions reached by the present study suggest, moreover, that reexaminations of Nazi ideology should give due attention to the popular acceptance and understanding of the mediated ethos of National Socialism. Similarly, there are obvious lacunae on the subject of Nazi popular culture. While Nazi films have been thoroughly analyzed by a number of historians, other aspects of popular culture, sport and public exhibitions to name but two, that frequently shared public space with Nazi festivals, have yet to receive adequate scholarly attention. Finally, the history of Nazi public celebration would benefit from a comparative perspective not possible in the present study. A large literature exists to permit a thorough reexamination of the process of German cultural development that bridges the Nazi era, rather than stopping in 1933 or 1945 as has so often been the case in the past. Similarly comparisons with different festival cultures across time and space might expose more clearly the peculiarities and perhaps more importantly the commonalities of the Nazi festival experience.

TABLES

Table 1: Total Beverage Consumption (Excluding Beer) at *Oktoberfest* in Munich, 1932-1938

Year (cup)	Coffee (.25 l)	Wine* (bottle)	Wine (bottle)	Sparkling Wine (bottle)	Liqueur
1932	39,000	9000	750	—	—
1933	43,000	13,300	900	—	—
1934	44,000	11,450	864	—	98
1935	53,474	10,832	827	162	375
1936	62,105	12,421	849	165	533
1937	58,377	11,254	1,462	238	728
1938	104,890	13,174	1,134	279	1,039

* Total amount measured in litres

Source: StadtAM, *Oktoberfest* 243Table 2: Total Beer Consumption at *Oktoberfest* in Munich, 1928-1984

Year	Total Beer Consumption (litres)	Consumption Index
1928	1,288,400.0	155.5
1929	1,406,800.0	169.8
1930	1,217,200.0	146.9
1931	711,118.0	85.8
1932	763,790.0	92.2
1933	828,542.0	100.0
1934	1,141,898.0	137.8
1935	1,152,201.0	139.1
1936	1,075,111.0	129.8
1937	1,027,476.0	124.0
1938	1,402,751.5	169.3
1949	1,337,300.0	161.4
1950	1,501,200.0	181.2
1960	2,875,100.0	347.0
1970	3,998,500.0	482.6
1984	4,971,300.0	600.0

1933 as base year=100

Sources: StadtAM, *Oktoberfest* 243; Münchner Stadtmuseum, *Das Oktoberfest: Einhundertfünfundsiebzig Jahre Bayerischer National-Rausch* (Munich, 1985), 326.

**Table 3: Total Food Consumption at *Oktoberfest*
in Munich, 1932-1938**

Year	Pork Sausage (2)	Chickens	Oxen
1932	265,000	39,000	16
1933	280,000	44,000	16
1934	360,000	72,000	16
1935	274,439	75,831	32
1936	306,783	88,583	32
1937	277,572	95,933	28
1938	499,788	152,576	43

Source: StadtAM, *Oktoberfest* 243

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NS 8/156, 172, 183-88, 190-91, 193-94, 231, 242

NS 10/130

NS 18/328, 431

NS 18 alt/695

NS 22/147, 151, 224, 675, 716, 781-82, 968, 1151

NS 26/425, 448, 460, 476

NS 30/52

R 43/665

R43 II/150, 168, 177a, 680a, 1194a, 1196, 1196a, 1197-99, 1201a, 1201b, 1209a, 1210, 1211a, 1211b, 1256, 1265-66, 1266a, 1267a, 1267b, 1268-69

R 55/510-11, 559, 622, 1330

R 58/436, 479-80, 510, 513-14, 529, 534-35, 548, 552, 566-67,
660-63, 671, 1572-82, 1584-87

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3/23/2, 4, 6, 10, 15

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288, Ufa-Wochenschau no. 13, 1933
512, Emelka-Tonwoche no. 14, 1933
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